



International  
Specialised  
Skills  
Institute

Italian Australian Foundation Inc.



# ADDRESSING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH CREATIVE PRACTICE

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

**GRACE LEONE**

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# 1. Acknowledgements

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## Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

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The Fellow sincerely thanks the Italian Australian Foundation (previously known as the Italian Services Institute) for providing funding support for this Fellowship and to the ISS Institute. The Italian Australian Foundation was established, inter alia, to advance the education of Australian residents who are of Italian descent. The Fellowship provides the opportunity for successful Fellows to advance their skills and knowledge. The Italian Australian Foundation and ISS Institute work with the successful recipients upon their return to share and publicise the learnings and recommendations from their Fellowship investigation.

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- » Maria J. del Blanco Manager of Economic Strategic Sectors Area at Bilbao Ekintza (Economic Development Agency of Bilbao)
- » Maria Arana, URBANBAT
- » Andrew Gangoiti, Artist, BilbaoArte

## 2. Executive Summary

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Grace Leone is a designer, artist, educator and curator who lives and works in Melbourne, Australia. Leone brings together a range of fine art disciplines with extensive architectural knowledge to create works that question the relationship between art, the body, perception and public space in evocative concepts.

The objective of the Fellowship undertaken by Leone from November 2019 to January 2020 was to research the application of interdisciplinary practice for better sustainable living in cities and how inhabitants can reinvent the city through experimentation and creative interventions. Through collaboration with and mentorship by the director of City Space Architecture, a non-profit organization based in Bologna, Italy, it allowed an immersive investigation into European case studies that formed part of Human Cities\_Challenging the City Scale, a project supported by UNESCOs' Creative Cities Network.

Building on Australia's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are part of the United Nations' Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the Fellowship explored ways of addressing the SDGs in the context of creative practice and civic learning in public space (Sustainable Development Goals Transforming Australia n.d.).

The Fellowship learnings have been translated into an evolving manifesto to guide Leone's practice in the formation of a living lab that will address the contribution of creative public space practice in addressing the SDGs. The living lab will engage with co creation, exploration, experimentation and evaluation in public space with partners from the education, industry, business and university sectors.

This Fellowship was undertaken during unprecedented and challenging times; a time when a global pandemic impacted the world socially, environmentally, economically and politically.

*'Only a crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable'* (Friedman, cited in Klein 2020).

## 3. Fellowship Background

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The UN Sustainable Development Goals are important in achieving a better and more sustainable future for all worldwide addressing global challenges related to climate, environmental degradation, poverty, inequality, peace and justice.

According to the SDG Index and Dashboard Report 2018 by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) UN initiative, Australia was performing worse than most advanced countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ranked at 38 in the world with the top ten ranked countries in Europe (Sustainable Development Goals Transforming Australia n.d.). The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is committed and engaging Universities to help address the SDGs (DFAT n.d.).

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), has adopted a Declaration advocating the importance of culture and creativity as vital transformative drivers of sustainable development. However, sustainability is often measured by the Triple Bottom Line approach, a framework incorporating social, environmental and financial considerations. The approach often adopted by business to evaluate their performance does not adequately recognise the role of culture and creativity as enablers for sustainable development as stated by Jyoti Hosagrahar, Director, UNESCO's Division for Creativity, *'more research and locally-generated data is needed to assess and monitor the impact of creativity for sustainable urban development'* (UNESCO 2016a).

The Fellowship afforded Leone the opportunity to engage and network with the partners of the project Human Cities\_Challenging the City Scale recognised by UNESCO and led by Cité du Design from Saint-Etienne. *'The project explores the reshaping of public space through design, with the overall objective of affirming*

*the central role of creativity in the public policies and action of cities'* (UNESCO 2016b).

The Fellowship was an opportunity for Leone to employ her practice-based research methodologies to create moments of situated learning to enrich her future practice. Interviews with partners of the Human Cities\_Challenging the City Scale were organised to create opportunities for learning to occur through the formation of relationships and contextual conversations. Learnings and reflections were documented through photography, text and public space performances. The Fellowship report is an extension of Leone's practice methodologies; the learnings structured as musings, prefacing the creation of recommendations in the form of a evolving manifesto.

