What if... the History told the resistance? The unlikely odds of the Do-It-Yourself attitude insights regarding Zines and artistic heroes from the Oral Presentation Round Table 4 chair

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What if... the History told the resistance? The unlikely odds of the Do-It-Yourself attitude – insights regarding Zines and artistic heroes from the Oral Presentation Round Table 4 chair



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DOI: 10.34626 / 2184-9978_2021_1_010 Abstract. The Second International Meeting of "What if?..." World History (Whatif'20) had as theme "Art and Alternative History" which was a – as was said then – an umbrella for a several diverse proposals, such as transversal research themes, inclusion or globalization. The round table #4 presentations focused on what can be called the philosophy, lifestyle or Do-It-Yourself (DIY) attitude. Under discussion were proposals for alternatives to the current economic and social model, with regard to editorial forms of dissemination of scientific knowledge, and alternative and independent artistic trajectories. These are social practices that structure a non-fictional alternative history, once real, concrete, resultant from significant reflexivity and creativity, in the way they react and resist the dominant, capitalist, mercantilist, and competitive model. The DIY mode can be understood as a concrete alternative to the hegemonic model that perpetuates processes and mechanisms of cultural and knowledge exclusion. In fact, with these specific examples

- DIY editions on scientific knowledge and independent music career we can think and realise in alternatives ways of doing things, beyond the hegemonic course of History that is what we intend to do in this paper. These experiences show us as future perspective a real change for those who are not able
- in spite of the many reasons that can explain it to play the game or don't want to follow the mainstream rules, once they think alternatively.

Keywords: Do-It-Yourself (DIY); Alternative dissemination of scientific knowledge; Independent and alternative artistic trajectories; Alternative History

1. Introduction

The Second International Meeting of 'What if?...' World History (What If'20), that was held on November 24-26 of 2020, presented itself as a forum per excellence to researchers and aficionados of Alternate and Alternative History to exchange ideas, and research results of the field, whether as academic subject, or artistic/literary creation. This brief reflection focuses on the oral presentations (of the Round Tabel#4), which were concerned with alternative social practices imbued with what can be called Do-It-Yourself (DIY) logics (see table 1). On one side of the table, we had Samuel Etienne's presentation on alternative forms of academic publication for the dissemination of scientific knowledge, in a fanzine format. On the other, the biography of an unlikely artistic career of a Portuguese woman, musician, artist, whose irreverence is all the more remarkable as we are facing an artistic trajectory that begins in the political transition of a dictatorship and the dawn of democracy - a presentation by the artist herself. Ondina Pires and Ana Oliveira.

Although this is a non-fictional alternative, since we are dealing with critical and disruptive contemporary social practices, in relation to the current social model, the potential of these practices if they were normative would be notable. The intention is to materialize the will that change is possible, in the sense of making human experience in the most diverse spheres of life equitable.

In fact, the oral presentations here in perspective consist of two alternative proposals in the respective fields - music and art, on the one hand, and scientific knowledge on the other -, which not only proves the limits of the current model but are also based on creative and independent ways of making it happen. The question that arises first of all is whether the social model, namely supported by capitalism (market) [3, 4] and characterized by male dominance [5], would already be at a different level if the alternative forms on which we reflect were the dominant ones or. in the past, had arisen effect in terms of social transformation. In fact, as Etienne unequivocally points out in the title of his presentation, of what can be understood in a general way, of the logic of DIY, in the most genuined sense of the term and of the representations that it assumes. In this way we clarify what is meant by DIY, in order to distance ourselves from the multiple appropriations from which the epithet has suffered, namely those of the current socio-economic model, which assumes it as yet another dimension of the individualism to which it is attached [4, 6]. In fact, DIY social and cultural practices have a collective essence, a communion based on the way in which styles and models of life are viewed [7]. It is against the backdrop of the impossibility of making it happen 'by the rules' that differentiated, persevering and resilient ways of making things

Table 1 Themes of the Oral Presentation Round (OPRT)[1, 2]

What if academics decide to publish solely in doity-yourself journals? ZINES, a new academic journal dedicated to fanzines and consorts.	What if we can be hero just for one day? The improbable possibility of an artistic career in Portugal.
by Samuel Etienne	by Ondina Pires and Ana Oliveira
EPHE, PSL, Laboratoire CHArt, Paris France	ISCTE, University of Lisbon Portugal

happen are emerging as alternative scenarios of doing. And it is the reflexivity and necessary wondering about doing things differently that make us dive into one goal of Alternative History – explore alternatives possibilities for our capitalist way of living.

