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**What We Talk About When We Talk About Crisis, Part 2**

Sam Trotman: Hi, I'm Sam Trotman and I'm the director at the Scottish Sculpture Workshop. We are really glad to welcome today Lara Khaldi, Yazan Kalili and Marwa Arsanios together to continue a conversation that they started a year ago. The title is 'What We Talk About When We Talk About Crisis, A Conversation' and these themes of crisis and the arts, cultural working and how the arts operates continue to be the main threads of the conversation. I think it's a really important conversation to be hearing and to be part of and continues throughout the week where we will be hearing from other artists and cultural workers around what the arts is doing at the moment and how it's structuring, restructuring and thinking again about the way in which operates. So I'd really like to thank Marwa, Yazan and Lara for spending time together through through this conversation and to really contribute to the BEPART Assembly and the Lumsden Life program. Also, just to mention that this conversation is happening across a zoom like platform and so there will be background noise, there will be lots of other things kind of happening going on. So just if you hear that, that's what's happening. Now, thank you very much and we look forward to hearing more, now over to you.

Lara Khaldi: My name is Lara Khaldi. I'm a cultural practitioner and curator based in Jerusalem and Ramallah and Palestine but now, at the moment, based in Amsterdam. I'm now a member of the artistic team of The Lumbung, Documenta 15, working towards June next year and beyond. I also teach. I was the head of the Media Studies Department at the Al-Quds University in Jerusalem and Palestine.

Marwa Arsanios: I am Marwa Arsanios, and I'm an artist and I'm currently living in Berlin. I'm from Beirut and I come from an artist run space background and I'm currently teaching at the Dutch Art Institute and finishing my PHD at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste Wien, Vienna.

Yazan Khalili: I'm Yazan Khalili I'm an artist and an architect as well, who was the Director at the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center built 2019 and currently I'm doing my PHD research at Hubert University. Crisis, is you know like, it's becoming a lot very used as a term and then, and then somehow it has no kind of basis anymore and you can say everything is a crisis all the time, you know. Like what is not a crisis, these days? And this is something to look at and how in the cultural field and the cultural sector looks at the conditions it's functioning under. That it's somehow always in crisis or or trying to avoid a crisis. I very much feel like we work under this kind of, the imminent crisis and we say, oh....

Marwa Arsanios: Yeah.

Yazan Khalili: And where, where, where where is it, where is the crisis, how do we, how do we catch it? How do we understand it? How do we put our hands on it to be able to really analySe the question?

Marwa Arsanios: So if we want to think about locating this crisis, as you are saying, can we think about, for example, locating it like within the cultural region? And can we think about, why do we call it crisis? And what do we call crisis? Do we call crisis this wall structure we are working in? Or we just call it crisis because this is how it calls itself? Because I never really understood this question in terms of, for example, the crisis of the arts or the crisis of culture? What I, what, the way I can think about it, is more that there is a kind of a way of functioning and the certain structure, certain mechanisms that are a side effect of a political situation and an economical situation, and that limit the parameters of what culture can be. But I never really thought about it as a crisis as such, if you know what I mean? I mean, I don't know what is outside the crisis? What is like the non crisis, you know?

Yazan Khalili: Exactly?

Marwa Arsanios: Yeah.

Yazan Khalili: What is what is a non-crisis?

Marwa Arsanios: Which often falls into, you know, like an identification, was a kind of a western, public funded, publicly funded institution or this is the kind of institution model that is, you know, functional and not in the crisis and that is producing what it should produce, etc.

Lara Khaldi: Yeah, more like a stable institution, no? Like in a, in a place where the politics are stable, fairly stable. Where the public funding is study. A kind of study by the institution.

Marwa Arsanios: Yes, exactly, and that is like constantly producing at the same rhythm and like continuously and regularly producing whatever it needs to do. Never really having to re-question itself in depth.

Yazan Khalili: So it's this idea of the steady, you know? Like that, and that and what you said also, like it doesn't need to question itself because it can continue. In a way, and here with the crisis somehow becomes a kind of.... kind of an essential moment of questioning..... the structures? And you know, like it's, it's a moment; The moment, where the institution has to face itself and and to decide to make a very essentially, very extreme decision about its structures, its its continuity, its programs.

