Leadership Povera
A long-term project towards Gromo's 2026 elections

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ABSTRACT

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A celebration of the beginning of a long-term project (31 May – 3 June 2021. Lapinlahti Park, Helsinki)

Accordion: Alfredo Andreoletti / Environment sounds: Upper Seriana Valley / Singer: Rosetta Bressani / Audio design: Aku Pekka Vainikainen. / Sunday Dress design: Justus Kantakoski / Producer: Johanna Autio / Supervisors: Tero Nauha and Łukasz Jastrubczak /

The artistic section is produced by the Theatre Academy. ☒

The final project can be published online. This permission is granted for an unlimited duration.	Yes ☒ No ☐	The abstract of the final project can be published online. This permission is granted for an unlimited duration.	Yes ☒ No ☐

In 2026 I will run for mayor as an artist in the municipal elections of my hometown, Gromo, a small village in the Alps of the Upper Seriana Valley, northern Italy. In June 2021, I inaugurated the long-term candidacy project with my thesis performance, *A celebration of the beginning of a long-term project*. As my whole artistic practice, this long-term project resonates with the broad tradition of Arte Útil and socially engaged art.

I approach the candidacy with the ethics of what I call *Leadership Povera* (poor leadership). I develop this concept in the written thesis by recalling the links with positive poverty, a notion far from the idea of poverty in economic language. Furthermore, I employ the research technique of my artistic practice, *Learning something through something else*, to unveil the characteristics of Leadership Povera.

Firstly, the thesis explores the socio-political issues of the rural villages in the Upper Seriana Valley: Gromo, Valgoglio, Gandellino and Valbondione and declares that a union of the four municipalities is the proposal that I want to pursue.

Secondly, I explore positive poverty by observing the meaning of poverty in different times/contexts and recounting the use of the term "poor" in the Italian language and the Christian tradition.

Lastly, I deepen the concept of positive poverty through the figure of St. Chiara (Claire) and St. Francesco (Francis). In 1200, they fought for a radical proposal of social deconstruction against the divisions of class, religion and species.

Through the concept of Leadership Povera, the thesis argues that the scarce situation in Upper Seriana Valley can be an opportunity to imagine new forms of collectivity, collaboration, mutual aid, self-sufficiency, and alternative governance. Leadership Povera performs in the direction of a union of municipalities, involving and empowering the inhabitants in the decisions of the valley's future. Therefore, the thesis concludes that at some point, the candidacy will no longer be my art project and it will become a common governance project.

The thesis research is the beginning of a long-term practice that will continue in contact with the community of Gromo and the Upper Seriana Valley.

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INTRODUCTION

In autumn 2026, I will run for mayor in the municipal elections of my hometown, Gromo, a small rural village of about 1200 inhabitants in the mountains of the Upper Seriana Valley, northern Italy. This MA thesis supports and develops this project, both in practice and theory.

From May 31 to June 3, I performed my thesis artistic work, *A celebration of the beginning of a long-term project*. The performance inaugurated the project that will guide me in the next four years and lead me to run for the elections in Gromo. I gathered the performance audience in the park of Lapinlahti, an old mental hospital in Helsinki. I offered them a glass of water with a drop from the Serio river, which gives the name to the "Seriana Valley". The performance was an imaginary pilgrimage where I took the audience to the mountains of my hometown, the Upper Seriana Valley. Through storytelling of my previously recorded voice and my live voice, I presented to the audience the context I came from, its socio-political issues, and the neighbouring villages of Gromo, Valgoglio, Gandellino and Valbondione. I announced my intention to run for mayor, and I proposed the union of municipalities as a thriving direction for the valley's future. The performance uses water as a metaphor for property rights and uses vases to represent the powers that have owned and ruled the valley in succession, since 770 A.D. On that occasion, I introduced the figure of St. Chiara (Clare) and St. Francesco (Francis). I took them as an example of a position, the oblique, lying and grounded one. I folded the vases representing the four municipalities filled with water and laid them on the ground. The vases could no longer hold the water in that position, as it flowed on the land mixing up in different directions. This gesture was the anticipation of the concept of positive poverty and Leadership Povera that I developed within the written part of the thesis.

From time to time, I recall *A celebration of the beginning of a long-term project* within the thesis text, as the incipit to the topics that I further deepen in the theory research.

In the thesis, I develop the concept of *Leadership Povera* (poor leadership) as the modality and the ethics of the long-term candidacy project. I explore the leadership position through the idea of positive poverty, clarifying its distinction from the meanings of poverty intended by the economic language that colonizes the term and translates it into misery. I reconnect poverty to its positive links with the vernacular societies where poverty was the balance and a means of subsistence.

Leadership Povera escapes from the stereotype of authority, prowess, masculinity, and profit. It is a governance practice based on responsibility instead of power. It abandons authorship and triggers social practices and common governance outside the structures of belonging.

The thesis proceeds with my artistic practice research method, *Learning something through something else*. It means investigating the object of research distanced from its field or environment. Therefore I move to Finland to begin research on the rural conditions of northern Italy and I choice to use a term as misleading as that of "poverty" to investigate the ethics of leadership. Furthermore, I approach each topic from within the local context of the Upper Seriana Valley and in my autobiography.

In the first chapter, I introduce two characterizing elements of my artistic practice. On one hand, the Sunday Dress, the performance attire that accompanies me in the long-term project and keeps track of my projects in the form of decorations embroidered on its fabric. On the other hand, storytelling and oral narrative. They are the only form of documentation and the tool to create a shared memory outside of the logic of the archive. The chapter also explores the socio-political issues of Gromo's neighbouring villages through looking at the macro-scale of the Italian and European panorama. Depopulation and lack of funding show the need for a union of the municipalities for a joint management of resources and services. Unfortunately, the conservative spirit, echoes of populism and the fear of losing identity and power prevent cooperation. I declare that the union of the four villages is an opportunity for the Upper Seriana Valley's future, as long as it is not undertaken only for the purpose of economic interest, as done by previous governments.

In the second chapter, the thesis focuses on the concept of positive poverty. I investigate positive poverty from a semantic point of view through the writings of the Iranian diplomat Majid Rahanema. For years, he fought against poverty as an instrument of power utilized by a minority of potent economies to subjugate a majority of the population. Further, I conduct a linguistical analysis of the term 'poor' in the Italian language and from the point of view of the Christian tradition in which poverty meant the lack of the superfluous, while misery was the lack of the necessary. Finally, I deepen the concept of positive poverty through the figure of St. Chiara and St. Francesco. In the Middle Ages, they declared themselves "poor" because they lacked the barriers that separated them from the "other". I interpret their concept following Sarah Keenan's arguments on property as a system of belonging forms.

Lastly, I reminisce what a position of power can learn from the concept of positive poverty and how Leadership Povera would approach the process of the union of municipalities.

The thesis argues that Leadership Povera is the ethics and the modality of addressing the encounter with the Gromo community and the governance approach for the union of municipalities. It is a spirit of openness to the outside that protects the territory's identity and fosters an ensemble of "poor leaders" who "use" (more than own) what they have at their disposal and takes care of the surroundings. Furthermore, through Leadership Povera, the thesis glimpses the scarcity of the valley as an opportunity to imagine new forms of commonality, livelihood and alternative administrative management that involve the inhabitants in responsible decision-making for the valley's future.

This thesis outlines a theoretical trajectory that I will explore in practice in the valley, during the four years preceding the elections.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

My art practice has long been dedicated towards making things happen in life dynamics, often involving the audience in an experience. With the long-term candidacy project, I decided to leave the arts field and enter the political one, to the point that it is no longer possible to distinguish the project as an artistic piece. In the thesis, I declare the ethics behind this "encroachment" through Leadership Povera. The need to formulate an ethical direction for the project comes from the awareness that the project actively engages with policy decisions and can influence a context's economy and future.

As an artist and citizen of Gromo, I have decided to form a civic list[1] and prepare a government proposal to run for the mayor of Gromo. This long-term project started in 2021 and aims at using the artistic practice to engage the inhabitants in public debate, stimulate collaboration between neighbouring villages, and lay the foundations for social change.

The long-term project is part of the vast tradition of initiatives that have erupted since the 20th century, involving artists and artistic practices in a direct relationship with social and political issues, rethinking the position of the artist in the society. There is no single definition, and the interpretations, methods, approaches, purposes, and ethics of these practices change according to the contexts and the artists who initiate the projects. Several

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[1] The civic list gathers a group of people interested in administering the town who are not necessarily united under a single party or political ideal. In small villages like Gromo, it is common to apply with a civic list, as people interested in joining the municipal administration are usually few and hardly belong to any party, let alone the same.

names define these works, such as socially engaged art, participatory art, community art, post-artistic, post-representational art and Arte Útil.[2]

The latest definition was coined by the Cuban artist and activist Tania Bruguera in the early 2000s. Arte Útil today is an online archive that brings together a repertoire of artistic projects oriented toward usership instead of authorship and spectatorship.[3] The concept of Arte Útil has been summarized through the formulation of eight criteria for which the Arte Útil projects should:

1) Propose new uses for art within society

2) Use artistic thinking to challenge the field within which it operates

3) Respond to current urgencies

4) Operate on a 1:1 scale

5) Replace authors with initiators and spectators with users

6) Have practical, beneficial outcomes for its users

7) Pursue sustainability

8) Re-establish aesthetics as a system of transformation

The thesis took shape reflecting on the fourth point, "Operate on a 1:1 scale".

The long-term candidacy project operates on a 1:1 scale because it is nothing else than what it is (a candidacy project for a mayor). It doesn't aim to become its representation or a potentially useful small-scale prototype. It crosses the artistic territory to enter the political one and perform the function of the candidate for mayor, which is usually already fulfilled by others. The project goes as far as it is no longer recognizable as an artistic project, except for the fact that I define it that way.

The concept of a 1:1 scale project was described in *Towards a Lexicon of Usership* by theorist Stephen Wright using the 1893 Lewis Carroll's story *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*. In its simplicity, the tale could be a metaphor that clearly expresses the difference between full-size art projects and those on a 1:1 scale. The narrator of the story reports his conversation with an extravagant character about the larger scale of a map that "would be really useful":

We very soon got to six yards to the mile. Then we tried a hundred yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a mile to the mile! […] It has never been spread out, yet […] the farmers

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[2] Bishop 2012, pass.

[3] Bruguera, 2016.

> objected: they said it would cover the whole country and shut out the sunlight! So now we use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well.[4]

A full-size map, which represents the country in detail, ends up becoming useless and hiding the country itself. It resembles the artistic projects that remain in the spectatorship paradigm of representing something. Conversely, the 1:1 scale uses the country itself as its own map. It is a conceptual passage that does not map the country, does not measure it, or represent it but it changes everything. The territory remains the same, but our approach to it completely changes when we consider it as a map of itself.

Similarly, 1:1 scale art projects are exactly what they are and do not want to be anything other than what they are. They are not a representation of something, and they don't look like art, or at least they don't appear as art right away. They are an artistic proposition of what they are, as long as they are declared as art, just as the country is a map only as long as it is said to be a map of itself.

This double ontology is necessary to create that conceptual passage that changes everything and make things happen. My long-term project is a candidacy and nothing else. At the same time, it becomes an artistic candidacy project as long as I define it that way and as long as it is necessary. At this moment, it is necessary to define it as an artistic project to allow it that passage, that change of perspective that is needed to experiment with the approaches to the candidacy and to trigger a network of collaborations and connections. It also serves to use the privileged position ensured by the art system to make things happen.

One of my favourite 1:1 scale projects is Nuña Güell's "Humanitarian Aid" (2008-2013). For her project, the Spanish artist offered herself in marriage to any Cuban who wanted to leave the island and emigrate to Spain to obtain Spanish nationality. As explained by the researcher and coordinator of the Arte Útil archive, Alessandra Saviotti, the artist Nuña Güell

> set up an open call for the best love letter which was then submitted to a jury composed by three prostitutes who decided Güell's future husband. Once the winner was declared, she organized the wedding and the travel to Spain where after some years, her husband got Spanish citizenship. The project ended with their public divorce in 2013 […]. This is clearly how 1:1 scale works: the wedding was real, the citizenship was real, the divorce was real. On the other hand, it was a project about love and […] the illusion of freedom […]. 1:1 scale is a work of art in real life.[5]

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[4] Lewis Carroll cited by Wright 2013, 3.
[5] Saviotti 2021.

The thesis arose from the realization that 1:1 scale projects affect reality precisely because they are not distinguished from what they decide to be. They interact with communities and with people's lives. They become tools for political decisions and influence people's futures. My long-term project is not an exhibition that denounces Gromo's current politics and, at most, participates in the production of a political conscience. It is an artistic project that is not distinguished from an actual candidacy project. It could win the elections. It could have a political and social role in the future of the Gromo community. It could influence economic decisions, condition the laws of territory protection and those for social equality.

Therefore, I need to build and declare the ethics behind my 1:1 scale project. Defining it as an artistic project is not enough to ensure the ethics of the choices and their consequences. 1:1 scale art projects are not a guarantee, and there is no shared ethical direction for the projects of Art Útil or of socially engaged art in general.

Several artists have worked on a 1:1 scale in the political field. I choose to tell a few examples, most of them present in the Arte Útil archive. They share the eight criteria mentioned above, but the projects' objectives, means, ethics and understanding of "pursuing sustainability" are specific to each context and change according to the practice of the artist.

The first example is the Estonian-born conceptual artist Raivo Puusemp. In 1975 he was elected mayor of Rosendale, New York, a town struggling with numerous administrative and fiscal problems. The artist used his artistic approach (without declaring it) linked to experiments with group dynamics and conceptual strategies to persuade the people of Rosendale that merging the village with the neighbouring municipality would be the best possible solution to their problems. With a referendum, the citizens decided to implement the Puusemp concept of converting the town into a non-municipal territory and "dissolve" it in the jurisdiction of the neighbouring municipality.[6]

The second example is theatre director Augusto Boal. He was a municipal councillor (Vereador) of Rio de Janeiro from 1993 to 1996. He used the techniques of his Theatre of the Oppressed (Teatro do Oprimido) to create a "Legislative Theatre" which allowed citizens-actors-spectators to express their opinions, discuss, vote on them, and then collect and present law proposals to legislators. About 13 laws were created through Legislative Theatre during Boal's three-year government.[7]

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[6] Making Use: Life in Postartistic Times 2016.
[7] Arte Útil Nr. 285.

The third example of a candidacy that uses art as a tool for social change is that of the Colombian Antanas Mockus. Performer, educator and philosopher with no previous political experience, he was mayor of Bogotá for two terms (1995-97 and 2001-04). The mayor conducted a social experiment using artistic and educational strategies to improve the city's living conditions suffocated by violence, corruption, and illegal trafficking. His political and administrative management methods have contributed to the world-wide recognition of the "Bogota model". Among the many initiatives was "Women's night" in 2001, where «he asked men to stay home and care for their families while the women went out. That night the police commander was a woman, and 1500 police-women were in charge of Bogotá's security».[8] The project examined the role of men in both domestic and public violence and raised awareness of the recognition of female domestic works. Under Mockus' leadership, Bogotá saw the homicide rate drop by 70%, road deaths by more than 50%, and his government provided drinking water to all houses.

Outside the recognized state political offices, the fourth example is the "New World Summits" by Dutch artist Jonas Staal. The project is an artistic and political organization that develops "alternative parliaments" with and for stateless states, autonomist groups, and organizations currently excluded from democracy. The lists also include terrorist organizations considered a threat to international security. Each summit is a democratic experiment to expand the existing notion of politics and develop an alternative global political infrastructure for non-state politics. Through their intent of international democratization, the alternative parliaments aim to destabilize the current centres of power and want to demonstrate that all political power starts from its imagination.[9]

The fifth example comes from the Arte Útil archive founder, Tania Bruguera, with the announcement of her candidacy for the presidency of Cuba in the 2018 elections. Her artistic candidacy act was used to underline and bring to the surface the truth that Cuba is not a democracy but a one-party state and that, therefore, one cannot be a candidate. Her utopian candidacy for the presidency wanted to attract attention «to the embarrassing reality that Cuba's rulers are not freely elected by the people».[10]

Lastly, I bring the example of the painter artist Edi Rama, former mayor of Tirana and current Prime Minister of Albania, in office since 2013. Edi Rama got a wide recognition as mayor of the capital in the early 2000s, thanks to his initiative of colouring the grey facades of communist-era buildings with bright colours. The project involved artists,

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[8] Arte Útil Nr. 156.
[9] Staal 2016.
[10] Jones 2016.

architects, and the population. It brought people back to the streets and rekindled the relationship between citizens and the collective space. Arte Útil had included Rama's art and political project in its archive but decided to remove it on May 29, 2020, after the demolition of the National Theatre (Teatri Kombëtar) in Tirana by his government. For the same occasion, the cultural theorist Jonida Gashi and journalist Vincent W.J. Van Gerven Oei have published an open letter entitled *Open Letter to the International Art Community: Stop Artwashing Edi Rama's Politics*.[11] With the letter, they denounce the artist for using his status in the contemporary art circuit to obfuscate the abuses of power in his government. Among these, there is the state repression of the free press, the precariousness of cultural life, and the demolition of cultural monuments such as the National Theatre to make way for government-sponsored buildings and expensive houses, accessible only to an oligarchic fragment of the country.