The Fellowship was undertaken from November 2019 to January 2020. Leone travelled to the following cities: Graz (Austria), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Saint-Etienne (France), Bologna (Italy), Milan (Italy), Bilbao (Spain).

**Name:** Grace Leone

**Employment:** RMIT University, Educator (Vocational Education and Higher Education), Researcher, Curator.

**Qualifications:**

- » Doctor of Philosophy, School of Architecture and Urban Design, RMIT University, Ongoing
- » Master of Arts (Art in Public Space) with Distinction, RMIT University, 2017

- » Diploma of Engineering Technology (Jewellery), NMIT, 2012
- » Diploma of Vocational Education and Training Practice, NMIT, 2011
- » Certificate IV in Training & Assessment, 2009
- » Bachelor of Architecture (Honours), RMIT University, 1997

#### **Membership:**

- » NAVA National Association for the Visual Arts

#### **Biography**

Grace Leone is an interdisciplinary artist, designer, educator and curator who lives and works in Melbourne, Australia. Leone incorporates a range of fine art disciplines with extensive architectural knowledge to create works that question the relationship between art, the body, perception and public space in evocative concepts. Leone is an educator and researcher in creative practice within the College of Design and Social Context at RMIT University, Australia. Works include *'Fieldwork: Rules of Conduct'*, Public Space Museum, Bologna (Italy, 2020) and Art City White Night- Arte Fiera Bologna (Italy, 2020), *'SkypeLab: 1000 Pixel'*, Baden-Württemberg Stiftung, Berlin (Germany, 2020) and *'Skypescape'*, Salamanca Art Centre, Tasmania, (Australia, 2017).

Her interventions concern the urban condition as understood through the reception of architecture's language and image, while her object-based practice relates to a real time engagement between the body and city spaces. Leone curated public art programs, Urban Animators: Living Laboratory (2015-2017) and Activating Construction Sites (2018-2019) designed to integrate practical art interventions into the construction sites of RMIT University's Capital Works Projects. Currently this research has developed into URBAN AGENCY, a research practice that engages with pedagogy led practice-based research exploring the role of creative arts in the interpretation and expression of the changing face of the city.

## Abbreviations / Acronyms / Definitions.

<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SDSN</b>	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UCCN</b>	UNESCO Creative Cities Network
<b>ALLiN</b>	Australia Living Labs Innovation Network
<b>ENoLL</b>	European Network of Living Labs
<b>(CIS)</b>	Creative Industries Styria

## 4. Fellowship Learnings

### Musings for a Manifesto

#### **Between Private and Public: Can't erase the boundaries, overlap the edges.**

Graz is the second largest city in Austria, designated as a UNESCO City of Design in March 2011 and the European Capital of Culture in 2003 (UNESCO n.d). Metropolitan Graz and the surrounding area of Styria recognise the important role design plays in the livability of the city. As a Creative City of Design, Graz supports the creative community to connect locally and globally through the networking association Creative Industries Styria (CIS). Leone met with Barbara Nußmüller, Assistant Manager, Creative Industries Styria to discuss the association's key strategic framework. The framework centres around three strategies; Awareness & Location, Impulses & Projects, and Network & Service. The association acts as the link connecting the creatives with companies and supporting the process of creation, production and distribution of design ideas. Through this support the association creates best practice examples of partnerships and aims to encourage corporate companies to include creativity and design as part of business activities.

The City of Graz has six universities; the University of Applied Sciences FH Joanneum is the second largest university of applied sciences in Austria and was a partner in the Human Cities project. Leone met with the Head of Design and Communication, Karl Stocker, lecturers Anke Strittmatter and Erika Thuemmel (Design and Communication) to discuss the role and impact of their contribution in the Human Cities project.



Barbara Nußmüller (Assistant Manager, Creative Industries Styria), Grace Leone.