Lara Khaldi: But there's something very steady in, also these art institutions that we are talking about and this imminent crisis, no? The crisis of study, in the sense that institutions in our region are always about to, it's usually connected to funding, a lot. And it has to do with either lost funding, either does not know where the funding will come from in a year or a few months. It's usually this and it's actually a study in this, so this is the issue, that because... So instead of thinking other ways of funding, for example, the crisis continues and the looking for funding continues.

Marwa Arsanios: Yes.

Lara Khaldi: So actually there is no questioning, in most cases. It's just the study, crisis and study response to the crisis.

Yazan Khalili: But but but maybe this is what we expect from the crisis is to create this kind of question, but since most of our cultural institutions and I would say most of the culture and economy in our region is based on international funding and, and international funding comes to respond to a certain kind of crisis. So it has to be always in crisis so that international funding is coming. It has to always be in crisis to be able to overcome the crisis.

Marwa Arsanios: Yes, exactly. But this is how it survives. It's only way to survive is that crisis situation or that crisis state. And I guess that this means that, it's only, yeah, it's only way to survive. But also what it is proposing or what it is suggesting is that we can be in crisis and we can be in this questioning mode. And we can do this kind of work of thinking about what institution is? How institutions can be? Or imagine like ways of being or imagine other forms of institutions if you give us the money, basically. Or at least for example, this is what it says to like the European Culture and foundation or where big loads of money are coming from, or I don't know, like all these international funding. But at the same time, as you said, that it is not actually, it does not want to seek a other ways of being. Because if it seeks other ways of being that are outside of this funding economy, it's actually loses the money and it loses the reason of being. So I guess that it's a very, but like deep and essential question here.

Yazan Khalili: The crisis, in a way, becomes this kind of a wheel that keeps allowing certain funding to come in to, to either reduce tensions, reduce the possibility of change, of shifting words between populations, a more radical society, or like to take us away from what is stable right now. So and there's I think, what the crisis does, it somehow doesn't help. We can think of it in two ways. Maybe one is that it opens the possibility of change, but also closes it, at the same time. It makes us imagine, you understand that there is something wrong in the structure, but at the same time, it puts you in a situation where you are in crisis. You don't have anymore the ability to do radical change because then you you are working with, issues of surviving. Issues of like, how do we, how do we deal with, like, daily life issues that are at stake? And this is what I mean, what I think the crisis, speaking about it, it has this kind of problems in or this kind of tensions within it. How does institutions and governments and the power structures use this crisis at the same time maintain more power and not only power but more power, more regulations and more kind of cuts and and changes towards continuation of the steadiness, which is in other ways the crisis itself.

Marwa Arsanios: But it's also like, as you said, it's a, it maintains the status quo. Actually, when the Beirut port explosion happened, the first, maybe the first days the president came out and said that this is going to release and release the embargo, the economic embargo on the country, because a lot of money will come in. And in fact, it is, it's a state of being. This question of a crisis is a state of being on many different government levels. So it's something that is and I guess that the pay is the same as functions of the same economy as well. So I think that it's really a way of thinking about economy, of thinking about politics that is very rooted. And it topples down or it goes down to also. You mean we see it in the small institute, cultural institutions as well. Yeah, and I guess this is like a way of managing and of governance as well.

Lara Khaldi: Yeah, but it's even double for these institutions, right, because you have the the bigger crisis outside of the institution and the institution. So I was in this part of a donors meeting with different institutions, cultural institutions from Palestine, with an international doner. And this international donor was thinking about multiplying the funds for Palestinian cultural sector. And we were kind of invited to this meeting to provide arguments to the donor to actually increase the fund. And one of the cultural institutions said that if you don't increase budgets. Or if there is no budget for culture in Palestine, then young people will become more extremist; more religious and also more violent. And that art and culture are very important. And I mean, I use this word, but it wasn't used, but I mean, neutralizing. Right. It's a space which is neutral and it will kind of save these young people from their cultural, you know, cultural surroundings. And this is, this is also kind of responding, right to let us solve a crisis. This is something that we talked a lot about the last time and this NGO logic as well. Right, that you have a crisis. Also that you have to kind of provide solutions for it. You have to bring a different culture to the, to the people. Right so, there's the crisis of the institution and the crisis of the circumstances that are also being used, as a logic to fund it, which complicates matters.

