CIRCE

France – Creative Impact Fund

club coop

Exploring alternative approaches to the dominant models and assumptions surrounding nightlife cultural venues and their status in society

"ÇA TE DIT D'OUVRIR UN CLUB ?":

***CLUB COOP* FINAL REPORT**

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club coop (Marseille)

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Abstract

This report summarises the planning and execution of the *club coop* project in Marseille, France. Conceived as a nightlife cultural venue incorporating a cooperative decision-making process at the heart of its operations, *club coop* set out with two central ambitions: innovating toward a model which provides fairer fees to artists in the city whilst offering accessible pricing to fans, and providing a platform to artists from Marseille's marginalised or otherwise underrepresented creative communities.

The report details the activities of the project from May-December 2023 (what members have dubbed 'Season One'), and in particular its development from an idea prototyped by three initial team members to a residency in a bricks-and-mortar location, with a full cultural agenda programmed by its members, who number some 600 at the time of writing. It also details key conclusions from this period, both with regard to our involvement with CIRCE and more generally, as well as challenges and planned adjustments for the future.

Keywords: Cooperative, decision-making, Marseille

A. Summary: *club coop* is the result of several overlapping ideas. A project emerging from the social patchwork of Marseille, it seeks to address two key concerns within the context of the city's social and nightlife framework. *club coop* is, on the one hand, the testing site for a cooperative decision-making system and service-based membership model, designed to facilitate fairer fees for artists and fairer prices for fans in a live electronic music environment. It is also, however, an attempt to foster collaboration and cross-pollination between Marseille's often-disparate creative and sociocultural communities, particularly in response to issues of marginalisation in the city. **The development of each of these aspects came through successive, expanding innovative loops - affording more of a voice, at each step, to participants, both actual and potential, in the city's nightlife culture.**

This is not a pair of aims chosen arbitrarily. As event organisers and musicians, attempting to professionalise in the world of nightlife, the project's founding coordinators (hereafter the 'core team', for want of a better phrase) had seen first-hand the lack of space for communities outside of dominant class-cultural groups in Marseille. Analysis of local listings - discussed in Section C of this report - as well as qualitative data collected both before and during the experimentation phase - discussed in Section D - reveals an imbalance in the cultural offering of nightlife spaces in the city. This is particularly striking given the lack of direct correlation between distance from Marseille's city centre and levels of deprivation or disenfranchisement. Indeed, the "existence of segregation and ghettoisation" within the city is characterised by residents from working-class and migrant backgrounds - regardless of their location - being "excluded and marginalised, causing general social inequalities and social disintegration" (Grzegorczyk, 2012, p. 53). It is attitudes and structures, rather than geographies, which demarcate Marseille's social strata (cf. Warren, 2020). The project's initial hypothesis, then, was that the provision of a platform for *collective* programming of cultural

events - at a location and price-point more accessible than would be possible with a traditional event promotion model - would help tackle this challenge head-on.

B. Journey: At the time the core team submitted their proposal to CIRCE, significant research had been done into existing service-based cooperatives, but without the provision of financial support, no experimentation had been possible. As a result, upon receipt of funding, the project began effectively from a standing start with regard to building momentum locally. The vision, therefore, for *club coop* as a physical space was precise on theory but uncertain on practicalities, and had yet to be reconciled with the challenges posed by Marseille's material conditions. In the weeks immediately following CIRCE's award of support, an intense period of further research, development, and stress-testing ensued. Particular attention was paid to the development of a framework guaranteeing participation and centring of individuals from minority or marginalised backgrounds, and to the protection of this underlying principle from any 'tyranny of the masses.' Such 'tyranny,' of course, is not typically cited as a concern in the building of cooperative projects - with models commonly organised along deliberative democratic or sociocratic lines which serve the interests of the in-group (paying members) without particular responsibilities to any other one group or interest (Sgarro, 2023, paras. 5-6). In the case of *club coop*, however, guarding against it was crucial, in the event that a hesitancy to engage with a new, untrusted space meant the project's initial membership did not reflect the city's diversity.

