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## **On Collectivising as a Cultural Practice**

### **Insights from Tunis and Cairo**

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#### **Abstract:**

Despite their increasing significance, collectives remain underexplored in cultural policy research. While their global presence grows, a comprehensive understanding of their organizational structures and dynamics is lacking. Existing research often focuses on the conceptual aspects of collective artistic practices, neglecting their internal workings and frameworks. This gap may result in misunderstandings regarding the defining characteristics of collectives, their operational structures, and the factors that contribute to their sustainability.

Our study addresses these gaps by examining the cultural organization dimensions of collectives. Through interviews with 15 local collectives in Tunis and Cairo and participatory observations, we highlight dynamics such as pluralistic aesthetics, shared resources, and care practices, aiming to help cultural policy stakeholders better understand these groups. We argue that collectives should be seen not just as resource-pooling entities but as spaces where collaboration, empowerment, and care intersect. We also explore how collective care practices can be better understood and evaluated.

In conclusion, we advocate for a flexible, context-sensitive understanding of collectives. Our findings emphasize the importance of decentralized governance, diverse perspectives, and the collective effort to create alternative cultural spaces.

## 1) A Practice-Based Approach to Collectivity

Since documenta 15<sup>1</sup> (d15), a shift has been observable not only in German art and cultural policy discourse but also at the international level. This change is especially reflected in the introduction of new terminology, and the reassessment and partial reinterpretation of, and layering of additional meaning onto, existing concepts of collectivity. Curated by the Indonesian artist collective *ruangrupa*, d15 introduced a radically collective and community-driven approach that emphasized the concept of *lumbung* (Indonesian for “communal rice barn”). This model encompasses principles of resource-sharing, sustainability, and artistic collaboration beyond Western institutional frameworks.

The shift towards collectivity within the art world is particularly important as it aligns with a more general desire to decolonize international cultural spheres of production. Collectivity is regarded here as a progressive counternarrative, providing an alternative to the currently dominant prioritization of individual genius and one-man shows. Theorists like Boaventura de Sousa Santos have theorized and strengthened the belief in collective cultural work as a counter-hegemonic practice, which is able to challenge the imperatives of quality and objective evaluation of artistic production, by situating each expression in the context of the community that created it:

In light of the hegemony of the aesthetics of the North, what we often call contemporary art is in fact but a small portion of the art produced in our time, the part that is promoted by conventional curators and the global elites.<sup>2</sup>

He and others<sup>3</sup> have stressed the need for a descriptive language able to address the unique value of such alternative, locally rooted forms of cultural production.<sup>4</sup> Typically, the announcement of a new shift in the cultural sphere attracts significant

<sup>1</sup> **documenta 15** was the fifteenth edition of *documenta*, held in 2022. **documenta** is a contemporary art exhibition that has been held every five years in Kassel since 1955, serving as a global barometer of artistic developments and continuously introducing new curatorial concepts and socio-political discourses through its changing artistic leadership (cf. “Über” in [documenta.de](http://documenta.de) n.d.).

<sup>2</sup> de Sousa Santos 2020: 120.

<sup>3</sup>For the importance of collaborative artistic practices as an alternative approach to art production, see: Grant H. Kester 2011; For redefining public art by emphasizing direct engagement between artists and diverse audiences, see: Suzanne Lacy, ed. 1995; For expanding the notion of art, see: Karen van den Berg ed. 2019.

<sup>4</sup> cf. de Sousa Santos 2020: 118.

attention and discussion from a cultural audience. However, despite the strong expectations surrounding a cultural shift – of which the move toward collective practices is just one example – there has been little focus on the actual structures that underpin them.

While the topic of collectivity is increasingly being explored from an artistic perspective, much of the current research within international art tends to focus on the conceptual or aesthetic dimensions of collective experience, often overlooking the actual working structures of existing collectives. This is evident in the works of Wesseling & Cramer (2022), Clusterduck Collective (2021), Bublitz et al. (2019), and Lettau & Canyürek (2025). Our contribution aims to fill this specific research gap by engaging with the organizational, cultural, and policy frameworks that shape artistic collectives, providing a deeper understanding of their operational dynamics and collaborative structures. We seek to address this gap not by focusing on individual collectives and their unique working structures, but by taking steps towards a broader discourse on the nature of collective work, with an emphasis on its cultural, organizational, and policy dimensions. Hence we align with a tradition of a critical infrastructure debate, aiming to distance from a purely qualitative evaluation of artistic production by systematically embracing discussions about the infrastructures that were used to bring a specific expression into existence.<sup>5</sup> As Szreder (2021) puts it, a classical understanding of artistic production overlooks the exploitative and destructive mechanisms it generates. If infrastructure is understood as a relational setting that encompasses both technology and people<sup>6</sup>, modern art, in his view, has become a stabilizing feature of competitive capitalism—leaving little room for subversion within the artistic field:

The competitive system of ultra-mobile networks are incompatible with more strategic approaches to social change. Instead of supporting transformation, they cater to the flow of interchangeable fashions and curatorial projects, their expansion based on the exploitation of artistic dark matter.<sup>7</sup>

A growing number of critically engaged, postcolonial scholars begins to advocate against the idea of objective artistic standards within the arts and for a more diverse

<sup>5</sup> Within the arts this shift dates back to an influential article from Maria Vishmidt, issued in 2016. She was the first to question the belief in art to be a free and open space of deliberation, by highlighting the exclusive nature of the international gallery system. (cf. Vishmidt 2016, 265–266)

<sup>6</sup> cf. Simone 2004; van Eikels 2023, 94.

<sup>7</sup> Szreder 2021, Section 4.

approach to cultural production: „In the pluriverse, one thing does not have to kill another to exist.“<sup>8</sup>

This belief in the necessity to challenge hierarchical understandings of artistic evaluation has sparked some critique. Claire Bishops famously stated in 2012, that a purely normative intention behind artistic production is lastly resulting in a failure to carry on arts critical capacity to newly imagine social spheres: “The visual, conceptual and experiential accomplishments of the respective projects are sidelined in favour of a judgement on the artists’ relationship with their collaborators.”<sup>9</sup> Taking up a similar critique, but even radicalising its extent, Lang and Grimwood have stated their fear that such a pluralisation in art could further fuel a post-truth development, where each seemingly authentic expression of the own, individual identity is prioritised over common agreements.<sup>10</sup>

The result is a yet unsolved debate, in which some see cultural collectives as the source of a newly emerging, countermovement to hegemonic norms, while others fear it to be a driver of fragmentation and local isolation.

We want to address this tension by taking on another perspective on collective work. With our research we take on a mediating approach, by systematically asking about the productive aspects of cultural collectives. Our research was guided by the belief that the debate sketched above is somehow missing out the actual productive aspect of collective cultural work. Rather than just normatively demanding their right to be different, many collectives actively produce their own set of cultural infrastructures that the group uses for their cultural practice. By imposing their own micro traditions, playful rituals, physical structures or tools and a own, location specific history, artistic collectives actively produce a unique, context specific environment. It is neither enough to describe this environment through the lens of an ultimately unique singularity, as a post-factic demand on a quasi-transcendental individuality would impose, nor to discuss such environments in the light of artistic productions that can be evaluated and consumed from outsiders.

We aim to show that there are indeed recurring patterns in collective infrastructure that are worth further study. What is yet to be developed is a language able to describe this new branch of artistic creation, that is able to both respect the

8 Easterling 2022, 23.

9 Bishops 2012, 23.

10 cf. Lang and Grimwood 2023.

individuality of each specific context and each specific project, but nevertheless enables us to identify recurring patterns among different forms of collective work, strengthening its broader understanding and acceptance.

Our approach towards collectivity is based on the belief that we, as researchers, are not detached from the cultural environments we investigate. Hence we deliberately chose an environment that is unfamiliar to us and where the discourse on collectivity varies from that in which we were trained. The study explicitly focuses on how the collectives understand themselves, as presented to us by the interview partners (self-representation), and on the dialogue that emerged through our role as outsiders to their collectives.

In the vibrant environments of Tunis and Cairo, cultural collectives are emerging as vital components of the art scene. These collectives demonstrate unique organizational practices that challenge existing frameworks and thus prompt a reevaluation of how collaborative artistic and creative practices should be understood and assessed.

Both Tunis and Cairo present rich opportunities for study due to their complex connections to Western art institutions and their own distinctive socio-political contexts. Through semi-structured interviews with 15 local collectives conducted in the spring and summer of 2024, along with participatory observations during an artistic and research residency in Tunis in May and June 2024, our research delves into the discussions surrounding collectivity in the WANA region. Of these 15 collectives, nine were selected for deeper analysis in this paper.<sup>11</sup> This approach offers a localized understanding with potential global implications. Our study explores the nuances of collectivity as expressed through these organizations and adopts a methodological approach that prioritizes self-description over external evaluation. By focusing on the collectives' own perspectives, we aim to identify shared patterns and insights that can inform bottom-up as well as leader-driven discussions on collective practices. The importance of this investigation lies in its ability to reveal the intrinsic complexities of collective work within the cultural sector, which traditional frameworks often misinterpret.