The open letter is signed by more than 500 people in the cultural and artistic fields worldwide. They condemn the actions of Edi Rama's government, declaring that his artistic research differs from current politics in Albania and invites to reflect on the ethical implications in the legitimacy of his political actions as artistic interventions.

The different approaches to politics that I have presented and, especially the example of Edi Rama confirm the need to clarify with which attitude I will face the encounter with the Gromo community and the candidacy process, as an artist. Art in itself is not a guarantee of fairness or responsibility. I need to articulate the long-term project's ethics and consciously build the leadership position to be pursued during this path.

The research of the thesis and the reasoning around Leadership Povera begins from this necessity.

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[11] Di Liscia 2020.

1. A CELEBRATION OF THE BEGINNING OF A LONG-TERM PROJECT

Rome, June 2, 2021,

Italians celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Italian Republic. The tricolour arrows dart over Rome. The soldiers parade along via dei Fori Imperiali. They celebrate the referendum of June 2, 1946, when Italians were allowed to decide the form of government for post-war Italy: Monarchy or Republic. The referendum was initiated by the universal suffrage, and for the first time in Italy, women were also allowed to vote.

Helsinki, June 2, 2021,

With the performance *A celebration of the beginning of a long-term project,*[12] I celebrate the beginning of the long-term project that will lead me to run for mayor in the 2026 elections of my hometown, Gromo.
In the referendum of 1946, in Gromo, only 246 votes went to the Republic while 1,474 favoured the Monarchy.

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[12] *A celebration of the beginning of a long-term project* is the performance of my thesis art project. It took place between 31 May and 3 June 2021 in the Lapinlahti park in Helsinki.

1.1. Sunday Dress

My grandmother Rosetta was a tailor, and she taught me how to sew, passing on her tricks to me. Before starting this long-term project, I sewed a dress to wear in my performances. It has become the symbol, the support, and the memory of my artistic practice. The dress has two main functions. The first is to become a symbol that transforms my actions into performance. The second is to keep track of it.

I started wearing it for my artistic works, in meetings with mayors of other countries, in interviews with the citizens of Gromo, and for projects related to the candidacy. I embroider it with decorations that symbolize my projects from time to time. The embroideries increase over time, and the dress is constantly being made. Its making accompanies the development of my artistic research and all phases of the long-term project.

The fabric is 100% wool and blue in colour because my sister once told me that blue calms the listener. The tailoring of the dress began on 11 May 2021, during the Seven of Seven, Performance and Live Art Week festival, at the Myymälä2 gallery in Helsinki.

I called it "Sunday Dress" to distinguish it from the idea of a uniform. The name refers to an Italian saying that indicates the dress for special occasions, celebrations. Today it is no longer used in common parlance because there's a great variety of clothes available and one doesn't need to have a delegation for Sunday. On the contrary, since childhood, my grandmother used to make her Sunday dress (to go to Catholic mass on Sunday), combining small pieces of refined fabrics with cheaper fabrics that she could afford and embellishing them with handmade embroidery.

The Sunday dress is the modernized (mid-twentieth century) conception of the festive and ritualistic dress deriving from the ancient and rich tradition of popular clothes and costumes. The demo-ethno-anthropologist Elisabetta Silvestrini explains that in Italy there are only a few anthropological data on traditional clothes but they could be divided into "daily," "festive," and "ritual".[13] There are very diverse customs throughout the Italian territory and the traditional dress changes in style, method, and approach, from region to region and from village to village. Among peasant families, the festive dress, Silvestrini explains, was often a clean and more presentable version of the daily dress, decorated with admittedly ephemeral ritual elements such as flowers in the hair and flowers of carved paper. The festive and ritualistic traditional cloth had a votive function that brought out a mimetic aspect to the divinity. Often the clothes of the wealthiest

[13] Silvestrini 1986, 5-44.

peasants were similar to those worn by the statue of the Madonna. In more recent times, the cultural heritage linked to popular customs has survived in the concept of the Sunday dress: a dress that differs from the everyday one, often the newest, and celebrates a ritualistic component, often linked to religion.

For my grandmother - who came from the peasant environment of the countryside of northern Italy in the first half of the 1900s - the Sunday dress did not have precise rules. It simply had to be the most dignified that one possessed. When worn simultaneously by the whole community, it was a collective homage to holidays. When worn individually, it was a symbol that gave importance to every occasion. It must be said that the Sunday dress was not exempt from emphasizing class diversity. It was more or less elaborated according to the family's economic resources. If people were locked up in specific categories given by their uniform at work during the week, on Sundays, they entered other social uniforms disguised as a Sunday dress. Despite this, one day a week, the Sunday dress had the potential to honour the traditions of a community. It expressed the uniqueness and creativity of the person within an embroidery and in the cuts of the fabrics. Lastly, it managed to keep alive the connection to the family roots through the brooches and shawls handed down from mother to daughter.

My Sunday Dress wants to be a symbol more than a uniform. It functions to declare and name an event as a performance and me as an artist. In Italian, the dress is called "*abito*." In addition to indicating a gown, it indicates a habit, a behaviour, a way of being.

I started wearing the Sunday Dress every time I performed, and in doing so, it has become the symbol of my artistic practice. Now, it has the ability to declare "performance" actions done while wearing it. I am running for mayor as an artist, and the Sunday Dress will be there to claim it.

I designed the dress in collaboration with fashion design artist Justus Kantakoski, inspired by mountaineering clothes of women from the early 1900s who used to ski with skirts between northern Italy and Switzerland. With Justus, we thought about a dress that would last over time and replace any other clothing for performance, designed fickle enough to adapt to any situation. Above all, the dress had to be "enough", in the sense that it had to somehow carry all my research with it so that I wouldn't need anything else. Hence the initial idea of writing on the dress, making it a sheet for my diagrams, to record research and reasoning. Finally, considering that the documentation of my performances occurs only through oral stories, we came to conceive the Sunday Dress as the embodied trace of the long-term project and my artistic research in general. I began to embroider on it all my works in the form of symbols decorated with coloured threads.

The Sunday Dress cloths me and assigns me with the memory and tools of my artistic practice. It flourishes with and in the experiences that will lead me to the 2026 elections and will continue to accompany me beyond that experience. The Sunday Dress is also a long-term project that will last as long as needed. It has to do with time and with a never ending process of making. I like to imagine myself at eighty wearing the Sunday Dress, meticulously decorated, and extended into other fabrics. Moving the fabrics, passing from recent embroideries to ancient ones, through references to the places and people that those embroideries contain. Removing the folds of the dress to find the first embroidery. From there, starting to tell how it all began.

Dressing up on the Sunday Dress has a protective power, one that accompanies me, gives meaning to my actions, and guards my memory. Psychological protection and safety. A magical value.

The Sunday Dress.

1.2. Orality as documentation

Performances, live art, ephemeral art, improvisation, dance, music, theatre, and generally those works that do not produce objects but are made of live actions must face the problem of documentation. In the text *The Performativity of Performance Documentation,*[14] Philip Auslander proposes to view the documentation of performances under two categories. The first is the traditional way the relationship between performance art and its documentation is conceived. That is, to provide a recording of the event and proof that it actually took place. The performance is mainly for the audience, and the documentation remains in the background. The other category is what Auslander calls "theatrical" or "performed photography." In this case, the performances are staged only to be photographed or filmed and do not exist as an event with an attending audience. It reaches the audience later through the documentation of the actions. An example of this category could be Cindy Sherman's photos of herself in different guises or Irene Fenara's self-portraits captured by diverse surveillance cameras. Documentation is where the performance takes place.

I would add another category. What I would call "performative documentation." This category would include the different forms of testimony that are not related to video or photography but which document through modalities that are themselves performative. For example, the re-enactment of existing performances,[15] interviews with participants to report the work through their feelings and points of view,[16] the documentary installation that interacts between the viewer and the space,[17] and the storytelling.[18]

Whatever the documentation category, I believe that the way one chooses to document a performance, determines the performance both conceptually and ideologically: its relationship with the viewer, action, time, memory, and socio-political context. Deciding

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[14] Auslander 2006.

[15] Marina Abramović's re-enactments of other artists' performances in *Seven Easy Pieces* are examples of works that perform the performance as a documentation of itself. Also the project *Poor Theatre*, in which the Wooster Group recreates performances by Jerzy Grotowski and William Forsythe. Another example is the 2006 Performance *A Domicilio* (Home Delivered Performance), a series of performance re-enactments by several artists, including Debora Carnevali, Omar Góngora, Edgar Canul, and Omar Euan. They opened a site with a menu of pieces that members of the public could request at their convenience.

[16] An example is the exhibition *Lygia Clark from Work to Event. We are the mold. To you breath is given,* curated by Suely Rolnik for the Musée des Beaux-arts in Nantes, France. The exhibition included sixty-four interviews with different people close to Clark, her work, and her context, as documentation of Lygia Clark's performances which involved the spectator in a sensitive and sensorial experience.

[17] For more information on installation as a medium for documenting, see: Groys 2002, 108–14.

[18] See the project *Pinto mi Raya* founded by Mónica Mayer and Victor Lerma in 1989. The goal was to build an archive to deal with the lack of documentation and research on Latin American performance art. Between their projects, they have also trained as storytellers to make performances where they tell stories about performance (Mayer 2012).

to document a performance already says that the event is not an end in itself but it has a purpose other than its making. In a Western context in which images and texts soak up everything one does and where the growing dominance of technology and internet make information redundant, the choice of the documentation method for the performative action appears to me to be increasingly crucial.

In my practice, I have decided to rely on what I previously called "performative documentation." I use oral narrative without recording and without a predefined script as a way to remember my performances. After their realisation, the projects are accessible through stories transmitted orally. They exist in my memory and narratives. They persist in the stories recounted by people who have participated in my projects or heard of them. The oral tales document my works, stripped from being anything other than the performance. It is not a representation. It is itself a performative act.
It can be said that I document my performances through other performances and that all projects are transformed into performative storytelling projects.

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Peggy Phelan, in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, writes:

> Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so it becomes something other than performance. […] Performance […] becomes itself through disappearance.[19]

The conception of performance as an ephemeral event is the result of a cultural heritage linked to the logics of the archive. In *Performance Remains*, Rebecca Schneider explains that performance is a vanishing event only if we look at it through a model «predetermined by a cultural habituation to the patrilineal, west identified (arguably white-cultural) logic of the Archive».[20] Schneider points out that the root of the word archive (archè) means "antiquity" but also means "authority" and "government." An archive is a form of power and supremacy linked to the prerogatives of a certain type of culture. It is visible in the colonial archives where they participated in the disappearance of local knowledge and in which archiving has emerged as a mode of government against a certain type of memory.[21] The archive is the Western tool that imposes itself on other

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[19] Phelan 1993, 146.
[20] Schneider 2012, 137.
[21] For further information see: Stoller 2002; Stoller 2009. See also Thomas 1993.

methods of testimony, often legitimising only those that work within its logic. I think of the difficulties described by Mónica Mayer[22] in safeguarding and legitimising the rich heritage of performing art in South America before technology and the internet facilitated its documentation and sharing.

The problem with the archive is that, with its performing methods, it underestimates other ways of remembering and different memory paradigms.

In the 1996 essay *Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts,*[23] Jose Esteban Muñoz states that ephemerals do not disappear but are clearly material. "Traces, glimpses, residues, and grains of things" are also evidence of memory - used for necessity by the culture considered a minority and sometimes used for preference in other contexts.[24]

To return to my practice, I chose to rely on oral memory precisely because it leaves traces, even if different from those left by images or recordings. The oral narrative is material and remembers even in its transient form. This performative way of documenting, challenges and coexists peacefully with the idea of loss. A new version of the story may end up with missing parts and additions or even disappear forever. The story changes according to the interlocutor, the time available, the surrounding conditions, and the interpretations of those who have heard the story and want to tell it again. Each narration is always a reconstruction, a new version of the project, a transformation, and it no longer makes sense to think about what the original version was. The original, which is sacred to the archive, becomes the "myth" in oral practices.

Even the concept of "author" fails in the mechanism of the oral narrative. The stories of my projects pass from voice to voice, and I am no longer the author of the tales. The author become the one who tells them from time to time, adding their interpretations and choosing how to perform the stories. Thus, the documentation of my works enters a system that no longer has authorship, and the artist becomes the one who decides to tell and to continue to remember.

"To remember," in Italian "ricordare," means to bring back to the heart (the organ that was once considered the centre of memory). The Italian philosopher Carlo Sini was one of my maestri. In many of his lessons, he explains that if there is a need to remember - to bring back to the heart - we no longer possess the subject of memory. One only remembers what has been lost and is no longer there. Thus, in the end, it turns out that even the archive - in its attempt to remember - does nothing else than produce loss. Of

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[22] Mayer 2012.
[23] Muñoz 1996.
[24] op. cit., 10.

course, an organised, regulated, maintained, and institutionalised loss that appears less evident than the performative one.

Relying on orality as a form of documentation gives me an incredible feeling of freedom. It requires no equipment, no post-production, no print, no websites, no social media, and no posts. From this point of view, it can be said that it is ecological and free, but it is undoubtedly no easier or less complex. It gives me freedom because I know that I'm enough, with my body, voice, and Sunday Dress. Still, it needs continuous performance, bodies that communicate, encounters, and exchanges between people. It must remain a nomadic, mobile practice. It must be a constellation in constant transformation.

Sometimes, someone tells about my work in writing, for example, in an article, or can't resist taking an amateur photo during my performance. I do not keep these "static" documentation forms, but I welcome them. They disregard my oral narrative modality, but they are part of an extensive and often involuntary system in which I live, and it would be a lost struggle to try to ban them. To stiffen and prohibit any documentation other than orality would be a useless waste of energy. After all, in their way, amateur audience pictures and journalist's articles look more like stories told from different points of view than an archive. Therefore, I prefer to let them disappear slowly by themselves, as it often happens, while I dedicate myself to storytelling.

I say this because I am aware that the closer I get to the elections, the harder it will be to keep my stories in oral form. I am thinking of the interviews and articles in local newspapers. This interference in 1:1 scale projects that are in close contact with the archival dynamics of everyday life is inevitable. A case in point is the publication *Beyond Art - Dissolution of Rosendale, 1975-1976,*[25] which documents artist Raivo Puusemp's two year term as the mayor of Rosendale, through all the clippings of newspaper articles published during his mandate and the reports of the municipal assemblies. I must consider that interviews would be an integral part of the candidacy. Therefore, in these years, I will look for a way to address them through the performativity of oral narration - reaffirming and confirming the idea that even the verbal, the ephemeral, the performance, the ritual, and the tradition can form a history. They can resist and be the material with which to build a history of the community.

Within the growing domain of archival forms, between technology and internet information, I am planning an election campaign that becomes a narrated myth, difficult to remember whether it was just a legend or if it really happened. This scenario is by no means utopian, and in some ways, it is what we experience every day. The redundant

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[25] Puusemp 1980.

volatile world of social media content, stories that last 24 hours, and messages with a single reading continue to satisfy the need for evanescent vitality within the logic of an archive of death, still and mute. This archive creates a history that loses most of the stuff. On the other hand, the narratives claiming orality, storytelling, improvisation, and ritual practices form a history handed down through performative acts and embodied practices. The history they create is perhaps more difficult to trace, requires greater responsibility, but maintains a complexity that includes atmospheric conditions, smells, noises, moods, touch, body, doing.

Finally, I return to the symbols embroidered on the Sunday Dress. They represent my portfolio, artistic practice, tools, and past and future projects. To the bare eye, they may seem like simple embroideries. Instead, each decoration is decipherable for those who know my works. Each embroidery becomes the incipit for remembering, bringing back the event to the heart, and starting the narration.

