

exCHANGE

**Exploring
Pathways of
Art-Science
Collaboration**



**eurac
research**

Index

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exCHANGE – Eurac Research

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57749/e4q9-1h38>

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Some companies treat climate change and the extinction of species as a problem that can be addressed through technical means, yet in doing so, they overlook the underlying cause: inequality, which not only drives the crisis but also exacerbates its consequences. We must embark on the path to a just solution, guided by both art and science.

Roland Psenner, President of Eurac Research

Interdisciplinary collaboration in the arts is crucial, as it demonstrates art's ability to permeate all areas of life and create meaningful contributions. Art reflects social, cultural, and scientific issues, fostering new perspectives. Collaboration between art and science holds great potential: art conveys complex ideas emotionally, while science provides deeper insights. We would like to thank the Eurac Research team and all the scientists and artists involved for their openness and commitment.

Lisa Trockner and Alexander Zoeggeler,
Director and President of the Südtiroler Künstlerbund

Art and Science – Siblings of Freedom, Equality, and Democracy

Art and Science! A kind of binomial? Both claim freedom – on one hand, freedom of expression, enabling diverse perspectives, *nolens volens* (willingly or not); on the other, the pursuit of knowledge – the search for truth. Freedom of art and science also concerns dissemination and discourse. Engaging in discussion, debating methodology, welcoming everyone – even those who think differently – allowing space for creativity, accepting that art cannot function by predetermined criteria, or that science requires exchange across disciplines to legitimize interpretations in the public sphere – all this forms the framework for contributions to a society where freedom and order belong together, and whose strength lies in learning from democratic diversity.

Art and science are cultural forces in the interplay of politics, religion, society, and the economy – sustained by respect and tolerance. And by responsibility – for both individual and common good. The freedom of art and science must be emphasized in times of rapid change, especially when individual freedom and responsibility are played off against those of society.

Art reflects the artist's expression; the starting point is the individual, the creator. The researcher determines its subject, methods, and is responsible for interpreting results. Can freedom of art and science be conceived socially?

Rights to freedom and equality are tied to duties, which limit freedom. The common good describes the relationship between individuals and society. Responsibility requires balance to ensure equal opportunities and reduce structural inequality. Freedom and equality go hand in hand.

The freedom of artistic creation and scientific work are interdependent in their responsibility to the individual and common good. Interfaces between art and science enable diverse insights and add complexity through interdisciplinarity – this, too, is a pursuit of truths. That has always been – and remains – the aspiration of “exCHANGE”.

Harald Pechlaner

Fixing our gaze on inequalities

During the last decades, much has been said about the worldwide rise in socioeconomic inequalities. Both within states and globally, the gap between the privileged and the destituted appears to be ever widening, according to several studies published by prominent economists.¹ Although inequalities have been characterizing human societies for millennia, their effects have never been so striking. According to data published by *The World Inequality Report 2022*, 10% of the world's population owns 76% of global wealth, while the poorest half possesses just 2% of the total.

In general terms, the concept of inequality refers to the *uneven distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges among individuals or groups*. This uneven distribution is often influenced by a variety of factors – such as income, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnicity, religion – and is generally associated with discrimination and power imbalances. In other words, what matters most to people's living conditions is not their merits or talents, but the good or bad luck of their birthplace and family condition.

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres powerfully explained during his speech to the General Assembly on the Organization's priorities for 2025, persistent inequalities are an “unmistakable signal that something is deeply wrong with our social, economic, political and financial systems”. As a matter of fact, inequalities unfairly reduce some people's chances in life; moreover, they tend to intersect and reinforce each other across generations. The lives and expectations of millions of people are established before they are even born.

¹ Milanovic B. (2018). *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization* (Belknap Press); Piketty T. (2013). *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Harvard University Press); Stiglitz J.E. (2016). Inequality and economic growth, in *The Political Quarterly*.

Being born into a low-income family often means facing a lifetime of hardship, with limited opportunities for quality education, stable employment, and good health. However, these disadvantages can be mitigated. If an individual lives in a society that implements effective redistributive policies and initiatives aimed at reducing the impact of socioeconomic inequalities and supporting individuals, they can have the opportunity to improve their conditions and achieve a fulfilling life.

Addressing inequalities contributes to the creation of fairer, more cohesive, and more stable societies. Goal 10 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on all states to reduce inequalities within and among countries, promoting poverty reduction and fostering the social, economic, and political inclusion of all citizens – ultimately aiming for the realization of equal opportunities. Unfortunately, we are still a long way from achieving this goal, which requires coordinated and multidimensional actions.

Throughout the exCHANGE project, we invited the artists and researchers involved as well as the general public to reflect on this topical issue. From their own vantage points, they explored the dynamics and effects of the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities in contemporary societies, offering original perspectives on inequality.

exCHANGE – Bridging worlds

Time and again, narrow-mindedness and siloed thinking have failed to solve the complex societal issues we face. Inequalities – economic, racial, or gender-based – continue to divide societies, limiting opportunity and reinforcing systemic injustice. As global challenges like climate change and technological disruption grow, addressing these disparities becomes even more urgent. Doing so requires openness to diverse perspectives and a stronger commitment to dialogue – not only within academic or professional circles, but also with the wider community.

Too often, science operates within an ivory tower – isolated not only from the broader public but also from other disciplines. Researchers frequently communicate in ways that are only accessible to their peers, limiting the impact and reach of their work and creating barriers to collaboration, understanding, and real-world application. If science is to truly serve society, it must step outside its tower and engage more openly with diverse perspectives and fields of knowledge.

At the same time, art is often underestimated and not always taken seriously – especially when compared to fields like science or technology. Some people see it as something extra, but art is much more than decoration or entertainment. It helps us express emotions, ask big questions, and see the world from different points of view. When we ignore or undervalue art, we miss out on powerful ways to connect with others. Just like science, art plays a vital role in helping us understand ourselves and the world around us.

At first glance, art and science might seem like opposites – one rooted in creativity and emotion, the other in logic and evidence. But if we look closer, we see that they share many similarities. Both begin with

curiosity and a desire to understand the world. Artists and researchers both ask questions, explore ideas, experiment with materials or methods, and search for meaning. Art and science involve trial and error, learning through failure, and pushing beyond what is already known.

Most importantly, both art and science aim to make sense of the world and communicate that understanding to others. Whether through a scientific model or a painting, both can inspire, inform, and shift how we see things. In this way, art and science are not so different – they are two ways of exploring the same world.

That is why exCHANGE aims to bridge the two together, highlighting the value of combining different perspectives to tackle complex societal issues. Art-science collaborations unite diverse skills, allowing for innovative solutions that neither field could achieve on its own, while striving to connect more with the public.

Within the exCHANGE project, researchers and artists worked in pairs to reflect on the topic at hand in innovative and unconventional ways. A key aspect of the project was the inclusion of both social and natural sciences. While collaborations between the arts and STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) have become increasingly common, partnerships between the arts and social sciences remain rare – representing an untapped potential in interdisciplinary exchange.

The researchers involved in exCHANGE were all based at Eurac Research and brought a wide range of disciplinary perspectives to the table: from comparative federalism and migration studies to linguistics, transformation and climate research, sensing solutions, and minority rights.

Similarly, it was important for the project to include all facets of “the arts”. The Südtiroler Künstlerbund brought together a wide range of creative disciplines, including visual arts (such as painting, photography, digital art, and sculpture), architecture, design, literature, and music – making it an ideal artistic counterpart to the diverse scientific expertise of Eurac Research.

On a broader project level, art-science collaboration has been integrated in the exCHANGE research design through the involvement of an artist observer, Valentina Stecchi, a cartoonist who investigated and interpreted the dynamics in her own way and expressed them in a colorful and insightful diary.