In the Human Cities project FH Joanneum explored the urban condition of Jakomini Street in Graz and asked the question 'How can this transit space be transformed into a shared space where people can meet and spend time without being forced to consume?' (Bastinand Weinberg, 2018, p.122). Through observations and conversations with the residents it was discovered that they wanted somewhere to sit and relax in the public space. This led to the exploration and implementation of temporary street benches along the street. However, this idea was confronted with challenges set out by the municipality; objects placed in front of buildings

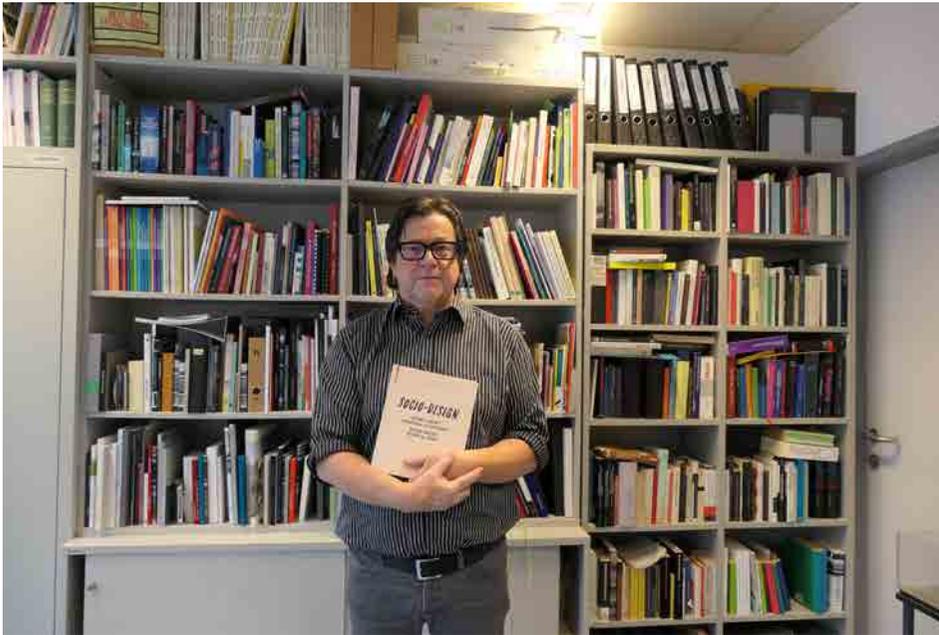


Grace Leone, Andrea Darvishzadeh (Manager, EU Projects, Migration and Knowledge Transfer, Department for Economic and Tourism, Graz)

could not encroach more than 50 centimetres into the pedestrian pathway. To circumvent this requirement very thin benches reminiscent of benches used in the Austrian mountains were installed in Jakomini Street, mainly in building recesses. Erika Thümmel described the space as *'a kind of space that's somewhere between private and public and it could help make our cities more human'* (Bastin and Weinberg, 2018, p.122). The experiment was a great success and well received by the residents but unfortunately the temporary benches were stolen. Discussion with the municipality to create a more sustainable approach to meet the needs of the residents was futile. Through collaborations with other public space collectives the project developed into '280,000 benches for Graz' and a prototype was trialed supplying 100 benches to residents to own and place in the public space.



Anke Strittmatter (Senior Lecturer, Design and Communication, FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Science)



Karl Stocker (Head of Design and Communication, FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Science)

Anke Strittmatter's reflection on the challenges of operating in public space resonated with Leone's own experiences of creative practice in the public realm; *'The only way you can organise an event in the street these days is by paying a lot of money for fees and insurance. This really has to change, because the public space belongs to everyone and everyone should be able to use it'* (Bastin and Weinberg, 2018, p.122).

Leone was invited to engage with FH Joanneum University exhibition design students participating in a European Union Project Urban Diversity "Creative Networking in Urban Spaces". The exhibition titled *'What the world needs most is openness: Open hearts, open doors, open eyes, open minds, open ears, open souls'* (Robert Muller), occupied shop windows in Annenstrasse, Graz. The



Exhibition opening at Seddwell Centre.

students developed their ideas with a minimum budget, demonstrating that the activation could be achieved at low cost using recycled materials. The exhibition also included a network lunch bringing together the shop owners and residents, many of whom were recent migrants. The exhibition launch was held at Seddwell Centre a cultural hub for expatriates to engage with Austrians through curated cultural community events.

During a meeting between Leone and Andrea Darvishzadeh, Manager, EU Projects, Migration and Knowledge Transfer, Department for Economic and Tourism (Graz), Andrea expressed the municipality's hope that other shop owners would look at the success of this project and be encouraged to open up their unused private shops to creative students and in turn positively activating the public space.