The summer months were focussed on further developing these processes in light of the particularities of the concept and the location - see Section C on Innovation - but also on space research and acquisition. Marseille has few city-centre venues adapted to host live electronic music, which has in turn led to a local population unused to - and often unwilling to tolerate - new spaces along these lines. Compounding this issue, significant gaps exist in Marseille's urban planning, particularly around public transport; a map of metro and tram lines reveals a 'hub-and-spoke' design, with journeys leading to-and-from the city centre rather than criss-crossing the suburbs (cf. "Marseille Plan Metro et Tramway," 2021). Clearly, this placed

a limit on the feasibility of a space in the outskirts, crucial as it was to attract city-wide interest. Meetings with key stakeholders in the nightlife ecosystem - from city council representatives to owners of one or sometimes several already-existing venues - were major milestones, therefore, in that they allowed for the formulation of a more realistic sense of the tradeoffs that would be inevitable during this experimentation phase. Ultimately, a location was found not through formal methods - though these were extensively pursued - but through existing networks, resulting in a residency agreement with the owner of a small bar, situated close to the the centre of Marseille but also a matter of metres away from tram, bus, and metro links. This space did not match up to initial expectations - regarding size, opening hours, or interior design - but nonetheless gave the project a decisive boost, as well as an initial means to involve members in imagining how the space could be adapted to the desires of participants. The natural question, here, is one of the limitations imposed by such a compromise (between an imagined, perfect space and an actual, imperfect one). The nature of the project influenced the space sought, but the space then acquired also shaped the evolution of the project. The effect of this dialectic was not purely philosophical - it also had a significant impact on the economic outcomes of the experimentation phase, as is outlined later in this report.

June, July, and August also saw the constitution and first meetings of *club coop*'s advisory board, which brought with it a first formal opportunity to share the work done to that point with key community figures in Marseille. These plans were met with enthusiasm, but there was a noticeable gap between willingness to support the project and each individual's capacity to effectively engage in the manner requested. As meetings with the advisory board gathered speed, initial promotional activities also took place. A guerrilla-marketing campaign, consisting of stripped-back posters referencing both the new project and iconic phrases and lyrics from Marseille, was met with a far greater response than expected. This resulted in some 400 sign-ups and an instantly recognisable image - itself generating social media interest - which could then be employed in online profile-building.

September saw the finalising of launch-day participation tools and decision-making processes, alongside a ramping-up of existing efforts to publicise the project (both online and

offline). Features in culturally significant publications - notably *mixmag* (Ross, 2023) and *Underscope* ("Marseille: Un Nouveau Club", 2023) - ahead of launch led to rapid growth of awareness beyond the offline networks built through postering and word-of-mouth. By opening night (September 30, 2023), this work had paid off, with some two hundred attendees and over one hundred new members, as well as a good deal of positive feedback and interest shown in the project. Of course, this was not the core focus of *club coop* - its cooperative, member-driven nature had not yet been tested - but the experiment could not have run without the initial interest and buy-in of Marseille's public. Developing a community built out of that public - one that would *actively* lead on the functioning of the space over the ensuing months - then became the mission.

The project's first member meeting, hosted in the first week of October, saw more than twenty people show up. A significant percentage of those had attended the opening night, though not every meeting attendee had already become a member. This - coupled with more than twenty event proposals received via a dedicated online form - meant that the member meeting had plenty to discuss and no shortage of ingredients with which to concoct *club coop*'s cultural agenda. Again, this came with challenges: in the absence of similar initiatives in the city, many proposals were made which were, in essence, requests on behalf of existing collectives looking to showcase their projects wholesale in the *club coop* space. This was to be expected, but revealed a lack of understanding of the importance placed on collective decision-making. Ultimately, though, 'workshopping' of events gathered speed. As early as late October, an event dedicated to the Baltimore Club movement and its growing appreciation in Marseille comprised member-proposed film screenings and online and library materials, as well as performances from multiple local DJs. Further collaboration between members led to the construction of the artistic programming still underway - becoming increasingly efficient as a shared understanding was built of how such a process might best work.

C. Innovation: The construction and revision of *club coop*'s model - right up to those most recent member interventions - has followed a roughly concentric approach. There have been at least three cycles of refinement to the development of *club coop*'s activities, each larger than the last - with the third cycle taking place throughout the experimentation phase.

