

Creative works in
small and remote
places: European
best practices
exploration

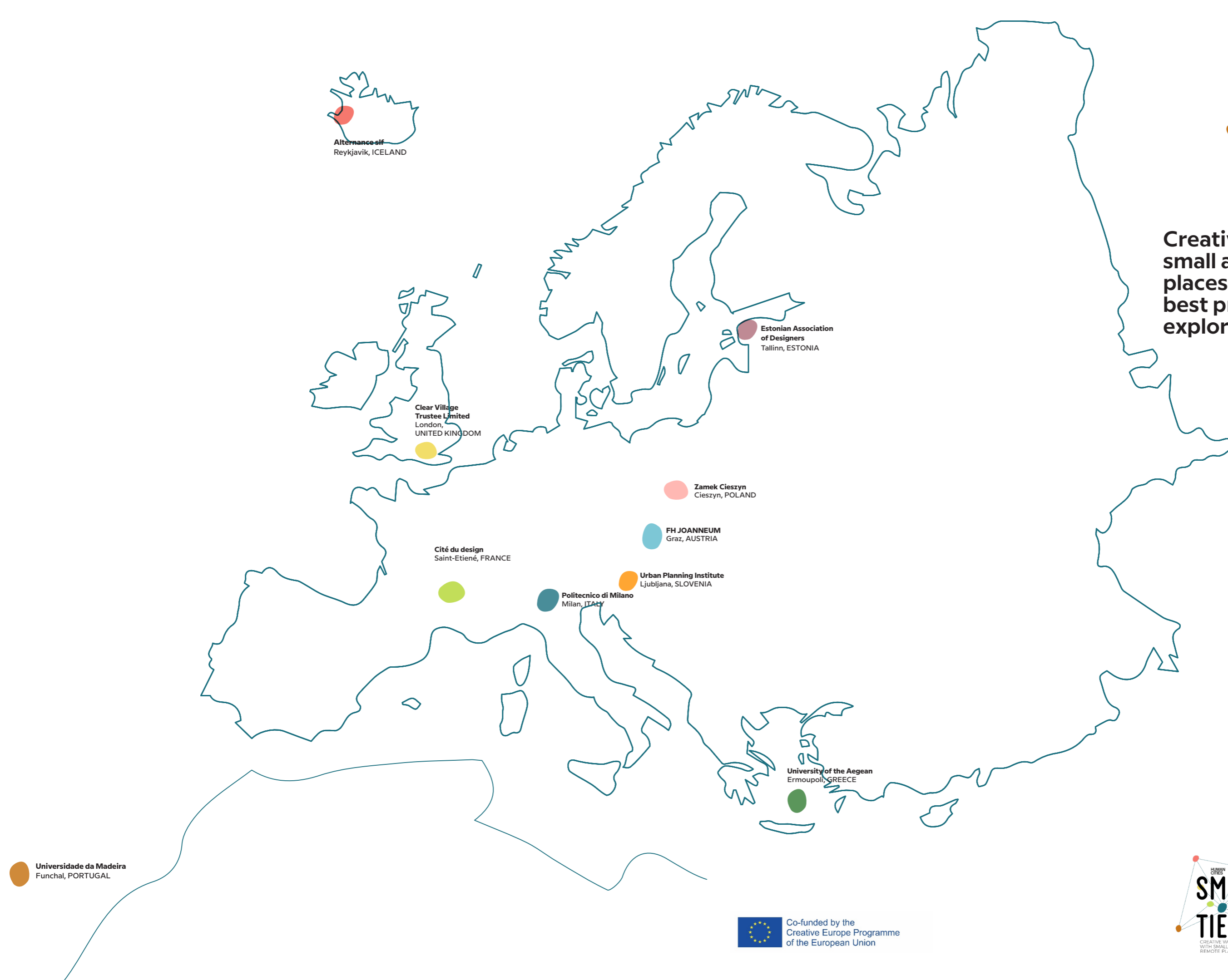


Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union





Creative works in small and remote places: European best practices exploration



Co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union



Index

A	Foreword	3 - 4	C	Poland	112 - 122
Introduction	Co-creation of public spaces in remote places: The review of creative practices to inspire further		One pagers	Greece	124 - 134
	About SMOTIES - Creative works with small and remote places			Portugal	136 - 146
B	Do you live in the best place on Earth?	5 - 12		Austria	148 - 158
Articles	Creative communities in action: ecosystems of social innovation in remote places	13 - 22		Slovenia	160 - 170
	Creative works in remote places, 5 Portuguese case studies	23 - 33		United Kingdom	172 - 182
	The good decision Two examples from Austrian practice	41 - 50		Italy	184 - 194
	(Un)intruding acquaintances	53 - 58		Iceland	196 - 206
	Participatory techniques and intangible outputs in rural Wales	61 - 70		France	208 - 218
	The wisdom of time	73 - 78		Estonia	220 - 230
	Feeling in control of the public good promotes creative works in remote places	83 - 88		Colophon	231 - 233
	Reverberations	91 - 96			
	How remote is remote?	99 - 106			

Appendix available at [LINK](#)



University of the Aegean

Department of Product and Systems Design Engineering

The focus of the **Department of Product and Systems Design Engineering** is on the integrated design of modern and emerging products, systems, and services. It is part of the **Polytechnic School of the University of the Aegean**, based on the island of Syros. It is the only department of Design Engineering in Greece. The department is a pioneer academic unit in Greek higher education in the field of Design Engineering.

Its educational operation began in the year 2000 and is aligned to the most modern practices and programs of study offered by international accredited institutions in the field of design of products and systems.

At the same time, the department produces high level research results that enjoy wide recognition from the international scientific community. This leading-edge research is referenced and incorporated into the educational material of the various scientific and technological courses offered, so that student teaching is always up to date with the latest advances in the field.



Creative communities in action: ecosystems of social innovation in remote places

Authors: **Kyproula Bartzoka, Helen Charoupia, Spyros Bofylatos**

Location: **Greece**