The Sunday Dress has the same function as the "cartellone" (billboard) of Sicilian storytellers, a significant folk figure of oral culture present in Sicily since the fourteenth century. They used to move to various city squares to sing ancient stories, often reworked and personalised, stories related to their contemporaneity and news. Before television became accessible to everyone and when radio was still a luxury for the few, peasant families had no other way to be informed of what was happening outside the city than through the storytellers. Their billboard was divided into numbered squares, painted with some of the scenes from the stories: stories of passion, blood, love, or those related to political issues, such as the land situation during the agrarian reform after the Second World War or stories of characters killed by the mafia.[26] The storytellers remembered the events, thanks to the use of the billboard, songs and refrains. Storytellers hung the billboard in the background to create an imaginary among those present. It was necessary for kicking off the rite of memory. The images set the pace and served to move from one narrative to another.

The decorations on the Sunday Dress also remind me of the tomb of Conchita Jurado (1865-1931). After the Mexican Revolution, between 1926 and 1929, Jurado created a fictional character called Don Carlos Balmori, to joke about members of the bourgeoisie, politicians, and nouveau riche. Dressed as a man, Jurado created performative actions in which «she presented herself as a Spanish millionaire willing to share his money if his victims agreed to act immoral or be humiliated».[27] All of Conchita Jurado's performances are documented on her grave, in an old cemetery in Mexico City, in the form of mosaics, decorated with drawings and writings, illustrating all the performances in her life.

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[26] *Italiani con Paolo Mieli: Rosa Balistreri, un film senza autore*. Min. 18:50 – 22:50.
[27] Mayer 2012, 107.

Like the "cartellone" of Sicilian storytellers and the monument to Conchita Jurado, the Sunday Dress is an imaginary intertwined with practices and performances that I carry with me, and it helps in starting every story. Often, it is people who point to one decoration and ask me to tell them the story.

When I wear it, I wear the history of my practice and my doing.

The storyteller Santangelo and the master Garofalo in Paternò, Sicily.
The "cartellone" hangs on the left.

1.3. Gromo microcosm of the macrocosm

For *A celebration of the beginning of a long-term project* performance, through storytelling, I led the audience on an imaginary pilgrimage that guided us from Helsinki towards northern Italy, 50 km from Bergamo and 100 km from Milan, in the mountains of the Seriana Valley. We embarked from the courtyard of the old Lapinlahti mental hospital in Helsinki and left Finland. Continuing along the Lapinlahti park, we reached Italy and continued north. Near the municipal gardens of Helsinki, we followed the Serio river upstream and entered the Alps of northern Italy. Arriving at a small bay along the sea in the Lapinlahti park, we found ourselves at the foot of the high mountains of the Upper Seriana Valley between the villages of Gromo, Valgoglio, Gandellino, and Valbondione.

The valley and its four villages are the contexts in which the long-term project takes shape. I need to get to know them better, ask questions to those who live there in everyday life, listen, and try to understand the dynamics. I grew up in those places, and my whole family lives there. I can say that I know the valley, but in the last two years, I have been trying to observe my hometown with more attention, trying to get to know it "again" and grasp the different nuances. I realise that my research is only at the beginning, and there are many things to learn. I started a series of interviews with current mayors, councillors, and those from previous terms. I started asking questions and listening to citizens' answers and speeches.

Furthermore, I learned to observe the Seriana valley from Finland, placing a distance between myself and those places I consider home. An exercise that helped me become a foreigner. A space that has helped me to detach myself from certain habits and ways of doing. Things that are too familiar risk appearing "natural" or indispensable.

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Like any other context, the valley is such a complex and rich microcosm that it is difficult to grasp a unique spirit, because often while doing so, one falls into generalisation. I will take the risk to introduce the place where I will work in the next few years.

If I had to sing a story describing how Upper Seriana Valley arrived to the current situation, the song would go something like this:

There was a time when the villages lived on farming and pastoralism. The Bergamo shepherds, called "Bergamì," were known throughout Europe for their techniques in transhumance, those long migrations that lasted all summer, from the village stables to the high mountain pastures. The inhabitants lived in the same house with the animals and made a living through them. They knew the land and its dangers. They predicted the weather by the February buds and knew when to cut hay by following the phases of the moon. They called trees by name and learned how to recognize healing herbs. In the villages, almost everyone had the same standard of living, they helped each other, and were proud of their animals and their land.
They helped each other and were proud of their animals and their land.
They helped each other and were proud of their animals and their land.

Over the years, new job opportunities began to arrive. They opened riverside textile factories, carpenters, and construction companies. Many women and men decided to go to work in the factory. Gradually, their standard of living began to rise. They had a good salary and could build a nice house. Some even managed to buy a car and go to the Romagna Riviera beach in the summer. They began to think about their interests and how to increase their savings. The land, the stone huts, and the work with the animals started to become humiliating. They sold the land to construction companies, who immediately filled the mountain slopes with concrete. The more experienced shepherds were offered a job in Switzerland, which paid very well. The cows, goats, and sheep of the valley were entrusted to the care of shepherds from Eastern Europe for a cheaper labour cost.
For a cheaper labour cost.
For a cheaper labour cost.

They left a suitable bank account and permanent employment contracts to the next generation that got rid of historical traditions, and social divisions escalated. Today, the grandchildren find themselves without land and with a house owned and house-held by their parents and grandparents. Often, they ask for loans from banks to move to study in foreign cities and never come back.
To study in foreign cities and never come back.
To study in foreign cities and never come back.

The situation in the valley reflects the fate of various rural areas in Europe, affected by depopulation and the lack of services. These are places that have experienced the looting and exploitation of raw materials. From the extraction of metals to the manipulation of waterways for hydroelectric plants. From deforestation for ski resorts to overbuilding of pastures for construction. Today, almost all citizens are commuters, work in neighbouring cities and find space for their interests elsewhere. In Gromo, except for some small farms and hotels, there is no real economy in the village, and the lack of economic interest is the main reason behind the lack of interest in local politics.

Citizens do not enter politics because they do not have to defend any personal interests linked to the village. In fact, since 2016, no people have been willing to commit to administering the municipality. Only one civic list has been nominated for the elections for two consecutive mandates, with only one candidate for a mayor whose interest is to make a political career.

The first disenchanted look at reality is the realisation that one is not a candidate in politics because one wants to pursue an interest for the common good - or at least not only. In general, one is applying to support their profit in some way. And in this, while keeping the best of intentions, I realise that my candidacy through artistic practice is not without a sin. I received a two-year art grant thanks to this project - to give an example.

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Since 2016, the mayor of Gromo has been Sara Riva, a 35-year-old lawyer. Among others, some headlines in the local newspapers are: «The revenge of the blondes!» or «I love Gromo, I am single, ambitious right, I'm running for mayor!». She has been mayor for two terms, and she prefers to be called "sindaco" and not "sindaca" (the female version of mayor), arguing that for equal rights, she wants to be called as men are called. Therefore, it is not surprising that the list presented for the second term consisted of only one woman (besides the mayor) and eight men, almost all young ski instructors and climbers. They were the only list in the elections, and they won.

The local newspaper has decided to communicate their commitment to politics as representatives of the community of Gromo with a photomontage. I cannot confirm if the group approved this image or the newspaper created it, but there was no complaint.

The photomontage portrays Sara Riva in the foreground, in a bathing suit with the words "good vibes only." The clipping comes from one of the many portraits on her Instagram account @vivasarariva (longlivesarariva). The origin of the photomontage is the cover of a VHS of California Dream Men's striptease documentary. California Dream Men was a

famous group of strippers born in the 90s. They had some success in Italy at the turn of the 2000s. The journalist who first introduced them in Italy, Andrea Iannuzzi, affirms that the California Dream Men's shows favoured the acceptance of male striptease in Italy and made many sexual and female sexuality taboos fall. In the photomontage, the muscular bodies in loincloths have the heads of the councillors. The female counsellor is the only one without a body, emerging behind the mayor. In addition to being overshadowed, she is also the only one with a t-shirt. She's a mom in her 50s, and it's not good for her to show up in a costume or thong. Is it that? At the top, the logo of the list, "Gromo da Vivere" (Gromo to live) stands out with the swan, which is the symbol of the municipality. There is the bust of two men on the sides, one showing his pecs and the other throwing a punch. The flag of the USA flutters in the background. A surplus of masculine eroticism and power! A beam of light descends from above and could appear like a divine vision that illuminates a Sara Riva who is a little virgin Mary, a little queen. The light highlights the writing on the floor "Si alza il sipario e volano i perizomi" (the curtain rises and the loincloths fly). It seems to say: "The show of Sara and her men can begin. They have been elected!". Finally, the most prominent inscription: "Gromo dream men."

The photomontage is still online[28] and contains all the stereotypes of Italian politics, in an imaginary linked to vulgar irony, sex, beautiful women, and men, many men. A policy that does not accept criticism but "good vibes only!"

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[28] Accessed 30 March 2022. https://www.araberara.it/gromo-sara-riva-e-le-deleghe-matteo-oprandi-vicesindaco-e-fabio-santus-assessore/
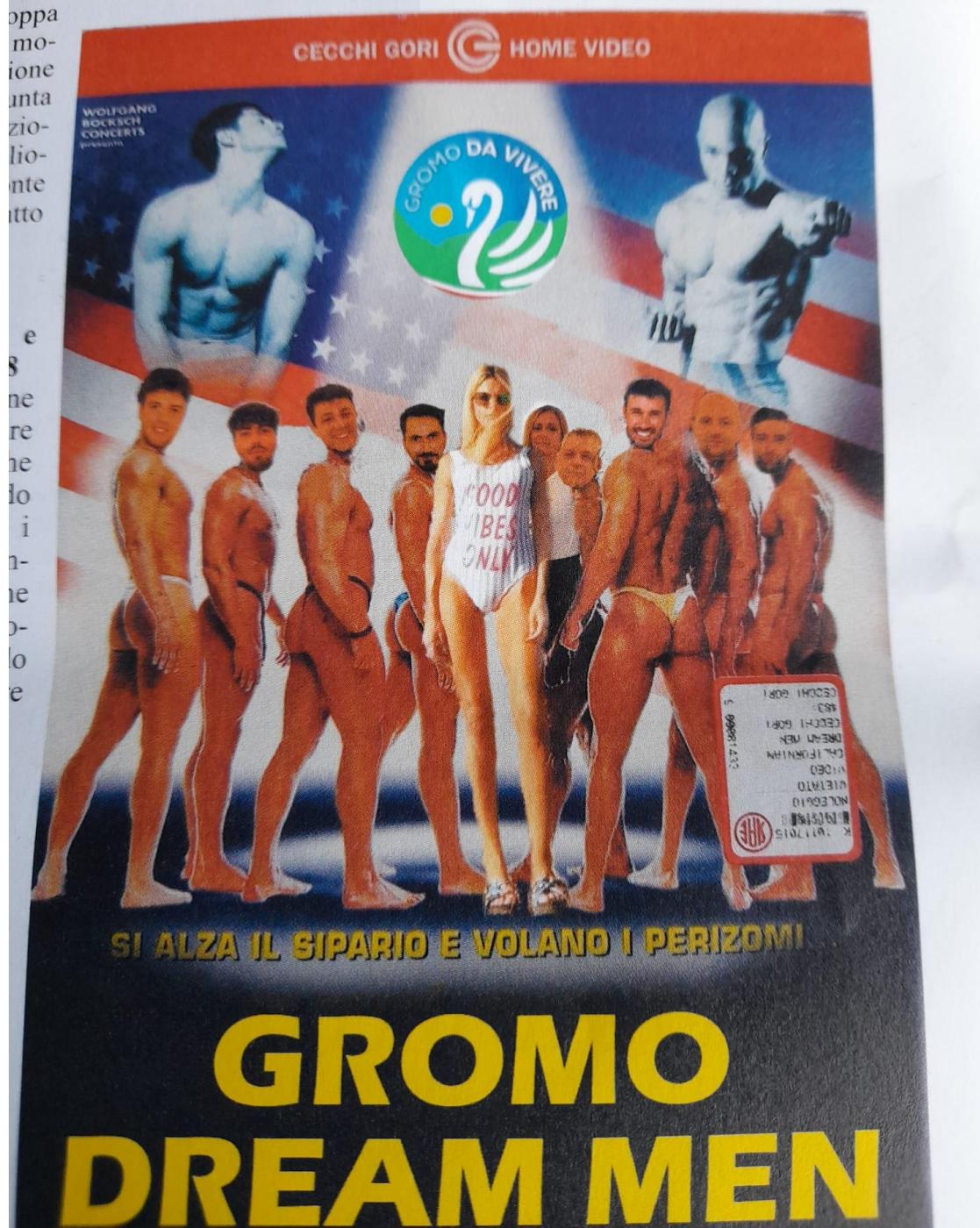
Detail of the photomontage in the paper version of the newspaper "Araberara", 8 October 2021.

Through postcards, Gromo looks like an uncontaminated place in the mountains, where time has stopped in ancient traditions, and people live together in harmony. In reality, the small micro-cosmos of the valley reflects quite well the economic and political macro-cosmos of the Italian national territory and the democracy of the Western countries. The simplistic and superficial languages echo in the valley and are used to find a consensus that nobody opposes. A performative style typical of populism takes place, and the above-mentioned photomontage is an example of it.

As a performance artist and storyteller, I cannot approach politics without considering and dealing with the performativity and storytelling of populism in power in Western democracies. Above all, because in the Italian context, it tends to any political orientation and has become a modus operandi.

I try to clarify what I mean when I speak of populism in power and populist performativity and storytelling. I state that my intent is far from defining populism. It is an ambiguous term that escapes fixed and indisputable definitions because it «is not an ideology or a political regime and it cannot be attributed to a specific programmatic content».[29] I limit myself to arguing the performative approach the populist leader has towards power and representation, aware that I can only touch the subject in part and in a non-exhaustive manner.

Among the authors who have explored the theme of populism, I chose to follow the approach of Nadia Urbinati, an Italian academic, political scientist, and naturalised United States journalist, because she observes populism from an analytical and not polemical point of view, while not justifying it. She tackles the issue keeping her mind clear from the negative prejudices that have escalated after Brexit and the Trump elections.[30] Furthermore, Urbinati chooses to observe the common characteristics of populism, maintaining the awareness that each situation involving populism operates in a particular way, based on the social, economic, and political context. Specifically, she decides to observe the dynamics of populism within representative democracy because its mechanisms are known, and it is easier to identify when democracy is entering populism. Thanks to the author's reasoning, I recognized a performative modality of the populist leaders in power that helps me orient myself within the complex issue of governance.

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[29] Mouffe 2016.

[30] Nadia Urbinati cites authors such as Paul Taggart, Yascha Mounk, Yves Mény and Yves Surel among those who see populism as a problem or such as Marco d'Eramo who use it to stigmatise political movements and leaders. On the other hand, authors such as Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau and Jason Frank see it not only as a decline of representative institutions but also as an opportunity for the rejuvenation of democracy.

Nadia Urbinati stresses that populism is born in democracy, and it is possible thanks to the democratic system.[31] For the author, it is essential to recognize that democracy is a process in constant transformation, and populism must be read as part of it. However, a distinction must be made between populism as a movement and populism in government. The first is a popular movement, a form of manifestation of a common feeling. It is a sign of people who are not apathetic and actively participate in democracy. Populist movements are movements of opinion, often horizontal. They do not want to become parties, they do not want to join the government, and they have no pretensions to define who "the people" are according to them. Urbinati gives the example of "I girotondi" and the "Le sardine" movement in Italy, "Occupy Wall Street" in New York, and the "Los indignados" movement in Spain. I also include the movement against the extraction of uranium in the Upper Seriana Valley, which in 1979 moved and united the people of all the villages. It has kept distance from parties, politics, and institutions. It remained a popular movement that has claimed for the needs of the valley and has developed a political commitment to fight for the protection of a common good, the mountains. In its own way, the same happened with the "No Tav" movement born in the peaks of the Val di Susa.

The second is populism which wants to come to power and acquire a majority. It is the most critical one because it internally transforms the fundamental principles of representative democracy. I would like to focus on the latter.

The common element of populism in power is founded on the basis of the claim to define the people. This definition is always made in the negative connotation because it «celebrates one subset of the people as opposed to another».[32] One is the "good" part, and the other is "bad". The most striking example that comes to mind is the "Lega Nord," an autonomist movement born in the 1990s, proclaiming the aim to make the northern Italy an independent federal state. They defined the north as the "true" people, and the southern Italy was the enemy. Once "Lega Nord" entered the government, the party called itself only "Lega" and re-established that the people were the Italians and the enemy was Europe. Once their leader Matteo Salvini became MEP, the migrants became the new enemy. In Gromo, 49% of citizens vote for the Lega (far right).