Marwa Arsanios: Yes, exactly. Because, as you said, it's really a double crisis for this institution.

Yazan Khalili: But then the question would be like, how then do we break away from this kind of vicious circle of crisis? Not how, you know, like this question of the how? But what does also understanding a crisis offer us a way to be able to practice something beyond the survival mode of not being in a crisis. And I think here this kind of, you know, when the crisis calms down and and I move slowly, I think you know, of like, OK, we understand, we are in a crisis. We understand that, the crisis is over. Let's say you understand that the crisis is not an event that is coming outside from the capitalist structures we are living in. That it's already embedded in it. It's part of the of the movement and development of these structures. And therefore, to take ourselves out from it. To take ourselves from the thinking that the crisis is going to come. To thinking like, OK, the crisis is moving. The crisis is happening, and therefore, how do we produce structures? How do we engage with structures, actions, processes of thinking outside of the crisis itself? It's not, it's not a question of funding. No, not for me. I don't think the funding is the crisis, as much as how you claim the crisis to be able to get funding and then you benefit from the funding. In a way, the relation between them is like one leads to the other all the time.

Marwa Arsanios: I follow you. Yes. And I follow this idea of how to get out of this closed, vicious circle of pricing. Crisis Bringing money crisis brings money and therefore we need the crisis. Therefore, we need to be in the continuous state of crisis in order to get the funding. And but in fact, I think it is also a not only like a mechanism, but also a discursive question. It's a question of how we are framing this crisis, so it's a crisis of language, as well

Lara Khaldi: I remember actually at that time at Sakakini, and it was also framed to say, OK, there is a crisis. It's not happening backstage, let's bring it to the forefront. And this Sakakini becomes whatever happens is around this crisis. So why is funding this important that the questions are also questioning the crisis itself? So I think it's also how do you see the ideological or it's discursive. It's about how you see the crisis. And I think that this is the issue, is that the crisis is always pushed to the back stage the whole time. So it's invisible in the, in the institution with the community in the sense that, yeah, everyone knows there's a coming crisis,but to tackle it is to go back. Yeah. Like how Yazan is saying, to go back to the safe structure. But then to bring it to the forefront where it becomes the project of the institution itself, actually. Is actually something that doesn't happen so often. So it remains, also it remains in a sense, an administrative question rather than a cultural question. Rather than an artistic question, which is strange. No?

Yazan Khalili: It's actually yes. And I think you brought this at the beginning of Sakakini as we said, we're going to bring the crisis, put it on the table. And then maybe just like we began producing a critic of the crisis, so it becomes itself something for discussion, something that we can speak about instead of something that we are running away from, and then we produce. But then the question is, what do we produce through it? Right.

Lara Khaldi: Yeah, but then what what followed was an attempt to change structurally, and that is also artistic and cultural work.

Marwa Arsanios: Yeah. And also what we produce through the crisis, but also how it produces? Right. How it is producing the new institution? This new political situation, or economic collapse. So thinking about how it is building these new structures? And I think there is a really important point to make that it's really strange that we are often thinking about it as an administrative or something that is a crisis of management. We just need to change how we used to manage the institution and not think about the fact that it's actually a moment where we can radically think about what culture is? In fact. And I think that this is a really crucial point, because often, as you also said, people want to just like go back to what what was there before the crisis. So this is the safest place. It's what you already know. But in fact, we never think about how this is a first of all, not possible. Second, it's also it's a question of how crisis and how a new situation have the power to push an institution, to start to think about what kind of new art, for example, needs to be produced at this moment? Or what kind of new culture production? Or what kind of new practices, etc? So I'm just trying to say maybe that sometimes it's also like, not only like a question of how we can? But what we can? And what our material conditions do? Also, I want to just say that maybe this question of putting the crisis in the middle, as our like, the thing that mobilizes our thinking. So maybe this is also what I mean when I'm saying, how crisis is producing the institution, and producing these new practice.