Small and remote places rely immensely on their local communities, without which they slowly wither, becoming socially and culturally desolate. Exploring the ways a place can grow resilient when faced with adversity, we discover an amalgam of distributed design, whole systems thinking and the emergence of creative communities. When we begin to design within the embedded networks of a place, a heightened understanding of data collected across space and time is required. Within the framework of Human Cities' SMOTIES, the University of the Aegean collected and analysed five case studies that represent the best practises in the field of social innovation in the context of creative works in the public space. This article picks out a couple of them in order to distil and analyse the lessons that can be learned from them:

- the first case study describes a festival organised within the ecosystem of Syros Island. The initiative is contextualised within the place it was created for and interpreted in terms of how it has managed to sustain itself while producing creative works in the public space of the island.

- the second case study describes the network of cooperatives in Tzoumerka. A fabrication laboratory, a participatory research collective and a farm, create a constellation of organisations with outstanding results when it comes to sustainable living and designing in a remote place.

To contextualise the case studies presented, as well as explain why they are of interest within the Human Cities Smoties context, one needs to analyse the impact creative communities and their works can have in remote places. Encompassing themes of participation and community resilience, the selected case studies underline local initiatives within remote places. The role of creative communities in the context of remote places, is critical as they consist of people who can put together their individual design capacity to propose new desirable futures for the remote place and appropriate practises.

Social innovation has a significant role for creative communities, as it encourages participation by building on tools and methods of service design, to co-create services towards a more sustainable future. One of the biggest challenges these communities face is the need to increase their resilience against the collapse of their traditional support structures. There are three aspects that seem helpful in achieving the resilience:

- persistence (the ability to withstand shocks or unexpected events),
- transformability (the ability to move from crisis to innovation), and
- adaptability (the ability to enact change).

By applying resilience thinking and biomimetic design methods in the context of a systemic perspective, these ecosystems of creative communities can be enabled and strengthened and can better achieve their goals. The increase of the diffuse design capacity of a creative community leads to increased resilience of the systems.