In general, the "righteous" part is the people, and the "wicked" part is the establishment. In democracy, the establishment's criticism is manifested through the minority's criticism of the majority. While in populism, the anti-establishment narrative is not a question of majority or minority. The establishment is predefined and coincides with the political

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[31] Urbinati 2020, pass.
[32] Urbinati 2019, 111.

elite operating in the institutions. Populism creates a division. On the one hand, the people, and on the other, the enemy, the parties, the establishment.

If so, then doesn't populism in power become a party, an establishment in its turn?
As seen with the Lega Nord, which has shifted the boundaries of "its" people, populism must rush to a series of performative acts, storytelling, and participatory campaign to cope with this paradox.

Whoever wins the support of the people and joins the majority, must prove that they are not and, in turn, do not become the establishment. Thus, a characteristic of populism in power is to be in a perennial electoral campaign, in order to show that it belongs to the people and not to the enemy. The anti-establishment discourse

> does not refer to socioeconomic elites and is neither class-based nor money-based. As candidates, Italy's Silvio Berlusconi and the United States' Ross Perot and Donald Trump were part of the economic elite and very wealthy persons.[33]

Not even on a subjective morality level, as the "locker room jokes" of Berlusconi and Trump are an example. The populist, anti-establishment rhetoric is focused against the exercise of power. At its base, there is a radical mistrust and hatred towards those who have and exercise executive power. The values that the leaders must share with the people are not moral values but the fact that they have no power. The people are considered "pure," because they are powerless; they are pure in exercising power. And in their purity of power, people are entitled to criticise those who have it. Therefore, populist leaders must prove that they are like the people and not the political elite. Urbinati gives the example of the Peruvian Alberto Fujimori, whose campaign in 1990 was crafted with the non-elite slogan «A President Like You».[34]

To be like the people, populism transforms the category of people and that of political representation through a performance resembling ritual.
In representative democracies, Urbinati argues, representing a people means establishing a distance. Through the elections, the voters indicate those who, in their name and with the promises made, will represent them (passing laws, making decisions, etc). Even if it is true that the voters choose the representatives for similarity of political ideas, it is also true that the distance remains. From that distance, voters have control in overseeing if their representatives keep their promises and if the representation persists. Likewise,

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[33] Urbinati 2019, 119.
[34] Ibid.

representatives are responsible for keeping their promises and showing that they continue to represent their constituents.

Populism does a different thing. The leader's figure performs no longer as the people's representative but as the people themselves, on a 1:1 scale. The populist leader incorporates the people (previously defined). He becomes the people. If the populist leader is already the people, he has no intention of asking the voters what they want or need and then committing to keep it. The leader embodies the people and asks them for an operation of faith, carte blanche, and identification. Urbinati recalls that the Venezuelan Hugo Chávez and Ross Perot in the U.S.A. requested it. Donald Trump confirmed it on January 20, 2017, with the assignment speech at the White House: Finally, the "forgotten" and "true" people arrive in Washington.[35] Populist leaders swear a promise of identification between themselves and the people they consider "the right one." And if this incarnation happens, there is no longer that distance that allows people to control or judge.

I go back to Lewis Carroll's story of the map of the country, which I told in the introduction, to use it as a metaphor. Representative democracy could have the same function as a map of the country. The elected representatives could be seen like a map representing the whole territory and reflecting the voters' wishes. In that case, the map would be, for example, on a 1:100000 scale. The distance between the country and the map that represents it is clear. One can hold it in hand, and it should be possible to check if the rivers and roads, traced by the map, mirror those of the country.

On the contrary, with populism in power, there is no longer a map representing the territory, but the leader becomes the country itself. It is proclaimed on a 1:1 scale.

The concept of a 1:1 scale in democracy can be interpreted in different ways, and on its own, it is not harmful. For example, governance could use it to imagine the country itself as its own map, where people represent themselves. This is what would happen in direct democracies.

Instead, with populism in power, it is the individual leader who becomes the country. He no longer represents it on a map but in his persona. In this sense, it is clear that the 1:1 scale of populism in power is closer to totalitarianism legitimised by the elections more than to a democracy.

This incorporation act is close to the performance of 1:1 scale projects because it is an action that decides to go beyond representation and to become the thing in itself. And this is where a whole series of problems ensue.

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[35] Urbinati 2020, 35.

There is no distance on the 1:1 scale (leader : people) because they are the same thing. There is nothing more to contest, judge, and ask, because it is moved by faith in the leader, who is "us."

> Thus, once elected, the leader feels authorised to act unilaterally and make decisions without meaningful institutional consultation or mediations, while in permanent communication with the people outside the government, to reassure them that they are the master of the game while he is their knight.[36]

If populism in power does not operate as promised, the recurring narrative blames the establishment, the enemies. When populism in power fails, it is because others prevent it, those who are not part of the people. If populism is like the people; if it has no power as the people; and if the fault of the mistakes is always the enemy, then the populist leaders have no accountability. People can trust them because they are the people and not the establishment. In this sense, the populist government has no responsibility. It eliminates representation and accountability.

Urbinati continues that the elections are transformed into a referendum, a plebiscite. They serve to demonstrate that the "real" people, a subset that excludes another, are in the right place. The question is no longer to elect but to acclaim. For this reason, Nadia Urbinati, concluding her text *Political Theory of Populism*, recalls that it is precisely the representative democracies that produce populisms. It does not come to power with the coup d'état, but with the elections, because they become a moment of sacralization, of legitimacy to become "the people".
Similarly, populism in power cannot replace democracies; otherwise, it would disappear and become tyranny or dictatorship. In its "in-between" existence requiring elections, populism does not eliminate the possibility of losing power. It lives at risk of no longer being the majority.

At this risk, populism rules by perpetually mobilising and encouraging the audience of its 1:1 scale performance. They are no longer citizens but spectators who recognize themselves in the leader and are linked to him by a proprietary relationship. In Italy, the Lega party (far right) spoke of "our lands," while the M5S (centre) of "our people." The new citizenship is that of the audience of an interactive performance that communicates directly with the public. There is no institutional mediation, no distant representation. Populist leaders live in constant propaganda and communication that humiliates opponents and instils the idea that the opposition is not morally up to par because it is not

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[36] Urbinati 2019, 120.

the "real" people. Populist propaganda «makes the audience its amplifying voice — a voice it holds to be much more relevant than elections».[37]

The increase in new communication technology tools has certainly encouraged this idea of "audience democracy".[38] An example is the "Rousseau" platform of the M5S (Movimento 5 Stelle), an Italian "non-party" born in 2009, thanks to the blog of the comedian Beppe Grillo. Openly populist, the movement has played an important role in legitimising populism among Democrats and within the left. The "Rousseau" online platform allows direct interaction with citizens, who can communicate, propose laws, and vote. Once they won the majority, the M5S showed all paradoxes of power, and their private platform replicated the dynamics of power they denounced. Today, the language and the modalities of populism in power tend to all parties, at least in Italy, supported by the simplicity with which the new media connects institutions with citizens. There are numerous examples up to the more banal and sad ones, such as the daily Instagram stories of the opposition representative of the Lega party Matteo Salvini, former vice president of the Italian council. He films himself around his house, while he throws the garbage or in parliament, to talk about politics, food, current affairs and to respond directly to the haters who send him insults.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Isn't the use of social media by those who have an institutional role a symptom of their lack of accountability? Isn't the photomontage of Mayor Sara Riva's list possible only if the group is not responsible for representing Gromo? Can anyone with a representative position behave precisely like a citizen? Are they citizens anymore?

The dynamics of populism in power highlighted the disappearance of the role of responsibility in those who occupy a political position. Populism, contesting the power of the political class, cancels representation, makes itself a citizen, and cancels its accountability.
The main error of this reasoning lies in thinking that the citizen has no responsibility. No wonder this is the feeling because, indeed, it is. I take the example of the situation in Italy. The current prime minister, Mario Draghi, and his ministers are the result of a technical government established after two government falls, in which the majority previously voted by the citizens barely appears. Nobody voted for the governing group,

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Urbinati 2020, 223.

which, as I write, is taking decisions on Italy's position in the Russian-Ukraine conflict. How does the citizen manage to feel responsible for the government's choices?

I want to put the concept of responsibility at the centre. What happens if you look at the position of representation not as a position of power but as a position of responsibility? What if the ruling class does not have power but rather an obligation? What happens if the elections are viewed not as a people's exercise of power but as an exercise of responsibility?

In her book *The Need For Roots,*[39] French political activist and philosopher Simone Weil declares that responsibility is a vital need of the soul because it nourishes the sense of feeling useful, even indispensable. This need is satisfied if one «often has to make decisions on problems, large or small, which concern interests extraneous to one's own, but towards which one feels committed».[40] The sense of responsibility could be the balance and the promoter of democracy. Norberto Bobbio, an Italian political philosopher, describes the specific characteristics of the concept of democracy: a method for making collective decisions where two rules apply. The first is that everyone participates in decisions directly or indirectly. The second is that the decision is taken, after free discussion, by a majority in respect of the minority.[41] Suppose the first rule aroused a sense of responsibility rather than power. In that case, it is easier to imagine that people take an interest and question themselves about the community structure to which they belong, including the sectors far from their interests. At the moment of the decision, the responsibility makes them understand the value and usefulness of the individual and the collective. It emphasises respect for the minority, which is responsible in turn. Simone Weil said that everyone must have «the opportunity to command during a certain period of their life».[42]

For the long-term project, I want to think of the political and governmental discourses as positions of responsibility instead of power. The responsibility role must be understood as a shared responsibility, not to confuse it with the responsibility of individual performance, typical of the neoliberal discourse. In doing so, responsibility is an awareness of the crucial connection between oneself and others. Responsibility is an anti-individualistic approach that shows, much more clearly than power, how vital, articulated and precious the individual actions that become a commonality are. Responsibility opens the thought on the whole mechanism of the community.

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[39] Weil 1990.
[40] Op. cit., 18.
[41] *Enciclopedia Multimediale delle Scienze Filosofiche*. Min: 0:50 – 1:40.
[42] Weil 1990, 18.

Entering the paradigm of responsibility and abandoning that of power is not easy because the Western narrative is built around and within the promotion of power. Does power or responsibility seem more attractive to you? Do you prefer to have great power or great responsibility? Which one seems more challenging to you?

1.4. The intention: the union of municipalities

About 307 families reside in Gromo and only 2 are of immigrant background. When you stop by for a coffee, it is easy to come across racist, homophobic, or misogynistic jokes. The majority of the population votes for the Lega, the far-right party I mentioned before. The community helps each other in difficulties, but the gossip network limits personal freedom.

In the series of interviews with the population, mayors, and councillors of the valley, I noticed that the most urgent problem in the Upper Seriana Valley is the lack of and the mismanagement of funds, which determines the scarcity of services and limited job opportunities. The lack of services leads to a high rate of personal dissatisfaction and the flight of young people to the city. The result is a substantial depopulation and the risk that the small villages will become mere mountain holiday resorts, inhabited by tourists only, a few weeks a year.

A prospect for the valley villages seems to be the proposed union between the four neighbouring municipalities: Gromo (1,200 inhabitants), Valgoglio (600 inhabitants), Gandellino (990 inhabitants), and Valbondione (1,010 inhabitants). A union is an institutional form of association and cooperation between municipalities. It means sharing the villages' finances and jointly exercising the functions and services of municipal competence. However, after twelve years of attempting, the villages never achieved the union. On the one hand, due to the obstacles imposed by the Lega party, which is afraid of losing votes. On the other hand, the lack of dialogue with citizens feeds parochialism, taboos around the theme of the union, and the fear of losing identity, power, and ownership. The conservative spirit of the valley discourages collaboration between neighbouring villages by isolating them in their private interests connected to building speculation and the tourism industry. In short term, the risk is that "for villages with less than 3,000 inhabitants", the state will impose the merger of the municipalities — to save money — without actual mediation or planning by the villages concerned. This is dangerous because it would centralise services in the larger village, leaving others in short supply and tempting the population to move to larger towns. Moreover, it is not desirable because the imposition of an unaccepted union is always a violent process.

I see the potential in the proposal to unify the neighbouring villages of Gromo, Valgoglio, Gandellino, and Valbondione. But it must be considered through a different approach than what has been done so far. It must not be limited to the joint management of services / finances / administrative functions but it must be a union for and with the community. A community that, through merging, can open up to a plurality of identities and

opportunities for dialogue. It can initiate an exchange mechanism to welcome different traditions and protect them as local cultural heritage. A union must begin from a conversation with citizens and must be created based on listening to the opinions and needs of each village population. This situation recalls the circumstances of Raivo Puusemps' project. As mayor of Rosendale, New York, the artist involved citizens in the discussion and then in the vote for the dissolution of the town and its merger with the neighbouring municipality. The artist accompanied the village in the delicate and often violent process of the union.

This reinforces the idea that a partnership within the Upper Seriana Valley needs to weld its foundations starting from the specificities of each municipality, from their shared knowledge of the mountains, rivers, climate, animals, and plants that characterise the valley. A union that starts from practices of commonality.

On the contrary, in the past twelve years of negotiations, the only interlocutors were the four mayors and the municipal council, behind the closed doors of the municipal building. The union remained a question of numbers and properties. It has never been reached because every mayor wants to make sure they keep power over the land properties to decide how to manage them, what could be buildable and what not. Each mayor wants to be able to determine their taxes and does not want to share them with other municipalities. There is no trace of public assemblies, meetings with citizens, demonstrations, or initiatives to raise awareness on the theme of the union, showing the advantages and disadvantages to citizens.

The union is a complex and delicate operation. Also in this case, the micro-cosmos of the Upper Seriana Valley's problems doesn't depict isolated issues but it reflects those of other micro and macro-cosmoses. A parallel is almost taken for granted considering the critical issues affecting the European Union, built on an exclusively economic basis. In an article, a few years ago, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben argued that the European Union was an agreement between governments and for which no one ever voted. A Europe that struggles to be united because it was born thinking of economic interests, ignoring the cultural and spiritual roots and the political and legal ones of other countries.[43] A union based on a currency bond rather than on a dialogue between the plurality of life forms. A union that often imposes the interests of a richer minority on a poorer majority.

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[43] *The Endless Crisis as an Instrument of Power: In conversation with Giorgio Agamben.* 2013.

How to unite the villages of the valley in a joint project? And how to make citizens responsible for a common choice in participatory governance? How can social change be promoted, and the identity of each village safeguarded?

Is union the only solution? What other proposals could there be for a better future for the valley?

I can't answer any of these questions now. These are issues to be addressed with the citizens and directly involving the communities. From Finland, what I can do now is to think about the ethics behind the interaction between my artistic practice and the community of the valley. I can define my approach, my position. In short, define the leadership with which to carry out a governance proposal.

The long-term art project that will lead me to the election is a 1:1 scale project. It means that it does not only have to do with the bubble of the artistic field but it directly invades a territory of life. In that context, the actions of the artistic practice no longer end in themselves but they take part in people's lives and can affect the socio-economic-political dynamics of the territory, the surrounding environment, and the villages' future. Therefore, it is vital to be aware of the possible consequences of any actions. It is necessary to build and declare the ethics of my practice for this long-term project.

Furthermore, it is clear that when one relates to a context on a 1:1 scale, as populism in power does, it is challenging to keep a distance, and one risks in losing the sense of responsibility towards the context that one embeds. If my artistic practice is to embody the mayor's figure, I must have a clear understanding of its ethics, and I must not lose sight of either the artistic practice or that of the mayor.

Building leadership ethics before returning is essential so as not to appear like the one who studied abroad and comes back to change things. I entrust my artistic practice with the task of helping me build ethics around long-term project leadership.

1.5. Learning something through something else

There are several ways to approach research. My artistic practice usually uses a modality that I call *Learning something through something else*. It is a research method and it consists of positioning the starting point of the investigation in a distant field, often wholly disconnected from the object of the research itself. It is very useful when you want to deconstruct a concept or previous knowledge; when you want to see the object of the study from a new point of view and experience it profoundly.

A distance must be interposed between the research object and the investigation. It can be a physical distance or conceptual, thematic, linguistic, etc. The distance must lead in a direction almost opposite to that of the research object, allowing the investigation to become foreign. The zone of strangeness enables the study to get confused, get lost, and avoid following a familiar and known path. Here, one begins to see the research object from a new point of view, and can explore it.