'What the world needs most is openness: Open hearts, open doors, open eyes, open minds, open ears, open souls'. Shop window exhibition in Annenstrasse, Graz.

### The Public Space Anarchist: If the rules hold you back, create new ones.

Founded in 1999, <rotor> Center for Contemporary Art, located in Graz focuses on artistic works that explore the 'social, political, ecological and economic questions of the present day' (<rotor> Center for Contemporary Art n.d).

Leone met with the Director, Margarethe Makovec to discuss the Centre's contribution to the Human Cities Project; titled "Annenviertel! The Art of Urban Action". Annenviertel employed artistic and cultural practices over a period of two years to research the process of urban development specifically in the district surrounding Annenstrasse. This district, originally an area for workers from low-socio economic backgrounds has now become an area with a high population of migrants from different nationalities. At the time of the project the term 'Annenviertel' referred to a fictitious area within Graz, designed to allow an exploration of a territories without defined boundaries and to raise the question 'Who makes decisions and who is (consciously) excluded from making decisions?'



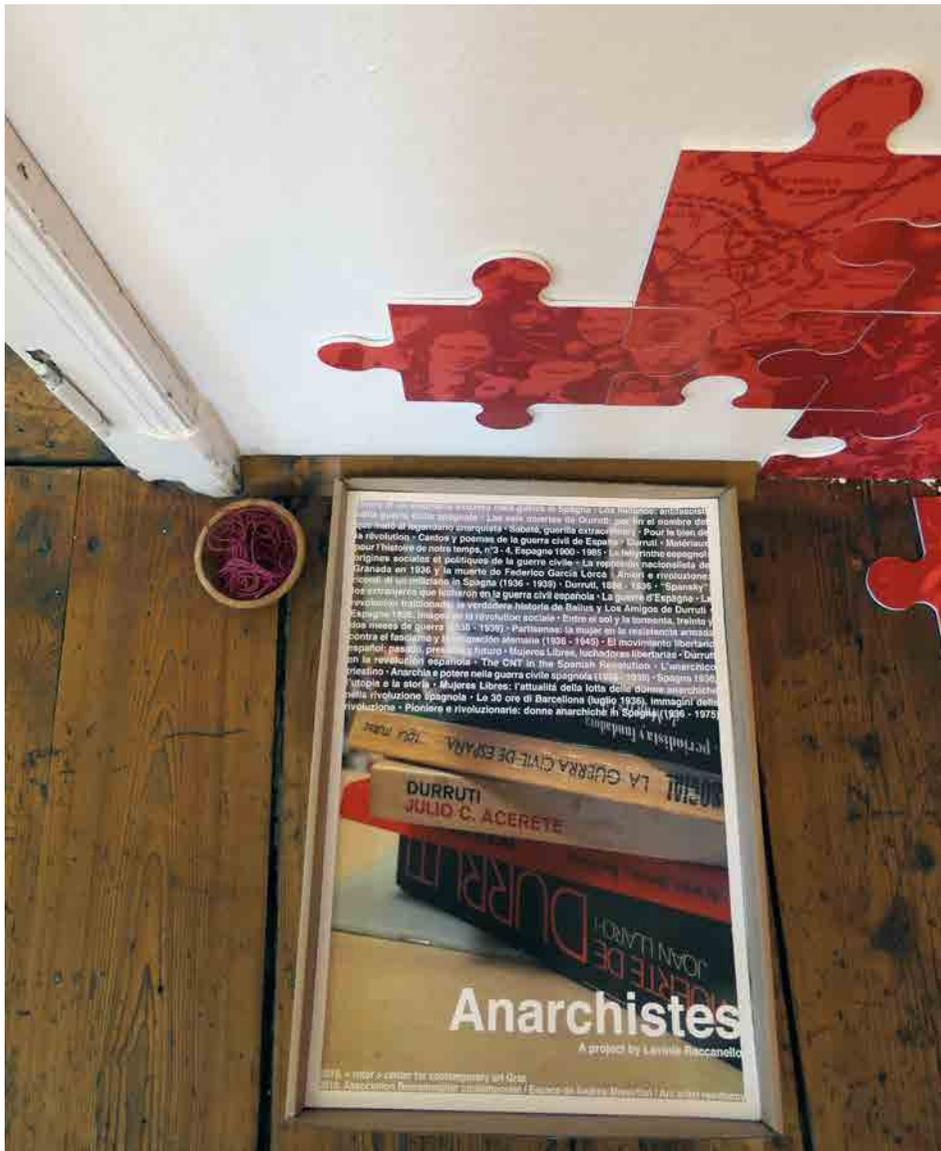
<rotor> Center for Contemporary Art, Graz.



