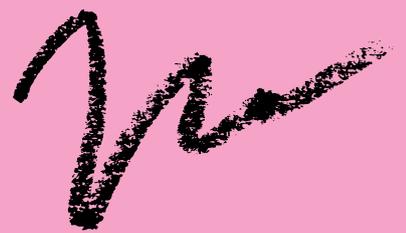NOTE
BOOKS

N.02

CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE

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ISABEL
LUCENA

2021

CREATIVITY AND RESILIENCE

PARTICIPATORY ART IN A TIME OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

ISABEL LUCENA

Preface

The idea behind the *Creativity and Resilience* notebook arose in the first half of 2020. It stemmed from an urge to gather, record and share the broad range of experiences and learning triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic as it hit the projects that make up the third edition of the PARTIS initiative right in the midst of their creative development process.

As evaluator of the initiative's artistic dimension since its second edition, I have always been fascinated by the PARTIS projects' potential to create shareable knowledge. The reports I write for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation offer a unique opportunity to reflect on individual experiences and see a myriad of cross-cutting issues surface – topics, methodologies, resources and creative output that warrant being shared with national and international peers.

It was in this spirit of reflection and knowledge sharing that the suggestion for a survey of the PARTIS III projects' responses to the constraints resulting from the pandemic was originally put forward. The initial idea was simply to create a report annex that could be easily shared with the projects concerned and peers from other editions. It was the PARTIS team, ever mindful and open to ideas that contribute to reflection, capacity-building and sector development, that then posed the challenge of publishing the information as part of its new series of *Art and Community Notebooks.*

The contents of this notebook comprise information gathered during my observation of the projects as an external evaluator of the initiative, and additional research focusing specifically on the individual characteristics and circumstances that shaped the projects' diverse responses to the restrictive measures imposed during the period of state of emergency and subsequent months.

The aim of this notebook is to share the *what*, the *how* and the *why* behind the different responses of the PARTIS III projects to the collective challenges faced during the pandemic. It seeks to identify and shine a light on aspects little known to both those who engage with participatory art from a distance and to those involved in the projects themselves, who are sometimes overly self-critical and often underestimate the real factors behind their difficulty in overcoming obstacles or harnessing opportunities.

Although it includes illustrative examples, the notebook does not focus on individual projects. It identifies collective trends, showcases ideas and encourages readers to reflect on issues that need to be considered and discussed, such as the perception of "success" and "failure", ethical issues that come to the fore in moments of crisis, the effect of institutional red tape on the projects or the potential political instrumentalisation of participatory art, without, of course, overlooking the opportunities (acknowledged by some, ignored or denied by many) that are part of the mosaic that is these troubling times. It also warns of the importance of contextualisation (a challenging exercise, given the lack of appropriate objectivity) and calls for reflection as a way of internalising, understanding and, ultimately, overcoming this limit-situation.

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Isabel Lucena

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A Global Crisis

The term "global crisis" has never made more sense than when used to describe the widespread hardship brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. A "pandemic" is, by definition, a global phenomenon, in the physical or geographical sense of the word. It is usually defined as the worldwide spread of an infectious disease, simultaneously affecting a large percentage of the population in multiple countries. However, the reach of the COVID-19 pandemic points to a broader concept of "global".

From a purely geographical perspective, the "globalisation" of the pandemic is undeniable. The virus allegedly appears in China, spreading quickly to Europe and then plagues countries as different and as far apart as Brazil and India, mutating into different regional variants that also appear and spread around the world faster than science can keep up with.

But this global crisis is much more than just a geographical issue. It is a health, social and economic problem that brought businesses to a standstill indiscriminately. Trade, industry and services were forced to close their doors (some never to reopen) and vast numbers were left unemployed or forced into precarious work amidst a highly competitive climate, despite the economic crises experienced in the recent past. In Portugal, all sectors of activity were heavily hit. Save but a few, usually linked to essential services and products or which could ensure physical distancing, such as home deliveries (or bicycle manufacturing which saw a boom unlike most other industries), entire sectors were pushed to the brink of collapse. From healthcare to education, no sector was spared, including, of course, the cultural sector – one which is often neglected and typically affected first in any economic crisis.

The unpredictable progression of this virus has wreaked havoc across vastly different countries and economies, having an astonishing impact with its ability to expose the weaknesses of the strongest of nations. In just one

year, the pandemic disrupted the usual order of things and inverted certain hierarchical pyramids, with "first world" powers, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, ranking highest in an indicator that no nation aspires to – the number of deaths due to infection by a virus.

Portugal, on the other hand, fared much better with its exemplary management of the first wave of the pandemic in terms of the number of confirmed cases and deaths. Something that would later change, possibly as a result of a false sense of self-assurance among the population. But this analysis focuses on the first wave of the pandemic and there is a very direct correlation between the discipline of the first state of emergency and the respective lifting of lockdown restrictions and the direction taken individually by the PARTIS III projects. After having benefited from a first year of normalcy in 2019, the projects had reached a pivotal moment in creative development when the virus suddenly broke out and the resulting restrictions were imposed.

With the first two cases of COVID-19 identified in the north of Portugal on 2 March, the government wasted no time by implementing a set of measures that saw the population under a strict lockdown put in place on the 22nd of the same month. This early intervention, while controversial for some, appears to be one of the reasons why the country's success at the time became internationally known as the "Portuguese miracle". Another possible and related reason is how the population reacted, accepting and complying with the radical set of measures with exemplary self-discipline compared to those in countries that are culturaly or geographically close to Portugal, which had disastrous results.

Of course, the success of this radical and unexpected approach came at a cost. The health crisis took a global hold, simultaneously becoming an economic and social crisis and immediately highlighting the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on the more vulnerable individuals and groups in society, which the projects assessed seek to benefit. The practical consequences of the lockdown – unemployment, loss of income, the closure of schools and other institutions, isolation – left already vulnerable populations in situations of extreme fragility. Those more fortunate were confined to their homes, having to balance work, their children's education and domestic chores under less than ideal conditions, which exacerbated family tension and mental health issues. Children living in unstable homes lost the little structure they had when schools closed and, in extreme cases, faced hunger and/or domestic violence without having anyone to turn to. Older people, typically more vulnerable due to their physical fragility or living in environments conducive to infection or isolation, were one of the most severely affected groups. But there are other, often overlooked, groups that became doubly isolated, such as those in detention settings or with physical and/or cognitive disabilities whose lives already require extra effort and who saw their daily routines disrupted, some of whom are unable to fully understand the situation they find themselves in.

Because they facilitate unlikely encounters, both between professional and non-professional artists, and between people from different backgrounds and realities (age, socio-economic, cultural, religious and other backgrounds), the projects that make up the PARTIS initiative tend to work with the aforementioned vulnerable and marginalised population groups. The impacts of the pandemic required a greater resilience and creativity from these projects that many didn't know they had in them. Even so, their commitment to the participants and awareness of how important these types of projects can be to their lives was enough to encourage the projects to literally reinvent their practices, adjusting them to the specific characteristics, needs and circumstances they found themselves in.

The wide range of responses from these projects to the impact of the pandemic is as extensive and complex as the nature and composition of the projects themselves and, despite the understandable frustration felt by the teams responsible for carrying out the work, the outcomes are extremely noteworthy. That being said, the real and full impact of these responses will only be seen further down the line. In traumatic situations such as these, our natural reaction is to overcome the crisis by putting it behind us. However, in order to take stock of learnings, we must acknowledge the crisis as a whole, taking all the bad along with the good that came with it, which isn't easy for those directly involved. Thus, the following sections create a record of their experiences by documenting and reflecting on the work and outcomes of these participatory art projects under the incredibly challenging circumstances they navigated in the months following the first wave of the pandemic in Portugal.

2

PARTIS III:
a national case study

2.1
Introduction

This section explores a range of responses to the impact of the pandemic crisis on participatory art. The analysis covers the work carried out by 15 extraordinarily diverse projects, ⬈ but that share several specific characteristics. As such, I have included the following explanation for a better understanding of the broader context in which they collectively operate.

The projects concerned are part of the third edition of the PARTIS initiative. Launched in Portugal by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 2013, the initiative is groundbreaking at national level in the sense that it provides strategic and consistent support to artistic practices for social inclusion. In addition to supporting the development of individual projects, the initiative fosters a community of practice dedicated to sharing knowledge and critical reflection on art and social inclusion, holds an annual participatory art showcase and conference, and encourages academic partners to contribute to the development of sector-related knowledge.

When it opened in January 2019, the third edition of PARTIS was already strengthened by the growth of participatory art in Portugal, embodied by its qualitative leap compared to the previous editions.

Each edition of PARTIS usually runs for a period of three years, which is the average duration of the vast majority of the projects. There are, however, a small number of projects that opt for shorter implementation periods, such as 24 or 30 months. The pace of project implementation is distinct and determined by several factors that vary considerably. In general, the first year involves consolidating various aspects, including partnerships, teams, groups of participants and even the artistic proposal, which often needs to be adjusted to the reality on the ground.