A way to face this challenge can be to turn to nature for inspiration and guidance. There are several "tools" connected to nature that offer interesting approaches on finding ways to increase the resilience of these communities. Biomimicry is a framework that designs solutions inspired by biological systems. It is an approach to problem solving which has emerged through the integration of design with other disciplines, such as biology and engineering, and which attempts to translate biological mechanisms into components of socio-technical systems. Biomimicry offers the tools for identifying patterns and mechanisms in the natural world that have evolved to increase the resilience of a system. Biomimicry can be used to inform the design of creative communities that aim to be more resilient.

Another interesting direction for increasing community resilience, in the context of social innovation, is provided by permaculture. In contrast to monoculture, where only one type of value is the goal of the system, permaculture provides a systemic view that is focused on fostering virtuous cycles and cooperation between different symbiotic systems. Permaculture can be utilised to increase systemic resilience when designing social innovators with creative communities.

By looking at creative communities in relation to the ecosystem they are embedded in, focusing on their interdependencies and virtuous cycles, a polyculture of social innovation can emerge in a specific space. Increasing the diffuse design capacity within this given territory can be a valid exit strategy for professional designers.

Culture and community intertwined at Ermoupolis, Syros

Stray Art Festival is a street art celebration that has taken place in the island of Syros for the past five years. After a brief description of the remote city where the festival is taking place, this case study presents the creative works enacted with the guidance and facilitation of the team that organises it.

The remote place in focus is the city of Ermoupolis. What characterises it as remote is, first and foremost, the fact that it is enveloped by the

Aegean Sea. This deems the city dependent upon the transporting of goods by boat, especially in the precarious weather conditions of winter. When it comes to cultural events, they are abundant in the tourist season (starting late May and ending beginning of September), but wane as autumn rolls in and the island recedes to slower rhythms. Therefore an imbalance is created, albeit experienced less intensely compared to more remote islands of the Aegean. On the one hand, there are the calm and slow autumnal and winter months where the population of the island is primarily occupied with work or study. On the other hand, there are the vibrant and busy spring and summer months where there is a spike in visitors that stimulate the economy all the while cumbering the environment and depleting resources. Motivated by this situation, a lot of the inhabitants and institutions of the island are trying to promote alternative tourism, that doesn't include events in the summer months, diffusing the intensity of the tourist season.

Inspired by the movement of alternative tourism and aided by their design studies background, a handful of people decided to create a street art festival that would happen in late September, postponing the end of summer. During the second iteration of the event, Stray Art Festival 2018, the externally neglected buildings of the Sports Center of Ermoupolis were adorned with murals, while offering guests three days of music, art, performances and food. The team's initial goal was to organize a festival away from urban centers, re-introducing different neighborhoods of the island while giving their public spaces new life. This encompassed their attempt to strengthen the idea that there can be other corners of Syros (and by extension Greece) that can appropriate and integrate Street Art Culture.

