l'asilo
exasilofilangieri.it
Creating New Institutions

2 march 2012
it all started like this!

L’asilo is at the same time a political, artistic and juridical experiment that is inventing new institutions and practicing a series of small breaks into the system on different aspects.

L’asilo is today an interdependent center of production for art, culture and education directly managed and administrated by an informal community of artist, activists, researchers.

The experience of l’asilo is linked to the Italian national movement of self-governed cultural spaces that started with Teatro Valle

these practices are based on:
• re-appropriation and direct management of public spaces by artist and activists
• practices of production based on cooperation and solidarity
• free contamination in the different fields of art and research
• theoretical and practical development and defense of common goods
From the occupation to a case of best practice

The Ex Asilo Filangieri is a wonderful three story XVI century building (about 4000 square meters) located right in the pulsing historical city centre of Naples

1572 workshop for arts and crafts
1920 orphanage
1980 earthquake > abandon
1995 UNESCO tutelage
2009 property of the City of Naples restructured and assigned to the Universal Cultural Forum Foundation

March 2012 occupied
May 2012 experimental experience
December 2015 the activities of l’asilo as an informal community of artists and activists and its Declaration of Urban Civic and Collective Use are officially recognized by the City of Naples

a case of best practice: for the first time in Italy an open and fluid community of artist and activists gave back to the city a precious building consolidating a practice of participated, shared and direct management of a public building as a common good (art 42 & 43 Italian Constitution)
From the referendum on Public Water... to Common Goods ....to Civic Uses

The Declaration of Urban Civic and Collective Use is the tool through which we realize a new form of direct management of a public building. It is the result of 3 years public working group at l’asilo where members of l’asilo, artists, activists, researchers, jurists, lawyers, with the collaboration of renowned scholars imagined and wrote a model of governance of the commons capable to overturn the political and strategic neoliberal rationality introducing a link between the common goods and the governance of the commons.

This link are the Civic Uses: an ancient institution in the Italian Law still in force which regulates the so-called rights of legnatico (profit of the wood) fishing and grazing on common land of small and medium size rural hamlets. An extensive interpretation of civic uses intends to guarantee the social function of those public spaces declared as common goods.

The Declaration of Urban Civic and Collective Use sets out how to use the spaces, who is entitled to use them, how decision are taken, how to acquire the status of member of l’asilo guaranteeing the respect of the 4 fundamental basic principles of the civic uses: accessibility, usability, fairness and inclusiveness.
3 steps 3 resolutions

Crossed by hundreds of people every day, after operating dynamics of conflict and struggle together with those in town who are against neoliberal policies the consistency, coherence and perseverance of our experience translated into 3 resolutions

24 May 2012 act nr 400 first formal resolution by the municipality of Naples, that commits the administration to “ensure a democratic form of the management of the monumental building called Ex Asilo Filangieri, according with the constitution-oriented interpretation of art. 43 of the Italian constitution, in order to facilitate the formation of a constitutive practice of "civic use" of the common good on the part of the workers of the immaterial sector“ + use destination for art & culture

9 March 2015 act nr 7 second resolution fruit of collective work with the Neapolitan global justice movement, ruled that public goods can be administered, with a sharing of the operating expenses by the City, “where justified by high social value created by providing civic use regulations, or other civic self-organization models recognized in special conventions"

27 December 2015 act 893 the municipality of Naples approved a new resolution, which fully recognizes the Declaration of Urban Civic and Collective Use l’asilo, thus becoming not only the set of rules to regulate the access and the use of the spaces, but a brand new model of the government of the commons in our administrative system.

The Declaration of urban and collective civic use of l’asilo that we wrote and the document about the “numbers” were acquired as part of the resolution.
Even under the economic point of view, the resolution passed the scrutiny of accounting, advocacy and all the technical departments of the municipality. We made a very interesting melee with funzionari, who must assume the technical responsibility of the resolutions. We introduced the concept of indirect civic revenue: the cost of extraordinary maintenance and the cost of utilities are paid with public money, but the daily care of the space, improvements and equipment, daily support to the organization of the events in the general assembly, are supported and provided by the community of reference, the inhabitants of the space.

We believe that artistic and cultural research as well as education should remain outside the logics of the market and of the discreitional political power.