By the end of the first year of project implementation, the projects selected for the third edition of PARTIS had advanced significantly more than those of the previous editions at the same stage of implementation, in that they already had:

× high quality creative processes and outputs;

× outstanding levels of engagement and involvement by participants in creative processes;

× teams very open to and capable of using available tools and resources;

× more functional partnerships;

× an academic dimension as part of most projects;

× more structured reflection practices;

× strong interaction and a close relationship between peers;

× and a strong sense of belonging to the PARTIS community, characterised by the markedly increased presence and participation in activities promoted by the initiative and by the respective projects.

In addition to the already mentioned growth of participatory art in Portugal, which was largely due to the strategic and consistent support provided by the Gulbenkian Foundation through the PARTIS initiative, it seems that the qualitative leap made was also underpinned by a combination of factors, including the fact that the Foundation chose, for the first time, to pay special attention to artistic quality when screening projects. This led to the selection of artistic proposals that were better structured and consistent, and the involvement of highly experienced and reputable artists (not necessarily in participatory art practice) who bring artistic rigour to the projects of which they are a part, positively influence their less experienced peers, and lend credibility to the initiative and to a sector that is still trying to establish itself.

Given that the initiative is cyclical, the third edition of PARTIS is a clear example of medium- and long-term impact. Its "coming of age" is, without a doubt, the result of six years of learning (reflection, capacity-building and skills development). However, despite the qualitative leap made, the first year of project implementation also exposed some weaknesses that should be noted because, together with the aforementioned strengths, they are part of a set of factors that profoundly shaped the context in which the projects operated and the responses they developed when faced with the pandemic crisis. The weaknesses identified include:

- × training needs related to co-creation between professional and non-professional artists, focused especially on the potential vulnerabilities of the participants and professional artists involved;

- × ethical issues and the need to create a "Code of Conduct" that provides guidelines for the PARTIS community;

- × issues relating to the (physical) accessibility of participants, in particular the provision of transport;

- × weaknesses within some partnerships, particularly as regards the involvement of local authority partners;

- × the need to develop skills in managing projects with multiple stakeholders, including internal communication practices and mechanisms.

Besides these general (positive and negative) characteristics that outline the collective profile of the third edition of the PARTIS initiative, it is also important to note the individual characteristics of the respective projects. In the PARTIS universe, each project is a unique constellation that independently combines a series of defining characteristics, including the primary and secondary issues addressed, age groups, gender, region, type of lead organisation, composition of the partnership, and artistic languages, amongst others. When properly interpreted, the data related to these characteristics clearly demonstrates that they aren't merely statistics and contain much of the information that explains the diversity and complexity of the impacts and responses developed by the PARTIS III projects in the context of the pandemic crisis.

It is impossible to list all those variants and the possible combinations between them, so reference to the different characteristics of the projects will be made around relevant issues relating to this reflection. References to them will, therefore, be made when appropriate to the situation being analysed in the sections below.

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2.2

Impacts

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As already mentioned, the unexpected arrival of the pandemic in March 2020 hit the projects selected for the third edition of the PARTIS initiative right in the midst of their creative development process. In 2019 the projects were able to build group cohesion, form relationships of trust between professional and

non-professional artists, and cement the relationships between the various partners. The majority were also able to create the conditions they needed to begin intensifying the creative development process. While this is the norm, there are deviations, such as projects that began before the respective PARTIS edition and already had more robust ways of working and relationships; projects with one-year cycles that had already gone through a complete creative development process with artistic output; or two-year projects that, in March 2020, were close to entering the production phase. Whatever the case, the pandemic brought an abrupt halt to the intense creative development process and relationships, jeopardizing the entire emotional dimension and bonds created, which are key to participatory art projects. To understand just how much creativity and resilience went into the projects' responses to the situation, one must look at it from different angles, starting with the impact of the pandemic and the resulting constraints on the respective partnerships, on the groups of participants and, finally, on the implementation of the projects themselves.

2.2.1
Partner and lead organisations

The partnerships formed under the PARTIS projects are based on collaborations between organisations from the cultural and social sectors. The balance between lead organisations from each sector varies from edition to edition. In the third edition of PARTIS, nine of the fifteen projects are led by organisations from the cultural sector, five are led by organisations from the social sector, and one other is led by an organisation from the sports sector. Within each sector, the nature, size and experience of each of the organisations vary considerably and the impact the pandemic had on the projects is closely related to the balance between all these factors. Naturally, there is a direct link between the resilience of the lead organisations in the face of the additional burden and the projects' response to the pandemic situation. That said, the response is also significantly influenced by the degree of involvement and commitment of the other organisations that form the partnership.

The **lead organisations** of the PARTIS III projects that are from the **cultural sector** include already established undertakings (e.g. Alkantara, Artemrede, Companhia Olga Roriz, PELE) with years of experience, networks and resources that provide a certain degree of stability. Some of these organisations are also responsible for the implementation of other artistic/cultural projects and for cultural production and programming activities. Since it is a health, social and economic crisis, even the most established of undertakings were affected by the extreme effects of the pandemic, including mass cancellations and repeated rescheduling which, of course, had a significant impact on their human and financial resources. However, these were issues that plagued the organisations

in general and not specifically the PARTIS projects, since the human and financial resources allocated to them were assured by the measures implemented by the Foundation (which will be discussed in another section).

As regards the organisations from the **social sector**, the impact of the crisis affected them somewhat differently. Fewer in number, these organisations are very diverse in terms of their nature, size and the additional burden placed on them. They range from between a local authority (Santa Maria da Feira City Council) and a small NGO (Bengala Mágica) run by the family and friends of the target group of one of the projects, and include social development associations based in cities as well as in inland areas. Like their cultural sector counterparts, these social organisations also benefited from the support provided by the Foundation, but in some cases the human resources allocated to the projects felt the strain of the overload of work their organisations had. That said, the projects do not seem to have been that affected. For example, in one case the group of participants continued to work directly on creative material sent via home delivery by the artistic team and, in another case, the group of participants remained closely connected to their respective project and even began assisting (volunteering) the lead organisation in its social action in response to the pandemic.

The impact on the **partner organisations** also warrants reflection, as it demonstrates the important role the various partners play in implementation of the projects. There are certain types of organisations that are often part of PARTIS partnerships, including schools, local authorities, and institutions such as the Directorate-General of Reintegration and Prison Services (DGRSP). The impact of the pandemic on each of these types of organisations was made clear by the way in which it shaped the responses of the projects to the crisis they faced. Below is a brief description of each of them.

Schools were closed during the period of state of emergency and, despite the gradual return to classes shortly before the end of the academic year, most projects targeting schools did not bring back in-person activities due to all the uncertainty. Some were able to design online activities, but this option was not always feasible or taken up by those for whom they were designed. Schools reopened in September 2020 for the new academic year, but the return of the projects to in-person activities was non-existent or insignificant.

In regard to **detention settings** isolation was taken to extremes in prisons, with inmates unable to enjoy release on temporary licence, have visitors or even receive packages from the outside world. As a result, the PARTIS teams were prevented from continuing any in-person activities, despite, in both cases, maintaining contact and carrying out activities with their respective groups of participants. This will be discussed in more detail in item 2.3.

Restrictions imposed on juvenile detention centres on the other hand, despite also being under the responsibility of the DGRSP, were not as severe and, although leave, visits and the receipt of packages were also prohibited, the artistic projects were able to continue their work. In-person activities were resumed in May 2020 by the only PARTIS III project working specifically with juvenile detention centres.

Local authorities, that is, city, town and parish councils, are one of the major partners of the third edition of the PARTIS initiative. With all the added responsibilities and overload of work, the availability and commitment of the local authorities to the projects varied considerably. Some opened their doors to the projects, offering them their facilities to ensure safer working conditions, while others distanced themselves, because of all the extra work or possibly to avoid being held responsible for spread of the virus within their facilities.

Finally, there are the **CERCIs** (cooperatives for the education and rehabilitation of citizens with disabilities), which are the formal or informal partners of several PARTIS III projects. Since these institutions initially only remained open to their residents, later gradually re-opening their doors to other users, they were unable to allow entry to the PARTIS teams due to the risk posed to their users, who often have comorbidities. Nevertheless, all the CERCIs concerned maintained their strong relationship with the projects and those that are official partners strengthened their ties with the lead organisations, extending project-related activities to users who were not part of the group of participants.

2.2.2
Participants

All of society was impacted by the effects of the pandemic, but it is widely known that the crisis, whether from a health, economic or social perspective, has had a disproportionately greater impact on the more vulnerable populations. Nevertheless, even among those living in more fragile situations, the level of impact depended on the characteristics and circumstances of each individual. To discuss the impact on participants means discussing the individual experience of hundreds of people. That said, the specific situations certain groups faced as a result of the pandemic and consequent restrictions can be outlined. Below is an account of some situations associated with specific settings, issues addressed and target groups, including the forming of wider groups of participants, as was the case of intergenerational projects working with people that are part of different target groups.

The restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic had a particularly significant impact on those living in **detention settings**. Already isolated from society, these individuals found themselves doubly isolated without being

able to enjoy leave or have visitors. As a result, the participants in the two PARTIS III projects implemented in prisons were suddenly unable to work with the teams and continue the creative processes they had started. The responses of these projects are discussed in item 2.3 below, so they will not be elaborated on in this section. That said, some of the more significant aspects of the impact of the sudden halt in activities are of particular note. One such aspect is related to the need to extend the timetable. Although this is something that affected almost all projects, it is particularly complicated when involving work carried out in prisons. Unlike their peers in other projects, these participants do not have a say in whether they are able to continue participating in a project when they are released from the respective prison. Said release may occur for several reasons, including time served, but also transfers or inclusion in an open regime (where, despite living in prison facilities, inmates do not have access to the prison area where the projects are carried out). As a result, even the participants who show the most interest in and commitment to the projects can be excluded from them, which raises several different issues. In terms of the impact on the project, some creative investment is lost, as the interrupted creative processes lose core elements. Replacement of course is an option, although any new participants will lack the skills developed by those who left the project. But the main problem is the potential impact on participants, who are cut off from the project as a collateral effect of leaving its setting. This raises several issues, from breaking the bonds formed with the other participants and the team to the ownership of the artistic output being developed, including copyright issues. The whole issue around ownership/copyright and the associated ties to the project also has an impact on any new participants who replace those before them, since they will be working on something that they did not create. But the impact of the responses to the restrictions imposed in these two prisons was not all negative. Something positive also come out of it, particularly with regard to the boost in the self-confidence and self-esteem of participants through the creative challenges posed by the teams as an alternative to on-site work. Both projects started working with the participants through correspondence (later having the option to work online). This creative reflection in times of double isolation resulted in unexpected revelations, by the participants themselves, who discovered traits and talents they didn't know they had. And, although it cannot be specifically attributed to this experience, or even to the project, three inmates from among one group of participants decided to enter higher education. The other project led to newfound talent in different artistic languages which, although not part of the original plan, are now being explored more in-depth together with artists from the respective fields.

Two of the PARTIS III projects address the issue of **public space**, a sphere particularly affected as a result of the pandemic. The *Como desenhar uma cidade?* project, aimed at "equipping the target group with artistic and social

skills to contemplate and experience the geographical space they inhabit", was suddenly deprived of occupying the city because of the pandemic, raising a set of new issues for the group to explore. The *Sob o mesmo Céu* project, which carries out its work through "collective interventions in the community space", was not only prevented from working personally with its target group - children and young people from the local community - but also lost the intergenerational component afforded by a partner association whose social responses include a nursing home and a day centre, which were particularly affected by the pandemic situation.

Among the projects that work with **people with disabilities**, the participants of one project include people who are blind or visually impaired, and two others include adults with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and multiple disabilities. The impact the pandemic had on the project that addresses the issue of blindness includes the loss of the facilities used for classes and rehearsals belonging to the partner parish council, with which a mutually beneficial relationship was being built. This partner institution feared spread of the virus within its facilities, forcing the lead organisation to establish new partnerships that, in the long term, will add value to the project, including close ties with Lusófona University. People who are blind or visually impaired are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic, not only because of the commonly associated comorbidities, but also because of how they interact with their surroundings. Using mostly touch, they are more susceptible to infection by touching contaminated surfaces. The project therefore had to implement a complex programme of individual online classes that put particular strain on its human resources. The type of instruments that are used in the project (wind instruments) also posed a risk, leading the team to design a detailed contingency plan, including creating protective covers that served a similar purpose to face masks: limiting airborne transmission of droplets that could spread the virus. The remaining two projects, that work with CERCIs, were prevented from having any personal contact with their participants and forced to work mainly online with audiovisual materials that were then used by the participants together with their caregivers or families. The participants in one of these projects also had a scheduled tour postponed, in which they were going to perform with a band outside of the PARTIS initiative, while the other project saw its artist residencies and performances postponed.

The **children and young people** that participate in the various projects were also severely affected. Many attend schools with limited resources, which, in addition to the socio-economic vulnerability of their communities and lack of access to digital platforms, left them isolated. Most of the projects did their best to create relevant content to ensure they were able to nurture relationships and to stimulate creativity. Many participants, however, were deprived of this

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interaction for various reasons, including not having the technology resources or because their parents or guardians didn't have time to support them. The situation improved slightly after a few months with electronic devices being distributed to some of the children (through schools and local authorities). However, it was the younger children who were more adversely affected as they were not a priority. Some projects later found that young people were less enthusiastic than before everything was suspended.

Several projects have an **intergenerational component** that is more or less central to their creative proposal. The main problem with intergenerational interaction lies in bringing children/young people together with older people, since the latter are at higher risk. Despite the *Meio no Meio* project's intention of "creating spaces for socialising and exchange between different generations and territories to bring worlds together", the pandemic affected mostly the exchange between territories (given the restrictions on movement and on large gatherings). Its intergenerational component was not affected since the group of participants was made up of young people and adults, but not necessarily older people. The *Enxoval* project, on the other hand, was unable to arrange get-togethers or even resume in-person contact with the group of older people that participate in the project. The *Sob o mesmo Céu* project also saw its intergenerational component suppressed, while *Diários de um Interior*, whose photography and videography are created by children and their families based on the stories told by the older locals, suspended all activities.

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2.2.3

Project implementation

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The restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic were highly disruptive. Isolation is the antithesis of the objective of these projects, no matter what issue they are addressing or the target group they are focused on. In the first notebook of this series, François Matarasso writes "community art is based on coming together, learning together, making together". All of this was abruptly interrupted and, despite the alternatives found, the disruption to creative processes was generalised. The range of responses relating to creative development will be discussed in item 2.3; however, the impact the pandemic had on the projects extends far beyond just the artistic dimension. All projects were deeply affected, but I believe the orchestras best illustrate the effects the disruption to the creative process had on the **social dimension.**
The third edition of PARTIS includes four projects whose artistic language is music as a collaborative/collective practice. I'll discuss the *Notas de Contacto* project in other sections due to its specific characteristics (the project began quite some time before the third edition of PARTIS and, as such, there was an already established relationship between the various stakeholders), and focus

now on three projects that emerged with this edition of the initiative. These are *Filarmónica Enarmonia* (the participants of which include people who are blind or visually impaired and the seeing); *Orquestra de Cordas da Ajuda* (which brings together children in vulnerable situations and people from different generations residing in an ageing Lisbon parish) and *Orquestra de Afectos* (which works with preschoolers from problem neighbourhoods in a suburb of Lisbon). The goal of these collective music projects is, literally, to work in harmony as a whole, which, of course, has been impossible. And while some, such as the *Filarmónica Enarmonia*, have made some progress in project implementation, it has been mainly on an individual level (through online classes) or, at best, with the creation of small ensembles to comply with the health and safety rules that are still in place. This change to the project's artistic rationale does bring some benefits, since it offers a different format that enables participants to work in a group and productively. By focusing solely on one type of instrument, these small ensembles can progress more quickly, and then, from time to time, join the larger format that is the *Filarmónica Enarmonia*. However, this working methodology is not in keeping with the purpose of the project, which is to bring together people who would otherwise not meet and have them make music and play together. The same applies to the two other projects. In the case of *Orquestra de Cordas da Ajuda*, the pandemic raised an ethical issue. The project works with children of different social backgrounds to promote social inclusion. However, only children with a better socio-economic environment were able to attend the online classes designed to keep the project going, while the other children, precisely those who the project seeks to benefit, were unable to participate because they lacked access to online platforms. This is a lesson learned that the team acknowledges, admitting that they would not even have opted for the alternative had they known. Finally, the *Orquestra de Afectos* project, the participants of which have similar socio-economic vulnerabilities to the group that was unable to participate in the online activities of the aforementioned project, faced a similar situation regarding the difficulty in reaching participants. This was made worse by the methodology *Orquestra de Afectos* uses, which, as the name implies (afecto in Portuguese means "affection"), focuses on the importance of proximity and touch, something particularly problematic given the pandemic.

There are many more examples, but impact and response are so intrinsically linked that they will be discussed together in item 2.3.

2.3
Responses

2.3.1
Foundation

Much of what has been described in the previous sections and which will be discussed in those that follow would never have been possible without the readiness and commitment for which the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is known.

At institutional level, the Foundation was quick to react to the crisis by creating the COVID-19 Emergency Fund, which includes relief measures for civil society organisations, including their beneficiaries. The set of measures, communicated to the lead organisations of the PARTIS III projects on 1 April 2020, scarcely a week after the state of emergency was declared, aim at ensuring the sustainability of the organisations responsible for the projects financed by the Foundation. These measures focus on ensuring continuation of the projects, by enabling the scheduled activities to be adjusted; allowing for an agreement on new timetables and project duration; and being open to listening to those responsible for the projects to find suitable solutions to the challenges their organisations were facing. The purpose of these measures is to enable the projects financed by the Foundation to keep precarious workers during the crisis and continue carrying out activities in the communities in which they intervene, and also to give beneficiary entities flexibility in planning projects and achieving outcomes, ensuring payment was made on time or earlier, where justified.

Besides the institutional response, the team in charge of the initiative stepped up its responsiveness and availability, taking the lead in maintaining the activity and cohesion of the PARTIS community, including organising different virtual get-togethers. While not intending to replace the traditional reunions of the PARTIS community, these virtual alternatives enable introspective exchanges among peers and create opportunities to broaden horizons with the participation of guest speakers who share external viewpoints (sometimes international), encouraging collective reflection that contributes to the contextualisation and relativisation of individual challenges, while fostering the development of a larger, more diverse, mature and cohesive community of practice.