The first of these three cycles was an intense period of study. Early ideas and policies were prototyped within the core team. This process began with market research, identifying transferrable - or perhaps better put, translatable - elements from the organisations the *club coop* concept took inspiration from. Cooperative supermarket *La Louve* was one such example, with their service-based approach to participation - in which members can maintain their access to services by giving some of their time to support the supermarket's operations - an initial pillar in planning. Reflection followed on how these foundations might then be adapted to material conditions in Marseille. This drew on a wide set of qualitative and quantitative data: going-out habits and prices in Marseille were analysed, as were the artists performing. Where there were limitations on analysis (cf. France's rather restrictive laws on data collection (Crumley, 2009)), open-source information from sources such as local event aggregators were employed to formulate a representative snapshot of the local situation.

Perhaps the clearest example of this prototyping in action came in the form of *club coop*'s programming guidelines - outlining how members could propose, workshop, and realise events. This document credits Zurich's *Zentralwascherei* as its starting point (Zentralwascherei, 2023). Significant adaptation was required, however. A specific focus on booking artists from "Marseille's underrepresented/marginalised music and cultural communities" reflected the identified lack of presence of artists from these groups on lineups (club coop, 2023) - with multiple weeks in early 2023 seeing a sole Black non-cis-het-man DJ included across the city's events, in one case amongst 79 DJs listed (Konetu, 2023). Other early documents covered programming committee formation, membership models, and a list of requirements for an eventual physical location. The aim of this first cycle, then, was to build a horizontal prototype: complete enough to give those unfamiliar with the project an idea of

how it might work, but light enough on the details to allow others to fill these in as consultation began with wider circles.

Our second innovative loop saw that consultation begin, with the broadening of the prototyping 'circle.' Meetings commenced with an advisory board composed of stakeholders from across Marseille's creative communities (both geographically and professionally). Event organisers and DJs were represented, but so too were dancers, artist liaisons, venue managers, and the *maître d'hôtel* of a local climbing gym who had, over the preceding months, overturned the venue's cultural offering. In a series of four monthly meetings with this advisory board, as well as through more frequent exchanges initiated by its most motivated participants, the aforementioned processes underwent significant revision. As mentioned, progress during this phase was not perfect - naturally, the fact that advisory board participants were already actively involved in *other* creative pursuits meant attendance was unreliable, and a 'core' of particularly motivated participants likely shaped the project's development more than others who were unable (or unwilling) to dedicate the same time to meetings and other interventions. Indeed, this proved a recurring theme throughout the development of the project, and the challenge of organising a large group of people with differing skill-sets, levels of engagement, and availability remains central in ongoing reflection.

In any case, these firmer processes were then shared with the fledgling member base as part of the third innovative cycle, both during and in the wake of *club coop*'s opening weekend. Attendees at the project's earliest meetings, as well as those active through online channels (generic feedback forms and a Discord server allowing for more detailed exchanges), provided feedback and identified priority areas to be addressed. This feedback began in the first members' meeting, and continued weekly throughout the experiment. Though the core team sometimes angled toward a particular focus on certain processes through the agenda for each meeting - with a financial presentation composed by the core team taking place each month, for instance - a ring-fenced period of open discussion allowed members to bring up anything they wished to modify in any meeting they attended. Meetings, then, aimed to practise "blends of decision-making and fantasy" of the kind proposed by

Sinclair (1992), amongst others, with extended exercises in building the *club coop* 'imaginary' paired with more immediate decisions envisaged as steps along the path to rendering that imaginary tangible (p. 614). This, in turn, led to the emergence of organic collaborations between members according to their desire and ability to tackle particular challenges. Clearly, the fixed day and time of meetings limited the amount of members able to participate, but attempts to mitigate this were made, with provision for amendments and additions to be suggested online. Ultimately, these amendments - both off- and on-line - led to the final set of core processes which lie at the heart of the present model, though these will be subject to a more intense period of revision following the conclusion of the experimentation phase.

The cultural agenda formulated through these meetings saw a series of events - rapidly accelerating to three night-time openings per week by the project's closing stages - programmed by members. These events were successful, in the sense that they stemmed from proposals which had been enriched by the collective, and were staffed by members who were sufficiently numerous to cover shifts at the venue. On an economic level, however, they were not always self-sustaining, in no small part due to the limitations of the space in relation to the amount paid to participating artists. With relatively short opening hours, and a residency agreement which allocated at least one third (and often more than one half) of bar proceeds to the landlord, conditions were suboptimal. Participation was encouraging, though, and at the time of writing, member interventions have, with growing confidence, extended far beyond solely questions of programming.