Art and culture need investments by the entire community because only apparently they do not produce income, actually the produce an indirect social income because its benefits involve the entire society and contribute to collective well-being and growth.
Paolo Maddalena honorary vice-president of the Constitutional Court wrote on La Repubblica the article *The Ex Asilo Filangieri and the Constitution*

“The dominant thought of the economic neoliberaleralism pushes to consider not positive this administrative act whose objective is not to pursue economic growth but to enhance cultural and personal growth of the citizens. The Municipality is mistakenly considered the “owner” being in fact at the service of the interest of the citizens. **Art 42** states that collective public property belongs to the people and is *res extra commercio* (cannot be sold on the market) meant to satisfy the needs of the people. **Art 43** states that the general interests can be directly managed by communities of “workers and users”. **In Naples the Italian Constitution is being significantly implemented and this is a reason to be proud of and not to criticize.**

Tomaso Montanari on La Repubblica Napoli writes **Why the Ex Asilo Filangieri is scaring?**

“The reason why the resolution concerning the Ex Asilo Filangieri is considered to be dangerous it’s because it puts back together legality and justice... Piero Calamandrei (a founding father of the constitution) would say that the community does what the public authority should do but doesn’t do, a private exercise of public functions voluntary assumed by the citizens at the service of the community in a country where in general the public power is used for private interests.

Maurizio Zanardi writes **The Space of good encounters**

“To be clear, if there is a patrimony, it is not the building Ex Asilo Filangieri, that one could also use in a bad way, but it is the practice that invents it a a place for good encounters.
The creation of a collective practice of freedom
[Michel Faucault]

3 key points
• the recognition of the informal community
• power of self-regulation
• the process IS the model
Life at l’asilo

• **Assembly** held every Monday
• **Thematic groups:** Arti della scena (performing arts theatre and dance), Armeria (visual arts), Infrasuoni (music), Cinema, Library, Sociale (community and neighbourhood) Self-government (juridical innovation)
• **Working groups:** (transversal) communication and logistics

All decisions are taken by **consensus**
The assembly, thematic and working groups are always public and open to everyone!

4 fundamental basic principles of the civic uses: **accessibility, usability, fairness and inclusiveness** in the use of spaces and technical equipments - collaboration to the process is on volunteer bases (about 50 people)

Technical equipments were reused, donated or bought through crowdfunding: thus we built a theatre, a space for dance performance, a gallery and are about to create a cinema

The City pays for maintenance of the space, electricity, heating, water, guardians, major cleaning Resources are gathered by a volunteer subscription at the door

Gabriella Riccio 28.10.2016
If you really want it... here it is a SWOT analysis

STRENGTHS
external
political framework
attention by local authorities
support from the national and local movement
internal
internal cohesion among artists, activists, jurists (breaking down walls separating art and knowledge)
quality of the initiators
heterogeneous and non identitary nature of the community
sticking to our real practices and never imposing an abstract model
consensus vs vote (collective intelligence)
slow pace vs pressure (do not take the pace if not convinced)
constant reply to press
creativity imagination and madness

WEAKNESSES
project financing
attract funds and economic resources
productions vs system

OPPORTUNITIES
growth / audience development
opportunities for art an cultural workers who operates outside the institutional framework
new vision, transform (law, economy) - creative commons, copy left etc.)
spread the experience
public vs private

THREATS
local authority discreitional power
voluntary work (time energy) vs sustainability
What does in practice the civic use translates into?

in 4 years, 54 months
over 190 meetings of the General Assembly
over 830 meetings of Thematic and transversal working groups
over 1985 artist, companies, cultural operators had access to the space for their activities
over 1383 days of rehearsals
over 1536 days of workshops and educational activities
over 435 meetings, seminars, encounters
over 321 musical groups played
over 321 theatre companies performed
over 289 films
over 206 exhibitions
over 185 initiatives for children
over 112 social activities
over 97 presentation of books
the participation of public raised from 17,495 to 206,159 per year
The virus spread

in June 2016 the City of Naples officially recognized 6 other spaces “spaces that for the vocation (location, history, architectonical features) are spaces of civic and collective use for their value as common goods”

we call them *freed spaces* which are experimenting new forms of direct public and collective management as opposite to the assignation to an individual or a private

this year l’asilo was invited to Sweden, Barcelona, Weimar, Turin, Bologna to share its experience
There is a theatre but no artistic direction, spaces and equipments as means of production are shared and commonly used by artists and cultural operators who do not pay a rent, knowledge and competences are shared and we try to enhance individual and collective growth, there is no difference between emerging artists and award-winning companies, the only voluntary exchange required is the care of the spaces and organization.

We did not set up an association, we did not obtain a concession of property, we do not pay a rent. At the same time no room is assigned to no-one, we never say no to a project proposal within some criteria stated in the Declaration.

With an informal community that grows day by day we assured the daily opening and activities, the care of the spaces, we equipped what was an empty box under utilised, providing to artists the collective use of the means of production. We built a theatre, a gallery, a workshop for scenography, a workshop for costumes, an urban garden, a space for dance and we are about to create a cinema for independent films.

Gabriella Riccio 28.10.2016
Some Bibliographic References


Gabriella Riccio, *La pratica dell’uso civico come scelta estetica etica e politica per il sensibile comune*, La Scuola di Pitagora Ed, Napoli (in press)


www.exasilofilangieri.it
https://www.facebook.com/lasilo/
subscribe to the newsletter