2.3.2
Partners

The robustness of the partnerships that underpin the PARTIS projects was tested to the limit by the severity of the pandemic crisis. Having to rally around projects that address complex problems with vulnerable people at a time when each partner was struggling with other equally demanding commitments and working under unprecedented circumstances is not easy, particularly considering the typical profile of the partners in these types of projects, which, for the most part, work in the fickle world of the arts and the overwhelming universe of social action. Thus, the pandemic seems to have fast-tracked the process of eliminating the weakest links and reinvigorating those that are stronger, making partnerships more efficient and robust. Organisations that weren't fully committed to the projects were naturally purged, leaving partnerships more agile and open to new alliances. Partners that were more committed, albeit less involved before the crisis hit, got much more involved and strengthened already existing relationships. New partners also emerged, ready to join forces in what was a difficult time for everyone, but more manageable when there is a truly collaborative and committed approach. The pandemic brought to light all the negative and positive aspects of the partnerships and showed the difference between genuine partnerships, rooted in shared values and strong relationships, and those that are fragile, most of which did not survive the crisis.

Even under normal circumstances the projects are influenced by the characteristics of the partners involved. But, having regard to the severity of the crisis, it is important to include illustrative examples of responses shaped by the characteristics of some of the partnerships in question:

Institutional red tape has proven to be a challenging issue for the implementation of some projects. While it is gratifying and prestigious to have institutions such as a city or town council or a directorate-general as a partner, issues such as bureaucratic burden or hierarchical structure hinder the sound development of creative processes and, in this particular case, the responses required to face the crisis. Using the projects that work in detention settings as an example, a partnership with the DGRSP is not only necessary, but a tremendous asset. However, given the size and structure of the institution, projects rarely have the flexibility and agility that are essential to participatory art processes. Situations such as these usually involve partners with varying levels of engagement in the project, where there is a liaison who works closely with the team on the ground and with whom a relationship of trust is built, and a superior who is not directly involved in the project and who makes the decisions. This hierarchical factor, combined with bureaucratic obstacles, makes it exceedingly difficult to quickly implement the responses of the projects. On top of this is the matter of employee turnover, which

requires relationships to constantly be rebuilt with top-level managers, local managers and resources on the ground (such as prison guards). In the course of the pandemic, two PARTIS projects working in prisons were hampered by institutional red tape, despite having a very productive relationship with the local liaison. The issues raised could have been resolved, for example, with a protocol or code of conduct that provided the participatory art projects a suitable status for this particular context.

Partnerships with education institutions are also common under the PARTIS initiative. These partnerships are divided into two main categories: academic research, where one or more researchers or university students follow a project in order to study it and produce academic knowledge; the implementation of projects in which the participants are children or young students and, sometimes, school staff (teachers, educators, assistants). The latter category is more relevant than the former for the purposes of this notebook. However, it should be noted that the collaborations of the PARTIS III projects with the academic world during the pandemic crisis proved quite productive, given the additional availability that left room for activities related to reflection. With regard to the second category, there is much to be explored by analysing the PARTIS projects in the education sector over the various editions of the initiative. In this context, however, it is important to note how schools worked with projects to create **beneficial synergies** for participants. For example: the team leading the *Orquestra de Afectos* project designed content based on experiences from previous in-person work, which was sent to parents and guardians via digital platforms on the days on which activities would have taken place in the classroom. This content was sent and received together with the daily work set by the educators, thereby maintaining the link between the project and the partner – an example of teamwork that benefits the children involved. At the behest of the directors of the school cluster where the project is implemented, an adapted version of the content was also sent to the preschools of the cluster, despite not being part of the project. The *Sete Anos Sete Escolas* project is implemented in one-year cycles based on the plays from the *Sete Anos Sete Peças* project created by artist Cláudia Dias. Since it is part of the curriculum and given that one of the schools where the project is implemented was unable to support its students during the lockdown, the project worked more closely with the participants/students, who risked losing the little structure they had when schools closed. Although the artistic outcome was not as initially planned, the project did not halt creative development while restrictions were in place, stimulating creativity and providing participants/students structure on behalf of the school. Creative output includes the transformation of a performance piece into a video that combines individual works created by the participants from the respective school, under the guidance/direction of the artistic team via digital platforms.

2.3.3
Relationship with participants

The limit-situation in which the PARTIS projects found themselves in the first half of 2020 tested their resilience, forcing them to quickly design contingency plans that ensured the feasibility of the work and, more importantly, the continued involvement and well-being of their participants. While most projects were able to continue to be implemented, for some the first lockdown was so disruptive that they were forced to suspend all creative activity, which is not surprising given that they were designed to bring participants together to create ties with and between them. The inconsistencies relating to the ability to stay in touch, what type of contact was appropriate and what could come out of that contact affected implementation of the projects. However, having set continued contact as a priority in times of extreme vulnerability, the projects used every format possible to reach and keep in touch with their participants.

Online platforms have enabled many to continue nurturing affective relationships and even develop creative exercises with varying degrees of connection to the work abruptly interrupted by the pandemic. However, the digital alternative was not always feasible, whether due to the lack of access to electronic devices or to poor digital literacy skills. In such cases a more basic means of communication, such as the telephone, helped to maintain contact, especially with older participants. Mail correspondence was also an alternative successfully exploited by the projects implemented in prisons. Telephone communication enabled affective relationships, that are vital in situations such as these, to be nurtured and, in some cases, was used to pursue other aspects of the work through interviews. Mail correspondence with inmates had surprisingly positive outcomes by revealing hidden talents they themselvelves weren't aware of. It was through these more basic means of communication, such as letters, drawings and diaries, that the most meaningful output was produced, both for the personal life of the participants and for the creative processes. The online component, which revealed significant socio-economic divides, also had its upside by enabling participation by people who were unable to take part in activities in person due to health and/or mobility issues, offering personalised assistance and, above all, enabling participants to see one another and giving them a sense of being part of something bigger.

Things were very different when the lockdown was lifted after the state of emergency, which once again upset the dynamics of the projects. Besides the lack of motivation and the fear and anxiety felt by some of the participants in resuming activities, the projects were still battling several external factors which, in most cases, made returning to the pre-pandemic routine difficult.

It slowly became clear that it was not a return to normalcy, and the constant restrictions – on movement between municipalities, at the weekends, regarding who and how many people could gather and where – once again hindered project implementation and the relationship between stakeholders. However, with resilience and a lot of creativity, work continued and relationships were rebuilt, although not as well as expected or desirable – in small, rotating groups with people wearing masks and other protective equipment (some designed by the projects themselves). And a few never came back; just like the partnerships, the weakest links did not survive. Nevertheless, the projects did their best to continue their commitment to the participants and their effort is acknowledged. Even the teenagers who had to reluctantly get out of their pyjamas and get dressed to look presentable in the online sessions of the *Sete Anos Sete Escolas* project recognise that someone always cared about and was there for them. And that, quite possibly, is the most important outcome of these projects. Art, good art, can always be made, but being present in times of social isolation is a unique privilege, even if it only makes sense at a later stage.

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2.3.4
Creative development

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As regards creative development, most projects generated and fine-tuned responses as the crisis progressed and its extent and unpredictability became clearer. Thus, after initially focusing mostly on maintaining the emotional connections built, the projects moved on to another phase in which the teams felt the need to design exercises or challenges that stimulated the creativity of the participants. The nature of the work carried out in the months following the abrupt interruption caused by the pandemic varied greatly, often leading to different artistic proposals to those initially designed.

The most radical approach identified was the total suspension of activities with a view to later resuming the creative process according to the original plan. There are several examples of projects that initially and in reaction to the seriousness of the situation suspended all activity. However, the vast majority quickly came up with alternative plans that enabled them to resume creative activity at varying degrees. Among the fifteen PARTIS III projects, only one decided to suspend all activity until a significant change in the more restricting conditions made the return to field work practical.

Although distinctive and closely related to specific characteristics, the responses of the projects can be categorised to facilitate transversal readings and draw conclusions. Below is a description of some of these categories:

Inland

Diários de um Interior was the only project to suspend all activity, a choice made based on the project's specific characteristics and concerns. These include the inability to carry out meaningful work because the creative proposal requires intergenerational contact that poses a risk to older people, and reliance on the presence of the artistic team (from outside the region) to implement the more technical aspects. *Diários de um Interior* is being implemented in inland Portugal (Sardoal). This limited development of potential responses for several reasons, including the fact that the partner school did not have enough resources to ensure continuity of the creative involvement of participating students while restrictions were in place; the inability to showcase the work produced to recruit participants for the next phase; and, following the state of emergency, the restrictions on movement between municipalities, especially given the fact that the artistic team was prevented from travelling to the location. The lead organisation and its partners (which include said school, the parish council and the parent/guardian association) therefore agreed to suspend the project. Despite suspending activities, those linked to social coordination of the project decided to remain in the area during this period, in part to help maintain the close relationship with participants and partners; a decision that would enable a return to work with relationships intact or stronger.