The simplest example that comes to mind is the experience with my nationality. I was born and raised in Italy, but I had to leave Italy to understand what it means to be Italian. I am not Italian when I live in Gromo. I became Italian when I lived in Rotterdam, Budapest, and Helsinki. I had to leave Italy to understand what that nationality meant. From that distance, I was able to understand many things.

I understood that "only" a piece of paper differentiates me from a refugee. I realised that the Italian passport allows me to travel to almost all countries and gives me free access to the master's degree in Finland, unlike my other colleagues.

I understood certain forms of discrimination linked to the clichés of the country one comes from, such as hand gestures, the broken English accent, the need to always have to cook, and the claim to know how to make pizza. I am privileged because Italians are not so discriminated against, but I understand how heavy the stereotypes and superficialities can be.

I understand what it's like to be looked at with racist and fearful eyes when they discover your origins. I apprehended it during the first wave of Covid when Italy was fighting hundreds of deaths a day. Although I was in Finland for five months before Covid broke out, it often happened to me that people walked away from me on the subway or in line at the supermarket when they heard me speak Italian. In a coworking space, two people yelled at me to leave because they were afraid of the Covid virus behind my Italianness. I discovered how privileged I am because racist behaviour happened to me for the first time when I was thirty.

Another example of this method occurs in one of my first projects: *Learning to fence in Hungarian*. I wanted to explore the performativity of the sport of fencing, and I decided to do it across a linguistic distance. For one year, I moved to Hungary to learn fencing techniques. I chose to fence because it is a sport I did not know, and it reminded me of dance and elegant gestures. I decided not to practise it in Italy, because the country is excellent at fencing. I wanted to learn it in Hungary, within a Uralic language that had no ties to the Italian one. Budapest seemed to be a sufficiently foreign place to learn a sport from scratch. Unfamiliar with the language and any previous technique, I attended fencing lessons (foil specialty) in Hungarian for a year, three times a week. The fortune of not knowing the language and not understanding either the meaning of my teacher's words or his commands, allowed me to focus on the sound of the words. I began to associate each movement with the sound of the command, completely freeing myself from their meaning. Gestures have lost their name and have become sounds. At the sound "viivualashh", I extend my arm, step with my right foot, and shift the weight forward. "Pizzzirii", take small steps forward, slowly. "Neeghidik", the wrist moves counter clockwise, the sword parries the blow from the inside. "Quuarti", the wrist moves clockwise, the blade blocks the blow from the outside.

Learning fencing through an unknown language allowed me to deepen a sport through the experience of the sound of the language. On the contrary, you can no longer hear the sound of a language if you know it. You only hear the meaning.

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To investigate, deconstruct, learn and build the ethics linked to my leadership, I rely on the *Learn something through something else* method. Therefore, the investigation kicks off in a territory very far from the causal leadership vision, far from the idea of power, prowess, productivity, and abundance.

I will learn leadership through the concept of positive poverty.

The concept of positive poverty is dear to me, and it will be the foreign place, the distant context from which I will experience and build the ethics of Leadership Povera (Poor Leadership).

What do I learn if I look at the position of leadership through poverty? How can it guide me?

2. THE RICHNESS OF POVERTY. INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE POVERTY

In order to talk about positive poverty and understand its dynamics, it is essential to clarify the nuances of the concept of poverty. When I started using the term "poor" linked to leadership, I realised that it was often perceived in a negative way and considered irreconcilable with a form of care towards the community of Gromo. On the contrary, in the culture where I grew up and in the Italian language, the word "poverty" has managed to maintain a subtle link with its ancient positive meaning and power, despite the fact that the economic language has colonised the term. In fact, the capitalist vocabulary of economy has excluded any positive interpretation of poverty, emphasising the connotation of humiliation and its synonymity with misery, while for many cultures it used to be the resource to defeat destitution.[44] It is essential to clarify that the *Leadership Povera* (poor leadership) I'm talking about is far from the economic meaning of poverty, which is a situation of inadmissible impotence and it must be denounced through the awareness about the mechanisms that generate it, at least trying not to feed into them with our actions.

Poverty is such an abstract concept, so broad and so wonderfully linked to cultural and historical contexts that it is limiting and trivial to reduce it to a lack of subsidies and money. Starting from the experience of Italian culture and the mountain village where I grew up, I try to trace the positive influence that certain forms of poverty have exercised. A journey that visits the "poor" in a semantic and historical key, between Italian, French, Persian, Albanian and mediaeval idioms and dictionaries. A faraway journey in search of the links with the positive poverty that managed to survive all the way up to me, transmitting poverty as a form of life, where it becomes the means and the vital energy for the experience of life itself.

Recognizing the richness of poverty is the key I have decided to use to imagine the trajectory of my leadership project in the candidacy for the mayor of Gromo. A Leadership that inherits the positive meanings of poverty and embodies them to confuse the stereotypes of power, politics, wealth, community, and coexistence. A leadership in which poverty is not a rule to be applied. Rather, inspired by St. Chiara and St. Francesco, the leadership itself becomes poor.

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[44] I deepen the topic in the next pages.

Poverty appears to me like a fairy-tale word, in the sense that it has something magical and dark, it reminds me of witchcraft. It manages to be a frightening taboo word that one tries to eradicate, and, at the same time, it is loaded with strong spiritualism and a radical soul. It is a relative concept, and it remains a social construction, similar to the word freedom, impossible to be universally defined, characteristics of which are often labelled and described by the "non-poor". Poverty has meanings and nuances that are too broad, too ancient and, above all, too tied to specific socio-temporal-philosophical contexts to pretend to be able to describe it in an exhaustive and complete way. I limit myself to exploring what I can understand by staying within the context of the European tradition and getting help from vocabularies, etymology, and from authors and characters who have explored poverty in different directions.

2.1. About semantics of poverty

I am happy to explore the concept of poverty in the company of Majid Rahnema's (1924 - 2015) writings. Born in Tehran and studying in Beirut and Paris, he is a bridge between Sufi-inspired Persian wisdom and European knowledge. He was the Minister of Education in Iran, represented his country in the UN and was a member of the Executive Council of UNESCO. For years, he has fought to undermine the conventional idea that poverty is a threat, showing how much the humanitarian aid that should defeat it is in fact part of the same system that feeds it. The friendship with the philosopher and pedagogue Ivan Illich inspired his studies, and his reasoning provided a rare and stimulating excursus on the multitude of poverty and its role in the fight against misery.

Majid Rahnema observes that the noun "poverty" and "poor" have been absent for millennia from the world's vocabularies.[45] What existed was only the adjective "poor", which applied to names that lacked something or were not up to what they should have been. Like poor soil or poor health. Each individual was poor (and rich) in something, but without being entirely "poor". The author places the invention of the noun "poor" during the economic evolution that appeared between the tenth and eighth centuries BC. The term seems to have appeared in Israel when a group of wealthy landowners forced peasants to sell their land.[46]

Over time, languages have created numerous words to define their "poor" and the different conditions associated with the multiple perceptions of poverty. Rahnema finds more than eighty in the Persian vocabulary, more than ten in African languages, eight in the Torah and about forty in the Latin language of the Middle Ages. Beside the words, the numerous varieties of proverbs, mottos and popular expressions that add nuances to the idea of poverty and that are often difficult to translate into other languages must be added.

Although the common denominator of these words points to the lack and the unsatisfied need for something, the concept of poverty remains relative. The conditions of a poor person in one context could be those of a person considered rich in another. What is needed? Where, when and for whom? According to what values?

On the list of Cardinal d'Ostie, a mediaeval inventory of individuals classified as poor, he mentioned almost everyone: widows (even if wives of a knight who died in battle), orphans (even if they were daughters of the king), lepers, madmen, prisoners, pilgrims,

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[45] Rahnema 2005a, 84.
[46] Albert Gelin as cited by Rahnema 2005c.

unhappy church refugees, merchants, saints and ascetics.[47] Majid Rahnema points out that, before the industrial revolution, the people called "poor" were rarely those who lacked money. The Robert dictionary of the *Histoire de la Langue Francaise* asserts that, in French, the word "poverty" was used with the meaning of "misfortune, sadness". With the expression "Poverty of God", it euphemistically indicated the intimate parts of women and men. And again, in the sixteenth century, "faire la pauvreté" (singular) referred to the sexual act, while "faire ses pauvretés" (plural) meant "to go to the toilet". Also, Rahnema shows that foreigners were also called poor because they were not part of a community. "Poor", in Persian (bi-kas) and in Wolof (ki amul), literally means "without anyone". While in Albanian, my colleague Fjolla Hoxha pointed out that poverty (varfëria) comes from the root "var", which means to hang, tie, suspend. Therefore, in Albanian language, the etymology of poverty is connected to an idea of being anchored / dependent on something or someone.

An important observation comes from the book *The Poor In The Middle Ages* by Michel Mollat, French historian, expert on the mediaeval period. He tells that in Europe, until the end of the Middle Ages, the term poor (pauper) was opposed to that of powerful (potens). The "poor" was a free person who had no power nor was threatened by the powerful. The poor/rich antinomy came later, with the development of the bourgeoisie and the birth of the commune (city).[48] Mollat also tells us that in the 11th and 12th centuries, people entered the universe of poverty if they could not maintain a condition of health and if they lost the tools necessary for their work: «for the peasant, this meant the loss of farming implements and animals; for artisans, loss of the tools of their trade; for the merchant, loss of their shop, for the cleric, loss of their books, for the noble, loss of their horse and arms».[49] Poverty was the deprivation of power and social esteem.

Majid Rahnema relates how often the name that defined the poor was so precise that it allowed the neighbours to know or guess what they were suffering from or what they needed. Even today, it is possible to distinguish different meanings of "poor" based on the ending that accompanies the word in the Italian language. "Poverino" indicates an unfortunate person who needs loving compassion but who has the means to get out of their condition of misfortune. "Poveraccio" is a wicked person who is poor in a moral sense and does not need compassion. "Poveretto" indicates someone who cannot make do alone and needs help. "Poverello" is often used to indicate St. Francesco, the *poverello d'Assisi*. It shows someone who needs alms, but it resonates in a romantic way, as far as

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[47] Simone Wattelet according to Rahnema 2005c, 3.

[48] For an interesting study on the birth of the Italian commune and its structure, see: Bookchin 1991, chapter five.

[49] Mollat 1986, 6.

I know. "Povero <u>Cristo</u>" is a wretch, and is compared to Christ crucified, who flagged the sufferings of the world because nobody understood him. For the person addressed as "Povero Cristo", life has reserved only misfortunes, and the worst things have happened to them.

The nuances of all these terms change, depending on the sentence or the region of Italy in which they are used. They refer to social status and describe the person's character, actions, or attitude but in no way indicate a financial condition. For example, in Gromo, similar to other contexts, until about thirty years ago, it was customary to add "poor" in front of the name of a deceased. It was a discreet way to inform the interlocutor that it was being talked about a dead person, to help one avoid unpleasant questions or assumptions.

The examples of the most disparate interpretations of poverty are endless. Yet today, it seems that the economic language has dictated a definition of the poor that is universally accepted, at least in the West. Today's "poor" is the one who has a daily income of less than 1$ a day, a ratio that the World Bank has established using the currency of one of the richest powers in the world. The problem is that - trying to universalize and standardise a situation of lack - one loses sight of the subject to whom one attributes the name of poor and all the nuances related to the specific poverty. Majid Rahnema has worked extensively on the problems of poverty and on the processes of production of misery by the market economy. He explains that

> the poor of our times is a character invented from scratch by a modern "newspeak". A stranger who is programmed to be transplanted from their native soil to the "planetary village". An abstract entity with claims to universality whose stereotyped profile has nothing in common with the poor in the plural, which this virtual character tends to swallow.[50]

Economic language has fixed and structured the meaning of poverty as financial insufficiency, misery, and shame. It has hidden the links with the plurality of poverty and the "thousand ways of being poor".[51] Moreover, it has abandoned the links with the positive force that could arise from the state of lack. It seems to have achieved what J. M. Lotman called the "oblivion of connections".[52] Lotman (1922 - 1993) was a Russian theorist of the semiotics of culture. He considers the oblivion of connection an indispensable element to destroy a culture. Therefore, I would add, the economic

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[50] Rahnema 2004, 2.
[51] Braudel 1982, 256.
[52] Jurij Michajlovič Lotman according to Bermani 2008, 19.

language contributed to the loss of links with poverty as a positive and radical tool for re-reading life, power, wealth and conviviality.

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The difference between poverty and misery must be clarified to rediscover the links with positive poverty. In the Christian tradition, St. Tommaso, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus, indicated <u>poverty as a lack of the superfluous</u> and <u>misery as a lack of the necessary</u>. According to this differentiation, poverty is a lifestyle based on frugality, simplicity and sharing with other members of society, where one has everything needed. In contrast, misery is a form of impotence, in which the person is deprived of all individual and social forces.

In his fight against the exploitation of poverty as a means of power, the Iranian diplomat and politician Majid Rahnema has identified and described three types of poverty.

The first is *convivial poverty*, which is characteristic of "vernacular societies".[53] In its convivial form, poverty is a way of living together with what one has; it is based on solidarity, sharing and a sense of fairness. It implies an ethic of living with others and with the surrounding environment. Its frugal and moral way of life is based on a realistic recognition of needs, which becomes an art and a craft of living, to ensure the common struggle against necessity. For this reason, Rahnema emphasises that poverty was precisely the weapon used by the poor to exorcise and fight misery. Eventually, the convivial poverty of vernacular societies, developed a series of practices to preserve a good relationship within the community, such as hospitality, the containment of needs and the social control of envy.[54]

The second is *voluntary poverty*. Here, poverty becomes the tool by which one frees oneself from material needs to seek wealth of a higher nature. It is an attitude dear to many religions all over the world. It is also possible to find examples of voluntary poverty in the philosophies of the past of the Western culture, such as Socrates, the Stoics and Cynics.

The third is *modernised poverty*. Majid Rahnema considers modernized poverty as the most problematic because poverty is exploited as an instrument of submission and power by the market economy. According to the author, it was born with the industrial revolution when the systematic production of new needs made it difficult to distinguish what is

[53] Majid Rahnema borrowed this term from Ivan Illich, who uses it for the first time in his book *Shadow work*, 1981. Vernacular society indicates pre-industrial societies linked to a subsistence economy within a community. The vernacular society unites the members of their group thanks to relationships developed locally and thanks to a microcosm of practical knowledge and wisdom.

[54] George Foster according to Rahnema & Robert 2010, p.49.

necessary or superfluous. The multiplication of the needs of the economic-technological production system has created a series of "induced scarcities" which are the leading cause of the new deprivations suffered by the poor. De facto, modernised poverty is a «pure product of the new productive order»[55] whose needs are unrealistic. The essence of modernised poverty lies in the

> new existential frustrations - often humiliating and destructive - with which entire populations have to deal. On the one hand, the modern poor are intoxicated with needs that have been created for them. On the other hand, they are deprived of the means necessary for their satisfaction.[56]

In the era of consumerism and capitalism, poverty coincides with misery and all the solidarity strategies of convivial poverty collapse. Aid to the poor becomes institutionalised and only creates enslaving addictions. Rahnema denounces the current plans to defeat poverty in the world as tools of power in the hands of those who help, because they deprive the poor of their means against misery. The author states that external aid could be appreciated, but only if it does not transform the poor into a consumer of needs who depends on economic power.

Poverty as a frugal and moderate life is not a problem by itself. Yet, nowadays, it is views as a problem to justify a structurally impoverished society, and an economy of abundance, detached from life.

According to Majid Rahnema, poverty engages vital dynamics when problems are faced from within. The circle: induced deprivation and aid from the outside have nothing to do with the creative tension triggered when facing shortages. The richness of poverty, not to be confused with misery, lies in its ability to transform the lack into an enriching exercise that gives additional strength to face the need. It stimulates people to live better with what they have, to develop their abilities and social-environment balances because preserving them becomes vital. The poor are in the best position to find the right and more realistic solutions for themselves from the inside. From within, they can find their own way of life, freed from the needs invented by others.

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The word "poverty" used in the everyday Italian language, often maintains a positive connotation. Frequently, it indicates something genuine, authentic, rooted. Its simplicity

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[55] Rahnema & Robert 2010, p.51.
[56] Rahnema 2004, 5.

and frugality suggest things that manage to be creative and vital. Therefore, sometimes, scarcity can be considered a favourable factor for innovative solutions.