<sup>11</sup>All quotations used in this article have been edited by the authors for clarity and readability while retaining the original meaning of each response to the best of our knowledge and judgment.

Further, this strategy allows us to observe collectives as unique endeavors that do not fit neatly into predefined structures; instead, they evolve organically based on shared practices and collective goals. This informality and adaptability complicates external evaluation but provides the collectives with the advantages of resilience to changing environments, a potential to foster social integration, strengthen civil society, and promote sustainable resource use. With our approach we want to turn away from attempts at understanding individual collectives ethnographically and instead celebrate the plurality inherent in collective work. Rather than focusing on understanding a specific practice, we look at multiple forms of collectivity as they understand themselves and investigate the similarities that they share.

In order to address the challenges outsiders face in understanding the internal operations of collectives, our study emphasizes dialogic engagement over extractive research methods. Our research aims to stimulate further exploration into the infrastructures and contexts that sustain artistic collectives by using a collaborative glossary approach as a major practical outcome of our research and possible starting point for further collaborative processes and dialogues.

One of the focal points of our study is the role of collective care practices within informal cultural sectors. Despite being widespread, these practices have been largely overlooked and left unformalized, seen merely as aspects of daily life rather than strategic methodologies. This perception leads to a lack of understanding of, and support for, such initiatives. Institutional funding mechanisms also often fail to recognize the unique nature of collective work, which typically operates outside hierarchical models. We aim to address this marginalization of collective work by doing our share in developing a descriptive language that captures the distinct dynamics of these collective structures.

Ultimately, our research advocates for a more nuanced understanding of collectives as dynamic entities that challenge traditional artistic and cultural paradigms. By focusing on the structures and practices of collectivity, we can better support these groups and acknowledge their vital contribution to cultural diversity and local cultural sustainability. Our study explicitly invites further engagement on the topic of collective infrastructures by attempting to systematize collective practices and thereby make it easier for collectives to access the support structures offered by political stakeholders.

## **2) The Structures of the Collective**

Collectives are not created according to predefined structures; they develop pragmatically through shared practices and coordinated action. Often they take shape around a particular activity, issue, or space, and can differ significantly depending on the specific context in which they operate. Because collectives emerge organically rather than by following a standardized blueprint, they are highly adaptable, but also resistant to clear classification and external interpretation.

As collectives are rarely organized according to a strict plan or schema, it can be hard for outsiders to understand the conventions and working structures of a given collective. The people in charge are often not clearly defined and responsibility is distributed among multiple actors.

Instead of being carefully planned in advance, collectives often arise naturally as a pragmatic solution for a group to organize itself. The defining factor of a collective is not a rigid ideological commitment, but rather a lively shared interest in a common goal or vision. The specific form of this interest can vary greatly: some collectives arise around a physical space, others around a common social or political issue, and some evolve from existing relationships between people working together. They tend to grow into a cohesive unit over time, emerging as a result of accumulated experiences, shared practices, and long-term collaboration:

We didn't choose each other. [...] The space brought us together, actually. [...] [T]he curator, she called us a collective. And we've never used this word, you know, or described us (El Warcha, 2024).

As multiple individuals necessarily contribute to forming a collective, the products of collective work often bear traces of many minds, with each influencing the outcome. Many collectives explicitly want multiple ideas, visions, and approaches to coexist, shaping the collective as a dynamic and multifaceted entity rather than a singular, unified framework. The absence of a rigid strategic plan allows collectives to cultivate their internal differences, embracing the variety of perspectives within the group rather than enforcing uniformity. This does not mean, however, that collectives cannot also decide to have a clearly defined artistic expression that they represent together.

### *Plural Aesthetics*

Collectivity often produces its own recognizable way of solving things, as many people collaborate with their ideas. This process values the contributions of each individual, where diverse perspectives come together through shared goals and continuous dialogue.

The main resource of a collective is its shared idea, vision, or drive, which manifests not as a fixed leadership structure but as a cultural approach to self-governance. Collectives often rely on a governance model that allows for improvisation, adaptation, and individual initiative.