Also implemented in inland Portugal, but in three municipalities of Castelo Branco (Covilhã, Fundão and Belmonte), the impact on the *Veleda* project was quite different. It continued its activities despite (local and regional) restrictions having limited implementation. After the initial shock caused by the pandemic, the group of participants, comprising single mothers, was quick to request a return to creative activity. The team responded by posing several challenges during lockdown, followed by a return to in-person activities at the end of May. Even with restrictions on physical proximity and limiting the number of people allowed inside closed spaces, as well as some dropouts, the project was able to hold its event for stakeholders four months after originally planned. This included a performance and a group reflection session, both held outdoors in accordance with the rules in force. However, the restrictions imposed in the country at the time, and which had a significant impact at a local/regional level, really began affecting the project. The varying levels of precariousness and vulnerability became clearer and the group's cohesion bore the brunt, leading to some tension and more dropouts. The impact of the pandemic was certainly felt by the participants of this project, due mainly to the burden of being a single parent combined with factors such as precarious socio-economic circumstances. That said, the creative approach applied to the extreme situation experienced yielded interesting results.

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The activities completed, for example through photography (a language that was not originally part of the project's artistic proposal), helped the participants further develop "see and reflect" processes which, in addition to the effect of restrictions (such as physical distancing), had a significant impact on creative development. The final artistic output, the original proposal of which focused on the more physical aspects of choreography that encouraged proximity and touch, centred more around theatrical storytelling based on the spoken word. Such a change helps ensure that the required physical distance is maintained and that the same topics are addressed (care, protection, "togetherness"), but from a more political/social perspective. This change demonstrates the intellectual maturity reached by the group over the course of the project, which was assuredly accelerated and shaped by the pandemic.

CERCIs

Although there are similarities between the groups of participants of the two projects working with CERCIs – *Lab InDança* and *Notas de Contacto*, their individual responses differ as a result of the artistic language and environment in which they are implemented (dance with participants from more rural areas and music with participants from the Greater Lisbon area, respectively). The *Lab InDança* project felt the need to continue the physical training that was suspended due to the cancellation of weekly classes and artist residencies. As such, it opted to reinvent dance in the online world. The main challenges faced were the need to create a response that addressed the existing social and territorial inequalities in the municipality, and finding a balance between dancing for well-being and dance as part of the project. The team conducteda survey to determine who had access to technological devices and the level of digital literacy or support needed to be able to use them. In the first phase, and because of the disparities identified, most participants were only able to use the telephone to maintain emotional ties. For the few who had access to new technologies, the artistic director suggested the viewing of short films by renowned choreographers followed by an exercise in which participants were asked questions related to what they had seen. Online yoga and Pilates classes were also offered. Following the state of emergency, and with the gradual return to the institutions, the project resumed its weekly classes. These classes were held both online and at the institutions, where the instructors were in constant contact with the artistic director and worked in weekly rotations to comply with health and safety rules in force. The participants who took part in in-person classes at the institutions did so wearing face masks, gowns and respecting physical distance. Online images were projected onto the wall to make them easier to see and the activity was extended to colleagues who aren't usually part of the group of participants. The formats enabling the project

to continue its work and other impacts of the restrictions on participants led to reflection and discussion about the direction of the creative proposal, which was adjusted. With regard to the *Notas de Contacto* project, some circumstances are similar to those of the aforementioned project, in particular as regards participant profile and their vulnerability to the pandemic. The institution was also forced to close and to deny entry to both the project team and to the participants who were not residents. However, the socio-economic differences between the two groups also had an impact – while the group of rural participants finds it more difficult to participate, the city dwellers have better access to technology and are more digitally literate, which made continuing project-related activities slightly easier. The response included the creation of playlists on the institution's YouTube channel, with content designed to connect people and also to continue developing the skills needed for the project. As with *Lab InDança*, the digital content was made available to a wider group that includes colleagues of participants that are not part of the project. Creative activities suspended include postponement of the tour with the band *5ª Punkada*. The lack of in-person activities also hindered the planned creation of a musical theatre performance and the project replaced work related to the show with something completely different – greater focus on making adapted instruments, a vital activity to maximise the inclusion of participants in the ensemble.

Public space

The *Sob o mesmo Céu* project, which works mostly with children in the outskirts of the city of Leiria, has already been mentioned, but there are some aspects worth noting regarding the specific nature of its response. Because of the age and socio-economic circumstances of the participants (who live in a social housing neighbourhood occupied by a multicultural community of low-income families), the project faced several obstacles that hindered the fluid communication needed to ensure joint participation in creative processes. The artistic team, made up of three collectives that, in the project, focus on the community space using different artistic languages, joined forces to keep the project going by designing a set of challenges that included creative kits with materials and instructions and delivering them door-to-door to participants. This approach enabled participants to continue focusing on the topics they had been working on since the beginning of the project, for example, urban furniture that will be built for the neighbourhood is based on models designed by the participants using their creative kits. The *Como desenhar uma cidade?* project, the participants of which include young people and adults with and without disabilities from the Lisbon parish of Lumiar, and which was forced to suspend all in-person activities,

used a WhatsApp group and Zoom meetings for the development of project-related activities. During this period, the project team posed several creative challenges that resulted in a document with individual reflections on the project's first year of work and a manifesto of ten measures on "accessibility", entitled *10 desejos para tornar utopias em realidade* (10 wishes for making utopias a reality). The project was designed with a duration of 24 months and the suspension of in-person activities occurred during what would have been a pivotal moment in creative development. This required the team to rethink the development process of the final artistic output and the respective tour.

Detention settings

As already mentioned, the three PARTIS III projects working with groups of participants in detention settings faced significant differences between the restrictions imposed at the prisons and those imposed at the juvenile detention centres, although working conditions in prisons didn't vary much. The *Mare Liberum* project, which is implemented in juvenile detention centres and was not too limited, will be discussed in another category in which its experience is more relevant ("cyclical projects"). Consequently, I will discuss the creative responses of the other two projects, the groups of participants of which, besides being in prisons located in the Greater Lisbon area, comprise, in both cases, men of the same age group. In other words, from a global perspective one of the main differences lies in the type of artistic languages and methodologies originally proposed by the projects. One focused on dance and Gestalt therapy, while the other used a multidisciplinary approach to coordinate and combine several artistic languages (writing, theatre, music, cinema). In both cases physical access to the respective prisons was banned, so the projects began communicating with inmates by correspondence. The creative process of the *Corpoemcadeia* project (Linhó prison) was suspended during the development phase that preceded the creation of the final artistic output – a training stage where participants were exploring dance with different art practitioners. The team's initial response was essentially aimed at overcoming the physical and emotional distance between the professional and non-professional artists who had already formed a strong bond. This was done through letters and e-mails (correspondence), which were monitored by the warden of the respective prison and included creative exercises with topics or challenges that the participants could complete in the format they preferred – a text, drawing or lyrics. The depth and creativity of many of these works, which became clear early on, helped to boost the self-confidence and self-esteem of the participants and had a very positive impact (as already described under the "impacts" section). At the end of May, weekly online classes were implemented in a joint effort between the lead organisation and

the prison. However, the room provided (for logistical reasons) proved inadequate for dance activities and the sessions took a more therapeutic direction, despite including simpler creative activities and the viewing of films relevant to the project. Not being able to practice dance had a negative impact on the attendance of participants (which was not a problem before the creative process was suspended). The experience of the *Corpoemcadeia* project during 2020 shows that, despite the creative alternatives having enabled relationships to be nurtured and interesting creative material to be created, remote formats are easily exhausted. With regard to the *Lado P* project (Caxias prison) it was already considering a change to the initial artistic proposal for reasons unrelated to the pandemic. However, the restrictions imposed, and the alternatives designed, fuelled the team's conviction. Having also kept in touch with participants by correspondence to explore different artistic languages, the project saw the creation of an unexpected body of work that merited further exploration through partnerships between the participants and artists specialising in the languages concerned. The artistic outputs, worthy on their own merits, also contributed to the fusion of two of the original artistic outputs proposed – a fictional film and a documentary series – which were merged into a docufiction series. Thus, although the alternative of communicating by correspondence in the first phase was not seen as conducive to the original creative process, the material produced has made the production of the television series richer and more complex.