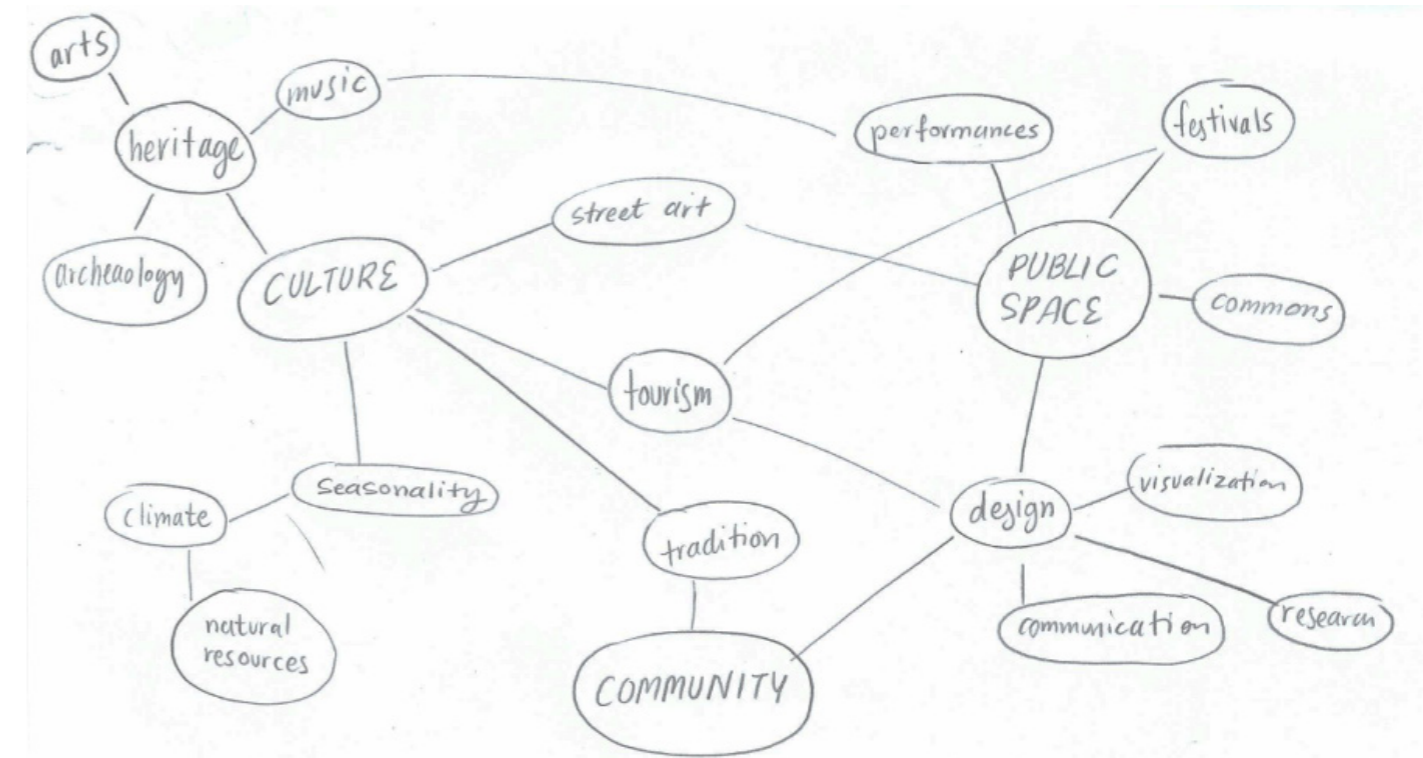


Diagram 1: A mind map of the system of Ermoupolis

Taking all of the above into consideration, the case of Stray Art Festival sheds light to how an initiative can become an important part of the remote place it was organised in. Firstly, the people facilitating the festival's activities are embedded in the culture of the island, living and breathing in the fluctuating rhythms of its city. This gives them the opportunity to understand deeply how the locals could react to the creative works, which plays a part in their design process. Furthermore, the physical outputs of the festival - murals on walls in public spaces, remain well after the three-day celebration has run its course. This demonstrates a long-term thinking that goes beyond the usual activities of similar cultural happenings, leaving a legacy to the locals, while symbolically representing the cultural exchange that took place over the duration of the event. Finally, the activities that are organised are of a wide range, engaging young and old people, of different backgrounds and tastes. The musicians that are invited include traditional folk music players, rock bands, DJ's and everything in between. This amalgam of stimuli brings together people who would not otherwise interact.

A portion of the works done at Stray Art Festival 2018
©Andromachi Boliou





Kaletzi Village ©Tzoumakers
 – photo by Nicolas Garnier,
 Creative Commons licence

This case study describes a collection of different communities with various interests but connected through exchange of products, culture, and creativity with a wider scope to enable the flourishing of the area of Tzoumerka. Tzoumerka is a collection of villages in the north of Greece in the region of Epirus. The network of two villages Demati and Kalentzi as well as their connection to the closest city, Ioannina, is of a special interest. Each of these places has its own creative community, physical environment, and traditions. What brings them together is a common goal - revitalizing Epirus, through art, tech, and agriculture. Three inspiring initiatives are drawing on art, tradition, and open-source technologies to shape a better future in the rugged mountains of Epirus.