The road to collaboration: retracing exCHANGE

The exCHANGE project began in September 2023 with an open call for artists and researchers interested in exploring the theme of inequalities through collaborative and interdisciplinary work. The call received an enthusiastic response with over 60 applications submitted by individuals from diverse scientific and artistic backgrounds. A five-member jury – composed of two representatives from Eurac Research, two from the Südtiroler Künstlerbund, and one external expert in art-science collaborations – was tasked with selecting candidates for the first stage of the project. Applications were evaluated based on creativity, motivation, thematic relevance, and the potential to contribute diverse perspectives to the program. Following careful review, 24 candidates – 12 researchers and 12 artists – were invited to a specially designed matching event held on November 30, 2023.

The aim of this event was to provide participants with an opportunity to meet one another, identify potential tandem partners, and start exchanging ideas. A series of interactive and playful activities created a lively atmosphere that encouraged open dialogue and supported the formation of connections. Quick, informal rounds of conversation helped participants to explore shared interests, while a World Café session facilitated deeper engagement through rotating small-group discussions on key topics, such as how inequalities take shape at the local and global level and the potential and expectations for art-science collaborations.

At the close of the event, each participant received a booklet containing detailed participant profiles and contact information. Participants then had two months – until the end of January 2024 – to form tandems and submit joint project proposals. This period allowed time for

candidates to develop chemistry, for ideas to evolve, and for interdisciplinary concepts to take shape.

Participants who chose to team up after the matching event were invited to submit a joint proposal, outlining a project that would tackle the broader theme of inequalities. Eleven proposals were submitted and evaluated by the jury based on four key criteria: transdisciplinarity, innovation and creativity, thematic relevance, feasibility and impact.

Six tandems were ultimately selected and invited to the project's kick-off meeting and first focus group, which was held on March 1, 2024. At this meeting, each tandem was assigned a tutor (see next chapter for more details), and each artist, researcher, or tutor received a personal diary in which they could document their reflections and observations throughout the process.

Tandems were required to meet with their tutor in person once a month, with the option of holding one meeting online if needed. A minimum of six tutor-accompanied tandem meetings were held, though several tandems chose to meet more frequently. These sessions primarily served a scientific purpose (see next chapter), while also offering space for reflection, exchange, and discussion of organizational matters. Outside of these structured sessions, tandems were free to collaborate independently.

Three focus groups were held throughout the project – one at the beginning, one at the midpoint, and one after the final exhibition. In addition to their research functions, these gatherings fostered the development of a sense of community, supported by informal moments like shared coffee breaks, aperitifs, and picnics.

The project hit its pinnacle on October 10, 2024, with the opening of the final exhibition at the Südtiroler Künstlerbund headquarters. All tandems presented the outcomes of their collaborative work – one of which invited guests to a live immersive experience at the terraXcube in the NOI Techpark. The exhibition was open to the public from October 11 to October 26, 2024, offering visitors the opportunity to explore the diverse outcomes of the art-science collaborations. During this time, attendees were able to engage with the displayed works, participate in dialogues about the intersection of art and science, and reflect on the innovative approaches to addressing complex societal issues.

Studying art-science collaborations

While the six art-science tandems focused on their respective projects, another group, comprised of six researchers from the Center for Advanced Studies at Eurac Research, took a closer look at the collaborative process itself, acting as tutors. Artist Valentina Stecchi also joined the process as an artistic observer, offering a creative lens on these dynamics and ensuring a balance in external perspectives. She attended selected focus groups and tandem meetings, observing the interactions between artists, researchers, and tutors, and capturing them through cartoons, some of which are included in this catalogue.

The tutors, on the scientific side, were particularly interested in understanding how interdisciplinary collaboration unfolds: how decisions are made, how different skills and perspectives are integrated, and how these alliances influence traditional ways of thinking and working. A key question was whether, and how, such interactions reshape participants' understanding of inequalities and contribute to bridging gaps between distinct disciplines.

To explore these questions, the tutor team employed a variety of qualitative methods. The analysis unfolded across three levels: the individual experience of each participant; the dynamics within the tandems and among the broader group; and the public's engagement with the collaborative artworks.

A fundamental tool for capturing individual experiences was the personal diary. This method, widely used in the social and behavioral sciences, encourages participants to regularly record their reflections, experiences, ideas, or emotions in writing, drawing, or other

creative formats, such as collages. Participants were asked to note any thoughts relating to the project, offering a valuable and intimate view into their personal development throughout the process.

At the interactional level, tutors used participant observation to document how collaboration evolved within the tandems. Attending tandem meetings in the least intrusive way possible, tutors recorded notes on decision-making, role distribution, conflict resolution, and creative exchange. This method allows for the capture of non-verbal communication, informal dynamics, and spontaneous moments that might be overlooked in interviews or surveys.

One central research interest concerned how artists and researchers perceived “the other side,” and how these perceptions shifted over time. This was assessed through three focus groups held at different project stages, where participants were asked recurring questions. The focus groups were split in a researcher and artist group to allow for peer discussions. This longitudinal approach made it possible to trace changes in attitudes and mutual understanding.

Finally, to capture the impact of the artworks on the public, the research team designed a survey that was available for those at the exhibition.

Thus, the exCHANGE project operated on two levels: the meta-research aimed at gathering valuable insights into art-science collaborations, and the creative projects themselves, which materialized in the form of artworks, installations, and prototypes. While the meta-level informs future interdisciplinary collaborations by providing information on how best to manage integration processes across different competencies, the artworks and prototypes offer tangible contribution to public discourse – inviting viewers to reflect on inequalities and to envision more equitable futures.

In the following section, each of the six tandem projects will be presented in alphabetical order.

Astrid Kofler & Sara Parolari

Border Motherhood. Being mothers in a world of inequalities

Astrid Kofler

Astrid Kofler is a journalist, writer, and documentary filmmaker from Bolzano. She authors books, documentaries, and cultural programs, often integrating creative expression with social themes. Her work reflects a commitment to storytelling, empathy, and cultural exploration through various media.

Sara Parolari

Sara Parolari is a legal scholar specializing in comparative and European law. Her work focuses on Italian regional law, fiscal federalism, devolution in the United Kingdom, and cross-border cooperation, with particular attention to the legal framework of Trentino-South Tyrol.