Therefore, we start with a synthetic framework on DIY and what it represents, in order to develop, in a second moment, a reflexive perspective on the oral presentations that constitute the main purpose of this article. We finish with some brief conclusions.

2. Do-it-yourself, do it for usthe tangibility of alternative possibility

According to Chrysagis [8], DIY is an ethical practice that produces economic value and it is a form of policy: "Do-it-Yourself is best understood as a modus operandi that allows people to achieve the internal value of a practice while simultaneously transforming the way in which value is generated across different realms. Most people who engage in DIY music activities do so in ways that combine internal and at least some form of external values: aesthetic pleasure, social enjoyment and personal fulfilment converge with the provision of necessary resources for the practice to continue, publicity and even 'prestige" [8]. One of the issues that runs through the ethos and DIY praxis in this socio-economic-political framework is about the notion of sharing. In the case of music, for example, the sharing of materials necessary for musical practices (such as stage, sound and image equipment) and editing practices is common [7]. This sharing is not so much guided by need itself, but rather by the ethical dimensions it involves, i.e. to enable access to resources for all, simply by the idea of enjoying them collectively. Another dynamic is resistance, especially the oblique resistance transposed to creative activities and to

the whole lifestyle. DIY provides a life regime in times of crisis and social disintegration [7, 9].

In fact, it is possible to observe the easiness with which these social actors have viewed music and other creative/artistic practices as possible occupations - in part as a leit motiv for confronting the growing precariousness in the transition to adult life [10]. Once used as a means of indicating pockets of resistance to traditional forms of music and cultural production, DIY has now become synonymous with a broader *ethos* of lifestyle policy that unites people in networks of alternative and translocal cultural production - particularly visible in cities [11]. While the Global North has led the way in establishing the fundamental qualities and parameters of DIY cultural practices, the prevalence of DIY sensitivities is no longer restricted to these regions of the world today. On the contrary, music scenes like punk, rap and dance music have found their way into countries of the Global South and became a critical influence on the evolution of DIY culture in these geographies too, notably in Southern Europe [9].

3. Is History made of alternatives ways of living? Practical DIY examples in designing alternative contemporaneity

3.1. DIY and the free proliferation of the word in the scientific knowledge dissemination

By presenting an alternative editorial form for the dissemination of scientific knowledge, Samuel Etienne clearly immerses us in the scope of DIY subcultures [12]. The proposal is to materialize an editorial format strongly imbricated in the DIY models - the (fan)zines/zines.

There is an inescapable connection between fanzines and the visibility of the punk scene, but

we cannot merge both subjects. In music, and in Atton's proposal, a fanzine emerges for three primary reasons: (1) as a space for expression and debate for fans of a musical genre (band or artist) who have no space or are forgotten by the traditional music press; (2) it helps to fortify an underground music genre (band, artist) whose reach is very limited; and finally, (3) it allows fans of a niche musical style to maintain their connection and spirit [13]. In all these circumstances, the aim is to create a communion of interest and taste - the fanzine thus assumes itself as a kind of low-tech predecessor of today's social networks and this is not confined to the punk universe, nor to music as a whole. Nevertheless, fanzines and their production associated with punk made an inextinguishable contribution to the expansion of musical scenes, their documentation, their visibility and their loyalty [14]. And from here, from the DIY logic that accompanies the musical scenes, other universes have been opened, such as the scientific production.

The current model of editing and dissemination of scientific knowledge, based on (intellectual) property, tends to be predatory and exclusionary, far from the primordial academic model which aimed strictly at the dissemination of knowledge thinking about the common good, without any proficiency in editorial and publication matters; moreover, the primordial editions will have taken on a non-formal (fanzine format), because of their spontaneity [14]. The result is "Zines", an editorial experience in the dissemination of scientific works without the editorial skills at a professional level, but with great experience in the creation of fanzines, that is, in self-realized ways of disseminating academic and scientific works. And this alternative materializes itself as a counterpoint to commercial editions, with a competitive and profitable character and a strong selectivity. According to Etienne, with

this alternative, immediate and creative model it emerges a real science in real time, overcoming the bureaucratic stages of the current model [15].