In Italian cuisine, a dish is appreciated when cooked with so-called "poor ingredients," a minimum quantity of ingredients, often seasonal vegetables, used in all their parts, without waste. A famous Italian "poor dish" is the "Ribollita", a typical Tuscan soup, which literally means "boiled several times". It was born in the Middle Ages when the feudal lords ate their roasts served on bread as a dish. After lunch, the leftover bread — flavoured with the juices of the meat — was given to the servants, who added it to their soups. The soup was re-boiled every day, adding new ingredients.

A poor dish is considered to have an authentic flavour, without too many spices or sophisticated ingredients. It refers to traditional and genuine dishes cooked by grandparents.

The same goes for furnishing. What in Italy is called "poor art," is a furniture style characterised by solid wood with simple and essential lines. They stand out for their sober, refined elegance and for a type of traditional artistry that refers to grandparents' homes. They are robust, simple, and functional.

To give another example in the contemporary art field, the term "poor" has been used to name one of the main movements of the Italian avant-garde: Arte Povera. It was born with the homonymous exhibition curated by the art critic Germano Celant in 1967. Under the name of Arte Povera, a group of Italian artists who «rebel against traditional, supra-temporal and transcendental»[57] gathered. Arte Povera refused the precious traditional supports of painting and sculpture to make art with poor materials: earth, wood, stone, iron, rags, plastic, industrial waste. It was an art called povera (poor) because it started from everyday aspects; it brought art into everyday life. Arte Povera movement focused on the element of contingency, the event, and the present. For Celant, Arte Povera is not an artistic current but a way of behaving. The name was inspired by the Poor Theatre of the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski. The concept of Poor Theatre for Grotowski entails the elimination of the superfluous. A theatre «without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects» and that «it cannot exist without the spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, communion».[58] In Poor Theatre, the actors, stripped of any excess, could experience their own body, voice, and physical experience with the audience. A space of freedom where even the practice of exercise gained value.

Poor Theatre and Arte Povera choose the word "poor" as a manifesto, to show their radical position. They wanted to abandon conventional trappings in their respective fields to

[57] Celant 1967.
[58] Grotowski & Brook 1968, 19.

rediscover a genuine approach. I do not think it is a coincidence that these two movements come from two strongly Catholic countries like Italy and Poland.

I have chosen to call my approach to leadership "poor" because I believe it is the most solid and suitable word to describe broadly and profoundly the leadership ethics that will lead the project of running for the mayor of Gromo. Nonetheless, I understand that is a sensitive issue arguing that poverty is a source of inventiveness, vitality and genuinity. If I consider scarcity as a generative factor, I risk to justify inequalities, shortcomings and precarious situations. Therefore, I try to tell my idea of positive poverty by taking one step at a time and trying not to generalise.

2.2. My encounter with positive poverty

The relationship between me and positive poverty has its origins in the Catholic doctrine with which I grew up. I lived in close contact with Catholicism not because my parents were believers but because religion fulfils cultural activities in Gromo, as it often happens in small Italian villages. There are no other great alternatives or state funds to support cultural activities in rural areas. Therefore, the festivities, games, and moments of meeting revolve around the Church. A Church that still has a lot of power in contemporary Italian society and that, in small towns, ends up being the social glue even for non-believers. For me, it was "normal" to go to Mass on Sunday, do catechism on Thursday, meet up with friends in the evening for the "Via Crucis", or decorate the village together with the grandmothers for the feasts of the saints.

At the kindergarten in Gromo, the nun Elisa taught me to say prayers in front of a porcelain doll dressed in lace and flowers: it symbolised the child Madonna. In my prayers, I asked her to make my hair grow long, have braces on my teeth like other children, and let me play Gargoyles even if I was a girl. On rainy afternoons, the nun showed us Franco Zeffirelli's film, *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, 1972, which tells the story of St. Francesco and St. Chiara. Walking home from kindergarten, I hummed the song from the movie that I knew by heart:

> If with faith you will know how to live humbly,
> You will be happier even without anything.
> In the simple life, you will find the path.
> Give and give, every day with your sweat,
> One stone after another, high you will arriveeee... (epic moment of the song)
> Live pure and free, don't be in a hurry
> And the simple joys are the most beautiful
> They are the ones that are the biggest in the end...

That film was my first encounter with St. Francesco and St. Chiara. The two Catholic symbols of poverty par excellence. Francesco (Assisi, 1181-1226) is the founder of the Franciscan movement and Chiara (Assisi, 1194-1253) is the founder of the order of the Poor Clares. The nun taught me that they both decided to put into practice life in the likeness and in the company of Jesus. To be like Jesus means to live in poverty. In fact, even if it was never emphasised by the priests I met — except by the current Pope Francesco (not by chance he chose that name) — the concept of poverty is at the centre of the gospel. And by listening to it and repeating it in prayers, the concept that Jesus Christ is the example of poverty remained with me. From being rich (Jusus was rich by

Godly qualities because he was his son), by coming down to earth, he became poor, stooped down and died on the cross, to enrich humanity. To give people every day what money cannot buy: inner peace. Living a poor, frugal and charitable life is the ransom for the soul, "the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen".[59]

I have certainly incorporated these gospel messages, but I cannot say that my artistic approach to poverty is based on the holy scriptures or the dogmas of the Church. Rather, I believe that the link with positive poverty lies deeper, in one of those links that have survived the layering of meanings that cover the basic concept of positive poverty.

The key figures of poverty in my culture, such as Jesus, St. Chiara, and St. Francesco, arrived to me covered with a deadly weight of time; retold, censored, rewritten, translated, celebrated, sanctified, and fictionalized. There are no original writings of the two Saints, just as there are none of Jesus. As it often happens, what has come down are only the interpretations constructed a posteriori to censor unaccepted ideologies and adapt the language to the dogmas of the church's and different historical contexts. An example is Francesco's biography. Thirty-seven years after Francesco's death, all his biographies were officially replaced by the *Legenda Maior* of Cardinal Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, who was five years old when Francesco died. He ordered to destroy and burn all previous versions of him with the excuse of not wanting to create divisions within the order.[60] The life and message of Jesus too. His memory survived through the stories of his disciples and thanks to the commitment of St. Paul. Paul was among those who persecuted the early Christians. Fifty years after the death of Jesus, falling from his horse, Paul had a vision and began writing about Jesus and converting the Jews and the pagan Romans to Christianity.

De facto, the concept of positive poverty that touched me in my Christian upbringing is painfully buried under the Church's papal tiaras and rings, vestments, crusader wars, martyrs, conversion campaigns, struggles against heresies, witch hunts, sales of indulgences, ownerships of land and real estate, the suppression of knowledge and culture, indoctrination, dynamics of power, aid to the so-called third world in the form of religious colonization, paedophilia, laws against abortion, homophobia, up to the recent letter from the Vatican that asked the Italian government to reject the Zan law draft on "Measures to prevent and combat discrimination and violence for reasons based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability". According to the Vatican, this law violated the freedom of thought in the Catholic community and their freedom of

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[59] From the prayer of The Apostle's Creed.

[60] For a very interesting and in-depth study of the dynamics of censorship and transmission of St. Francesco's message, see: Mercuri 2016.

organization, as the law did not exempt Catholic private schools from organizing activities against homophobia, lesbophobia and transphobia.

In its traveling, despite being crushed in the Church's bulky diving suit, positive poverty continued to survive in Catholic cultures. It has been preserved in small daily gestures, between the lines of idioms, in sensations and affections coming from remote traditions.

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I could explore the sense of positive poverty in many other cultures, philosophies, or religions, like Buddhism, that have better protected, understood, and put into practice the positive poverty under different names. Instead, I decided to go and discover it in my tradition because it is the only one that, to date, I can say I know and feel on my skin.

Again, I used the *Learning something through something else* method to rediscover and understand my idea of positive poverty. I had to use it to impoverish myself from the ballast, impoverish from the structures and things that appear "natural". Therefore, to hear and learn more about the poverty of Chiara and Francesco, I didn't go to the Basilica di Santa Chiara or to that of San Francesco in Assisi, and I did not consult the immense Historical Archive of the Sacro Convento of Assisi. Rather, I moved to Finland, where about 28% of the population is atheist, and about 68% is of the Lutheran Evangelical religion (which does not venerate the Saints). I reached Franciscanism in the small Franciscan community of "San Damiano" in Porlammi, a village of 600 inhabitants 100 km from Helsinki. The community is self-managed by two theologians and former Lutheran priests who converted to Catholicism about ten years ago, Eeva Vitikka-Annala and Pauli Annala. I visited them very often, and I discussed the issues of Franciscan poverty with them, speaking a mixture of English, Italian and Latin. I attended their retreats with morning vespers, masses and evening prayers, all in Finnish. I prayed for the first time in an unknown language. I knew the content, but I didn't understand what I was saying. The sensation is intense, hypnotic and exhausting. Still, it is not that far from when I pray in Italian as I pray a gospel that before that it was in Latin and before that in Greek and originally in ancient Hebrew.

Finally, I abandoned all the texts about the two saints, and I interpreted them through Sarah Keenan's text, *Subversive Property: Reshaping malleable spaces of belonging.* This text does not even remotely touch the theme of poverty or mention the two Saints. Still, it is thanks to Sarah Keenan's arguments on the topic of property that I was able to explore and read in a contemporary key the concept of the right of poverty of St. Chiara and St. Francesco.

2.3. Property as a form of belonging

Where does the radicalism of Chiara and Francesco reside?
There is no genuine answer, as there are no reliable sources. Everything that follows is my interpretation and the result of the *Learning something through something else* method:
To understand the direction of my artistic research, I followed the ethics of the position of leadership. To define this leadership ethics, I followed poverty. To understand what is meant by poverty, I followed Majid Rahnema. To understand Rahnema's positive poverty, I followed two Saints who lived 800 years ago. To understand the two saints, I followed Sarah Keenan's contemporary thesis on property. To deepen the idea of ownership in St. Chiara and St. Francesco, I followed the historical period in which they lived.

During the 1000s and then throughout the 1100s and 1200s, northern Italy, like other areas in Europe, is characterised by a complex phenomenon that is the birth of a new political reality: the Medieval communes. The communes are alliances of mutual defence among the citizens of Medieval cities. They are born for a series of intertwined factors, including the rebirth of towns, the resumption of craftsmanship and the new urban classes that come together to free themselves from feudal bonds and imperial authority.[61] The dominion of central-northern Italy is divided between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papal States. For convenience, the latter sided with the communes to fight against the Empire. Far from the central power of the Holy Roman Empire, many northern cities, such as Bergamo, begin to develop into autonomous organisms, placing the surrounding countryside under their control. Bergamo took control of Gromo, a mountain area, rich in silver and iron mines.

Assisi inaugurated the communal era in 1198 when Chiara was 4 years old and Francesco 16. These years are punctuated by clashes between the two main town factions. On the one hand, the *Minores* (or Populare), a nascent social class that had enriched itself thanks to trade and began to feel tight under the emperor's feudal rule. On the other hand, the *Maiores*, the class of the conservatives, formed by noble families who support feudalism. At this point, Assisi had about thirty families in a commune of three thousand people.[62]
What most differentiates the two factions is the nature of their assets. The *Minores* enrich themselves thanks to trade and the pursuit of (increasingly sought-after) professions of a judge, notary, doctor and merchant. They had cash on hand to easily invest and experience

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[61] For a good overview on the topic see: Hyde 1973.
[62] Flood 1991, 19-23.

profitable profits, such as credit. Their money attracted the *Maiores* who, on the other hand, struggled behind the burden of ownership of land and real estate, which would guarantee them a comfortable life, but not that reserve of liquid money that began to become the means to multiply wealth.

Chiara belonged to the latter group, the *Maiores*, daughter of the noble rank of the Offreduccio. In contrast, Francesco was the son of Pietro di Bernardone, a *Minores* who had made a fortune thanks to an active fabric shop and commercial relations with France. Francesco's family has the most significant availability of money in Assisi.[63]

In 1210, *Maiores* and *Minores* sign the "*Carta Pacis*", a pact that declares the end of their clashes to focus, together, on the economic growth of the city.[64] The union between the two classes derived from the financial fatigue of the *Maiores* and the desire of the *Minores* to become a superior class.

Assisi passed from a subsistence economy to a market economy. This led to a wealth increase but it multiplied the needy in the streets. It became clear that trade development only favoured those who already had something to invest in, while overwhelming the sick, orphans, the poor and the lepers. In the rural world of Chiara's great-grandmother, the indigent lived as servants but were protected in a fortified castle. In Chiara's time, people moved away from the villages in search of fortune and the city became their downfall. Whatever the social class, life was marked by masses, prayers and the power of the Church. This is the context within which the Franciscan movement was born.

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Summarising and sifting through official and unofficial sources, I tell you that, probably, Francesco began by undertaking forms of charity and distributing his money to the destitute of Assisi. Against his father's will, around 1205, Francesco abandons all his possessions and he begins to repair small, dilapidated churches in the countryside of Assisi. Soon, other rich young people from Assisi left everything and began to follow Francesco. After a few years, Chiara joined the group, gradually followed by other women peers.

For women, entering religion meant something extremely different from what I can imagine today. It meant freedom, autonomy and the conquest of a recognized role in society, away from constant pregnancies and domestic duties. Perhaps the only opportunity a woman had to cultivate a spiritual and intellectual life. It was probably also the only real alternative to arranged marriages and protection from sexual obligations and abuses. The condemnation of adultery and the invocation to virginity until marriage that

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[63] Mercuri 2016, 54.
[64] Bartoli Langeli 2007.

the Church promoted were a form of submission and power. Could it have appeared as a kind of regulation to limit abuse and violence against women? In her book *Francesco di Assisi. La Storia Negata*, medieval historian Chiara Mercuri draws up a long list, which could be endless, of women, even contemporaries of Chiara, who were saved from a chain of violence thanks to entering the monastery. Unfortunately, however, it was challenging to enter a female monastery. First of all, there were only a few female monasteries because they were considered expensive, and so they were not accessible without a substantial family dowry. Often, even a noble girl did not have a dowry because becoming a nun was against her family's wishes, who would have preferred to exploit arranged marriages for favourable alliances.

The initial Franciscan group was made up of wealthy and socially well-integrated women and men who had the cultural and social means to evaluate their choices and imagine a different future for themselves and the society around them. None of them was a cleric, and they didn't preach doctrinal themes. They were simple lay people who invited for a change of the direction and entering to poverty.

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Early Franciscanism focuses on poverty.
What did it mean to be poor? Is it a question of money? Probably it's not just that. As Majid Rahnema shows, poverty is much more than one's financial situation. And Michel Mollat says that in the Middle Ages, the opposite of poverty (paupertas) was power (potentia).
Perhaps the better question is: making oneself poor *from* what?
If St. Tommaso is taken up as an example, poverty is the lack of the superfluous, while misery is the lack of the necessary. What is the superfluous they wanted to let go? What is necessary to keep? St. Chiara calls the right to poverty "necessary" and claims the right to free nuns from the constraints of property and possessing a dowry. What property do Chiara and Francesco want to abandon?

My interpretation of this last question comes from Sarah Keenan, whose research transits legal and political thought, geography, feminist theory, and postcolonial studies. She proposes interpreting property as a relationship of belonging instead of thinking of property as the right to exclude others. Shifting the focus from the object of possession to the system of belonging that surrounds the subject.
It is complex, but I will try to summarise by saying that Sarah Keenan follows Davina Cooper's thesis and argues that belonging can be considered in two ways. First, the

relationship according to which an object, space or "rights to it" belong to a subject ("subject-object" = me and my phone). Secondly, the constitutive relationship of the part to the whole by which attributes, qualities or characteristics belong to a thing or a subject ("part-whole" = me and my whiteness).[65]

First of all, she clarifies that, in both cases, the relationship of belonging is contingent. It is built through connected relationships and heterogeneous intersecting forces. Those forces weave both the relationship of belonging between me and my phone ("subject-object") and between me and my whiteness ("part-all"). It is perhaps easier to understand it when thinking of the "part-whole": I possess my whiteness because I am embedded in certain connected social factors that constitute whiteness. But the same goes for the relationship of belonging between me and my phone. The relationship can only exist where «networks of social relations have first constructed 'me', other networks of relations have constructed the phone, and yet other networks of relations have constructed the relationship between myself and the phone as one of belonging».[66]

Property is a form of belonging. It comprises a network of heterogeneous factors that dress the subject with its properties/belongings and constitute its identity. The subject owns (objects, status, qualities, privileges, etc.) and what the subject owns determines its identity. Consequently, its identity ends up owning the subject itself. So, «while whiteness can be said to belong to the white subject, the white subject also belongs to the complex relations and networks that form whiteness».[67] As a result, the subject's identity belongs to the various social, cultural, economic, and other networks that construct it. Furthermore, it is essential to note that the networks of relationships that build belonging must be recognized, shared, and accepted in order to function. The disparity that the Western model has exercised and continues to exert on the various networks of belonging and the understanding of properties is evident. In any case, the networks and factors that determine ownership are not fixed or essential but temporally and spatially contingent. Ownership is contingent on the surrounding environment and historical times. What belongs to me and identifies me in one context may not do so in another. I may be white or the owner of a phone here and now, while I may not be any of those in another time and space. Therefore, Sarah Keenan concludes, if ownership is contingent, it can be remodelled. A change of perspective can be activated towards ownership, towards those status quos and hegemonies that are so rooted in time as to appear inevitable or even "natural".