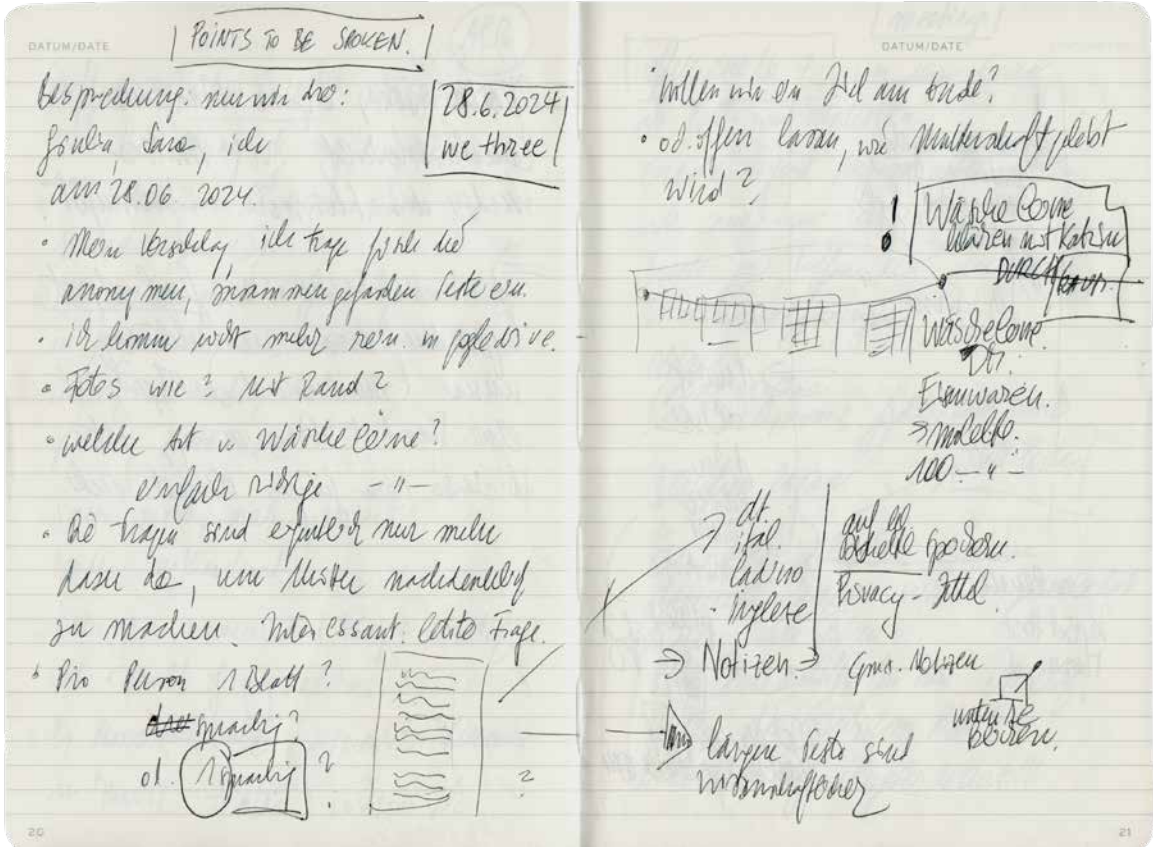
Being a mother today presents a range of challenges, from the unequal distribution of care responsibilities to societal expectations, limited institutional support, and persistent gender-based inequalities. While motherhood is often idealized, the experiences of mothers reveal complex dynamics shaped by geography, social background, and access to services. These structural factors influence how women experience motherhood and often determine whether it becomes a source of empowerment or marginalization.

It was from this awareness that artist Astrid Kofler and researcher Sara Parolari, both mothers of three, began their collaboration. Their shared personal experiences became a foundation for a candid and probing exploration into the realities of motherhood across different contexts. Through their project, they set out to uncover how specific circumstances – ranging from cultural norms to state policies – influence maternal experiences. What can these lived stories reveal about the intersection of gender and caregiving? Can motherhood be a path to feminist consciousness? And might mothers, in their everyday negotiations of care and identity, be among the most insightful commentators on the topic of inequality?

Driven by these questions, the tandem interviewed 53 mothers from diverse geographical, cultural, and social backgrounds. Each interviewee was invited to reflect on her journey and to choose a photograph or selfie representing what being a woman and a mother meant to her.

The final exhibition showcased a selection of the most powerful excerpts from the interviews, displayed as “a forest of paper” through which the visitors could walk, surrounded by the images chosen by the mothers themselves. Each excerpt was hung with clothespins on red laundry lines, evoking the everyday, often invisible labor of care that underpins motherhood. This immersive and powerful installation gave voice to individual stories while collectively highlighting the broader structural inequalities that shape the lives of mothers around the world. The work invited viewers to acknowledge that there is no single or right way to experience and live motherhood.

The installation deeply resonated with visitors. Especially women, who shared that they were profoundly moved by the stories presented and that they recognized echoes of their own lives in the experiences of others, as women, mothers, and workers.



1



2



3

«Several people realized that it is very important to address this topic and that it is still talked about far too little because politics is primarily made by men and fathers.»

Citation from the final report of the researcher and the artist

1 The artist's diary sketches the first concept of the final output.
2, 3 Details of the installation during the opening event.

Ingrid Hora & Elena Maines

Cloud Catchers

Ingrid Hora

Ingrid Hora is a visual artist based in Berlin. Through multidisciplinary work – ranging from performance to installations, video, and photography – she questions social and political norms, exploring democratic processes and community engagement through experimental and participatory art.

Elena Maines

Elena Maines is an environmental scientist specializing in climate variability and extreme weather events. Her research focuses on developing tools for climate services, as well as strategies for mitigating and adapting to human-induced climate change and environmental risks.

Over 70% of the Earth's surface is covered by water, yet access to clean and safe water remains one of today's most pressing inequalities. Water scarcity manifests not only in the uneven distribution of freshwater across regions but also in the social, economic, and political barriers that dictate who receives it – and who does not. These disparities are deeply intertwined with climate change, population growth, and environmental degradation, creating complex challenges that affect both human and ecological well-being.

This understanding inspired artist Ingrid Hora and researcher Elena Maines to collaborate. Brought together by a shared interest in the symbolic and material dimensions of water, they focused on the Mediterranean region – specifically Italy, Spain, and Morocco, countries that face increasing vulnerability to desertification, soil erosion, and dwindling freshwater supplies. Through their project, the tandem sought to explore how myths and storytelling could serve as communicative bridges, connecting scientific knowledge with local experiences of climate stress.

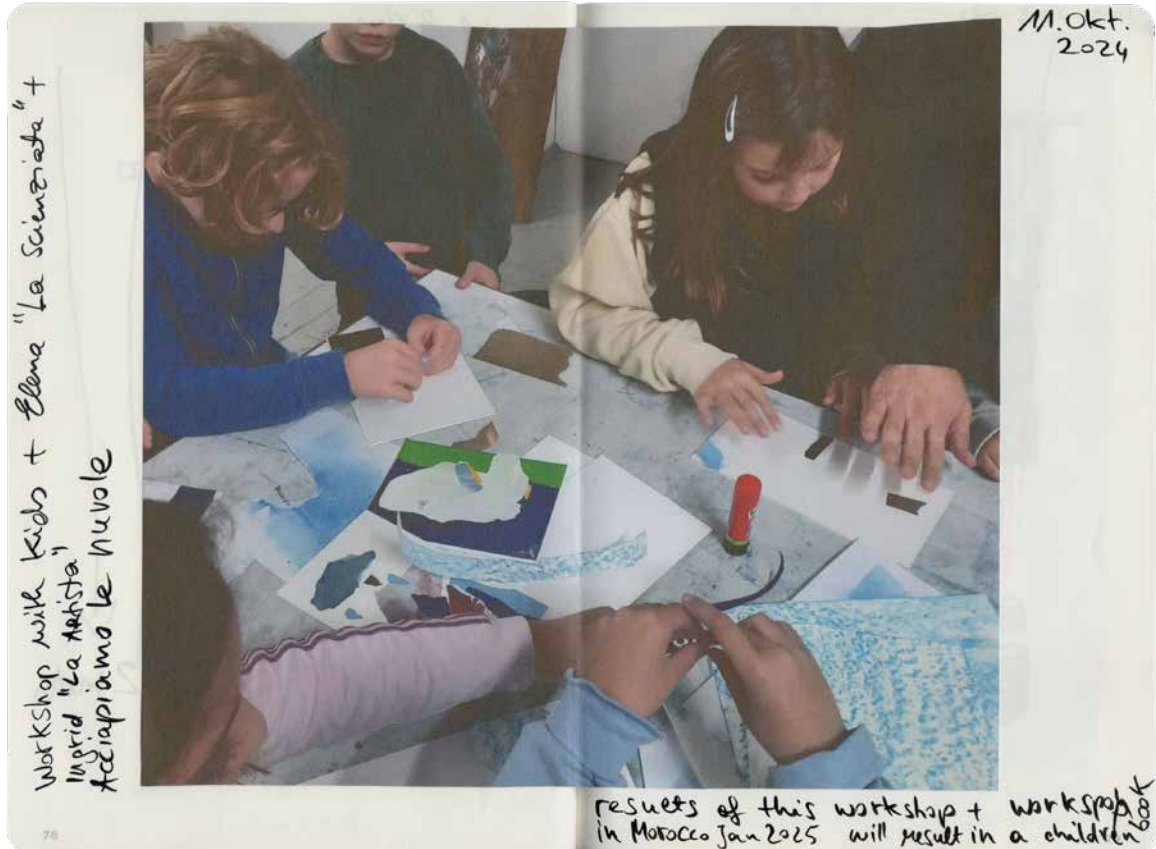
Moved by a commitment to environmental justice and the desire to make science more accessible, the duo engaged with communities at the frontlines of water scarcity. Inspired by fog-harvesting technologies such as CloudFisher, they examined how these communities adapt – and what these strategies reveal about resilience, tradition, and innovation. A central focus was the unequal distribution of water access – between rural and urban settings, wealthy and marginalized groups, and across generations.