Both villages have low population, are far from cities and their citizens have a difficulty in accessing daily-life-support facilities as there are no good transportation links to the cities. In general, the population is aged with low income, the unemployment is high which causes economic inferiority. When the tourists leave, most of Tzoumerka's villages are virtually empty. During the summer, because of tourism, public spaces are more "alive" and well organized. Of course, the physical environment and green pools of leisure surrounding the villages are more than enough, and are open to the public at any time. This encompassed their attempt to strengthen the idea that there can be other corners of Syros (and

by extension Greece) that can appropriate and integrate Street Art Culture.

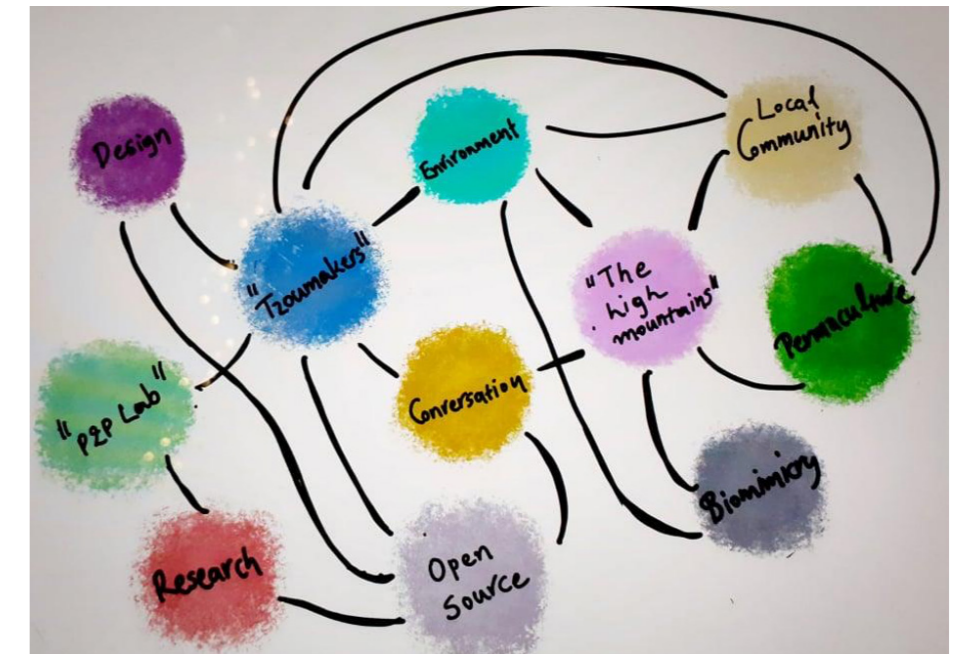
Regarding the creative spaces in Demati there are the "High mountains" a social cooperative founded in 2015 by people who live and produce in the mountainous areas. Members of the cooperative are farmers, food processors, livestock farmers, beekeepers, but also carpenters, artists, makers, and scientists. "High mountains" give the opportunity to visitors to customize a tour to see and learn about the lands, history and culture, projects, productions, and live for a while like them. Their vision is to boost economy and production, revive mountainous societies, protect the environment, and reclaim space and abandoned properties. The creative public space in Kalentzi is called "Tzoumakers" which is an



Working together in "Tzoumakers" space
 ©Tzoumakers – photo by
 Nicolas Garnier, Creative
 Commons licence

open lab for communities to cooperatively design and manufacture tools for small-scale agricultural production. Their vision is to create such sites in both villages and cities where citizens may seize technology into their own hands. These sites may be supported by municipalities and/or by multi-stakeholder cooperatives.