Cyclical projects

Although not as common, projects that implement their artistic proposals cyclically have also been selected for the various PARTIS editions. These projects typically have a duration of three years and are implemented in one-year cycles consisting of the holistic development of a creative process, including showcasing the artistic output. The group of participants usually changes every cycle/year, although their overall characteristics remain the same. Two of the projects selected for the third edition of PARTIS are cyclical projects: *Sete Anos Sete Escolas*, a project previously mentioned based on the plays by artist Cláudia Dias and which works simultaneously with schools in Almada and Porto; and the *Mare Liberum* project, which works with young people in three juvenile detention centres in the Greater Lisbon area. The reason why these projects have been singled out is because they are part of a small group of projects (3 out of the 15) that opted not to request an extension. The third project did not need an extension for different reasons that will also be discussed; however, it is important to explore how the pandemic affected the two cyclical projects differently. While projects with longer creative processes generally had a whole year to consolidate the various aspects of project implementation before the pandemic broke out and were affected precisely when they were

entering the creative exploration phase, these two projects had already completed a full creative cycle with artistic output. Because one of the projects was already further along into its second cycle than the other, the pandemic affected each of the projects differently. However, both were able to manage the situation by using intensive approaches that enabled them to carry out and conclude work with the groups of participants who would otherwise lose out. The *Mare Liberum* project had already completed the cycle corresponding to the first year and was about to begin its work at the second juvenile detention centre when the pandemic hit. Since it had not begun implementing the project or forming relationships with those who would become the new group of participants, the project was able to suspend activity without significant repercussions at a creative or emotional level, suffering only a delay. As already mentioned, the restrictions imposed on juvenile detention centres were lighter than on prisons and activities were able to be resumed in May. The project also benefited from the fact that the young people, who resided at the centre, were well protected from potential infection. As a result, and in compliance with all required health and safety measures, the artistic team (albeit smaller) was allowed to hold in-person sessions (creative writing and theatre workshops) until the summer break, which were then resumed in September. The team made themselves available to work intensively and the young people (who were prevented from leaving and entering the centres) were also quite open to participating in the activities, which helped make up for lost time. As a partner of the project (part of the DGRSP), the juvenile detention centre strengthened its relationship with the other partners and increased its involvement in the project by extending some activities to young people who were not a part of the group of participants. Regarding the second cyclical project, *Sete Anos Sete Escolas*, its artistic proposal involved focusing its work with participants around three of the seven plays created by Cláudia Dias associated with the days of the week (specifically Wednesday, Thursday and Friday). The work focusing on the first of these plays had already been completed and presented, and work on the second play was underway when the pandemic broke out. The intensity with which this work was carried out made up for the shortcomings of the school's response (see 2.3.2); however, it should be stressed that, despite the challenging circumstances the professional and non-professional artists faced, they managed to complete the cycle of work, including showcasing the output via digital platforms. The shorter duration of the creative cycle and the intense pace with which work is carried out in these projects, alongside the concern shown by the teams for the groups of participants who would otherwise lose out, seem to explain their productivity while facing the same difficulties as the projects with longer cycles (mostly 3 years).

Intergenerational and interregional projects

Meio no Meio is part of the small group of projects that chose not to request an extension, but for different reasons. Unlike its aforementioned peers, whose work is carried out in creative cycles of one year, *Meio no Meio*'s artistic proposal is implemented over one long cycle focusing on the training and capacity-building of participants in various artistic languages, including the creation and presentation of a multidisciplinary performance in the third year of the project. The desire to develop and present the final artistic output within the proposed timetable is due to the fact that the project's partner organisations and its artistic director already had other commitments scheduled for after the intended date. Given that an extension was out of the question, the only options were to either make an effort to ensure continuity of the project or abandon the participants. The complexity of the project was at the root of most of the challenges it faced. *Meio no Meio* is a forum where people of different ages and from different areas come together to socialise. This bringing together of worlds happens by bringing together young people (16-25 years old) and adults (over 45) from four municipalities in the Lisbon metropolitan area. The groups of participants were paired by region (Almada/Lisbon and Barreiro/Moita) to explore work in five artistic languages, and biannual meetings were held to bring all the four groups together for reflection and to share experiences to enhance and hone project development. The first response, during lockdown, was to maintain contact through creative exercises set by the team focusing on the artistic languages explored by the project. Not everyone had access to the digital platforms though, which put a strain on human resources doing their best to involve all participants, including combining some digital exercises with telephone calls during which the members of the team acted as an interface. These exercises yielded surprising creative results, such as a choreography created with the artistic director via Zoom, and a self-reflection exercise proposed by the documentary film-maker involved in the project done in the form of a video, creating a real-time record of the group's emotional and psychological state. Other visual arts, photography and videography exercises were also carried out. This phase was essential for continuity of the project. The group reflection shows that without nurturing and strengthening the relationship during the most challenging time of the crisis, *Meio no Meio* quite possibly might not have survived. As soon as it was able, the project resumed in-person activities to continue the training that had been suspended. However, the second wave of restrictions brought significant challenges in respect of the logistics needed to comply with the rules in place. With restrictions on movement between municipalities and the number of people allowed in closed spaces, the participants had to be separated by group and were forced to

work in their area of residence, which goes against the rationale of the project and places an additional burden on human resources. As a result, the project opted to work intensively by condensing training content, which ended up diminishing the depth thereof. However, it is extraordinary that the project progressed and achieved its objectives, without losing too many participants and even managing to sign up new ones. This was made possible due to a combination of factors, including the effort and dedication of the teams (social and artistic) and the commitment of the participants; the partnership structure, which includes the local authorities themselves, who facilitated many of the logistics; and the fact that the intergenerational component didn't involve the senior population, which enabled the groups formed in each municipality to remain intact. These factors make the juxtaposition of this example relevant to that of *Enxoval* which, also an intergenerational and interregional project, faced a completely different set of circumstances.

Enxoval explores the topic of gender equality with a large group of participants, which includes subgroups of specific ages (e.g young people, older adults), that are from regions with distinct characteristics (e.g. the city of Porto, the city of Amarante and the rural area of Amarante). The project's artistic proposal includes researching and collecting items relating to feminine heritage, conducted in each of the different regions. These are then used in creative processes to produce objects that enable the reinterpretation and resignification of the items collected using different artistic languages, thereby creating a new "hope chest" ("enxoval" in English means "hope chest"). The project's first response to the lockdown was to keep in touch with participants to continue nurturing the affective relationship using the available means of communication – digital platforms with the young people in Porto and the community group of Amarante (city), and the telephone with the group of older people in rural Amarante. The attempt to pose creative challenges during this period, with the participants who had access to digital platforms, did not yield results given that their original motivation waned as a result of the fatigue associated with overusing these platforms for school and work. When the lockdown was lifted, the project introduced an adjusted proposal that enabled participants to partially resume in-person work, exploiting the mobilisation potential of one of the components of the project, *As Bravas* – a fanzine about inspiring women, which was also explored during group embroidery sessions. Thus, through individual work, during which each participant explored the story of a woman that inspired them, the project mapped the regions and created a collective narrative based on the stories that the participants shared using their preferred format (writing, photography, audio recording). At the same time, a small group was formed comprising the

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artistic team, members from partner organisations and representatives of the groups of participants to, together, design the strategy to be implemented by the project in each of the regions and to start "sewing" the various testimonials into a collective narrative. An alternative also needed to be found for the community performances that were part of the original artistic proposal and that involved close contact with the various groups of participants. The artistic output now centres around an installation based on the collection of audiovisual and written records created. The flexibility of an installation enables participants to become involved in more performative work as in-person activities are resumed. As the above description clearly suggests, the creative development of the *Enxoval* project was more adversely affected than that of *Meio no Meio*, due mainly to the specific characteristics of each of their intergenerational and interregional aspects. The various subgroups that are part of the larger group of *Meio no Meio* participants are intergenerational groups, although, despite comprising young people and adults, there are not many elderly people. In *Enxoval*'s case, however, two of its more established groups at the time activities were suspended comprised specific age groups, which left the project off kilter, with groups working at different speeds and the different generations geographically separated. The purpose of this side-by-side analysis is not to compare the incomparable, but rather to illustrate the type of issues that influenced the responses and outcomes of the projects, even though they appear to share similar characteristics. It is also important to note that both approaches adopted are entirely valid and prioritised the inclusion and well-being of their respective participants.

2.4
Examples

The following links provide access to a range of artistic outputs developed as part of the projetcts' responses to the pandemic-related restrictions experienced:

Meio no Meio [↗]
Work developed in response to the creative challenges posed by the artistic team, including the self-reflection exercise set by the project's documentary-maker.

Lado P [↗]
Criative outputs developed in various artistic disciplines in response to exercises set by the project.

Enxoval [↗]
Filó, a Cozinheira de afetos – work produced for As Bravas fanzine.

Veleda [↗]
Caderno da quarentena – collective output developed from a creative challenge based on moments of individual reflection.

Sete Anos Sete Escolas [↗]
Quinta-Feira: Vamos imaginar o mundo ao contrário – adaptação para vídeo do trabalho que os participantes desenvolviam em torno da peça *Quinta-Feira: Abracadabra* de Claúdia Dias.

Notas de Contacto – A OCPsolidária na CerciOeiras [↗]
Contents aimed to stimulate creative development and shorten the distance between professional and non-professional artists during the period of physical distancing.

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Reflections and Learnings

3.1
Challenges

Physical distancing is a major issue that affected the third edition of the PARTIS initiative across the board and lies at the heart of most of the specific challenges faced by the projects individually and collectively. Given that the concept of "isolation" is the diametrical opposite of the essence of participatory art, the distancing measures imposed between March and December 2020 corrupted the rationale and methodologies on which the PARTIS projects are based. The nature and severity of the restrictive measures implemented varied considerably over those nine months. However, there were two distinct phases: a period of state of emergency, which was in place until the end of May and saw a radical but rather "uniform" lockdown imposed in the country; and the months that followed, with a gradual lifting of the lockdown and the implementation of different measures in response to specific circumstances that became reflected in the severity, duration and location of restrictions imposed. As such, the set of challenges posed by each of these phases requires individual analysis.