The extension of the scope and use of the (fan) zine model emerged in the United States and in the United Kingdom. Samuel Etienne dedicates himself to this possibility in France, materializing alternative editorial possibilities in some different technological formats, from paper to digital printing [15, 16]. This is crucial in order to show that in view of the current system, there is once again an urgent need for alternative responses, particularly as regards the publication of scientific texts. These, in the current model, fully follow the rules of global competitiveness. There is a strong competition to publish scientific productions, and these are the terms that rules scientific validation. Today, the reputation of research and the validation itself depends on the publication in editorial media listed in specific rankings in the scientific editorial field, namely regarding the number of citations. The homology of the logics inherent in the different contexts or social fields (in the bourdieusian good way) are useful to understand the social practices considered here [17]. Especially when confronted with logics that sustain and converge the action in conformity with the rules of the field, on the one hand, and those that do not have a place there, either because they do not have (yet or at all) the necessary capital for this to occur [17], or, on the other hand, because they bet on alternative possibilities. The proposed alternative emerges as a potential response to the discrediting of scientific knowledge and, inherently, the scientific field as a whole. The emerging publications, very concrete and close to the formats that ordinary people know, constitute a possible and reliable alternative in the dissemination of scientific knowledge - a "real" science, according to Samuel Etienne [15]. Once independent and freer, these alternative forms of publication will

eventually be more useful in bringing the scientific knowledge closer to the general population. We have here a double potential of this alternative type of publishing: the emancipation not only from the scientific community but also from the population in general, in a logic of an informed citizenship. Nevertheless, we cannot hide the possibility of facing some obstacles to the validation processes of the current academic and editorial models - the ortho and heterodoxies of the struggles that cross the field(s) [17].

This round table #4 - on DIY logics which invariably refer to so-called cultural and post-cultural studies - highlighted the importance of having platforms for the dissemination of scientific knowledge versed in DIY models, processes and cultures DIY. As an example, the speakers of this round table pointed out the International Conference KISMIF - Keep It Simple, Make It Fast! [18], as a privileged space of trans and multidisciplinary scientific dissemination. The KISMIF Conference crosses not only the scientific community, but also has repercussions in other fields, such as the media and the arts, due to the inexorable alternative form that it takes on - we would say - the frugal scientific system. KISMIF is a platform that privileges the sharing of knowledge: from scientific to artistic, bringing together researchers from the most diverse disciplinary areas, visual artists, musicians, fans, among others. In fact, what was discussed here - taking the work of Samuel Etienne and KISMIF as some important references - was the set of alternative forms/ platforms of knowledge dissemination vis-à-vis the dominant system.

From the various notes of the discussion that has taken place around this table, it is important to recognise the work of "people who give themselves in order to do what they do instead of treating them as if they were doing little", just because their work is outside of the terms and rules

of commercial competitiveness; "the professional recognition of those who make artistically different is practically non-existent"- as Ondina Pires, our "heroine", categorically states.

3.2. DIY your biography – the (im)possible tangibilities in an artistic trajectory

Ondina Pires' personal and artistic trajectory is characterized by evident tangibilities despite the difficult and complex circumstances of the contexts in which it was developed [19-21]. A continuous exercise of personal fulfilment, in the good DIY way, of fighting against everything that was supposed to happen. Although the musical dimension of the trajectory has ceased as a result of health constraints, several vicissitudes mark Ondina's artistic life. At stake is not only the dimension of the viability of independent, alternative and, therefore, non-commercial musical projects. A lifestyle outside the system brings out a wide range of significant constraints.

In fact, as this presentation shows, and as Ana Oliveira, her co-author and co-presenter, reaffirmed, we cannot dissociate, from this trajectory, some sociological and historical variables that explain and reinforce the initial question - and if not (or had been)?...

The issue of gender or, if we like, the role (plural) and the presence of women in the most varied social fields is a relevant dimension to consider in this discussion. The artistic and the cultural field are no exception in the spectrum of male domination [5, 22]. Even more, when cultural and historical variables are associated and reinforce a conservative position as far as women are concerned. Portugal was during forty years in a political dictatorship anchored in highly conservative normative customs [23].

Another important component of this case is the fact of Portugal, as far as culture and arts are concerned and its economic value, to be a peripheral society. This is a context that difficult a professional valorisation and recognition, that becomes a prodigious field of incipient, precarious and significantly difficult to self-sustain careers.