<rotor> Center for Contemporary Art, Graz.

(<rotor> Center for Contemporary Art n.d). The map produced as part of the research output is now formally recognized by the municipality as capturing the diversity and creativity of the region that makes it so unique.

During Leone's visit the centre was exhibiting the show titled 'The Anarchist Amateur's Alphabet', published by Graz literary scholar Beatrix Müller-Kampel in 2007 and contains written work by Herbert Müller-Guttenbrunn (1887–1945). The show contained artworks by contemporary artists whose work expressed anarchistic elements. The exhibition offered a platform for examining anarchism which is described by Vienna based writer Ilija Trojanow as aiming 'to create a suitable social framework for the greatest possible individual freedom' and 'the greatest possible equality and justice' (<rotor> Center for Contemporary Art n.d).



Margarethe Makovec, (Director, <rotor> Center for Contemporary Art), Grace Leone.

Through its artistic programming and approach to business <rotor> Center for Contemporary Art demonstrates the importance of public space as a setting for art, extending the territory of art beyond the gallery walls and into the community. <rotor> strives to follow the values of an ‘economy for the common good: Human dignity, solidarity, ecological sustainability, social justice, democracy, participation & transparency.’

‘The Anarchist Amateur’s Alphabet’ exhibition at <rotor> Center for Contemporary Art.

**Gender transcendence, gender neutral public space: Safe for you, safe for me.**

Bilbao, UNESCO City of Design since 2014, is the capital of the province of Bizkaia, part of the Basque Country. Culture, design and creativity are pivotal to the economic and social transformation of the city over the past decades (UNESCO n.d).

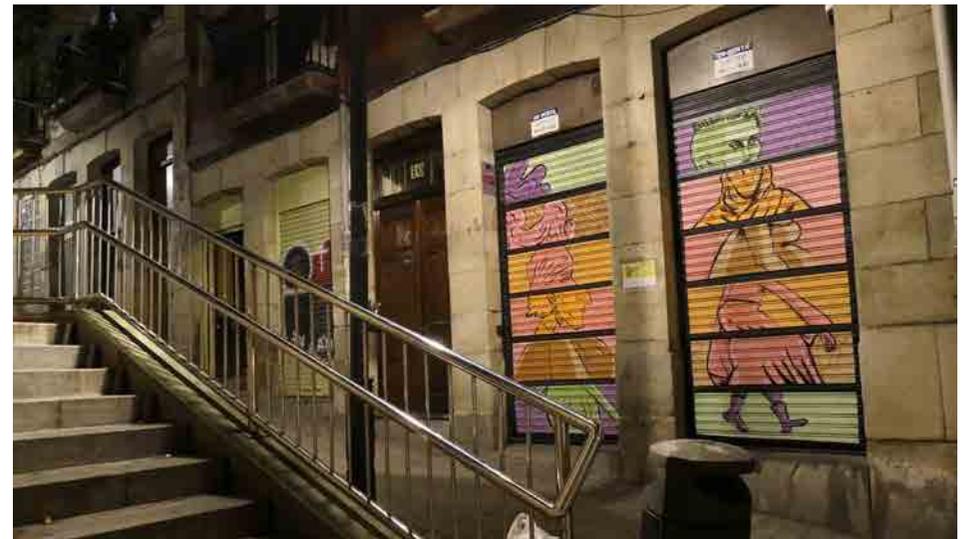
“Walking the Streets!”- “Haciendo la Calle!” a project conducted under the framework of the Human Cities project took place in San Francisco, Bilbao La Vieja and Zabala, all neighborhoods of Bilbao. The area, rich with history and diverse cultures is perceived by many locals as urban blight, a dangerous area to avoid, especially at night. Leone met with Maria Arana Zubiate from URBANAT for a tour of the public art outcomes of “Walking the Streets!”- “Haciendo la Calle!”. Urban innovation office, URBANAT who curate urban transformation processes that support the creative and social input of citizens in public space development, joined forces with Bilbao Ekintza, a division of the local municipality that support