March-May (general lockdown)

> **Unpredictability** – this was possibly the first and most persistent challenge faced by the PARTIS III projects. The lack of preparedness to face an unexpected crisis and the unpredictability associated with the potential progression of an unknown virus were factors that significantly hampered the implementation of alternatives to ensure continuity of the processes brought to a halt.

> **Disparities in access to communication** – the need to continue nurturing relationships and creative processes during the nationwide lockdown put in place in March led the projects to create mechanisms that enabled them to continue their work while complying with the radical isolation measures imposed. One of the main challenges faced in this phase is linked to the disparities identified in access

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to communication by different participants. Digital platforms helped people stay connected and even enabled some creative development; however, significant divides were identified in this regard. Other means of communication, such as the telephone and correspondence by mail, although more accessible, also posed challenges, including the time factor, given the need for an individualised approach that put a strain on human resources, not to mention the delay that comes with corresponding by mail.

Digital format – as mentioned above, activities carried out through online platforms (including WhatsApp groups, Skype/Zoom get-togethers, and sharing content on YouTube channels) were lifelines that enabled not only to maintain emotional ties at a time when vulnerable groups or individuals were even more fragile, but to also do creative exercises. However, the digital format also presented its own challenges:

× ethical issues, including the fact that not everyone had access to the required technology, or had the digital literacy or cognitive ability to ensure equal involvement, which ultimately underscored or even fuelled the social inequalities the projects address;

× bullying, which found fertile ground in the online environment, became a concern when working with more vulnerable individuals;

× fatigue linked to virtual meetings related to work and school saw motivation wane in the development of creative processes using digital platforms;

× the fact that many people were working or studying at home limited creative processes from being carried out for fear of disturbing others, whether family members or neighbours (e.g. playing certain musical instruments);

× it was not an option suited to the groups that were beginning the creative process. Given the nature of participatory art, the projects chose not to use the virtual format in situations where a relationship had not yet been established between the group of professional and non-professional artists;

× online work was not taken as seriously as in-person work, including the casualness with which participants attended online sessions and even cancelled attendance, which occurred more frequently than with in-person sessions;

- × the significant strain put on human resources, due to the effort required to reach everyone individually;

- × finally, the projects found that the potential of online creative activities in respect of participatory art was quickly exhausted.

June-December (lifting of the lockdown and varying restrictions)

The end of the state of emergency and the lifting of the respective nationwide lockdown suggested a gradual return to normalcy in the second half of 2020. Despite the trauma of what everyone had been through and the fears and anxiety of some participants, most projects focused on resuming the interrupted creative process and, with a few adjustments here and there, continued to pursue the objectives they had set. However, the subsequent months proved to be equally challenging due to the instability and uncertainty that plagued the period between June and December and which included the following constraints:

Inability to return to in-person activities – despite the expectation that came with the end of the state of emergency, several projects were unable to resume in-person creative activities. This restriction affected mainly institutions such as prisons, schools and CERCIs and had a significant impact on the creative development process of several projects, leading to changes in not only the timetable, but also art practice.

Instability and uncertainty – for projects that resumed in-person activities, the main and more widespread challenge was the instability and the consequent uncertainty about how and when in-person and group activities could be resumed, as a result of a set of restrictive measures that were imposed or lifted depending on how the pandemic progressed at local and regional level and which included:

- × **restrictions on movement between municipalities**, preventing activities from being carried out involving groups of participants living in neighbouring municipalities and who need to travel to a particular location for group work; groups of participants who work independently in more distant municipalities, but who need to meet at strategic moments in the project; or situations in which the team has to travel to the municipality where the project is being implemented;

- × **weekend lockdowns**, which affected projects whose creative development depends on the availability of participants and other stakeholders outside of working hours.

In addition to the above restrictions, the projects also faced other measures implemented to stop spread of the virus between people, including:

- **physical distancing**, which prevented the proximity that is inherent to creative activities, such as dance;

- **use of personal protective equipment**, including face masks that made communication more difficult during activities and was especially challenging when communicating with children and people with hearing loss that requires being able to read facial expressions;

- **capacity limits**, which led to the division of groups of participants, affecting the production of art objects designed as collective creations and put a strain on human resources, who were forced to multiply the number of sessions initially planned;

- **no contact between groups of different age groups**, particularly the restriction on intergenerational get-togethers between children/young people and the senior population, which was central to the rationale of some projects.

Other issues, on top of the measures indicated, that limited project implementation include:

- **disabilities and comorbidities:** the projects working with groups of participants with disabilities and comorbidities faced additional challenges relating to the safety of participants (e.g. because they rely on touch, people who are blind are at greater risk of infection from touching contaminated surfaces and often have comorbidities such as diabetes, cancer and other medical conditions that increase their risk);

- **restrictions on using shared materials** (including musical instruments), which can spread the virus among participants;;

- **difficulty in acquiring the material**, needed for the creative process, due to the closing of specialised establishments.

There were also other more generalised challenges that were exacerbated by the pandemic crisis:

- × **Vulnerability of professional artists:** naturally, many of the problems and vulnerabilities that are common in participatory art settings were made worse by the pandemic crisis. Situations such as cyberbullying, domestic violence or the lack of basic resources increased considerably. Whether witnessing an incident or confided a private matter as a result of the trust participants placed in them, some artists were put in particularly difficult situations that left them very vulnerable and for which they were not prepared.

- × **Institutional red tape**: due to being incompatible with the flexibility and agility required for participatory practice, institutional red tape was a quite limiting factor during the pandemic crisis. This affected, in particular, projects implemented in detention settings (especially prisons) and the partnerships involving local authorities.

- × **Political instrumentalisation**: the lack of availability and commitment to projects of some of the local authority partners proved really challenging during the pandemic crisis, which once again raised the debate over the true intentions of certain institutions of this type and the potential political instrumentalisation of participatory art.

3.2
Opportunities

Despite the understandable frustration of the projects and the reluctance shown by most of their stakeholders in accepting that the pandemic crisis also had a positive impact, there are a small few that have already identified some opportunities resulting from the situations they experienced. The lack of temporal distancing is, quite possibly, the main obstacle to objectively analysing the challenges and **opportunities** resulting from this unrelenting crisis. However, by having the advantage of being someone who is not involved in any of the projects, but who observed how they individually navigated the troubled waters they found themselves in, I feel I am in a privileged position to identify the positive aspects that are worthy of note and which I have listed below.

I've chosen to begin this section with an aspect that was also included in the challenges listed in the previous section: the **digital format**, which posed

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some of the biggest challenges and provided some of the biggest opportunities for the projects. This duality, which is an excellent example of the coexistence of negative and positive factors, enables us to reflect on issues from different perspectives.

While communication using online platforms raised ethical issues related to the exclusion of people who, for a variety of reasons, did not have access to them, it can also be said that the digital format was an **inclusion factor**, by enabling the participation of people who would otherwise have been excluded due to being unable to travel or having physical vulnerabilities. But the benefits of these platforms, generally low-cost and far-reaching, are not limited to their role as mechanisms for inclusion. The opportunities identified during the pandemic crisis include:

- **nurturing the affective relationship**, through both direct contact and disseminating material related to the project and that fosters a sense of belonging and community;

- **carrying out creative activities** at different levels: from simply stimulating the creativity of participants to the production of independent artistic output or material that enhances collective works with varying levels of centrality to the interrupted creative process;

- **exploring individual relationships** that profoundly impact the artistic and personal spheres;

- helping to develop **digital literacy** and **making technological devices available** (especially in respect of children in precarious socio-economic situations);

- entering participants' home and involving and **winning over their families**, which is incredibly important in certain situations;

- **extending creative content to the colleagues of participants** who are not part of the project (of particular importance when involving schools and CERCIs);

- creating **synergies with partners** beyond the scope of the project (e.g. the webinars held by the *Filarmónica Enarmonia* project count as training sessions for the teachers involved);

- **giving projects visibility**, which, in some cases, has led to a significant uptake in interest by the public.

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Project development opportunities included the following examples:

× bringing forward its series of training sessions for music schools across the country enabled the project *Filarmónica Enarmonia* to accelerate **network development**. These institutions can put together their own ensembles/orchestras and facilitate touring opportunities, thereby ensuring sustainability of the project and helping to foster inclusive art and accessibility. The team also found that the need to divide the group of participants, to comply with the rules in force, enabled them to focus their work on smaller ensembles that can be integrated into different configurations, including an orchestra – this frees the project from continuously focusing on the whole group and allows the team to give participants more individualised attention;

× the *Notas de Contacto* project saw the pause in in-person activities as an advantage that created opportunities for deeper reflection. Significant changes were made to the project's **artistic rationale**, which will contribute to supporting participants' potential more efficiently. The use of tablets as a creative work tool gave participants greater autonomy and focus, and new symbols were created for the music scores (that could be used based on level of autonomy or instrument). This physical register of music offers participants a type of art practice that goes beyond the improvisation characteristic of the work carried out in recent years. The artistic team also began making adapted instruments, which will contribute to greater levels of inclusion.

The **opportunities for individual and collective reflection** offered by these unusual times would not have arisen under normal circumstances. Initially, many projects used the pause in in-person activities as an opportunity to explore other areas, such as structured reflection and knowledge generation.