To further deepen the connection between science, art, and society, the tandem also conducted a creative workshop with children. Through hands-on activities, young participants learned about water collection and the importance of environmental stewardship. This workshop fostered curiosity while emphasizing the need to involve future generations in discussions about sustainability and equity.

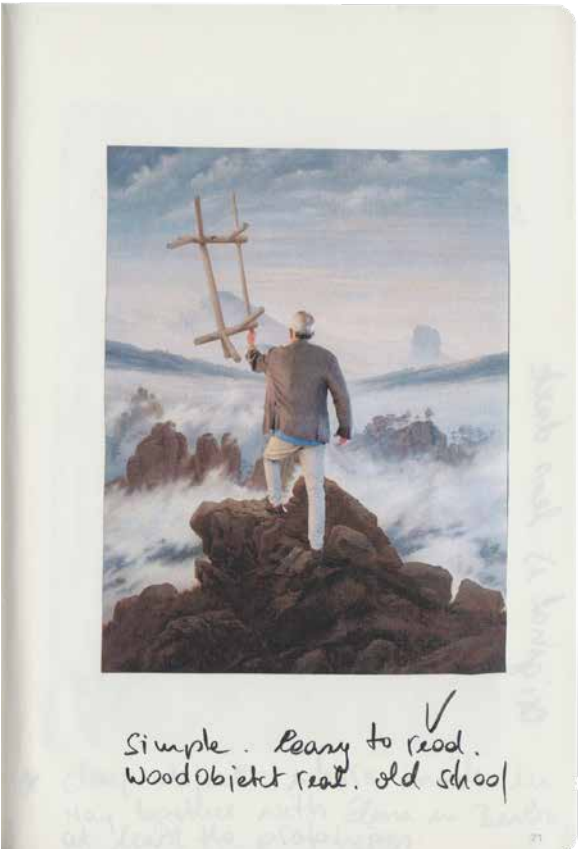
The final exhibition featured three photographic portraits of experts in climatology, glaciology, and environmental psychology – interviewed as part of the exploration. Each scientist was photographed from behind, to symbolize both solitude and silent determination in the face of overwhelming ecological challenges. Using mythological elements and reimagined landscapes, the images cast the researchers as stewards of a fragile future. Their hidden faces invited viewers to step into their role and join in the search for solutions.

«Myths were the links and focus of our dialogue from the very start, we want to define what a myth is, so that we can use it in our project.»

Citation from the researcher's diary



1



2



3

1 Artist's diary documenting the tandem's workshop with children.

2, 3 Artist's diary keeping track of the project development.

Katharina Theresa Mayr & Verena Platzgummer

»Gegenplätze« ore 21.11, parco giochi, BZ An artistic-scientific inquiry into the hidden life of playgrounds

Katharina Theresa Mayr

Katharina Theresa Mayr is an interdisciplinary process artist who explores socio-cultural themes through performances, drawings, installations, and language. She often uses abstract drawings as translation tools, combining analog and modern techniques to create both abstract and concrete artistic spaces.

Verena Platzgummer

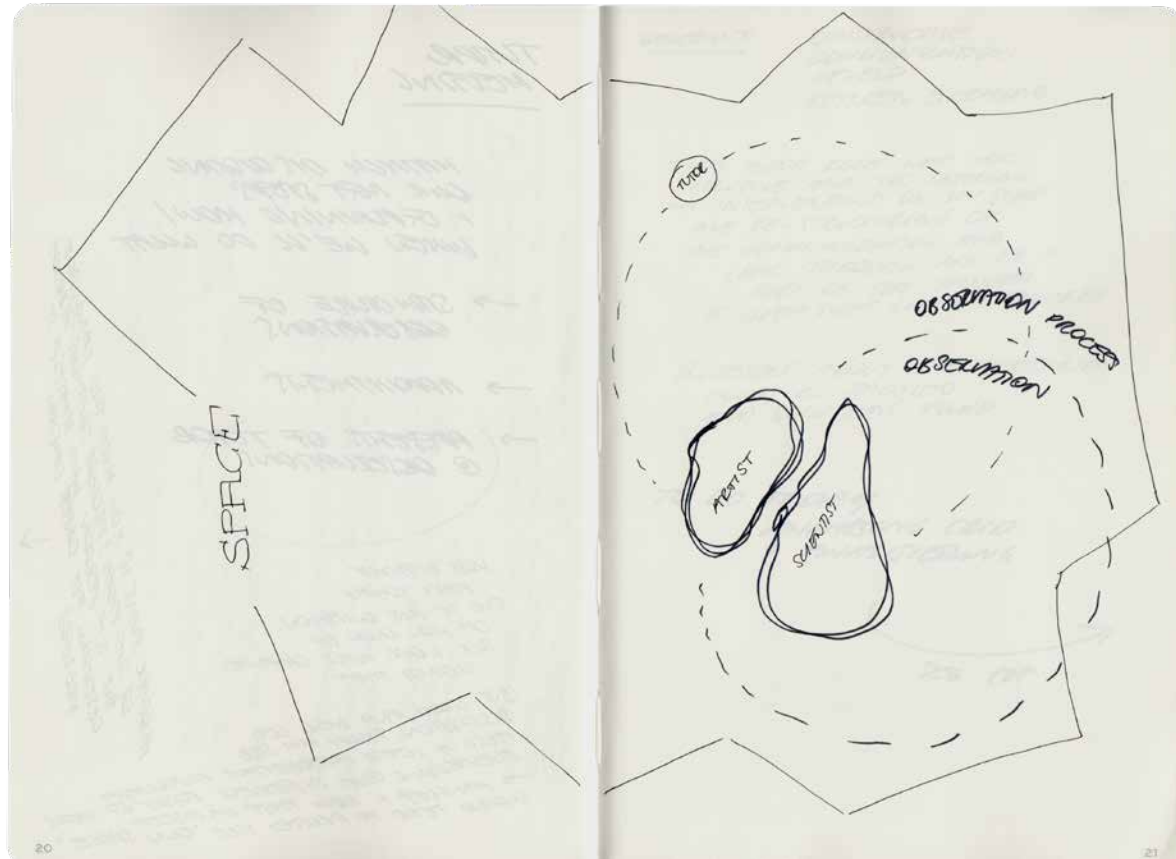
Verena Platzgummer is a sociolinguist researching the impact of globalization and migration on historical minority regions. Currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Galway in Ireland, she examines language and cultural changes through a critical, sociolinguistic lens.

Playgrounds occupy a unique and significant space in society. They are more than just designated areas for children to play – they are sites of shared experience and collective memory. While typically filled with swings, slides, and climbing frames, playgrounds function as communal stages where people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds briefly come together and where diverse narratives unfold. Outside of typical play hours, these spaces often transform into havens for other groups, revealing their potential as liminal zones – places of retreat that are simultaneously part of and apart from the urban fabric. But who uses playgrounds when the children aren't there? How do people interact with these spaces – and with one another – during those off-hours? Playgrounds become “defined undefined places”: open yet unguarded, visible yet unmonitored, offering a rare kind of freedom. For young people especially, they can represent a space of in-betweenness – neither entirely private nor public – where they don't have to hide, yet aren't fully on display. The transitional nature of youth finds a physical counterpart in these transitional spaces.