Despite their fluid structures, collectives are not necessarily free of hierarchies. While some explicitly work to reduce power imbalances, others develop intricate networks of formal and informal influence that shape access to resources and decision-making power. Prestige and authority within a collective may be distributed in complex ways, often determined by experience, social capital, or specific skill sets, rather than by officially designated roles. Similarly, workload distribution is not always equal – tasks often fall to those who feel the strongest sense of responsibility or who possess the necessary expertise, rather than being systematically assigned. As a result, collectives frequently operate within an informal yet deeply embedded structure of power dynamics that influences how they function.

In a collective, there's always someone who needs to take control, especially during meetings. While collective work on equal terms should be considered the ideal, there are always a few who need to organize. Even those not at the core of the collective contribute in different ways, sustaining it through participation and eventually becoming part of the process (Cyrine Gherissi, 2024).

This flexibility means collective structures should be seen as an organic conglomerate. Rather than creating a plan or strategy, collectives work with a culturally created vision that each member interprets according to their own views. Rather than attempting to impose conformity, collectives often work to cultivate the differences in their membership in order to maximize the number and scope of viewpoints actively contributing towards any matter or decision.



### *Crowd Knowledge*

Collectives do not depend on a single planning mind, but on compromises. Groups form naturally and take on responsibility together.

Collective practices extend beyond a mere gathering of people; they constitute a collection of individuals *with agency*. These practices offer a platform for all participants to become politically active, not only by focusing on individual tasks within a cooperative effort, but by acknowledging the political agency of each member throughout the organizing process: Participants have the power to negotiate and redefine the organizational structure. In this sense, most collective practices inherently rely on an open-ended, collaborative, and experimental approach. This implies that the predictability of a collective's output is often secondary to the process itself as the group process relies on the ability to listen to each other and being convinced by relevant arguments (thereby highlighting the adaptability and learning potential of the group). The belief is that all participants contribute valuable knowledge, and this evolves into collective knowledge that is both temporal and spatial, which can be adapted for future developments. Consequently, what is crucial in a collective is not a commitment to a fixed structure, but a belief in a structure's capacity to transform through its diverse participants exercising their agency. Organisation, therefore, becomes not an external quality, but a temporal and spatial accumulation of the knowledge of multiple participants.

It's a learning space, and, for example, none of us is a carpenter, has built a boat, or has created a floating circus. [...] We are all learning from each other. Over time, we developed a sense of who to ask for specific things. So within the collective, someone became—not an expert—but a guide, say, for the group in that technique (El Warcha, 2024).

In a scenario where relationships are not dictated by a pre-existing structure but are emergent properties of individual agencies coalescing into structures – typically fluid in nature – negotiation and communication are vital. This communication arises from accepting the plurality of knowledge and agency while reaching for agreements on a collective action. Though our research method did not permit direct interaction with these processes, we observed several indicators in the diverse expressions of the collective, such as respectful communication among members, which reflected their

acknowledgment of each other's knowledge, and an intersubjective understanding of collective activities, suggesting sustained dialogue. Despite their seemingly natural, almost instinctive collective engagements, these collectives exhibited notable enthusiasm and a deep understanding of their activities. Such communication may also serve as a mechanism for conflict resolution within the group, facilitating smoother transitions in periods of change.

In the absence of coherent structures, place emerges as a unifying element. Interviews consistently highlighted the influence of place in shaping internal relations and collective activities. On one level, the location allowed participants to intermingle and jointly generate knowledge through shared experiences, as Aziz explains:

We always described it as a project, more like a workshop or a space. But after a year or two, with work and time spent together, we gradually melted into each other. We really started functioning as one body, a collective. (El Warcha, 2024)

Collectives begin to dynamically interact with their surroundings, possibly due to increased participant numbers and diversified communication methods. Interviews with collectives hinted at this broader interaction resulting in further knowledge exchange. For instance, Marlen notes that an openness to external influences beyond merely operating as a studio shaped their collective identity:

From the beginning, there was this really huge interaction with the neighborhood. So everything, like in Hafsa, was bigger in terms of community and space as well, because it was not only the studio space but also our relation to the streets. So I think this gave us this kind of really collective and community aspect. (El Warcha, 2024)

This suggests that a collective's geographical or cultural position can significantly direct its evolution and engagement strategies.

#### *Collective Empowerment*

Collectivity is about doing something together that individuals cannot do alone. It often fills in for a need that the community has identified.