Activities for **structured reflection** included revisiting the Theory of Change developed at an earlier stage, adapting the *"Is this the best it can be?"*[1] toolkit to the projects' particular needs and circumstances brought about by the crisis, and developing internal evaluation processes.

With regard to **knowledge generation**, the work carried out focused on two aspects: academic work and the production of material that can be shared among peers. Regarding the first aspect, most projects found that their academic partners were more available, which helped to make progress on related work and to strengthen relationships.

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[1] *Is this the best it can be?,* commissioned by Creative Scotland to provide its beneficiaries with tools for self-reflection.

As for **materials with a more practical and peer-to-peer use**, most noteworthy is the body of work produced specifically in response to the pandemic, such as contingency plans of benefit to other projects in similar circumstances, including: the work carried out by the *Corpoemcadeia* project team in collaboration with the Linhó prison, relevant to detention settings; the plan and protective materials developed by the *Filarmónica Enarmonia* project relating to blindness and to wind instruments; and the more general work carried out by the *Enxoval* project together with other art projects, in an initiative spearheaded by the Porto City Council.

The participants were also invited to **reflect individually or in a group** as part of the creative challenges posed by the projects and which included introspective work in formats such as writing, drawing and photography, and reflecting on the projects themselves, like the exercise focusing on the first year of work carried out by the *Como desenhar uma cidade?* project.

Other materials were also produced which, having resulted from the opportunities for pause and reflection that arose from the situation the projects found themselves in, were not directly related to it (e.g. new methodologies such as those of the *Notas de Contacto* project or the manifesto on accessibility produced by the *Como desenhar uma cidade?* project).

Several **opportunities for development** emerged in the artistic dimension, including:

- the **broadening of horizons** through activities such as reading and the viewing of films and documentaries related to the area of art explored;

- the growth and **development of the critical thinking** skills of participants through introspective work resulting from the creative challenges posed by the projects;

- the **creation of independent and unexpected artistic output**, as a result of those same challenges;

- the **redefining of the artistic rationale and aesthetics** of some projects based on the experience lived and the reflection undertaken.

The more **general opportunities** identified by the various projects as positive impacts resulting from their collective experience include:

- × **strengthening of partnerships**, including new partners who joined to overcome challenges faced and, as a result, improved conditions for projects (e.g. more suitable facilities and opportunities to build networks);

- × and the **strengthening of relationships and ties between the various stakeholders**.

3.3
Conclusions

The contents of this notebook aim to serve as a record of the work carried out during the unprecedented period covered and to share the issues raised with a wider audience to encourage reflection and debate.

The observations and reflections featured focus on the period between March and December 2020. It is, as such, an account of only part of the story. The period that followed saw the situation worsen and resulted in a new state of emergency being declared and new challenges in implementing what were already alternative plans. At the time of writing, the pandemic continues to plague us, with new, more infectious and resistant variants fuelling a climate of uncertainty as to how the situation will unfold.

The position taken by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is worthy of mention. It enabled projects to remain active, providing them with the necessary resources and flexibility to implement alternatives that would ensure continuity of creative activity and, above all, the well-being of their participants at a time when everything seemed to be crumbling around them. An example of best practice to be disseminated among funders.

Seven projects had requested an extension by December 2020. This number later increased to twelve, leading the third edition of the PARTIS initiative to be extended for another year. Thus, a proper assessment of the responses of this group of projects will only be possible from the end of 2022, when we will also be able to look at them more objectively.

One of the main obstacles faced over the course of this study was the lack of objectivity resulting from the fact that not only were the projects still underway, but they continued to be directly affected by the climate of insecurity and uncertainty that had been plaguing society at large since March 2020. The frustration felt by the teams of several projects as a result of the inability to achieve their goals prevents them from recognising the good they have been doing and which quite possibly will have an even greater impact on the lives of the participants. The resentment against the situation is shared by many (and not just in this context). There is a general sense of injustice and revolt against the situation, which seems to turn a blind eye to history and science. The truth is that this is not the first pandemic, nor will it be the last. We are in fact in a privileged position compared to our ancestors, given that we enjoy the benefits of scientific and technological advancements that simply did not exist in previous pandemic situations.

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To better understand how important the work they have done during this period is, the projects need to relativise their individual situation, scale themselves to fit in the global crisis and understand that it makes no sense to demand normalcy and the ability to continue as originally planned in the midst of what will likely go down in history as one of the major crises of their time. In the first notebook in this series, François Matarasso says: "My point here is to understand and accept ethical challenges as integral to the work. Don't make the mistake of thinking that ethical problems, political tensions, the conflicts in your projects, are things that you can resolve in order to then get on with the work. Resolving these problems is the work. It is how we do the work; it is how we help others and ourselves to learn and become empowered." Despite focusing on ethics, the message also applies to the current situation. We cannot expect the pandemic to resolve itself to carry on our work. Dealing with the situation is part of that work and, for the most part, the projects concerned have done their work in exemplary fashion, so they need to acknowledge their own performance.

The success of the work the projects carried out is in large part due to the resilience shown throughout this long period of instability and uncertainty, their creativity in finding solutions to respond to the specific circumstances of their participants, and the sensitivity in creating alternatives often tailored to individual needs (e.g. activities that could be done in the form of a text, but also as a drawing, photography or another artistic language that would help overcome the issue of illiteracy). There is, therefore, no need to insist on the specific aesthetic envisaged at a time when the world was safe and predictable and which is now a distant memory.

The concept of "success" and "failure", in and of itself of interest for reflection and debate on participatory art, plays a fundamental role. Having purposely avoided using these words in my musings, the contents of this notebook revolve around them and the fact that acknowledging different perspectives is incredibly important in participatory art. "Success", of what, in what, and for whom? are questions that should be asked more often and which should certainly be asked with regard to the work the projects carried out during the pandemic.

Speaking of words and concepts, it is now commonplace to refer to situations as both a "challenge" and an "opportunity", despite the lingering reluctance to accept that opportunities did arise or acknowledging any positive outcomes. However, they do exist and are part of the mosaic that is this multidimensional crisis. While time will give us the benefit of objectivity, the greatest mistake would be to think that we will overcome this crisis by ignoring it or putting it behind us as quickly as possible. We all want the pandemic to be over. However, we will need to revisit it, reflect on the good and the bad, and take stock of learnings. This is the only way we will overcome it constructively.

In many ways, the extreme situation we have been through simply exposed existing weaknesses, such as the socio-economic inequalities it highlighted, the ethical dilemmas it exacerbated, and the institutional red tape that hampers the agility needed in times of crisis. Some of these issues may have created awkward situations, but the opportunity should be seized constructively as a first step towards debate and potential resolution of drawn-out problems.

As for the creative dimension, most of the material produced during this period is very personal, introspective and strongly tied to the unprecedented situation their creators found themselves in. And although the output was not always directly linked to the situation, the impact it had can usually be seen in some way. From this perspective, the body of work created, in large part from unexpected creative output, makes for an interesting artistic/psychological/social record of the period in question.

As the examples included illustrate, the range of responses to the impacts of the pandemic crisis is remarkably rich and diverse. This notebook enables their dissemination among peers internal and external to the initiative, national and international. It is a collective response of the PARTIS community to this global crisis.

Biography

ISABEL LUCENA

Isabel Lucena is an arts and culture consultant with expertise in intercultural, cross-sectoral, and multidisciplinary settings, as well as a special interest in participatory practice and evaluation processes based on continuous improvement. Working transnationally, Isabel collaborates with the PARTIS initiative since its second edition, focusing on the development of evaluation mechanisms suited to the specificities of participatory art. Born in Lisbon but living in London since 1987, Isabel has previously spent 13 years with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's UK Branch, initially coordinating the international *Atlantic Waves* music festival and later leading the Branch's cross-cultural understanding strand and its arts initiatives, including the development and implementation of multi-year programmes in visual arts, international literature and multilingualism, and participatory art. Responsible for editing and translating several publications, Isabel had previously worked as a journalist and art critic, and has an academic background in Media and Cultural Studies (University of the Arts London). Currently, she divides her time between Portugal and the United Kingdom, where she is a trustee of two non-profit organizations active in the fields of art, education, and social inclusion (Maslaha and Stephen Spender Trust).

ART AND COMMUNITY NOTEBOOKS

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's main purpose is to contribute to the creation of a cohesive society that offers equal opportunities and promotes the well-being and quality of life of vulnerable groups. In order to do so, the Foundation has been working for over a decade to demonstrate the importance of art — setting up co-creation processes that encourage an active participation by everyone — as a privileged channel to foster change and social transformation.

In 2013, with the launch of the PARTIS initiative, this plan gained a broader visibility, which was in turn increased in 2020 with the launch of the PARTIS & Art for Change initiative, a joint collaboration with "la Caixa" Foundation, which boosted the work both foundations have been undertaking in this field for many years when it comes to supporting artistic projects with a social impact.

By launching these initiatives, the Foundation aims to highlight the civic role arts and culture play in Portugal. Democratizing access and opening up participation to everyone are key elements to building more sustainable, cohesive and just communities.

The *Art and Community Notebooks* intend to share considerations and learnings stemming from the PARTIS and PARTIS & Art for Change initiatives with everyone committed to broadening the horizon of art, renewing hope in the future we have in common.

NOTE BOOKS

ART AND COMMUNITY

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