Yazan Khalili: But I think they're connected because you are saying, you know, about the material aspect of it. What what can we do? And I imagine the moment we claim that this is a crisis, some openings happen in the structure, and how things in the order of things. And then these opening can be small, can be big, can be, but it can be for a longer time, for a short time. But certainly gaps happen. And then there are situations that either allow people or agents to infiltrate through these gaps or from one side or the other side, meaning that it can be a crisis. Or you know what, Naomi Klein speaks about the shock doctrine. Where, you know, something happened, a crisis happens. And then how companies just like, infiltrate the society or new rules and or the government puts new rules or and or cuts too, but the crisis is that. But also and I guess maybe it's more possible sometimes in the art sector to, see individuals, groups, collectives use these moments to these kind of situations, but also infiltrate the structure that is in crisis or that claims the crisis. But of course this is, also a very materialistic moment because who's available and who has access? You know, who has time, who has the effort? You know. Who is in Lebanon or in Palestine or in Egypt at that moment? Or whatever it is, to take over or? It's really a situation. It's something like it's not an abstract, but it's really something. Sometimes you have, things do happen and many other times it just opens and closes without anyone being able to use the opportunities. The thing is It's just maybe opportunity is not the right word, but the thing is what happens afterwards? After these openings happen and they are used or frustrated. And here I think you are saying, you know, we either go back to the norm or we go beyond these norms?

Marwa Arsanios: The way to go beyond these norms or or what used to be before the so-called crisis is just putting the crisis at the center right? This is what you were saying, what you were talking about, this kind of like bringing the crisis to the forefront and making it the thing that mobilizes everything else. And mobilizes so it becomes like the drive of the institution.

Lara Khaldi: Yeah. I mean, making it visible and yeah, whether it's crisis or not. But what I'm speaking about and specific is the economic structure of the institution, even I think not only the economic structure, for example, you have the managerial structure as well, but I mean one, the economic one is always in crisis. And that's what we've been talking about. And everyone knows there's an issue but yeah, it's not being addressed. There is no time also to address it because it's so pressing. And yeah, once it's addressed, I think there's a lot of kind of also doubt and sarcasm around trying out different models or looking at different models. And then there is also yeah, so the fear also, the fear of changing how it works and what it represents and then also a managerial kind of almost always issue with these institutions. You only hear it through gossip usually that because it's maltreatment of the team, of the practitioners, of artist fees. Now you see more and more kind of organization around this. But usually it works through gossip and pressure, of course. And it still works, I think, through gossip, because that's the place where the more weak, class and the cultural effects that kind of can speak within because, you know, we have very small art and culture of things where the gates are closed for you: If you if you're speaking too loudly. And these also issues are not brought to the fore when also the institution tackles them right there in their backstage, they're dealt with in and so they're not also brought to the stage. Right. To see also other models of even managing the cultural institution more open and yeah, tackling it artistically right through artistic practice. So very importantly, here would be the kind of artist run institution. Right. And to look at different ways that the artists run institutions are quite different from other structures because of this continuous questioning as well.

Marwa Arsanios: Yeah, but it seems like something is, it seems like it's almost like the end of a model of institutions and something is shifting. And it's exactly this move that you're talking about, which is bringing to stage the actual what used to be or what is usually left in the back stage, which is, for example, the like all the problems of labour exploitation, of abuse, of sexual harassment, all of these things that used to be really, you know, dealt with inside the institution and just like left in the backstage. But at the same time, what is also left in the backstage is this question of what we were talking about, this economic crisis. If you want. Or this situation where people wouldn't want to really make it for public or bring it to the to the forefront. So it's all these things that were, let's say, part of this private side of the institution that are actually brought to the forefront and becoming themselves. The question of cultural production. And made to be the quote. And it says, if there is a model of running an institution that is also at its end. Let's say. Or like this one, for example, head of institution, this one traitor, that is the head of the institution for many years etc. Like this kind of model is also like reaching its limits it seems. And something is, it has been, of course, like in the past years, like all these different structures and let's say the so-called alternative structures or artist run spaces, etc. have been like showing different ways of working and different ways of, you know, of how an organization can actually be. But it seems that now is a moment where these are brought to the forefront really, or there is like a shift: A transition.