Indeed, during the third cycle, several smaller datasets were collected to facilitate informed decision-making. Of course, new member sign-ups were tracked, but so too was the percentage of members returning to the space for subsequent events, as well as the amount of hours contributed by members in the form of voluntary services. Financial performance for each event (stratified to explain where money had been spent) was shared with members at the start of each month of the experiment, and the cumulative distribution of money to Marseille's creative communities was also tracked (see Figure 1 below).

Figure **1**

Example Financial Data Presented to Members (translated)

EVENT	EVENT REFERENCE	NET PROFIT (EUR)
Opening (30/09)	1	-107
Whaack the House (13/10)	2	-367
13.93 (28/10)	3	-1057
Tear Da Club Up (31/10)	4	-158
Open Decks 1 (11/11)	5	190
Club Night (18/11)	6	280
Open Decks 2 (23/11)	7	94
Jerker (24/11)	8	-289
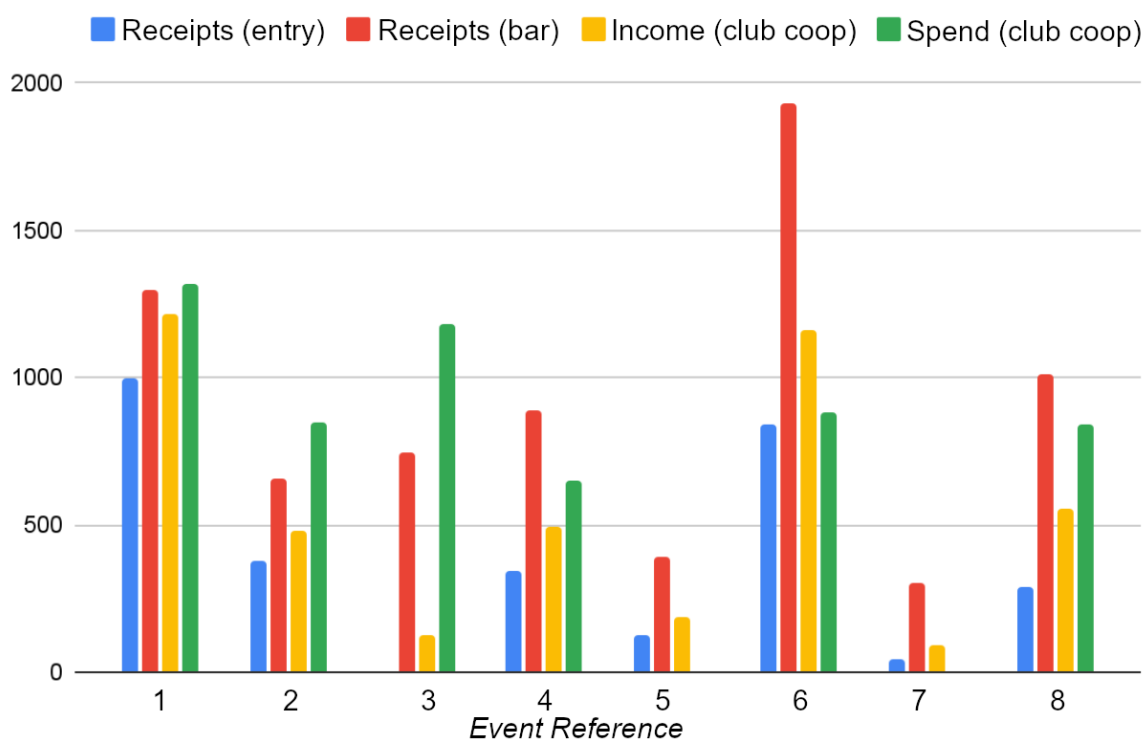
This was crucial for transparency, of course, but also served as an informal benchmark for

member investment in the long-term success of the project. Members had the opportunity to -

and did - make decisions which went against their own short-term self-interest, such as raising

prices at the bar for certain drinks deemed to have been priced unsustainably. In doing so, they demonstrated a willingness to prioritise the needs of the project - crucial for any prospect of long-term viability. Over the course of the experimentation phase, the project's safer spaces policy, members' charter, and financial policy all came under productive scrutiny, and began to be reshaped according to the vision of project participants.