The reasons for working collectively vary widely, but are often linked to the need to access resources that would be difficult or impossible to obtain individually. Collectives often emerge in response to an identified lack or need that the group aims to confront together. Collectives provide a framework for pooling knowledge,

labor, and material assets, allowing their members to engage in projects that surpass individual capacities. They offer mechanisms of empowerment and enable participants to bypass institutional barriers and create alternative spaces for cultural production and exchange.

Collectives are spheres of resource activation: they serve as platforms that individuals create together to activate a resource they could not access individually or that groups utilize to collectivise and hence maximize an existing resource. These resources can be both material and immaterial. On the one hand, collectives may provide shared physical assets such as studio space, venues, or housing. At the same time, they may also generate immaterial resources, including peer networks, specialized knowledge, and shared decision-making power. The value of these resources does not lie in individual ownership but in communal access, fostering a culture of sustainability and long-term collaboration.

The first edition of Interference had zero budget – we hosted 23 international artists and welcomed 12,000 to 15,000 visitors with just €1,000, which went towards food for the community. Our most valuable resource was not money, but community support. Instead of asking, ‘How much do these headsets cost?’ we asked, ‘Do you know someone who knows someone who has them?’ (Interference, 2024)

### *Sharing Economies*

Collectives are experts in distributing and sharing resources. They often come up with unique solutions and can work under conditions of scarcity.

The notion of sharing economies, originally rooted in macroeconomic theory, is often misinterpreted when applied to the art world. While sharing economies are commonly associated with shared access to resources, they are in fact more about creating and sustaining collectively governed infrastructures. As described by Yassem from the Cairo-based electronic music collective MOSHTRQ, their financial model evolved over time, increasing financial independence by joining together and combining resources:

When we started performing at Cairo Jazz, we agreed on a flat fee per show, which we’d divide among the contributors like poster makers and performers. Now, we self-finance everything, and I prefer having full control over the finances and the responsibility (MOSHTRQ 2024).

The collective deliberately shared costs to maintain autonomy, choosing not to depend on external funding. They emphasized that this approach was not only a financial decision but also a political stance against reliance on European funders.

I'm not a fan of relying on grants from European or American-funded institutions. They often come with caveats, like not charging for entry, which doesn't appeal to me. I'd rather absorb the risk and handle everything ourselves, even though some of our team prefers applying for grants (MOSHTRQ, 2024).

This change reflects a key consideration in the ambiguous concept of sharing economies: financial sustainability is not just about securing resources but also about establishing governance structures that align with the collective's values and long-term vision.

The success of artistic initiatives – whether tangible or intangible – depends not only on material conditions but also on the ethos behind the project and a deep commitment to the joint responsibilities needed for a project. This reveals a crucial tension within the sharing economy framework: focusing too much on resource access can obscure the need for long-term, cooperative governance models.

The dynamics of collective work create a form of freedom distinct from individualistic models of artistic and cultural work – it fosters a space where utopian ideas and alternative ways of working can be tested by collectively sustaining the methodological, ideological, financial, and resource framework necessary for doing so. At the same time, individual freedom is also limited by the responsibilities that individuals need to take on in order to be able to sustain a collective practice together. It is a form of cultural creation that strongly relies on the soft skills within a group, such as friendliness, mutual understanding, and the willingness to compromise. It is a structure that develops around specific, existing groups, rather than something planned and imposed from above. The collective way of working relies on people that are invested in the things they are doing and hence cannot be detached from the cultural engagement that drives the collective.

#### *Localized Care*

Collectives slowly adapt to their social, environmental, and societal surroundings to sustain their practice, engaging with local communities and public spaces in ways that reflect their flexibility as a form of care for their own community. Rather than one-sided solutions, they seek lasting compromises.

This phenomenon of collaborative or collective creativity, within the spatial context of scarce resources that must be managed with care, leads us to the notion of localized care. While none of our interview partners explicitly referred to collective care in our conversations – a concept that often remains elusive – there emerged a strong emphasis on the contextual relationship between local space and people, which we could subsume under the term 'situatedness' of practices. Collectives undoubtedly provide care for one another, fostering a shared sense of belonging, mutual support, and collective responsibility within their groups. At the same time, their care extends beyond the collective itself to the local communities in which they are embedded.