The main and common characteristic of the spaces with creative works is their effort to revive the areas' tradition of craft and making things by hand; recovering lost skills, giving people reasons to stay, work and



A mind map of the system of Tzoumerka

create; and injecting new energy into rural life. Therefore, one of the most important elements of the physical environment is the intense presence of nature and rural life. Creativity, products, and constructions use natural goods, support the physical environment and most of all are inspired by nature. Regarding "Tzoumakers" the infrastructure of the building supports the operation of the maker space, so it is used by creative people. Also, in the case of "The high mountains," there are fields that are cultivated to produce crops, and this is usually a space where the community of "Tzoumakers" goes to observe the building of farming tools and other constructions useful for agriculture. On the other hand, the people from "The high mountains" often visit the space of "Tzoumakers" to acquire a scientific approach and knowledge. This exchange of knowledge is one of the most important aspects of this case study. In addition, the natural environment plays a crucial role as it provides the creative spaces with valuable materials and offers inspiration for creation.

A final note on the importance of these initiatives is the interconnected nature of social innovation. An important contribution in preparation of this article was provided by the OpenP2P lab, the organisation that supports the 'tzoumakers' space and a fab lab in Ioannina that is working to found the 'Koinergia' cooperative. Koinergia aims to become the collaborative energy community of Epirus. Without the existing ecosystem of the Don Quixotes who left the city to create resilient communities that regenerate remote places, this would be impossible. The cascade of good that these romantics bring is the thing that makes the work undertaken through SMOTIES meaningful and hopeful.

Conclusion

The Greek case studies show there are lessons learnt in the context of social innovation, biomimicry and permaculture. They show how creative communities across remote places can increase the resilience of the systems they belong to through diffused design capacity. In the case from Ermoupolis, the creators of the festival are embedded in the local community, using service design for social innovation. Their exit strategy is facilitated by their embeddedness, since the locals recognise themselves and the place in the creative works, which motivates them to take care of them in the long term. In the second case study, as well, the exchange of knowledge that happens within the community of makers, farmers, artists and researchers is strengthening the diffuse capacity of the people on a systems level. When it comes to biomimicry, in both case studies nature provides the framework based on which the communities connect. Resembling an ecosystem, the interdependencies between the actors as well as redundancies among them protect the community from external perturbations, increasing its resilience. The contribution of the notion of permaculture becomes visible when considering an ecosystem, social or biological, as not being the sum of its parts but the number of connections between its nodes. The use of appropriate technological means to reduce remoteness is highly valuable, especially in the second case study where the importance of ICT for bridging the gap between the distant villages is underlined. If we are looking to create and regenerate these derelict remote places we need to focus on the enabling infrastructure that supports the people in supporting each other, as well as attracting more and diverse types of initiatives that can create even more connections. Reviving areas of tradition and cultural interest, while creating participatory design opportunities in small and remote places can have a significant impact for generations to come.

1 About – Stray Art Festival. (2021). Retrieved December 13, 2021, from Strayartfestival.com website: <https://www.strayart-festival.com/about/>

2 Bofylatos, S. (2020). Designing Resilient Creative Communities Through Biomimetic Service Design. *Strategic Design Research Journal*, 13(2), 249–267. <https://doi.org/10.4013/sdrj.2020.132.09>

3 Wikipedia Contributors. (2006). Ermoupoli. Retrieved December 12, 2021, from Wikipedia website: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ermoupoli#/media/File:Brainsik-ermoupoli.jpg>

4 Xyntarianos, P., Spyrou, T., & Bofylatos, S. (2018). Remixing Heritage, a Case Study in the Application of Street Art in Cultural Capital. *SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE, TRADITIONS*, 1(a). <https://doi.org/10.26341/ISSN.2241-4002-2018-1A-5>

5 Creativity in the Countryside: How Art and Tech are Revitalizing Epirus <http://www.greece-is.com/creativity-in-the-countryside-how-art-and-tech-are-revitalizing-epirus/>

6 About us-The high mountains. (2021). Retrieved December 13, 2021, from Thehighmountains.org website: <https://the-highmountains.org/en/homepage/>

7 About us - Tzoumakers. (2021). Retrieved December 13, 2021, from Tzoumakers.gr website: <https://www.tzoumakers.gr/english/>