As noted, this process of progressively expanding innovation cycles was imperfect, and could certainly be improved with preferable conditions and the benefit of hindsight. A recurring theme was that of balancing online and offline decision-making spaces. Offline processes excluded those who could not commit time or did not have access to transport, whilst online processes often proved intimidating - or even inaccessible - to those who were less tech-savvy or did not have access to a mobile phone or computer. An effective, transparent, *accessible* hybrid model, then, combining a robust and easily-understood online platform for voting on proposals *and* the foundation provided by in-person meetings, is a priority target for the project, and should be considered crucial for any who seek to employ a similar decision-making or innovative process. Nonetheless, the experimentation phase has already demonstrated that a member base previously unknown to one another can, with very little lead-in time, produce an effective cultural agenda, which responds to public demand whilst also tackling prevailing imbalances head-on.

D. Impact: The impact of the *club coop* pilot period, whilst relatively brief (under three months, comprising approx. 30 openings) and incomplete at the time of writing, can be measured in numerous ways - quantitatively through administrative, digital and financial footprints, and qualitatively through interaction with and engagement of members both in-person and online.

To the point of writing, *club coop* has over 600 member sign-ups, from which base over 200 hours of services - at the bar, at the door, keeping an eye on the dancefloor, or even helping to stick up posters - have been contributed. The project's Instagram account has gained some 2000 followers over this period, with over 1000 unique attendants having passed through the doors over eight late-night openings, eight DJ workshops, and eight member

meetings. These contributions from members have allowed for 34 hours of DJ sets and live performances to take place. This, in turn, has translated into investment in the local creative community. €6000 - and counting - have been paid in artist fees, allowing up-and-coming participants in the city's creative economy to be properly compensated for their craft. Each pay-packet given to DJs is large enough to constitute a 'cachet d'intermittent,' a crucial building-block for those seeking to chart a path to professionalisation in the industry (Fourcroy, 2023).

Case Study: "13.93"

Having attended the opening of *club coop*, one new member proposed an event bringing together up-and-coming hip-hop artists from neighbourhoods facing similar socio-economic challenges in Marseille and Paris. The proposal pitched performances from OMR, HKM and R2S - three artists from Frais Vallon, a rapidly-built and now underdeveloped estate in Marseille's northern quarter (Ingram 135) - alongside their counterparts Montescristo, Boons and Daby from Montfermeil - a central site of the 2005 Paris riots. As it evolved, the putative event was paired with the screening of a documentary conceived and produced by young people involved in the local rap scenes - entitled '13.93,' a reference to the postcodes of each neighbourhood.

Ahead of the opening, adjustments were made to the offerings of the space to allow entry to under-18s, given the paucity of venues in the city centre which cater to young people from the city's neighbourhoods. And, as the artists involved arrived - some four hours before their show was set to begin - the importance of this, and their wider vision, became clear. OMR, one of the artists from Frais-Vallon, noted that the estate is "like a small city … [with] everything" - including being "the only *quartier* with a metro stop." His music - which he described as "melodic," but unmistakably "*cité* [estate]" - aims to unite his "welcoming and open" estate, and reveal its potential to the broader Marseille scene (Fabry et al., 2023). As discussed, Marseille's northern quarters - including Frais-Vallon - have been at the tail-end of

the city's cultural restoration, despite initiatives such as the designation of Marseille as European City of Culture in 2013. In this context, and with creatives from such estates struggling to access sites of cultural exchange - as OMR alludes to above - *club coop* was rendered a space of cross-pollination. Alongside local party-goers, returning members, social workers and volunteers with the *Espace J* social project - which operates in both Frais-Vallon and Montfermeil - OMR remarked that what was "incredible" was that "all the guys [came] and [brought] their audience – the whole of *la cité*" seemed to be in attendance (personal correspondence, October 29, 2023). He didn't think that the group had "ever played in the centre" prior to the event, and none of the artists had previously received a fee for their performance, underlining again the motivation of the project to pay artists fairly for their work, and demonstrate a path toward professionalisation - especially for those from the city's marginalised cultural communities. Having watched the '13.93' documentary covering the two scenes in the space, even those who had attended by chance were already familiar with the artists performing by the time they took the stage. In OMR's words, "the atmosphere [was] buzzing, the size of the venue [was] perfect, and [the artists] really enjoyed bringing [their] own rap style to rue Curiol." Mohamed, Head of Wellbeing at *Espace J* in Montfermeil, echoed these sentiments, noting that "club co-op [sic] members … mobilised and put in place the necessary means to ensure that the event … could take place under the best conditions" (personal correspondence, October 29, 2023). From electrified singalongs to local superstar JUL and impromptu viral moments captured by attendees on Snapchat, to hands flailing in the air in excitement, the event served as evidence that the creative potential of the artists from both the '13' and the '93' had firmly transcended the boundaries of their estates.