Katharina Theresa Mayr and Verena Platzgummer, respectively the artist and researcher of this project, set out to examine the inequalities embedded in how playgrounds are used, and how these mirror wider social disparities. Their focus was on the age dimension of inequality – specifically how young people access and occupy public space – and how this intersects with other factors such as socio-economic status, cultural or linguistic background, and gender.

The project began with field visits to two playgrounds during “off-hours,” times when these spaces are assumed to be empty. Observations conducted during these unconventional moments revealed alternative uses and hidden dynamics – insights that shaped the final artistic installation.

The resulting work features two swings: one suspended from the ceiling, inviting interaction, and the other lying flat on the floor. This simple yet striking composition speaks to the unequal distribution of opportunity – some are lifted, others left grounded. Visitors were invited to sit on the swing, physically engaging with the piece while ambient audio – recordings of conversations, footsteps, birdsong, and silence captured at different times in the playgrounds – played in the background. Through this immersive environment, the work invites reflection on who is given space, who remains unseen, and how public spaces subtly include or exclude.



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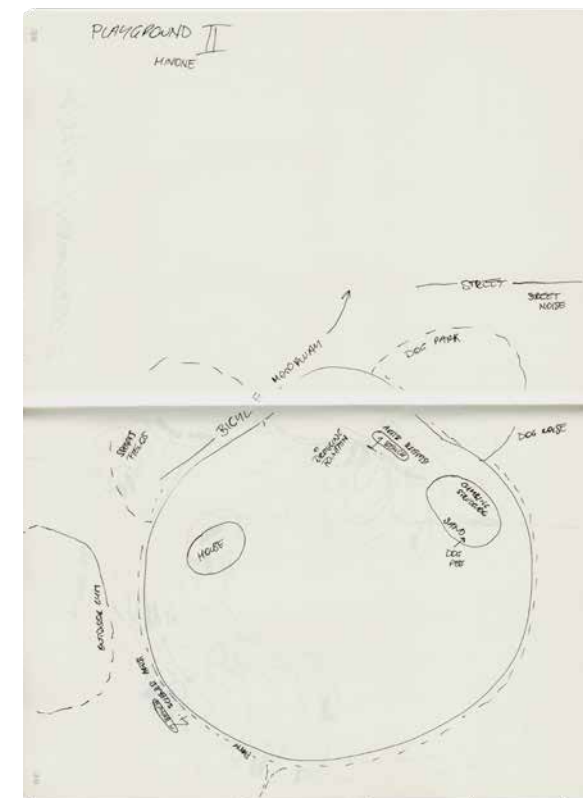


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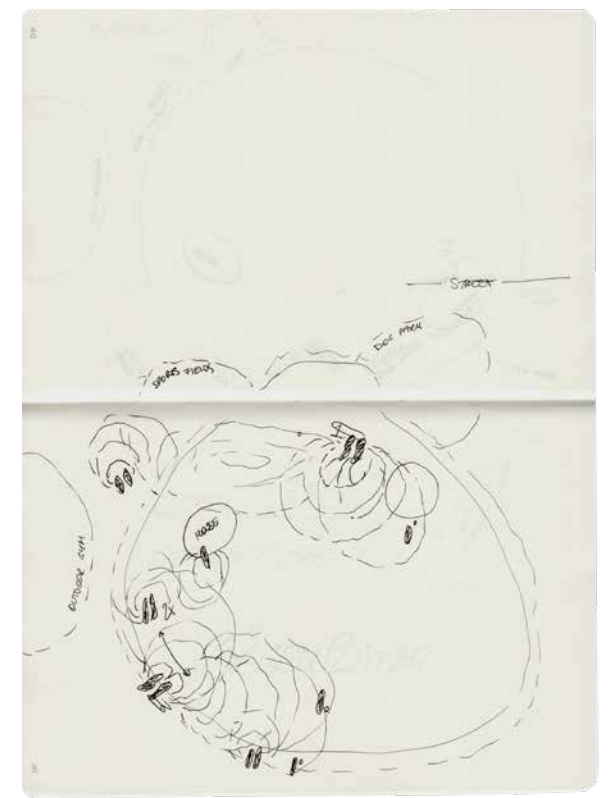
26

«We did gain some key insights regarding inequalities from our observations. Perhaps the most relevant were aspects of gender and culture. For instance, we often observed boys and men on their own at both playgrounds, whereas girls were never at the playgrounds by themselves, and women were only there by themselves when they were walking their dogs. We also noticed a difference between the two playgrounds in which we conducted our observations, with one being a considerably more 'male' space, where we would not have felt entirely safe had we not been there together.»

Citation from the final report of the researcher and the artist



3



1 Process dynamic of the tandem project.

2 The artist and the researcher of the tandem.

3 Artist's diary shows the visual representation of a playground's observation.

Maria Walcher & Verena Wisthaler

MY NAME IS HUMAN / thank you, dear bus driver

Maria Walcher

Maria Walcher is a visual artist whose work focuses on public spaces, social engagement, and contemporary art practices. She combines installation, performance, and participatory methods to explore political and societal issues through an interdisciplinary and reflective artistic approach.

Verena Wisthaler

Verena Wisthaler is a political scientist focused on migration and integration. Her work examines diversity, policy, and social cohesion, offering insights into how migration shapes communities and challenges traditional concepts of identity in multicultural societies.

The intersection of mobility and labor is a site where multiple inequalities converge. In today's increasingly mobile societies, access to employment is often shaped by legal status, language skills, and perceived social value – factors that disproportionately affect migrant workers. These workers are frequently recruited to fill essential roles in sectors with high demand, yet their contributions are undervalued, their visibility limited, and their working conditions precarious. The transportation sector, and specifically the role of bus drivers in South Tyrol, offers a striking lens through which to examine these dynamics: a growing reliance on migrant labor contrasts sharply with persistent discrimination, social exclusion, and the invisibilization of those who keep public systems running.

Artist Maria Walcher and researcher Verena Wisthaler chose to focus on these layered inequalities, with particular attention to how migration-related diversity is ranked, negotiated, and managed within the labor market. Their project explored the subtle but powerful ways in which hierarchies are constructed – between those seen as “wanted” and “unwanted,” central or peripheral. The tandem's goal was both to foster awareness of the discriminatory structures at play and to advocate for more inclusive approaches to diversity management, particularly within local institutions and companies.

Their approach combined empirical research with performative and artistic methods, including participatory observations, on-the-ground research, and interviews with SASA management, bus drivers, and passengers. Central to the project was *PINO*, an art installation by Maria Walcher in 2023, that set the stage for an intervention at a bus stop. Inspired by the traditional shoe-shiner's setup, *PINO* features two asymmetrical seats – one elevated, one lower – symbolizing the power imbalance inherent in many social interactions. Participants were invited to choose a seat and respond to a series of questions posed by the tandem, subtly confronting them with the dynamics of visibility and hierarchy.

The installation presented a soundpiece that intertwined conversations from the research phase with ambient recordings from bus journeys, forming the culminating art piece of the project. A printed booklet containing excerpts from the interviews allowed for further engagement: visitors could annotate, underline, and comment directly on the texts, turning the documentation into a participatory document. The artists also designed symbolic bus tickets functioning as access passes to the soundpiece. These tickets extended the artwork beyond the gallery, inviting reflection on the everyday journeys we share and the social inequalities often overlooked.



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«The bus becomes the space ‘we all belong to’, where we are all united for a particular moment on our way, and hence the ideal and utopian place for a resilient and sustainable society characterized by diversity, trust, care and respect»

Citation from the Proposal Application of the researcher and the artist

- 1 Artist’s diary with the symbolic bus ticket.
- 2, 3 The PINO installation at the Bolzano central bus station.