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[65] Davina Cooper according to Keenan 2010, 429.
[66] Keenan 2010, 434.
[67] op. cit, 430.

From my point of view, reshaping the hegemony of ownership is exactly what St. Chiara and St. Francesco try to do together with their "sisters" and "brothers". I'm going to investigate how their use of poverty is an attack on the systems of belonging and a social struggle against the injustices of their time.

2.4. The right to poverty. A form-of-life outside property

The first Franciscan movement proposes poverty as a form of life. It means that they do not propose to be poor. In fact, they have the necessary. Instead, they decide to make their own life poor: their thinking towards others, their attitude towards things, their approach and their actions. Poor of belonging. It means a form of life that is outside ownership, outside that property described by Sarah Keenan: a property that extends to the relationships of belonging. The Franciscan *Highest Poverty*[68] is a form of poverty outside of ownership, structures of belonging and social divisions. It reveals a common territory in which there is no more division and distance between me and others, between my actions and their consequences, between what I produce and what I consume. Their impoverishment is positive and could be summarized in the follow points:

❖ Distancing themselves from money. Money is considered a form of exchange that is too abstract and makes the very value of things a marketable reality.[69] Money enters into games of profit and power easily and moves one away from their direct experience with things. Above all, it distances from the immediate effects of their actions. It alienates.

❖ Hindering land privatisation and taking care of the common land.[70]

❖ Working without receiving any salary or aiming for profit. Working what one can, but working well, and seeing that what is produced goes to those who need it. Also, working for those who fail and for those who take care of the poor. Work towards seeing that everyone thrives.

❖ Taking care of one's own needs. They are strangers to the idea of fasting and abstinence of the monastic ascent tradition. They have the necessary and food is offered to everyone in an atmosphere of conviviality, joyful and playful festivities. From a God-centred religiosity, they pass to one centred on the living beings.

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[68] Wording concept from: Agamben, 2013.

[69] Todeschini 2009, 18.

[70] Land - which ultimately belonged to the king - was organised in a feudal hierarchical system. The open fields were regulated by governors and worked by peasants, but their production was supposed to feed and enrich the vassals and lords in the governing hierarchy. Meanwhile, peasant subsistence was secured by the maintenance of lands for common use, such as forests and wastelands. In the commons, peasants were allowed to shepherd animals, gather wood and plant crops. The use of common lands secured the peasants' subsistence. Still, the reason for their existence was to keep the population under control as the population could revolt against the sovereign if it felt too restricted by boundaries. (Reece Jones as cited by Cattin 2019, 13).

❖ Abandoning relations of belonging and ownership. They become impoverished of classes, categories, races, divisions. They impoverish social, economic and cultural barriers to find themselves together with everyone and everything. They called others siblings. They call the sun, the fire, the wind and the birds brothers, and they call the moon, the water and the sheep their sisters.

From the bible: "God created sky and earth, all visible and invisible things, and gave them to everyone to make good *use* of them".[71] The Italian believers of the 1200s (and beyond), translate that *use* into ownership and make it exist only for men, able-bodied and a specific social class. The city of Assisi leaves out the needy, the sick, the lepers and all the "subcategories" who are not considered as part of the society. Instead, Francesco and Chiara bring the poor and the sick back among the people; they get everyone back into the society. Francesco goes to the Holy Land to meet with Sultan Malik al-Kāmil. Not to convert him, but to try to stop the crusades and open a dialogue with other religions. Chiara gives the possibility to women of any class to enter the monastery.

The aspect that I find radical in Chiara and Francesco is that — through poverty — they manage to deconstruct the structures of power, not only of the city of Assisi but of the Church in general. They demonstrate that everyone can *use* what they need if everyone lives within positive poverty. Above all, they reveal that being poor means making all walls and social barriers fall. They become poor in belonging to feel united with everyone. It is a union that has nothing to do with the idea of homogenization. They feel united because they deprive themselves of barriers and recognize that they are single in a common ground. They perceive themselves as siblings with nature and the environment, as unique life formed by multiple parts. There are no divisions but, rather, diversities united in a common interest: to live and share the goods that "a God" has given.
Through their struggle against poverty, the group of the first Franciscans does not seek holiness but social justice.

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In the last years of Francesco's life, the movement expands beyond the borders of Italy, the guidelines begin to get lost and suffer pressure from the Church. Some friars begin to consider poverty absurd and request to have books, to be exempted from manual labour, to be able to accept money from charities and to progress in ecclesiastical offices and

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[71] The summary of this passage from the bible is mine.

career. In 1221, Francesco resigned from the leadership of the order. Very ill, he died five years later.

Chiara had been forced by the Church to abandon the Franciscan group seven years earlier, to retire to the cloistered monastery of San Damiano. Society was not ready to accept women's freedom of movement and, under the pretext of their safety, forced them to be enclosed. Society was far from being ready for the idea of self-sufficient female work and, consequently, it was inconceivable for the Church to approve a female monastery entirely dedicated to poverty. Chiara fought all her life for the poverty rights of nuns. Three days before her death, in 1253, the Pope approved the St. Chiara rule which freed the nuns of San Damiano from the possession of any property. It was the first rule of a Christian order drawn up by a woman.

Meanwhile, Gromo had become an autonomous commune and had drawn up its first statute, 1238, in the presence of 12 accountants and 4 notaries. Bergamo granted Gromo the *Instrument of the privilege* a document that gave Gromo the privilege of autonomy over the mines and the minerals extracted both in the economic and juridical fields. The autonomy allowed the socio-economic development that would lead the village to become one of the most important centres for the production of weapons and swords in the Bergamo area. In 1246, twenty years after the death of Francis, the territorial boundaries of Gromo were defined. The woods of firs, larches and pines, and the pastures for the sheep and cows — that were previously collectively exploited together with the neighbouring communities — were divided between the borders of the different properties.

Over time, the spirit of early Franciscanism — that of Brother Elia, Egidio, Leone, Bernardo, Rufino, Chiara, Masseo, Angelo, Silvestro, Filippo, Pietro and Francesco — gave way to a rigid order of institutionalised rules. Their story died out under the one told by Bonaventura da Bagnoregio through a misogynistic, mystical and body negating gaze. The new friars were educated clergy who abandoned manual labour to work at the University of Paris. Others responded to the most urgent needs of the Church, such as preaching, missions for conversion and the fight against heresy.

Francesco's idea of a diversified union outside of belonging disappeared with a cruel campaign of unification of European territory under a single religion.

Poverty as a form of life — that remains inseparable from its form — got lost in the various interpretations and divisions of the movement. The radical social change inaugurated with positive poverty by Chiara, Francesco and their siblings was manipulated by the supremacy of the Church in the quest to attract the faithful, and positive poverty gradually lost its value and intentions.

2.5. Some things survive

Some things survive even without being written. In this case, the memory is linked to a daily doing that, day after day — even unconsciously — spreads the memory. It is a memory that passes from hands to things, from songs to prayers, from works to traditions and allows links to survive. Surviving links are something deeper that resists regardless of the structures of belonging, the great stories, dominant narratives or written texts.

The positive poverty of Chiara and Francesco is one of those surviving links that has come down to me, allowing me to feel the closeness of the two Saints, even though everything written about them seems distant and meaningless to me.

In the upper Seriana valley, there are two situations in which I can find the links with positive poverty. The first are the traditions. Handed down from generation to generation and close to the rituals of paganism. The second is the struggle to safeguard the territory and the environment of the mountain.

The links with positive poverty remain in the valley's traditions because they are contemporary rituals that work outside the western contemporary socio-economic structure. An example is "Venerdì Santo" (Good Friday), its most heartfelt and shared tradition in Gromo. It is the procession to commemorate the death of Jesus, but it maintains a strong link with the pagan rites of adoration of fire. That day, many people (unfortunately, the majority are still men) take a day off from work and find themselves working together. What is needed is old rags and used oil. During the day, rags are rolled up, dipped in oil and arranged on the mountain's slopes to form Christian symbols (the crosses, the host, the "G" of Jesus, etc.). There is no monetary compensation for the preparation work, but everyone brings their food to share. There are several local kinds of cheese, wine, and the "Maiasa", a typical dessert of Gromo that is prepared exclusively for the "Venerdì Santo" (usually by women). Traditionally, it was prepared with what was left in the pantry from the winter: eggs, fig, leeks, apples and cornmeal. The cake was designed to use all the leftover food and make room in the pantry for the new seasonal fruits coming with Easter. When night falls, the procession of "Venerdì Santo" leaves the church with the statue of the dead Christ. Everything is dark. When the procession arrives in the town square, the "fuochisti" (fire-people) set fire to the rags placed on the slopes of the mountains. At that point, the whole village seems to burn in a touching scenery of fired symbols. People watch the fire blaze, with a background of solemn music and prayers.

"Venerdì Santo" maintains positive poverty because it brings a spirit of extreme happiness in the air throughout the day, using the meaning of working together. It brings

together an entire community. Every year, different generations work together to prepare for the "Venerdì Santo". Thanks to this tradition, the community experiences the result of a collective effort.

Location: Ripa di Gromo. The picture captures the moment of raising a cross during the preparation for the tradition of Venerdì Santo.

Another example is the "gnocchi di colla" tradition in the hamlet of Valcanale, a few kilometres from Gromo. There is a mountain peak high enough to keep the hamlet's houses in the shade during winter. The inhabitants of Valcanale greet the sun in December and see it again at the end of February. On the day that the sun returns, everyone — almost all of the approximately 320 inhabitants of the town — meets for lunch. They return to Valcanale, even those who usually had lunch at work in other cities. They prepare a long table and eat the "gnocchi di colla", made only of flour, salt and water. It is one of the traditions of positive poverty that I have always envied.

These traditions maintain positive poverty because they are contemporary ceremonies that act as an instrument of encounter. A gathering made up of simple, free and collective efforts.

Feelings of positive poverty also reached the Upper Seriana Valley during the demonstrations against the uranium mine in Valgoglio (a neighbouring hamlet of Gromo) at the end of the 1970s. The valley lies above the largest uranium deposit in Italy of 1.500 tons. The 1979 movements against uranium extraction were the last form of commonality that united all the valley villages under a common interest. My parents, and the youth of their generation, fought against uranium mining due to the ecological consequences of processing the mineral, the immense amount of waste material, and the repercussions on health. Furthermore, they were fighting to defend the common ownership of the mountain that the municipality had sold to a private Italian company, which in turn had granted it to a multinational company and finally to an Australian corporation.

My parents and other people at a demonstration against uranium mines. Gromo, 1979.
In front is the symbol of death with the sign: "*Who loves the mine, follow me*". On the front row, some Italian political parties of the time are represented. From left to right: Italian Socialist Party, Italian Communist Party, Christian Democracy, Italian Republican Party, Italian Social Movement (neo-fascist). Followed by several characters dressed as Pinocchio and schoolchildren. The signs say from left to right: "*You have been bad. We will eat radioactive chickens*." "*You tell us so many lies*". "*The adults are preparing us for a radioactive future*".

The struggles for protecting the territory are an echo of positive poverty. On the one hand, because they amplify those moments of togetherness and cooperation — usually excluded from the main narrative and forgotten in the background of political defeats — yet essential to foster commitment and a struggle. On the other hand, mining could be seen

as a profit oriented form of accumulation, and the protests resemble positive poverty by keeping the mineral dormant. The movement against uranium extraction is a story of resistance, a story of commonality among the official history of a struggle and a story that recollects a sense of love for the soil's deep-time formation, overtaking an extractive and possessive thought over a landscape. For more than forty years, the valley villages have kept a "poor", deactivated uranium in the belly of the mountains. What will happen to that memory of positive poverty if Italy includes nuclear power in the list of green energies and starts to invest in it? Will the mountain and its habitants be able to maintain their poverty?

To conclude, positive poverty is a tool, and more precisely, it is an attitude. It exempts itself from the division of social, cultural, political and economic structures. Therefore it was possible to use it in 1200 as well as it can be used in 2022. It is a lens that shows things impoverished of their enclosures, belonging, structures, barriers, differences and borders. It shows how small, grounded, and connected everything is.

It is not a situation of insufficiency. Rather, a voluntary situation of poverty from structures shows all the wealth one has in common.

Slowly, awkwardly, and silently, positive poverty still lives around and it can be a tool to look at things and a compas for one to orient oneself. Positive poverty is the attitude with which to build an example of leadership that lives in the structures of the contemporary world without having too much to do with it.

3. A CONCLUSION

This thesis presented the long-term project that sees my artistic practice in contact with the political dynamics of my hometown, aiming to initiate a candidacy proposal for the next elections in Gromo, in 2026. The project is part of a long artistic tradition that considers art as a tool to trigger social and cultural change. I called it a 1:1 scale project, borrowing Stephen Wright's definition, because it does not denounce or represent the political situation of Gromo. Instead, it decides to candidate itself and actively participates in it.

I introduced the socio-political conditions and problems of the four northernmost villages of the Seriana Valley in the Alps of northern Italy. Depopulation, lack of finance, scarcity of services and a conservative spirit tend to close the future views. In short term, the Italian state could impose the merger of small municipalities to save on subsidies and facilitate the management of services. The four villages would face the violent process of a union imposed from above. A process that occurred in Finland for most of the small villages around the 1990s. Therefore, it is more desirable that the union, or a possible alternative starts from within so that the villages can decide the terms of the collaboration. The centralization of services in the larger town could be avoided, safeguarding the small municipalities from complete depopulation and defending the identity of each village. I stated my thinking that the union is not just a necessity, but it could be an opportunity, if the trajectory is drawn together with the citizens.

Furthermore, I recounted Gromo's current politics, contextualizing it within the Italian political scenario, in which populism in power inspires a language and an attitude that is irresponsible. I have proposed a paradigm shift that replaces the leadership position of power with a position of responsibility.

The candidacy in Gromo's elections is an artistic project that doesn't look at anything other than what it is: a candidacy, with everything that precedes it and everything that follows. It is a long-term project that can influence and inspire the political decisions of the Upper Seriana Valley and mark the territory with both short and long-term consequences. Because the project takes an active part in the political decision-making process, I declared its need to rely on precise ethics. Being an artistic project is not in itself a guarantee of fairness or responsibility. I sought the foundation for ethics within what I called "positive poverty", to then build a leadership that becomes poor.

I introduced the concept of positive poverty, distinguishing it from the economic language and looking for its meanings in different times and contexts. Through the Christian St.

Tommaso, I have spoken of positive poverty as the lack of the superfluous, distinguished from misery, which is the lack of the necessary. Through Majid Rahnema, I observed how a situation of scarcity could be a creative force that triggers new possibilities from within a context. Through the artistic avant-gardes (Arte Povera and Poor Theatre) who have named themselves through the concept of poverty, I have defined positive poverty as an expression of genuineness that helps a concrete experience of the here and now. Lastly, I interpreted the poverty of early Franciscanism through Sarah Keenan's concept of property to show that positive poverty can abandon the property system and unhinge the social organization of the divisions of belonging.

Now the concept of positive poverty appears more familiar to me. At this point, what can it teach leadership? How is the approach to positive poverty intertwined with that of leadership ethics? Finally, what does Leadership Povera (poor leadership) mean?

I am at the beginning of my research, and the conclusion of this thesis is only the beginning of further studies that will continue after the MA. The Leadership Povera approach will have to be experimented through practice with the valley community, by building a safer space for the encounter between the citizens and my research. I cannot do it only in theory. I have to develop it *up there*, among the "green mountains".[72]

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[72] It refers to the song "Montagne Verdi" by Marcella Bella, 1972. It was my favourite song as a child. It speaks about a girl who leaves the mountains and her beloved to move to the city. Her destiny is to be next to her love and, becoming a woman, she will return to the mountains.