Of course, the internal and external ripple effects of the approach to programming, and broader participation, taken by the *club coop* membership are not limited to one case study. The impact of the project on the core team was liberating, emotional and transformative. Even as equal co-founders, coordinators, and friends – who had worked extensively together and individually in the world of music and culture – the process of community-driven innovation

resulted in an increased sense of connection to one another, as well as of embeddedness within Marseille's creative ecosystem(s) and organisational structures. CIRCE's funding and broader support also alleviated the burdens of financial risk and imposter syndrome typically associated with the early stages of such initiatives. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the core team discovered first-hand how nightlife and venue management demand long, late hours – and can at times compromise the work-life balance struck in daytime professions. During weeks with busy openings, particularly close attention had to be paid to ensure personal check-ins and encourage time to be taken off when necessary. Crucially, though, the participatory model of the project saw members stepping up to spread the workload more broadly, and *allow* this time for rest and recuperation.

More broadly, another clear boon of the model employed has been the reach of the project, with responsibility for sourcing, developing, and delivering diverse programming spread across a large pool of members with their own experiences, networks, and expertise. This has extended far beyond initial expectations, with the most committed members stepping up to concretely change the scope and ambition of the experimentation phase. A small permanent library, and even a 'ref-o-tech' - providing literature and media connected to the theme of each event, which can then be borrowed by members - have emphasised the desire of those involved to focus on the educational potential of the project, something that had not been a central feature of early planning. The typical formulation of artistic practice is one of individual expression; this has remained at *club coop*, but emphasis has been shifted to community involvement, both within the membership and in the communities from which they are drawn.

E. Learnings: Clearly, a project such as *club coop* is one beholden to its environment and material conditions. Several challenges are clear, however, and derive from a mix of practical and theoretical sticking points - and on these fronts, some conclusions can already be drawn, even as the experimentation phase continues.

Firstly, building strong links with local communities takes time. Indeed, the manner in which a space was found and accessed underlines that embedding a project in local networks, and understanding the business practices of the environment into which one is entering, is invaluable. More broadly, the prior work of the core team in Marseille notwithstanding, winning trust in *club coop* is an ongoing process, especially in light of growing - and often justified - cynicism toward supposedly 'community-minded' projects. The influential French collective 'Soeurs Malsaines' ['Unhealthy Sisters'] produced a widely-shared social media graphic on this topic, 'Rien ni personne n'est safe' ['Nowhere nor nobody is safe'], which gestured toward the increasing exploitation of buzzwords associated with inclusive values in lieu of genuine attempts to tackle social issues (Soeurs Malsaines, 2023). Improved outcomes could have been obtained here through earlier public engagement, even if this had meant launching online, without a finalised and refurbished physical space - or any space at all, for that matter. Gaining the trust of potential participants, and ensuring successful two-way communication, has been key to engaging the member base beyond just attending late-night events as partygoers. This process of rapport-building only began following *club coop*'s first in-person event, and could certainly have started sooner.

Linked to this element of community-building - and engagement - is the question of communication. Being concise and clear on what the *club coop* project was set to offer in advance of launch proved challenging, given that the key processes underpinning it were in a state of flux throughout the buildup to - and even during - the experimentation phase. A lack of clarity on this front - as well as the absence of consistent messaging to press and other stakeholders - meant that control over the narrative was lost in early weeks. Some turned up expecting a fully-fledged nightclub, only to be disappointed by the nature of the venue, whilst others seemed shocked to learn that the focus of the project was community-minded at all. This confusion extended to proposals, as has been mentioned, with many disappointed to learn that they could not hire the space out as if it were a conventional events hall. The production of a press kit - as well as informational updates through social media channels -

helped to redress this initial murkiness, but only after a good deal of trial, error, and member feedback.