Luca Trevisani & Fabio Carnelli

Recasting Ötzi. Playing eco-foundational myths

Luca Trevisani

Luca Trevisani is a visual artist whose work spans sculpture, video, and installation. His multidisciplinary practice explores material transformation, hybrid forms, and the intersection of art, design, and performance, challenging conventional ideas of sculpture and engaging with fluid, experimental processes.

Fabio Carnelli

Fabio Carnelli is a cultural anthropologist and environmental sociologist. His research focuses on climate change, risk, and social adaptation, exploring how communities respond to environmental challenges and how social systems engage with environmental transformation in everyday life.

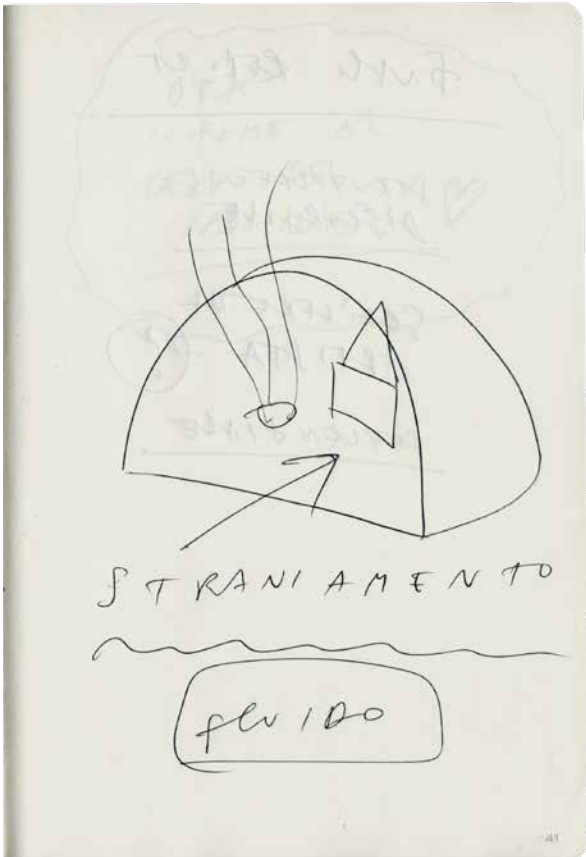
All human societies have always been shaped by inequalities. Even Ötzi – the prehistoric Iceman who died in the Alps about 5300 years ago – lived within a social system marked by diversity and inequalities. Yet, his world also showed a deep connection between humans and nature, a relationship that fostered the practical knowledge necessary for surviving in harsh environments. By tracing inequalities back to early civilization, we gain insights into how social differentiation has evolved. This long-term view invites us to question modern narratives of progress, and to reflect on what we consider valuable or advanced.

Starting from this perspective, artist Luca Trevisani and researcher Fabio Carnelli explored the imbalance that Western anthropocentrism maintains between humans and other life forms. These inequalities resurface in everyday practices – in how we feed ourselves, build and use tools, and inhabit the landscape and territory we share with other species. Ötzi's tools became a focal point of the tandem's investigation. These, often romanticized as relics from a simpler past, were reexamined instead as anthropized objects – evidence of both practical knowledge and uneven access to natural resources. Thus, rather than reinforcing the touristic narratives tied to Ötzi's story, the tandem used his legacy to open broader reflections between nature, technology, and inequalities across both time and space. The tandem's dialogue gradually expanded to include diverse voices, touching on archeology, conservation, human mobility, and the role of technology.

The final artwork took the form of a tent – a symbol of Ötzi's nomadic life, but also a reference to the mobility experienced by many people today due to economic, social, or environmental reasons. The tent offered visitors an intimate space to sit and engage in the themes explored. Inside, a video installation combined visual elements with audio excerpts from key conversations held throughout the process. Two encounters were especially important: Andreas Putzer, researcher and curator at the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, and Persian artist Leila Tahammoli. The excerpts of these conversations were accompanied by AI-generated subtitles. The errors in translation were deliberately preserved, highlighting the limitations of technology – especially in conveying nuanced, human meanings across languages and contexts.



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- 1 Artist's diary shows the first idea for the final project.
- 2 Artist and researcher during the set-up of the art work.
- 3 Caption of the final short-film.
- 4 Watercolor painting of Ötzi by Leila Tahammoli, shown at the final exhibition.

Silvia Hell & Abraham Mejia Aguilar

THEMIS: an arTistic and research approach to raise awarEness about cliMate change that produces InequalitieS

Silvia Hell

Silvia Hell is a visual artist working with sculpture, photography, site-specific installations, and time-based media. Her work explores systems of knowledge and representation, combining objectivity and experimentation to investigate how reality, data, and language are processed and transformed into visual forms.

Abraham Mejia Aguilar

Abraham Mejia Aguilar is a researcher with expertise in electronics, data analysis, and environmental modeling. His work explores the relationship between technology and nature, blending scientific methods with a personal passion for experimentation, mountains, and ecological observation.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and it affects people and ecosystems unequally. While rooted in human activity, its consequences are disproportionately borne by the natural world and the most vulnerable populations. As global temperatures rise and extreme weather events intensify, the balance between earth, air, water, and fire is increasingly destabilized. This disruption is not only physical, but also ethical and emotional: nature, voiceless and often overlooked, suffers silently from a crisis it did not cause. In this context, the figure of Themis, the ancient Greek goddess of justice and natural order, serves as a symbol – a reminder of the need for balance and care in responding to climate change.

Artist Silvia Hell and researcher Abraham Mejia Aguilar gave voice to the elements – air, water, earth, and fire – and challenged the human-centered mindset behind ecological exploitation. Their approach, grounded in empathy, recognized the importance of feeling and sensing in reimagining our relationship with the planet. A key part of the project was the tandem's visit to the UNESCO World Heritage site Bletterbach Canyon, whose 200-million-year geological record offers scientific and cultural insights. Supported by Geoparc President Peter Daldos and paleobotanist Evelyn Kustatscher from the Natural History Museum of South Tyrol, they explored how the canyon's rock layers reveal Earth's climate history, like reading time in stone. Even the ground, where rocks from various eras mix, became a metaphor for the blending of time. Footage from the visit – quiet observations, sweeping views, and stone textures – was used in the final installation, grounding it in Earth's long, slow transformations.

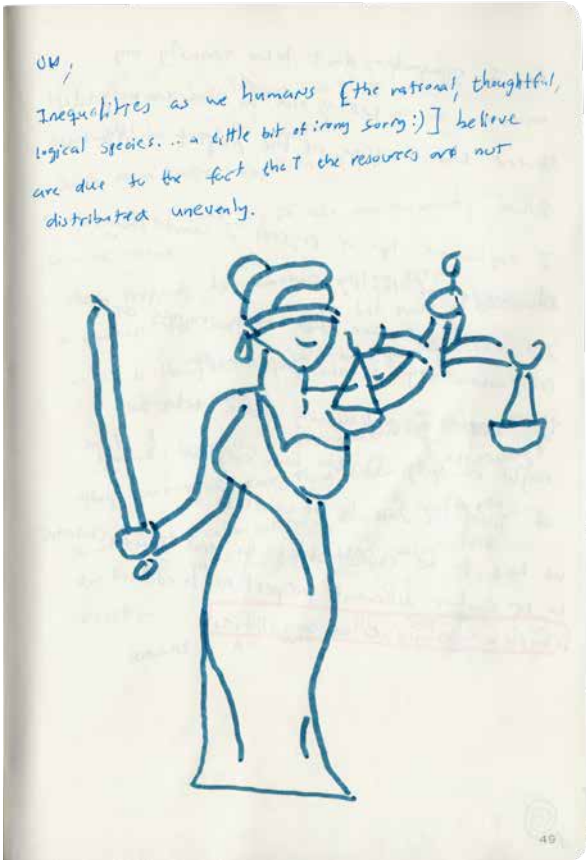
The final installation was partly set at terraXcube, Eurac Research's extreme climate simulator. In this augmented environment, the team recreated higher temperatures, intense winds, rain mirroring the effects of global warming. What took millions of years in the Bletterbach canyon was compressed into an immediate, immersive experience. Visitors entered the climate chamber and felt these forces firsthand, translating often abstract data into emotional understanding. A short film projected during the exhibition wove together sensor-based data and poetic imagery, deepening the audience's connection to the elements.