Yazan Khalili: I think the question of the individuals relations to the institutions. I think this is a very important question, but also a very big question about the economy of art institutions or the economy of art practice or of the whole cultural practice of this kind of liquidity, expected liquidity as well. There is a kind of a you can move with it and against it at the same time. Like in a way, you are expected to always be moving and changing. And this is kind of, this kind of shift towards more equal institutions or liquid structures, where the director stays for two years and then moves, and then new people come. I think this is important that it does not remain, as it is inside these institutions. But we should also rethink how this power has to be moving. And this is, I guess, set about, you know, like you take one director and then you bring another director and this sort of thing. But it's more about how these structures altogether have to be able to include the individual. But also to challenge the individual within it. It's a question of how much power can people get, through these institutions, and how much institutions also get power because of these people? So, I think it's a very important question because many times you think like, you know, at the same time we are talking against this kind of super exploitation of the intellectual workers. How, we don't like this kind of freelancing and that we we don't have any kind of stability or security through our work. And we keep on working, you know, like a job here and a job there. They're against it immediately we have or like in front of it, we have these individuals who work in one institution for 20 or 25 year, and they are like super protected and secure on many levels. And actually securing their salary becomes the mission of us, the freelancers, because through us they can continue being able to get funding, etc., because of the work we do. But I want to say it's also important to think that, OK, there is a kind of security in this kind of field. And how do you reach out and how do you do it? Sort of for the few but how do we do it for everyone?

Marwa Arsanios: But definitely this question of liquidity is something that is, as you said, to be thought through. But also worked against in many situations. And I guess this really depends on which situation we're talking about? I guess that there is, of course, not one way of thinking about this or one way of doing it? And maybe it's very difficult to have, like, one proposal. But I think that, for example, what happened at Sakakini was a very interesting model. Let's say it's that it was like one of the moments where something was seized, or a moment was seized. But at the same time, I was also thinking about when these models of institutions appear, they actually, what happens is, that it's the less, let's say, or the other kind of one person institution. They seem a little bit I mean, they are put in question, right? There is something like that happens where you start questioning these other forms, or these other kinds of institutions, and also what they produce, is put in question, in this kind of situation. So I'm thinking more about, you know, like this moment where you can seize these moments that are where, like an economic crisis is happening, for example and you seize something, or you seize a place, you seize an institution, you do something that is actually or has a new proposal, let's say. When this happens, when these moments happen and are seized it's great and something, a new form happens. But the problem is when these are fixed. These forms are fixed. And I think that when they become like a formula or a model, I think in that sense the question of liquidity, not in this neoliberal way of working, but more in this way of thinking about structures, is an interesting one. Because, in fact, this kind of like how can one integrate within the institution, this kind of energy for self-critique and a kind of energy of an ability to change and the ability to self-reflect the whole time and change. And I think that this happens a lot. And what I was saying, like a lot of artists, Collectives, artist run spaces because they are so precarious in fact, they have to adapt to every material conditions around them. And it can be at the end also very exhausting and very exploitative or exploitative in the sense of self exploitation as well. So it's not ideal, but I'm thinking that maybe if one wants to think about a structure that integrates this kind of like a way of being that is always questioning what they're doing and also like this kind of never becoming a model. Basically, it's as if, like, you always need something that is fixed and something that is moving right? So you need like both of these dynamics?

 Lara Khaldi: Yeah, yeah. I think it's. Yeah. As complex for sure, because I think like thinking of us for example, I mean the structure is also, I mean there's a board right. There is the General Assembly actually the structure, if it works maybe more organically, it's one that could allow for change. You know, thinking with you, I think one on one hand you do need models in the sense that because I mean, the NGO is a model. It's a model that kind of worked at a certain time. And yeah, the problem I mean, of course, the problem is that it became a model, but also because it became a model, it was a reproducible. So it's important to have something that is reproducible to get you out of your monoculture model kind of an institution. Right? But then I agree that also it's a structure that needs to keep on changing so that it doesn't get stuck in the same way because every structure has its issues. I mean, nothing is perfect in a way. And so how does it keep on moving? And I think one I mean, one part is, you know, as you say, the Questioning was precarious situation that already in your context, I guess it's this precarious context, but also the community. So I think if we're talking a more about a more organic institution, a cultural institution, then the change would be organic kind of to the institution because it's depending on the community. Right? What the community needs was more available today in the community? A generation, different generations, participating, yeah, but at the same time, you need different models to be able to kind of try things out and learn from, but not to be stuck in them as well.