One key way this care manifests is through consensus-building. More than just a mechanism for decision-making, consensus-building is a way of tending to the relationships, tensions, and conflicts that shape collective work. Localized care, as we understand it here, extends beyond internal and external support; it is the process of navigating disagreements and fostering mutual understanding with surrounding collectives. As Yellow Tape describes, decision-making within collectives is an ongoing negotiation:

You still have to convince each other [...]. No one ever just puts his foot down [...]. You have to agree on it in the end, even if we're going to end up fighting about it (Yellow Tape, 2024).

This underscores the fact that compromise is not a weakness but an active practice of care – one that sustains collective structures and ensures long-term cohesion.

### **3) Conclusion**

The process of collectivisation in cultural work extends beyond pooling resources. It is a concept that remains under-researched and inadequately defined. As we have illustrated, embracing and organizing plural aesthetics, fostering collaboration as a form of collective empowerment, and sustaining artistic practices through the sharing of crowd knowledge, infrastructures, and spaces – along with caring for oneself and the community – present potential avenues for further research.

Further research is needed in the most basic fields of collective endeavours. A key challenge in understanding collectivity lies in distinguishing collectives from non-collective entities. Our research suggests that this distinction is not externally

identifiable but emerges internally through ongoing negotiation within the group. A collective dissolves when individual members lose decision-making agency (without agreeing to it) – a characteristic that is hard to evaluate from the outside as even very hierarchically organised structures can show traces of collective engagement.

Another important question is whether collectives inherently care for their environment and how such care could be evaluated objectively. While we lack empirical proof, strong indicators suggest that collective structures excel in distributing, managing and sustaining resources. What may appear as inefficiency or slow decision-making from an external perspective often turns out to be a strength: In collectives, redundancy in decision management ensures that diverse viewpoints and knowledge are taken into account before irreversible decisions or actions are taken.

A recurring question concerns the impact of collectives – why some navigate tasks seamlessly, while others appear to struggle with responding to fundamental inquiries or administrative needs, giving collectivity a bad rap both in cultural organization and to some extent in public debate. We hope that our work helps to overcome trends in trying to identify universal criteria for the success of a collective by highlighting the importance of a descriptive framework beyond attempts at standardisation. While collectives share structural features, their effectiveness can only be understood within the cultural ecosystems they create. As each collective forms based on its own goal, need, or the lack it seeks to address, no universal criteria for success can be established. Each collective defines success on its own terms, making external assessments both limiting and inadequate.

Collectives, as we have observed, serve as sites of experimentation that generate plurality through the creation of distinct infrastructures rather than adhering to predefined institutional models within the broader cultural framework. The work of the collectives we interviewed is shaped by necessity, well-established practices, and visions for expanding inter-collective collaboration. This has uncovered paths toward what we call cultural emancipation or collectivisation – paths that remain underexplored in both academic research and within the collectives themselves.

We aim to take the desire for collectivisation further by framing our research as the starting point of a collective exchange of ideas on the strengths, obstacles and challenges surrounding the collective practice, thereby assisting other researchers and practitioners to better understand their practice through contrasting it with others

in similar circumstances. Platforms like *collectivise.org*<sup>12</sup> support this goal by providing a solution-oriented approach: first, by mapping and connecting self-organized initiatives, and second, by developing an accessible, comprehensive glossary of what it means to be a collective. Both efforts aim to increase knowledge and facilitate long-term connections between collectives. These endeavors should not be viewed as blueprints but rather as tools for exchanging ideas. This project seeks to contribute to the study of collectivity, not by prescribing a normative framework or imposing rigid definitions, but by recognizing it as an evolving, underrepresented field that requires careful attention and nuanced, again, situated perspectives.

With doing so, we open another possible avenue in the stagnating discourse on how to evaluate collective work, described in the entry: Rather than seeing collective work as an artwork itself, our methodological analysis made it possible to discover the actual thing that collectives create more clearly. Instead of aligning to existing evaluative frameworks of social prestige, collectives create their very own form of evaluating, celebrating and caring for something. Collectives are not post-factual islands, escaping all discourses, but rather develop an own, locally rooted practice of negotiating their doing, with the environment one finds them in. Further research on collective artistic and cultural practices needs to start acknowledging this interplay between the locally rooted knowledge that a group creates and the confrontations with its surroundings. In that way the productive component of collectives becomes visible: They form their own infrastructures of cultural evaluation and test-run them in and against the environment they are situated in.

<sup>12</sup>*collectivise.org* is an open-access platform for artist collectives worldwide, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge exchange. It bridges gaps by sharing experiences, resources, and strategies, supporting sustainable collective practices, and strengthening the global commons in the arts.

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