Clarity, here, should not be mistaken for concretisation. Systems of cooperation must be developed in tandem with members of the community they seek to serve, and should be considered malleable until reviewed and - if necessary - revised extensively. Processes and ideas presented as sketches or prototypes were received and workshopped far more effectively than sometimes intimidating, extensive, and even sprawling pseudo-policy documents. Furthermore, it was crucial that once members felt comfortable to propose amendments and additions to existing processes, they could see how these changes were implemented, in clearly demonstrable ways. Transparency, then, was central to member meetings. Once changes were implemented, these were highlighted - as were proposals not taken forward, along with the reasoning for these decisions - and ample time was allowed for discussion of the given rationale. As an example, the economic model of the space is yet to be stabilised, as has been discussed. Member-proposed adjustments to bar prices and programming, though, have seen additional revenue generation which might subsidise less popular - but no less culturally significant - events. There is more to be done, here; the introduction of a greater deal of leadership ambiguity would be a starting point, as meetings can currently settle into a tacit hierarchy (cf. Schippers & Rus, 2023, para. 3). The establishment of more organised working groups - in lieu of the informal groupings which have emerged according to levels of engagement, without specific scope, powers to act, or incentives for participation - would also aid with organisation and facilitate the shift of power away from the core team. An upcoming period of reflection will allow these ideas to crystallise ahead of future planning.

More generally, conversations with participants in similar projects which had failed to get off the ground yielded a common warning: long-delayed projects, seeking a kind of theoretical purity, rarely made it to their launch weekend intact. The time constraints imposed on *club coop*'s opening by the provision of funding, therefore, proved productive on this front. Efficient channels of communication, and processes for effective division of labour and

decision-making, were established *out of necessity* at each stage of the project's development. With this in mind, the upcoming period of reflection will need to be managed to ensure *it* does not roll on indefinitely. The setting of target deadlines, launch dates, and key goals to be achieved will be essential to ensuring that this reflection is productive, rather than eroding built-up momentum. In the longer term, the development of a dedicated mobile application and web platform - replacing the useful but non-specialised Discord server used as a hub for online organising - would allow for the centralisation of such discussions, as well as the shift sign-up, programming calendar, and proposition interfaces. These are challenges the project is yet to tackle, and so any learnings are yet to be determined - but this is undoubtedly an exciting moment, and one which the member base seems more than ready to engage with wholeheartedly.

F. Linking back to CIRCE: Experimentation - and with it innovation - needs adequate funding. The CIF program provided a huge opportunity for a project such as *club coop*: lacking resources, employing a non-profit model, but with the potential to have an outsized impact on the communities it serves. Of course, experimentation almost always entails some degree of failure, from which useful insights can be gathered, and CIF addressed this head-on, building a program based on trust - rather than transaction - and close cooperation with CIRCE staff and mentors.

Alongside this, the exchanges afforded by the development of the CIRCE 'network' - both through organised symposia and in ad-hoc meetings, be they digital or physical - proved invaluable. They brought with them opportunities to learn from existing methodologies, work through common difficulties, workshop new solutions, and share experiences and knowledge. Cooperation and collective action are crucial to the project, and they are crucial, too, to the core team's conception of creative impact; in developing new solutions to problems that the market cannot - or has chosen not to - address, drawing on the well of communal experience provides a bedrock from which to build. Furthermore, that this network was composed not only of other projects similar to *club coop*, but also of researchers at different stages in their careers

who offered varied theoretical contributions, was a major boost. Indeed, that one even came to visit the project in advance of its opening, offering their thoughts and feeding back on the plans in place, was a testament to the success of these connections.

Perhaps the other side of this coin is the space there could have been for further focus or advice on the 'business' side of the project. Meetings with mentors were among the most impactful hours of the core team's time with CIRCE, both for *club coop* and for general understanding of a commercial world which was, albeit to varying degrees, new to them. These sessions might have been complemented, however, by the inclusion of counselling on the future of the project beyond the scope of CIRCE funding, whether through direct guidance on identifying and securing avenues to further support, or through broader discussion on the subject of finances throughout the process.

This aside, *club coop* has hopefully demonstrated that creative impact is people-driven. This is a lesson which can - alongside earlier more specific learnings - be applied to any new initiative. Even more broadly, creative impact has here proven to be a question of giving opportunities to potential change-makers to shine a light on their community. Through the provision of space, finance, and *confidence*, these change-makers can emerge - and the skills honed by them through their participation in *club coop* will, hopefully, continue to inspire progress both within and beyond this particular project, to the benefit of the city and the communities that make it the extraordinary place it is.

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