Yazan Khalili: Yeah, I agree with Lara the sense that it's OK to create a model, maybe that is, but, you know, use the word vision, but maybe it's a model on the conceptual level then only of, you know, a procedure like how to move away from the crisis to the one, two, three, four, five, six and that's how you move away from it. But more on how do we begin the process. And also, there are many others that move with the individuals who were part of these movements of change. But you have this issue of scaling, of moving, of learning, of teaching. Taking out the experience from one place to the other. I think this is a very crucial moment in the life of social movements, because they depend a lot on many times. They are very fragile, very based on individuals putting time, effort, they happen I think also in very limited time in the life of the person. Only they are able to engage this much bigger process. It's important that there is a kind of a place to pick out the essence, of this experience, to find them. And this happens a lot in language as well, I think. And how do you speak about these kind of possibilities, about these practices and how do you bring them into the imagination or in the not only the measures, but in the possible imagination? Not as something that's impossible, but it is possible to think in this or that way.

Lara Khaldi: In terms of museums, for example, as institutions in Palestine, how the Palestinian museum responds or works with the community and helping its kind of staying, in terms of, in relation to the status Quo? I don't know. I mean, they are building this kind of narrative where there's a community building but then why start an institution, and then build a community around it? It's a very simple question. And so thinking more about that, I'm curious how the community will change it also? Because it will be changed at the end in the sense cultural institutions are people and institutions. But it's about the moment when they take them over. Right? And so, yeah, when it's the communities, then the communities will change it. A great actually example is this small museum inside the campus of Al Quds University. It's called Abu Jihad Museum, the prisoners museum. So it's a museum dedicated for Palestinian political prisoners and detainees. And the museum you know a big part of it is a classical museum, where you have information about the prisoners, a historical kind of perspective, stories from prison, also objects made by prisoners. And this is for the student audience. So it's very classical museum. So if you if you enter the museum and you see it, it's quite a classical museum, which historic sites is something that is actually within the museum campus. Students don't go in there because students usually have a family member or a friend who's actually detained or they have been detained themselves. So the experience is first hand. But what is quite interesting in this museum is that on the third floor, and so because it's a prisoners’ museum, there was an interest actually from the prisoner community or a former political prisoner community in the museum. And the lawyers of former museum, started using the museum because they have an archive of documents and letters and official documents of the former prisoners. So the archive actually has become extremely used by the community that the museum is for so it's actually, in a sense, has changed the way the institution itself and has become has given it a complete different a completely different reason of being. And it's sustained now. It's necessary that this institution remains not because of the four visitors that come into it. Although it's in the student population and the university is, I think, the biggest in Palestine. But because actually it's being used by the community itself. The lawyers of the prisoners and the prisoners themselves. And the archive is being kind of reused. It's an act of literally a politically active archive. But I mean also the Sakakini.

Yazan Khalili: But it's going to be a long like Sakakini. But but maybe just like to, just like the question of audience, for instance, not a book about this. How do you change the audience? I think that's what we try to do there from being the spectator audience and to the producer audience. Like, in a way, the audience are the ones to sort of change the audience. But to change the institutions understanding of the audience, but the audience of the ones who utilize the institution. This is the community. It's not the people who come to the attend events, to watch it or to do workshops, etc. It's the ones who make them who uses the facilities, the legal structure, the administrative structure, who uses the equipment, uses the institution, uses the spaces, uses everything in the institution to engage culturally in the community. So this is in a way, how Sakakini in these five years, this is what, this was the kind of shift that we tried to do in the way we understand our relation to the community. And how the community is utilizing the center itself. So close to what Lara is saying think about Abu Jihad museum.