A small tree placed in the simulation room was a powerful final detail. Repeatedly knocked over by the simulated wind, it became a stark symbol of nature's vulnerability to climate stress.



1

1, 4, 5, 6 The environmental installation at the terraXcube during the opening.
2 Sketch of the goddess Themis from the researcher's diary.
3 Stills from the closed-circuit camera video.

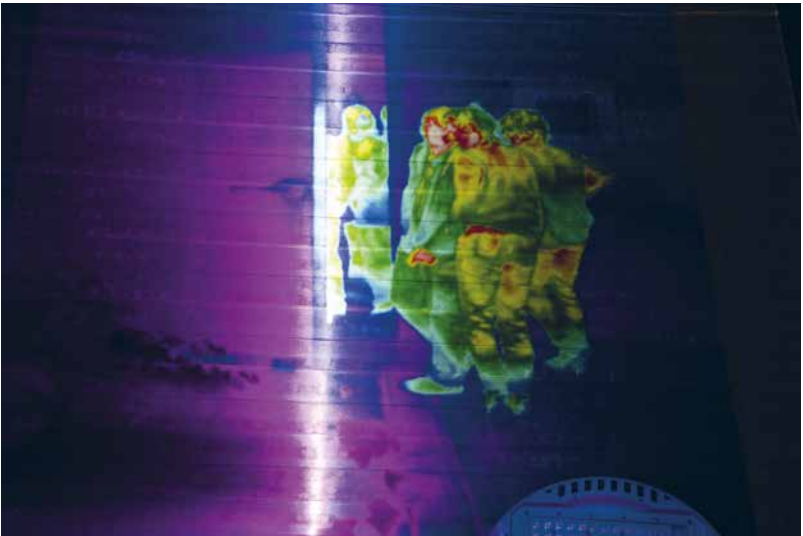


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Exhibition View

[illegible]

1. Stellenwertsysteme (oder Positionssysteme) sind Systeme, in denen die Werte der Zeichen (die Stellenwerte) von der Position des Zeichens im Ausdruck abhängen. Beispiel: Die Zahl 1234567890 hat die Stellenwerte 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0.

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5. Stellenwertsysteme sind Positionssysteme, in denen die Werte der Zeichen (die Stellenwerte) von der Position des Zeichens im Ausdruck abhängen. Beispiel: Die Zahl 1234567890 hat die Stellenwerte 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0.

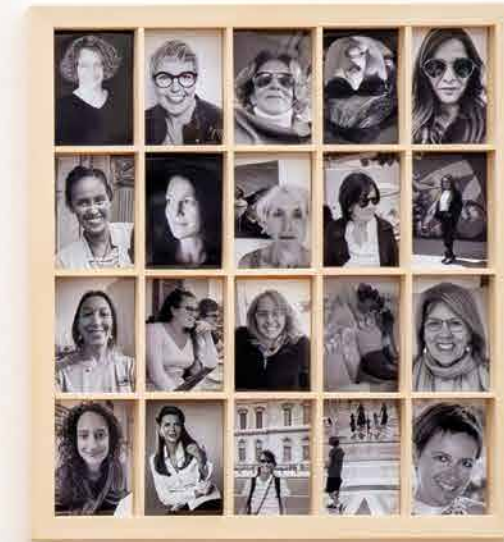
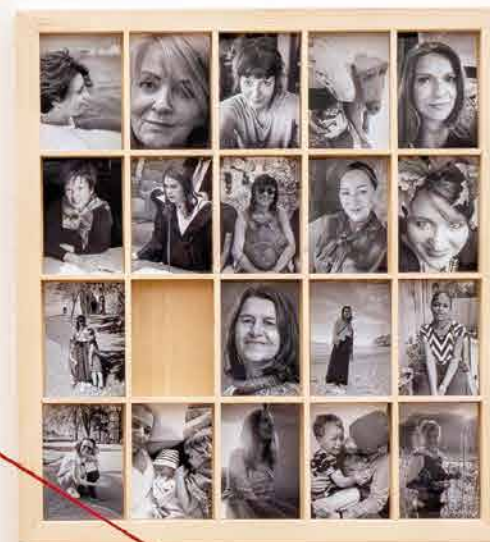
6. Stellenwertsysteme sind Positionssysteme, in denen die Werte der Zeichen (die Stellenwerte) von der Position des Zeichens im Ausdruck abhängen. Beispiel: Die Zahl 1234567890 hat die Stellenwerte 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0.

7. Stellenwertsysteme sind Positionssysteme, in denen die Werte der Zeichen (die Stellenwerte) von der Position des Zeichens im Ausdruck abhängen. Beispiel: Die Zahl 1234567890 hat die Stellenwerte 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0.

8. Stellenwertsysteme sind Positionssysteme, in denen die Werte der Zeichen (die Stellenwerte) von der Position des Zeichens im Ausdruck abhängen. Beispiel: Die Zahl 1234567890 hat die Stellenwerte 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0.

9. Stellenwertsysteme sind Positionssysteme, in denen die Werte der Zeichen (die Stellenwerte) von der Position des Zeichens im Ausdruck abhängen. Beispiel: Die Zahl 1234567890 hat die Stellenwerte 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0.

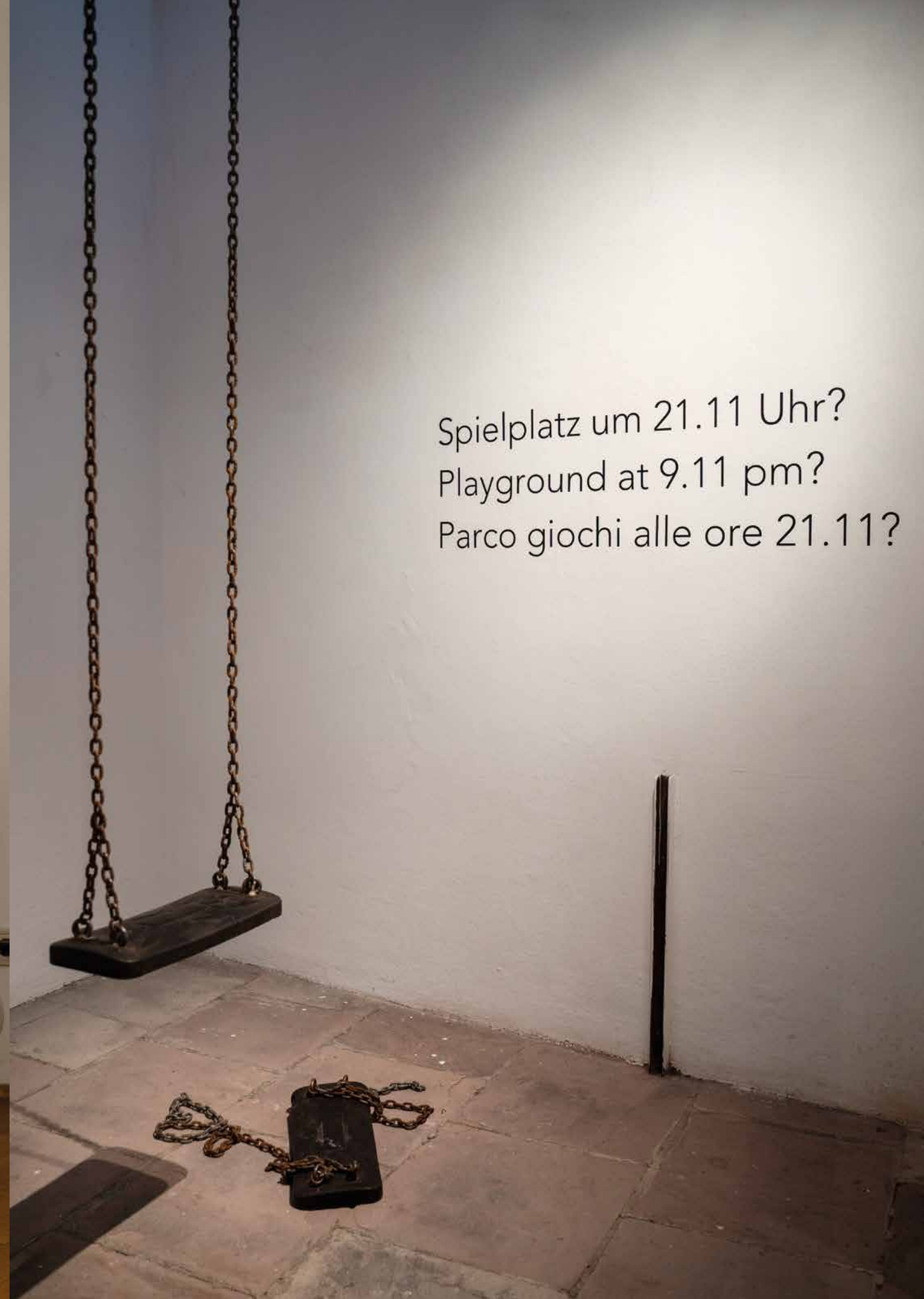
10. Stellenwertsysteme sind Positionssysteme, in denen die Werte der Zeichen (die Stellenwerte) von der Position des Zeichens im Ausdruck abhängen. Beispiel: Die Zahl 1234567890 hat die Stellenwerte 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0.