*Bilbao*



*Grace Leone, Maria Arana (URBANAT).*



*Artwork, “Walking the Streets!”- “Haciendo la Calle!”.*



social and economic wealth for Bilabo. Through this partnership the organisations hosted ‘citizen laboratories’ to address issues pertinent to the area. The issues included the disconnection between the three neighborhoods and the lack of women using the public space. Following community consultation, the project engaged several artists to create public artworks for “Walking the Streets!”- “Haciendo la Calle!”. The artworks were created mainly by women, depicted women, with the aim to focus on women’s issues by artistically representing them in the public space.

The artistic representation of the women in the public space attempted to acknowledge the historical contribution women made to the area, something that was often forgotten by the locals because of gentrification. The artworks depict the Sirgueras, 19th century women who towed boats onto the land often with no pay, female textile workers who started the first female trade union in 1911 and the underpaid women who worked in the local mining industry. In 2018 one of the paintings was defaced with the words “Refugees welcome, tourists go home!”. A local association brought together the citizens to restore the artwork to its original composition demonstrating the sense of citizen leadership and ownership nurtured by the project.



Artwork, “Walking the Streets!”- “Haciendo la Calle!”.



Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO), 'Shared Knowledge' Biennial.

### 'Knowledge transfer': Your truth or mine?

The city of Ljubljana, Slovenia, hosts one of the oldest museums of architecture and design in Europe called Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO). Founded in 1972 the museum creates a platform for public dialogue on architecture, design and urban design (MAO n.d). The museum facilitates this exchange of knowledge through BIO, the Ljubljana Design Biennial. From its inception the biennial has mapped the effects of industrialism and modernism on everyday living. It uses design thinking to interrogate everyday living, offering alternatives to the status quo that is then disseminated both locally and globally through the programming of the Biennial.



In 2019, during Leone's visit to Ljubljana, the Biennial titled 'Shared Knowledge' explored the age of the 'information crisis' (BIO 26 n.d) and associated challenges around the production and dissemination of knowledge. The curators used the 'data-information-knowledge-wisdom' (BIO 26 n.d) hierarchal model to structure the exhibition and associated program of events. Amongst the curated works of various artists and designers was the work of Bureau d'études. This Paris based group produces cartographies of contemporary political, social and economic systems represented in the form of large-sized murals. The artists seek to reveal socio-political power structures that are usually unseen to the public and to create opportunities for that power to be redirected to the individual citizen and community.



Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO), 'Shared Knowledge' Biennial.

**Not-for-profit: To be, or not to be a not for profit?**

City Space Architecture is a non-profit organization based in Bologna, Italy. Leone's visit to Bologna gave rise to the opportunity to engage with an organisation devoted to 'studying, making, spreading and sharing public space culture, through an interdisciplinary approach, involving art and architecture' (City Space Architecture n.d). Through a partnership with UN-Habitat's Global Public Space Programme the organisation is included in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Civil Society database, engaged in the United Nations General Assembly of Partners (GAP), Research and Academia Partner Constituent Group. The skill to create and nurture partnerships ensures that the organisation's message is widespread and impactful.

A common characteristic of many of the projects that Leone engaged with during the Fellowship was that these projects were delivered by not-for-profit organisations. This commitment to furthering the social cause for sustainable engagement of communities with public space development through a not-for-profit organisation often led to difficulties in ensuring access to funding to support the initiatives. In many of Leone's discussions with the not-for-profits it was found that a surplus was not always available to further the objectives of the organisations and projects were often run on a minimum budget, impacting on access to resources and ultimately outcomes. Many of the not-for-profit organisations spent a considerable amount of time preparing applications for funding from local government authorities, a very competitive process, often resulting in an unsuccessful application. Leone recognises the need for a more streamlined process for accessing financial support for projects run by the public, for the public.

Public Space Museum, a recent City Space Architecture project opened during Leone's visit to Bologna. Leone's artwork 'Fieldwork : Rules of Conduct' was exhibited at the opening of the Public Space Museum, a research centre museum dedicated to merging art and architecture practice through investigations on public space. The exhibition was also included in the list of events for Bologna's Art City



*Luisa Bravo (City Space Architecture), Grace Leone.*



*'Fieldwork : Rules of Conduct', Grace Leone, Public Space Museum, Bologna*



Grace Leone at University of Bologna, Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures.