Marwa Arsanios: I think these are really two great examples, but also links back to what we were saying before in terms of this question of the model. And in fact, what both of you were saying, that this kind of need for a model to be reproduced as well. Not reproduce as in how to do things, but more reproduced in that context. But how also these models travel and the need for these models to travel. But more these, as you said, on a more like maybe conceptual level. Sorry. And maybe also on this, again, coming back to this question of the language. So how do these new forms of languages and forms of, yeah, like discourses of how we speak about these places can travel and infect other ways of thinking? And contaminate other institutions and contaminate other places, as well as like, how do we transmit and learn and teach and learn from all these different experiences? I think that this question of the maybe model is a quite, let’s say, a modernist idea, but quite a useful one. In the sense of, you know, they created these kind of I don't know, like, for example, in housing architectural units that would then travel around the world and become this kind of like a universal space of living somehow. Which, of course, doesn't apply as such and has all these problems and everything. But it's interesting to think about these models as travelling models that can actually infect the imagination.

Lara Khaldi: Yeah, I mean, the issue with the model, I mean, yeah, it standardizes and it removes context. I think this is the most important issue because this well, again, we call them models, Right? I call it, are become models, because it's the context that actually produces them, and of course, the interaction with the context. That they are produced in historical context,that is a cultural context. Which is specific and it produces this model. The problem is that, of course, once it travels, the context is also or also disappears. And, you know this, really great essay by a Daudzai, Travelling Theory Reconsidered, where he talks about, you know, how when theory travels and especially theory that's rooted in practice, or that's produced by Practice. Because its context disappears, then it's kind of diluted once it travels. It's diluted. It's no longer as radical as where it started from. Where it was necessary. But when reconsidered he actually kind of deposits the opposite. That actually it may get re in it's appropriation to a certain, to another context, it might actually bring back something revolutionary to the context. So but I think it's extremely important. Yeah. I mean, as you say, the problem of the model is that it standardizes. So it's really, really important, I think, when we think or look at other that's right, this other model, that it doesn't become first the only model. Right? This monoculture of models that's standardized. And that there needs to be an understanding that a certain context produced this model and that it's never, there's this ability to reproduce it is impossible. And but the attempt to reproduce is to reproduce it, I think is quite interesting because it will be reproduced in a different context.

Marwa Arsanios: Yes.

Yazan Khalili: But that's maybe also important that when we speak about these models to speak about contexts. Yes, it's not never given as this kind of universal theories about, you know, like how to change. And this kind of like connection between the locality and of cultural practices and the globality of its effects. I think it's important to be able always to be aware of these moves. So you brought modernity and the problem for them to try to work as a model without a context. And I think that's the thing with these kind of examples and these kind of practices. That they don't try to take themselves away from their context under the conditions that allow them to happen. I personally keep saying, you know, Sakakini happened in a coincidence. And like, it didn't happen out of, like, too much planning. And, you know, there is a kind of material conditions, material coincidence that allowed a group of people to take over mainstream elitist institution and and if it was an open call for a job to bring a Director. None of us would have been able to get the job. Like we could not say we have this model that we want to share with you and the board.

Marwa Arsanios: Maybe thinking more about this particularity of these institutions and experiences and experiments. But also think at the same time about their universality or potential universality. So I guess that maybe it is on where we're speaking on two different levels. So really critiquing the modernist idea of the model. Which is this kind of, you know, contextless: a universal thing that doesn't need any particularity. And at the same time not wanting to stay in this, you know, only specific locality. Because at the same time, it would be also might be interesting to think about how one can create a way of thinking about all of these different so-called alternative models.

Lara Khaldi: Or experiences.

Marwa Arsanios: Yeah, yeah. Experiences, experiments, yeah. Experiments, Yeah.

Sam Trotman: And thank you so much again for coming together and for having this conversation. We'd really like to thank the Creative Europe programme for supporting this work through the BePart Assembly and the wider Lumsden Live programme. And we'd like to thank Marwa, Yazan, Lara very much for contributing. I'd like to thank Zoe for helping to record this on the day, and Jake and Ika for doing the edits. If you've enjoyed listening to this piece, then I'd encourage you to listen to a few others that we're doing throughout the week. Where we are really trying to think about the different ways in which we can organize in the arts, at a time when it's so crucial to do so. If you want to listen to other things that you might be interested in is a conversation that we have with artist and writer Harry Josephine Giles and also a conversation between artist Jack Tan and producer Amy Lawrence. There will be lots of other things happening on the Lumsden Live program, so please do tune in. Thank you.

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