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Quechu





Spielplatz um 21.11 Uhr?
Playground at 9.11 pm?
Parco giochi alle ore 21.11?



List of works

Astrid Kofler & Sara Parolari
Border Motherhood. Being mothers in a world of inequalities
 2023/2024
 Mixed materials (wire and clothing pegs, fabric, wooden boxes, photographs)
 11 m (laundry thread), 42×46 cm (wooden boxes)

Ingrid Hora & Elena Maines
Cloud Catchers
 2023/2024 ongoing
 100% rPET, produced without water
 119×199 cm (photographs)
 Edition of 6
 Climatologist photographed by Daniela Brugger

Luca Trevisani & Fabio Carnelli
Recasting Ötzy. Playing eco-foundational myths
 2024
 Audiovisual environment, tent
 200×200 cm
 Acknowledgements: Essential to this piece – without which it could not have been realized – were the contributions of Persian artist Leila Tahammoli, who provided the voice and color of the work; Andreas Putzer, a researcher and curator at the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology; Azadeh Yousefi, a researcher involved in the translation; and Anastasia Routou, the contact person at Casa Conti Forni in Bolzano, managed by the Volontarius Group.

Katharina Theresa Mayr & Verena Platzgummer
*»Gegenplätze«
 ore 21.11, parco giochi, BZ*
An artistic-scientific inquiry into the hidden life of playgrounds
 2023/2024 ongoing
 Mixed materials (installation: swings and audio elements)
 Site specific (audio: 7:33 minute loop)
 Further supporting institutions: With the kind support of the Free University of Bolzano – Faculty of Design and Arts, the Municipality of Bolzano / Bolzano City Gardens and music producer George Munro

Silvia Hell & Abraham Mejia Aguilar
THEMIS: an arTistic and research approach to raise awarEness about cliMate change that produces InequalitieS
 2024
 Visual expressions, music, graphs, photos, videos, multimedia, environmental audio-video installation
 Variable dimensions
 Further supporting institutions: GEOPARC Bletterbach

Maria Walcher & Verena Wisthaler
MY NAME IS HUMAN / thank you, dear bus driver
 2024
 Performative research, sound-installation, bus tickets, photo series insights into the process
 approx. 200×300×200 cm
 Further supporting institutions: SASA, Südtiroler Transportstrukturen AG



Unfinished by design

As the exCHANGE project comes to a close, what remains is not a single story, but a collection of voices, questions, creative approaches, and perspectives that speak to the many ways inequalities shape our world. The six tandems that participated in this journey have opened up distinct and often surprising windows into inequalities – through the lens of motherhood, climate change, ancient artifacts, language, public spaces, and more. They each followed their own path – some through personal experience, others through experimental data or historical reflection – but all shared a willingness to look at inequalities from new and creative angles.

What stood out across the collaborations was how inequality rarely appears in loud or obvious ways. More often, it lives in the details: in who gets seen, who gets heard, who gets to stay or move freely, or who is expected to stay silent. Whether through a fallen tree in a simulated storm or a chat with a bus driver, each project found ways to expose these hidden dynamics – sometimes gently, sometimes provocatively. This is where the strength of combining art and science truly showed: in the ability to hold complexity, to raise questions without rushing to solve them, and to invite people to engage with uncomfortable truths in thoughtful and deeply emotional ways.

Of course, collaboration across disciplines is not without its challenges. Differences in language, pace, and working methods required constant negotiation. Yet many tandems reported that these very frictions led to deeper insights and unexpected synergies. The collaboration was not only a space of production, but also a space of learning – about others and about oneself.

Thus, rather than providing answers, exCHANGE offers new ways of asking questions. It reminds us that inequalities are not only a subject to be analyzed, but an experience to be felt, a structure to be challenged, and a reality to be reimagined. It shows how art and science can come together to spark reflection and action through thoughtful, grounded, and collaborative experimentation.

The outcomes shared in this catalogue are not meant to be conclusive. They represent an ongoing process rather than a finished product, a first step on a path that continues to evolve through dialogue, reflection, and... exchange. Rather than wrapping up the conversation, this project hopes to extend it. The ideas, questions, and experiments presented here are an invitation for others to join in, to take part, to challenge, to carry the conversation forward, and, perhaps, to envision more equal futures.

The exCHANGE tutors and observers



Giulia Isetti holds a PhD in Classical Philology and a Master of Business Administration (MBA), having completed her studies in Germany, the UK, and Italy. Her recent research focuses on art-science integration, sustainability, digitalization, and gender inequalities.

Michael de Rachewiltz's main interests concern philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, and applied ethics.

Elisa Piras holds a PhD in Politics, Human Rights, and Sustainability. She does research at the intersection of political philosophy and political science, exploring issues of social and global justice, political liberalism, public opinion, and disinformation.

Maximilian Walder is a sociologist specializing in media, culture, and the arts, with academic training across Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Germany. His work explores media reception, cultural production, and, more recently, sustainable tourism.

Chiara Paris holds a background in history, with a focus on societies and institutions in modern and contemporary history. Her interests span women's political participation, gender inequalities, and how historical contexts shape today's social structures.

Zoe Krueger Weisel holds a background in Sociology and Social Research, having completed her studies in Germany, the United States, and Italy. Her research focuses on third and cross cultures, globalization, and cultural identities.

Valentina Stecchi, a professional cartoonist, works in illustration, satire, comics, graphic design and teaching. Her drawing style is directed toward addressing a wide variety of present-day topics with a focus on memory, human rights, and gender issues.



Projekt Webseite
[https://www.eurac.edu/en/institutes-centers/
center-for-advanced-studies/projects/exchange](https://www.eurac.edu/en/institutes-centers/center-for-advanced-studies/projects/exchange)



Themis
<https://silviahell.eu/themis>



My name is human / thank you, bus driver
[https://mariawalcher.com/MY-NAME-IS-HUMAN-
thank-you-dear-bus-driver-1](https://mariawalcher.com/MY-NAME-IS-HUMAN-thank-you-dear-bus-driver-1)