White Night as part of Arte Fiera, which is Italy's first contemporary art fair founded in 1974. Fieldwork:Rules of Conduct is an artwork documenting the performative fieldwork conducted in public spaces of Graz (Austria), Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Saint Etienne (France). The artwork employs photography and the moving image to capture performances by Leone in public spaces containing iconography used to control pedestrian movement through the space. Leone highlights the human figure with hazard tape as a provocation questioning the urban condition.

Director of City Space Architecture, Luisa Bravo's lecture, 'Stand up for Public Space' is included in the UN- Habitat Global , Urban lecture series, a series that aims to build the relationship between the UN- habitat and Universities, promoting a stronger engagement between the city and academic practice. Leone was invited to present her practice in a public seminar titled 'Shaping Inclusive Cities through Art in Public Space' held at the University of Bologna, Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures. This allowed Leone the opportunity to debate creative public practice with students and academics with perspectives and experiences from a broad range of cities and backgrounds. The question of who is given the platform to define 'inclusive' and its application in 'public space' was a contentious issue. Being open to reflecting often on the influences and impact of one's practice in public space is a learning that Leone will continue to adapt in her creative public space practice.

**Build it and they will create: Transform spaces, transform ideas.**

Saint-Etienne, a UNESCO City of Design since 2010, was the lead partner for the Human Cities project. Leone visited and engaged with staff from the Manufacture Plaine-Achille district, previously an arms factory now an area dedicated to the creative economy promoting innovation and creativity. Leone experienced the district through a guided tour by Inge Eller, International Project Manager at Cité du design exploring the facilities that create a dynamic ecosystem of culture, education, media, research and co working spaces.

The Manufacture Plaine-Achille district consists of a number of complexes and at the heart lies Cité du design an education research and economic development centre aimed at promoting design to a broad audience with a mission 'to demonstrate how design can contribute to the emergence of new dynamics within contemporary domains; social, economic, touristic or cultural' (Cité du design n.d). This mission is reflected in the architecture of the new and refurbished buildings designed by Berlin based practice LIN. The geometric pattern adopted on the adaptive transparent and opaque facade not only provides light for activities within the building but also expresses the dynamic program of the centre aligning with its operational mission. The complex also plays host to the Saint-Etienne International Design Biennial, featuring the work of French and international designers through exhibitions, workshops and conferences. Attached to the Cité du design is the Higher School of Art and Design where students engage in art and design activities embedded in the network of industry partners and activities associated with the disciplines.

Located within Manufacture Plaine-Achille district is also the Le Mixeur an incubator devoted to supporting projects in the arts, sciences and design. The complex offers a free space for networking and the exchange of ideas for creative practitioners, students and general public.