Indeed, we cannot fail to point out the fact that we are faced with a fragile exercise of activities in the artistic and cultural field, essentially due to the significant precariousness associated with it: the precarious labour relations, the intermittence of a political solution and the persistence of not seeing its social value [22]. The way in which the cultural sector has been viewed in the current capitalist and neo-liberal social model is based on the autonomisation and self-sufficiency of the individual, free from any external institutional force, detrimental to his or her creative individuality. Capitalising on individual responsibility not only frees the State from its basic social responsibilities (providing welfare), but also protects large corporate enterprises and institutions from social commitments by freeing them from the contractualisation of people and inherent workforce responsibilities [27, 28]. This is the basis of the devastating and regrettable fallacy of DIY in a neo-liberalised form - 'being free to do your own thing' and the neo-liberalisation of the economy in the cultural sphere [9]. It is therefore important to stress that when it is invaded. DIY loses its essence and its potential to build concrete alternatives to the current socio-economic model. This kind of fabulation has been sustained a sector that is characterized by significantly deregulated activities and services, low returns on capital, and relying significantly on self-employment and low wages/income [24].

In fact, this is a hegemonic model structuring all social dimensions, not very complacent with difference and freedom of independence, although - and returning to the world-system and the territorial divisions of centre and periphery - the intensity of those characteristics may differ according to the position of the territories. The reflection on this difference was present in the OPRT, since the interlocutors are from different territories and different "geopolitical" positions - Portugal and France. As far as Portugal is concerned, the trajectories of Portuguese musicians, programmers and cultural/musical agents are transversally characterised by precariousness a [7, 11, 25], which reinforces that peripheral position of Portugal.

And Ondina stressed this point: "what is the reward so that we can do the work?! Yes, because it is a job we are talking about!". And the discussion led us to a recurrent reflection on the global positioning of art and culture within contemporary societies and the tendency to value the economic rather than the symbolic [24]. The cultural policies become instrumental, distant from the essential and, many times, they lose focus and coherence. And at the level of artistic creation itself, how to deal with what some people point out as the wear and tear of innovation, the loss of meaning and the tendency to integrate artistic production into the mainstream and the consequent loss of its fundamental transgressive dimension [26].

In fact, the segmentation of the markets as far as music is concerned, and on a global level, unequivocally show hegemonies that are difficult to overcome, such as those that our interlocutors point out: the structuring of Anglo-Saxon culture and the Asian emergence. In fact, the market tends to not value artistic and cultural proposals that are not competitive and do not regard the requirements of demand and profitable viability.

3.3. Alternative and Alternate History and DIY culture

The exercise that this document seeks to do in terms of Alternative History implies another: that of placing ourselves in a historical scenario prior to the exponentiation of neoliberalism, or rather, the radicalization of capitalism, which we can place in the last quart of the last century.

When considering, from the issues discussed here, that shared experiences are, in fact, alternative responses to an excluding social model, we are pointing out as inducers of this model the historical contexts that put an end to the experience of social organization with a view to well-being, or that is, to the social state models constructed in the post-war period.

If historical, economic and social conditions had not led to the exponentialization of the commodification of the vast majority of aspects of life and societies, the alternatives discussed here would not be as such. They would probably exist and would also be DIY but equated in models whose non-strictly economic aspects of life would be much more than mere externalities.

7. Conclusion

The Second International Meeting of "What if?..." World History (Whatif'20) had as theme "Art and Alternative History" which was a – as was said then – an umbrella for a several diverse proposals, such as transversal research themes, inclusion or globalization. The round table #4 presentations focused on what can be called the philosophy, lifestyle or DIY attitude.

The two presentations and the discussion/reflection around them have shown us that DIY can be understood as social practices that are resistant and a real alternative to a hegemonic socio-economic model that is difficult to reverse and convert.

In the face of adversity, the attitude of resistance and perseverance constitutes concrete and real alternatives to what is hegemonic and therefore excluding. Samuel Etienne bets on an academic editorial format that is alternative – freer, independent and nearer to those who produce scientific knowledge – to commercial and industrial, capitalist and profitable system. Ondina Pires, a

multifaceted artist, under the sociological sensitivity of Ana Oliveira, unequivocally embodies a trajectory of conquest, but above all of resistance. And these two narratives are unequivocal examples of the *ethos* that runs through them, that of DIY. Manifestly resistant, collective and, undoubtedly, alternative. Against all odds.

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