3.1. Leadership Povera. Towards the 2026 candidacy

I report some preliminary considerations on Leadership Povera and indicate the direction of future research.

First of all, if the leader is poor, it means that she cannot do it alone. She needs others, which in turn, are poor leaders. Leadership Povera does not decide but educates for collective governance and shared responsibilities. It doesn't work with its ideas but with a common project. Positive poverty brings down every wall and hierarchical structure and shows that everyone is "low" and limited. Its strength lies in constituting a collective of limitations.
In light of this, it is clear that it is a mistake to say that I will run for mayor. If anything, I will be able to encourage the formation of a group, but then the group in the civic list will apply. Leadership Povera questions the singular position of the mayor and wants to nominate multiple mayors. There is no leader. There is at most a Leadership Povera made up of a multicultural and multidisciplinary union of poor leaders.

Second, performing leadership through positive poverty opens the path for a non-stereotypical leadership. Far from specialization and the idea of power, authority, profit and success, Leadership Povera welcomes mildness, humility, shortage, vulnerability, amateurism, passion and responsibility.

In addition, Leadership Povera can be the key to addressing the proposal of the union of Upper Seriana municipalities because it means choosing an open position, free from dichotomies and parochialism, where leadership resembles the stick insect. The stick insect does not try to prevail but becomes one with the surrounding. It evolves together with its context and is part of it. The actions of the stick insect are confused with those of its environment, and there is no author. In Leadership Povera, authorship is shared with everything else. Each element of the community is the protagonist. It means doing things by paying attention to what is there, what is available and what is around: the communities, dialogues, commons and traditions.

To use another metaphor, Leadership Povera is a project that does not travel on a speedboat. It does not have an engine to proceed in a predetermined direction. Instead, it sails on a sailboat. It must listen to and understand the wind and the changes in the surrounding environment. It must consider the tide of the conservative spirit, the storm of criticism, the currents of the opposition and each time, it must find a way of travelling, suited to the surrounding conditions.

Over time, Leadership Povera can become an example for various leadership positions, such as that of the mayor but also that of the researcher, teacher, director, curator, facilitator, parent or priest.

3.2. Future practices

Together with two other inhabitants of Gromo, we have recently decided to open a social and cultural cooperative in the Upper Seriana Valley that brings together people from all the four villages. Thanks to the cooperative, it is possible to start thinking about a joint project that no longer bears my name and is not strictly linked to my artistic practice. Still, art will remain one of the tools to facilitate the approach of the population to the discourses related to the social changes in the valley. Through a series of interventions, the cooperative wants to bring new job opportunities to the valley, encourage dialogue and exchange between the villages of Gromo, Valgoglio, Gandellino and Valbondione. Among the main projects of the cooperative, there are workshops in schools, initiatives for sustainable tourism and the organization of a performing arts festival. Through its organization and logistics, the latter wants to experiment with social, economic and democratic models of the union between the four villages, starting to experiment with them on the micro-scale of the festival and then proposing them on an administrative level.

In addition, the cooperative could lay the foundations for forming the civic list that will stand as a candidate for the next Gromo elections in 2026. The cooperative could introduce an "expanded" mode of governance where the councillors include people from the valley and consultants from other parts of Italy and the world. An exchange of advice with different realities. This would consist of people of different nationalities and ethnicities, both Western and non-Western cultures. From the most disparate disciplines, both academically and without degrees, a wide range of ages and backgrounds. Over the years, the group could work together to think about possible trajectories for the Upper Seriana Valley and perhaps inspire similar realities. Enlarge the consultancy network to address Gromo's issues with a plurality of voices, experiences and different skills. Thus, what appears "natural" or taken for granted to some, may appear different from a foreign perspective.

Within my artistic practice, in recent years, I have already started a series of performances that try to expand the boundaries of Gromo and reach rural realities and places that, in one way or another, share the same difficulties as the Seriana Valley. For example, contexts facing the problems of union or that have been united for some time or, again, have found different solutions. An example is my participatory performance *Call for stand-in mayors and councillors*, produced by Mad House Helsinki and presented for the first time in June, 2021. The piece is a fictional city council in which the audience takes on the roles of councillors and mayors of the four villages of the Upper Seriana Valley.

Together, they discuss the need for a union of municipalities and envision a trajectory for a more prosperous future for the valley. The performance aims to think together so that problems in one context might open up strategies for another that addresses the same issues. It helps both places to envision a future direction through a foreign sensibility. The reports of these municipal councils - including the considerations, dialogues, and proposals - are translated into Italian and made available to the valley's population and those who host the piece.

In February, I presented this performance to the village of Kirkenes in the municipality of Sør-Varanger. The city results from the merger of eleven smaller towns in northern Norway, on the border between Finland and Russia. Although belonging to a national context very different from that of Italy, Sør-Varanger shares many of the problems related to the political microclimate of the Seriana Valley. Among these is the closure of schools in smaller villages, the issues of transport, the centralization of services and the debates around the extraction of iron ore and mines. Before the performance, I spent a two-month period of residency in Kirkenes. I talked to some inhabitants and local associations; I visited the schools and, for several times, I met Mayor Lena N. Bergeng, with whom I established a good friendship. She promised to come and visit Gromo soon. During the performance, 20 audience members took the roles of the four mayors and those of the councillors. Given their union experience, they brought to the city council concrete examples of the long term positive and negative effects of a union. Furthermore, they have shown that the 12 kilometres separating Gromo from Valbondione are not a problem. The children of Sør-Varanger often have to travel up to 50 minutes to reach the nearest school. They explained that a larger school offers more workshops, experiences and stimuli that compensate for the difficulties related to distance. Another interesting aspect that emerged during the city council performance is that looking at the valley map for the first time, the audience identified Gandellino as a village in the centre and, therefore a possible headquarters of the union. This makes me reflect because I used to consider the villages as neighbours, and I had never realized that one of them was geographically in the centre.

In May, *Call for stand-in mayors and councillors* will also visit the Finnish town of Outokumpu, in northern Karelia. The city has 6,508 inhabitants and a mining history. Today the village has relaunched itself thanks to a dance school and a program of artistic and research residencies. While in June, the inhabitants of Porlammi will step into the shoes of the mayors and councillors during the participatory performance. The small town has only 600 inhabitants and it has been merged with the city of Lapinjärvi in southern Finland for several years. After the municipality unification, Porlammi closed the school, the swimming pool and the carpentry.

The performance *Call for stand-in mayors and councillors* is an initiative that lays the foundations for opening a sisterhood between similar cities, a dialogue and exchange between communities.

3.3. The wealth of scarcity

The positive poverty approach shows that it is possible to see wealth in the scarcity of the valley. The lack of services and finances can help imagine new forms of collectivity and subsistence. The shortage of opportunities in the valley shows that it is not sustainable to continue governing the four villages independently, each town on its own as if they were distant. Difficulties in addressing needs alone are an opportunity to work in the direction of cooperation and experiment with new social forms. The union of municipalities could be an opportunity to rethink the management of the economy but also encourage new social relationships, guarantee common goods, and settle a collective commitment to care for the environment, the children, the sick and the elderly.

I want to explore these issues in the future. Analyze the aspects of the commons. On one hand, the relationship between the idea of the *use* for the commons, released from possession, as in early Franciscanism and that of art towards a usership, released from authorship, as described by Stephen Wright.[73] On the other, paying particular attention to the inflation of commons in the context of contemporary privatization. If the economic language has colonized the concept of poverty to transform it into misery and an instrument of power, in the same way, market interests have co-opted the language of the commons. As the Italian naturalized American philosopher, sociologist and activist Silvia Federici explains, capitalist accumulation and the market have understood that

> a collective management of natural resources can be more efficient and less prone to conflict than privatization, and commons can be made to produce very well for the market.[74]

In the context of the scarcity of the valley, a poor, collective, and responsible Leadership could work together to achieve three conditions.

First of all, to create an economy within the valley that is sustainable. It is essential to rekindle collective interest and bring people closer to the desire to take care of the village and participate in its politics.

Secondly, investing in culture and opportunities for discourse articulation and thought exchange. To give everyone the chance to talk about their needs, express their interests, and bring multicultural experiences that often struggle to reach the rural villages of the valley.

Lastly, feed a community awareness that refuses to see itself separated from others, which goes beyond the feelings of parochialism between villages. Leadership Povera that

[73] Wright 2013, 66.
[74] Federici 2010, 285.

promotes cooperation, must nurture a common bond and focus on the quality of relationships. For example, elevating the quality of the gossip network, transforming it into a network of mutual aid that makes sure everyone is well and has what they need, rather than disparaging people.

The scarcity of rural places is an asset if one imagines it as an opportunity to build a collective project. The three conditions mentioned above are fundamental for regaining contact with the places where one lives and to feel as a part of a non-exclusive community. Union and cooperation can be the conditions for giving more autonomy to rural villages. Independence would bring people closer to their actions and overcome abstract solidarity to make it more tangible. It would take every town and every family out of the isolation of their individual survival struggles. What Simon Weil calls *grounding*[75] is fundamental in Leadership Povera. It means being in the thing, perceiving it and feeling like an integral part. The grounding makes me think of the sense of touch, which, together with taste, is the "lowest" and the most concrete one because it requires closeness to things if one wants to touch them or taste them. A closeness that offers me the possibility of perceiving myself in relation to things. This closeness allows me to feel responsible. Touching the consequences of one's actions firsthand is essential to increase awareness and *ethics of responsibility.*[76] Leadership Povera is tactile, brings back to things and «puta an end to the separation between the personal and the political, political activism and the reproduction of everyday life».[77] It nourishes the sense of «being useful and even indispensable».[78]

Leadership based on power makes me think about the sense of sight, a gaze that orders and controls from above. Instead, Leadership Povera is grounded and is contained in the sense of touch.

Could living in a community already become a purpose in one's life? Would it help to feel less alone and oppressed by the market logic that requires one to find a personal career and specialize in interests? Could the cooperative dynamics of subsistence, cultural exchanges and communities offered by the union of villages give means of livelihood, pleasure and become enough? Could the small and the scarce provide a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment?

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[75] Weil 1990, 167-268.
[76] Concept taken from Weber 2004, 83.
[77] Federici 2010, 290.
[78] Weil op. cit., 18.

I am aware that social change is a long and complex path. In June 2021, I presented my thesis performance, *A Celebration of the beginning of a Long-Term project*. The piece tried to tell this complexity through the simplicity of a metaphor and a gesture.

The thesis performance began with an imaginary pilgrimage through which I led the audience into the mountains of the Upper Seriana Valley. About twenty glass vases were arranged in a circle on the lawn. They represented the powers that have controlled the territories of the valley, rivers, mountains, and mines from the Holy Roman Empire to the present day. Water was the metaphor for the concept of ownership. Pouring it from one jar to another, I recounted the passage of the rights on the properties of the valley. The water passed from container to container from one domain to another, following more than 1300 years of history. Today, the properties belong to the municipalities of Gromo, Valgoglio, Gandellino and Valbondione.

In the performance, I wondered what could be a vision for the valley's future and how to overcome the strong conservative, parochial spirit and the scepticism in cooperation. The four pots of the municipalities, filled with water, showed the willingness to keep the properties to themselves by excluding sharing the water in a common vase. The performance utilized storytelling in which my previews recorded voice, alternating with my live voice, presented the Seriana Valley, spoke of property, the idea of a mayor as a servant, and two Saints as examples, Chiara and Francesco.

The performance ended with a gesture, a grounded position. A simple motion of my hand slowly laid the four vases representing the municipalities and overthrew them on the ground. They could no longer hold the water in that position, and it flowed on the lawn. Water, the metaphor for the concept of ownership, freed itself on the common soil of the valley, crossed with that of the other vases, mixed and expanded in space in different directions. The vases, emptied and poor from water, shared the air of their vacuity.

The lying vase position can be the metaphor for Leadership Povera.

3.4. The beginning

    I conclude by saying that the candidacy art project is what it is. It is nothing more than a political and social commitment to the place where I grew up. A form of care for me, who, besides being an artist, is an habitant of Gromo. The candidacy is an artistic project as long as I declare it so and as long as it is necessary. Now, it is needed to use the privileged position granted to me by the art system to legitimize the project, find collaborations and create exchanges between different territories. It is necessary to approach the project as an artistic project, to make its complexity more readable. I believe that art is a language that manages to tell the complexities of a context and can excite people to participate in social change. When it is no longer necessary to define it as an "artistic project", it will mean the change will have started.

My expectations are probably utopian and they will change, adapting to the context of a reality that is much more complex than theory. From my side, the fact that I became interested in the valley and decided to return to it is already the success of the long-term project, more than winning the elections or the realization of the union of the municipalities.

<div align="center">***</div>

You are welcome to the Upper Seriana Valley!
Below you can find a Gromo postcard with my address and contacts. I will be delighted to tell you how the project is going and collaborate on advising for the future of Gromo!
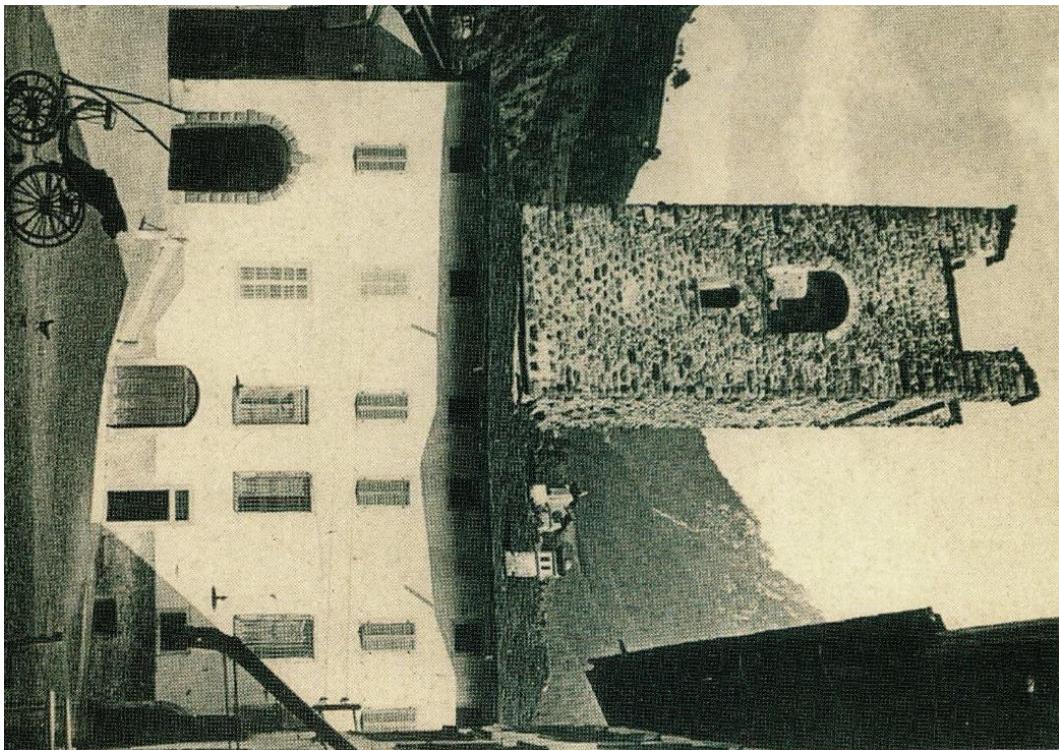
A CELEBRATION FOR THE BEGINNING OF A LONG-TERM PROJECT!

Together with a mountain, a river, a voice, a sunday dress, St. Clare, St. Francis, a mayor as an artist, and you

Performance by Tea Andreoletti
MA thesis - Live Art and Performance Studies

Lapinlahti Park, Helsinki _ 31 May-01-02-03 June 2021

Sound track:
Maslana, accordion by Alfredo Andreoletti
Environment sounds by Upper Seriana Valley
È Primavera Ancor by Rosetta Bressani

Collaborators:
Sunday dress design: Justus Kantakoski
Sound: Aku Pekka Vainikainen

Supervisors: Examiners: Producer:
Łukasz Jastrubczak   Tellervo Kalleinen   Johanna Autio
Tero Nauha   Matti Eräsaari

With the support of Thomas Berra, Pauli Annala and Eeva Vitikka-Annala, LAPS friends and colleagues, the Upper Seriana Valley community, its mayors and councilors for their interviews.

Photo: Piazza Dante in the early 1900s, Gromo. Ginami Castle, 13th century. Ph. Photo News Gromo

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Gromo postcard, designed for the thesis performance
A Celebration for the beginning of a long-term project.

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