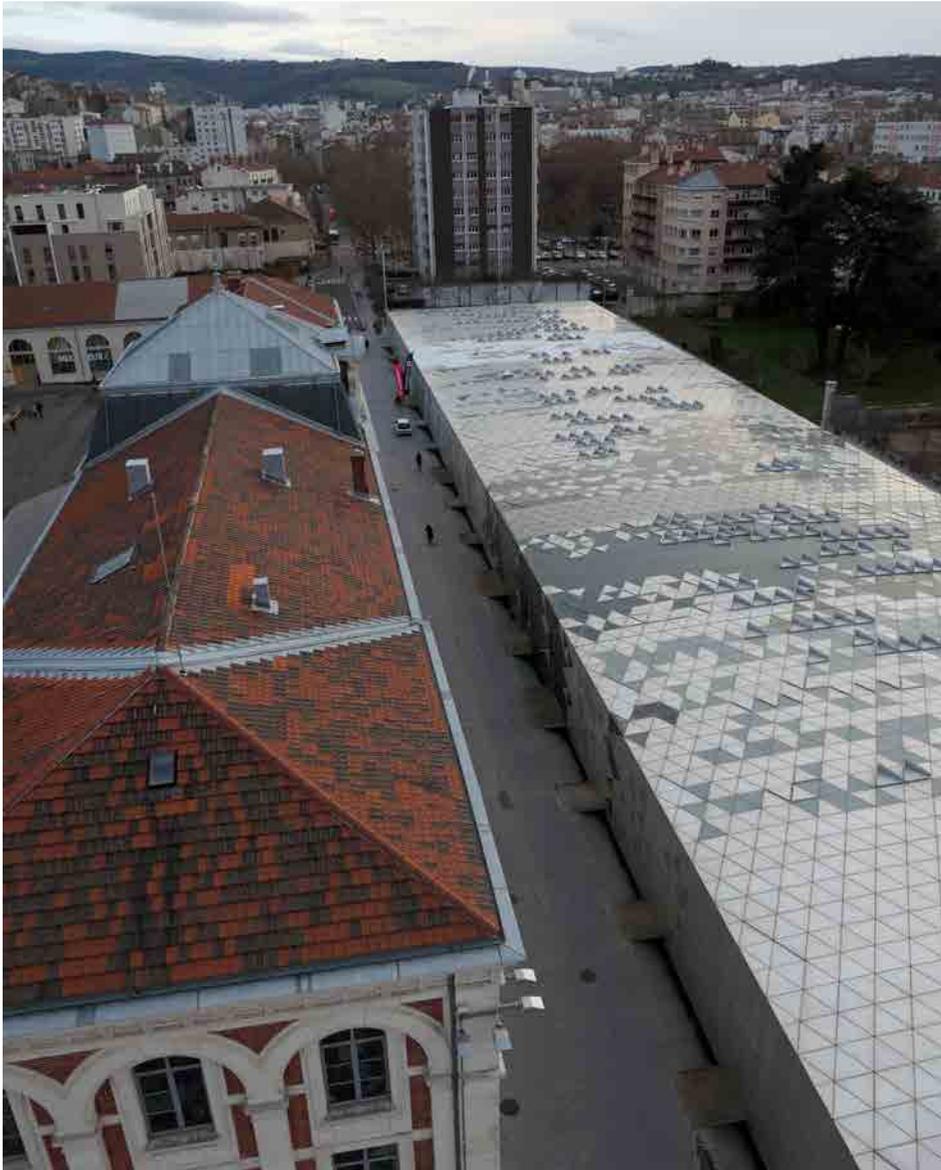
Through its unique programming the Manufacture Plaine-Achille district has established itself as a site for innovative practice for products and services, testing



*Inge Eller (International project manager at Cité du design, Saint-Etienne), Grace Leone.*



Manufacture Plaine-Achille District



*Manufacture Plaine-Achille District*



*Higher School of Art and Design*

prototypes with the public and industry. Through its infrastructure and programming the district supports networking between technology, art and culture and since 2009 has hosted the Design Creative Living Lab part of the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL). As an eco-system of innovation, the lab brings together researchers, users and business to produce new models for products and services within real-life environments.

## 5. Personal, professional and sectoral Impact

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The Fellowship outcomes will be a catalyst for the creation of a living lab to address the SDG's through creative practice in the public realm. The living lab titled Fieldwork: Living Lab will encourage collaboration, provocation, solidarity and exchange across communities, industry, business and universities. It will allow Leone to apply the learnings from the Fellowship to further extend her interdisciplinary practice and establish a platform to nurture and create future collaboration networks.

Fieldwork: Living Lab will work towards recognition by and collaboration with the Australia Living Labs Innovation Network (ALLiN) and establish international network connections with the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) ensuring that the living lab will have local impacts with the understanding of the need for global connection.

## 6. Recommendations and Considerations

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The recommendations and considerations are offered in the form of an Evolving Manifesto; a collection of declarations to underpin the creation and intention of the Fieldwork: Living Lab:

**Can't erase the boundaries, overlap the edges.**

**If the rules hold you back, create new ones.**

**Safe for you, safe for me.**

**Your truth or mine?**

**To be, or not to be a not for profit?**

**Transform spaces, transform ideas.**



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**ISS Institute**  
Level 1, 189 Faraday Street  
Carlton VIC 3053

**T** 03 9347 4583  
**E** [info@issinstitute.org.au](mailto:info@issinstitute.org.au)  
**W** [www.issinstitute.org.au](http://www.issinstitute.org.au)

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