

Exhibition

REDES DO PAÍS



WHEN 4 March – 3 September 2023

WHERE Fundación Luis Seoane, A Coruña

PRODUCED BY Fundación Luis Seoane

CURATED BY Manuel Olveira

Redes do país (Country Networks) is the name of an exhibition showcasing the works produced during the course of the project *Collaborative Village Play*, which took place in rural towns in Hungary, Germany and Galicia, and was led by German artist Antje Schiffrers, co-founder of the Myvillages collective, and Hungarian playwright and curator Katalin Erdödi.

Background on the Exhibition

The project *Collaborative Village Play* started in 2021 and has taken place in a number of small towns across Europe. Local residents would work together to create a play where their own perspectives, ways of life, and voices would converge. The crafts,

traditions, festivities and celebrations, and especially the local forms of production are the main features of the project, which seeks to honour and ensure the preservation of a productive and cultural legacy that has been the economic and social foundation of a large part of Europe over the centuries, and for which the rural exodus that started in the 50s has meant having to fight to prevent its disappearance and find recognition.

The first installment of *Collaborative Village Play* took place in Nagykaromás, a village in South East Hungary. Locals gave it the name *Dinnyeköztársaság* (Watermelon Republic), alluding to their most important crop and to the fight of small farmers against political corruption. The purpose of this and the other collaborations that were part of the project was to create a collective work of art by cooperating with the local residents, using the town's culture and traditional occupations. This is a very uncommon thing in contemporary art, as it usually comes from a more urban perspective and ignores rural and traditional cultural expressions.

In 2022, the project moved on to Bostelwiebeck, in the Lower Saxony region, Germany. *Alte Bäume werfen Schatten* (Old Trees Cast Shadow) alludes to the importance of the local farms and their preservation. Local residents were joined by people from nearby villages to work together on a play where they talked about their present and about the future challenges faced by traditional, family-farm agriculture.

O canto da subasta (The Fish Auctioneer's Song) has been the last event within *Collaborative Village Play* so far. Porto do Son is a fishing village on the Galician coast. A number of activities were held there over several months in 2022, centred around fishing and the sea, as the lives of the people there revolve around them, either directly or indirectly. The result was a collective play called *O canto da subasta* (The Fish Auctioneer's Song). It was inspired by the traditional way in which fish is auctioned, and included local cultural expressions. The play was performed on October 15, 2022, at the local fish market.

The Exhibition at Fundación Luis Seoane

The name of the show alludes to two concepts that the three projects have in common: "network" as a synonym for community, collaboration and collective work, and "country", which alludes to the geographical place and to the inhabitants' sense of belonging. The exhibition at the Luis Seoane Foundation has been curated by arts manager Manuel Oliveira, who also took part in the project in Porto do Son, where he was born.

Redes do país is a compilation of the works and objects produced in the course of those three processes, which have been arranged as three chapters or sections. The first one is *O bo camiño* (The Right Path). The phrase was used by fisherman and

communicator Rogelio Santos in Porto Nadelas, a natural harbour in Queiruga, Porto do Son, when talking about the future of fishing, and the impact of overfishing, the abandonment of traditional techniques and the absence of young people to take over.

The second chapter is called *A eso chámolle vivir* (To Me That's Just Living), which is how Carmen Carabel, from Corme, summed up how family and community are built through shared work, passing on tales and the traditional songs that are with us in the joys and struggles of life. Oral culture is an expression shared by all of rural Europe, and one of the foundations of the project.

The third and last chapter of *Redes do País, Sabemos cooperar* (We Know How to Cooperate) is what Emilio Queiruga said when he agreed to let the local residents perform their play at the facilities of the Porto do Son Fishermen's Association, of which he is President. As it had happened in Hungary and Germany, the preservation of the rural traditions and environment through collaborative practices as the driving force behind sustainable economic development that ensures the survival of the primary sector was one of the issues that came up during the process of creation of *O canto da subasta*.

Besides the artworks, objects, and materials used in those three experiences, the exhibition also includes visual documents -videos, audio files and photographs-, to let the local residents give their own accounts and talk about a project that gives voice and an identity as a political subject to populations that have been historically seemingly isolated from the economic, social, artistic, creative, and intellectual discourse.

Both the project *Collaborative Village Play* and the exhibition *Redes do país* have been made possible by the collaboration of local residents, workers, institutions and cultural agents of the small towns where we have worked as a collective, and by the support from the Allianz Cultural Foundation and Goethe-Institut, and Gadis's contribution.

Bios

Antje Schiffers (Heiligendorf, Germany, 1967). BA Fine Arts. She soon began to work collectively with other artists. Together with Wapke Feenstra and Kathrin Böhm she founded Myvillages in 2003, an international platform focusing on European ruralities that has had a presence at the last documenta in Kassel, for instance. She has worked with artisans, farmers and cattle breeders in places like Mexico and Kazakhstan, although she works mainly in Europe. Her body of work includes wall paintings, illustrations, videos and installations that revolve around some of the central aspects of contemporary art: the relationship between popular and contemporary art,

between native and foreign, between city and countryside. Her interest in the rural world has led her to produce site-specific projects in many places across Europe and exhibit them at institutions like London's Whitechapel, the Vienna Secession, or Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. In Spain she has collaborated with Campo adentro, CAAC in Seville and MUSAC in Leon.

Manuel Oliveira (Porto do Son, Spain, 1964) has got History of Art (Santiago) and Fine Arts (Barcelona) degrees. He has been the director of Hangar (Barcelona, 2001-2005), CGAC (Santiago de Compostela, 2005-2009), Centro Ágora (A Coruña, 2010-2011) and MUSAC (León, 2013-2021). He is a curator of exhibitions and, especially, experimental, process-based projects like *Lost in Sound* (CGAC, 1999-2000), *Processos Oberts* (Hangar, 2004-2005), *proxectoEdición* (CGAC, 2006-2009) and *Conferencia performativa* (MUSAC, 2013-2014). As an art critic and an author, he has written about the work of Luis Camnitzer (MUSAC, 2019) and Hessie (MUSAC, 2020). He has published *Complot* (Hangar, 2004), a book of interviews called *Entre-vista* (CGAC, 2008) and the essays *Conferencia performativa* (This side up, 2014), *Cómo vivir con la memoria* (Puente editores, 2018) and *Habla del cuerpo social* (Brumaria, 2022). He is the author of a novel, *Todo el tiempo del mundo* (Libros de Rocamadour, 2014), and a poetry book, *Muero todos los días 2013-2021* (Eolas ediciones, 2021).

Katalin Erdődi (Debrecen, Hungary, 1980) pursued postgraduate studies in Art Research and Curatorship in Vienna (Austria), Zurich (Switzerland) and Santiago de Compostela (Spain). She is an independent curator, playwright and stage designer based in Vienna and Budapest. Her artistic expression takes different forms, from the visual to the living arts, focusing on socially conscious art, experimental practices and art in public places. She has led a variety of projects, from performance art to the production of exhibitions and site-specific pieces, aimed at exploring the possibilities of art as a social practice and a tool to generate knowledge. She has worked as a curator/programmer at major art institutions like the *brut/imagetanz* festival (Vienna), Museum of Contemporary Art (Leipzig), Ludwig Museum (Budapest) and Trafó House of Contemporary Arts (Budapest). She is currently the co-curator for the 2024 edition of the Biennale *Matter of Art* (Prague).

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