# ABOUT

**Un-Scattering Creativity** is a digital publication and public Miro board containing a collection of tools and case studies. It gives insights into the processes behind the scene at Lacuna Lab e.V. during the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on three main questions: "How to keep the organisation afloat? How to present artworks to connect to the public? How to balance collective and individual needs?", it aims to give guidance, especially to young creative hubs, with practices that derived from the challenges of the pandemic.

Created by Thomas Heidtmann, Fara Paluso, Nayeli Vega Vargas and the members of Lacuna Lab e.V.

Developed for the Creative FLIP Ambassador of Change Platform.

## LAC UNA LAB

## FACTS

**Foundation**  2015

**Location**  Berlin, Germany

**Size**  170 m²

**Members**  17

**Lacuna Lab e.V.** is a Berlin-based Non-Profit-Association founded in 2015. It consists of a multidisciplinary collective and studio, located in the heart of Kreuzberg. The mission is to promote cultural exchange and explore future visions by bringing together people from different backgrounds and professions and combining their skills and methodologies. Members of Lacuna Lab are active practitioners coming from arts, creative coding, interaction design, music, writing, technology and science.

The organisation is continuously welcoming the public to create moments and learning processes together, exploring new realities in terms of hybrid methodologies. The goals are to bridge fields of specialisation and explore future possibilities of collaboration, to evolve innovative practices, to envision the future and to generate new forms of art. We are partnering with many friends and organisations of our community to achieve these goals. Since 2020 Lacuna Lab e.V. is a member of the European Media Art Platform / European Media Artists In Residence Exchange.

From the beginning on, Lacuna Lab e.V. has been a habitat for collaboration and exchange on interactive, interdisciplinary artworks and participatory events, with activities such as exhibitions, workshops, meetups, and lectures. An artist-in-residence programme allows guests from partner organisations to temporarily work in the studio space and participate in the association's activities. During COVID-19, we opened digital spaces for dialogue, to create opportunities for growth and discovery during these challenging circumstances.

# CHALLENGES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

# 1. HOW TO KEEP THE ORGANISATION AFLOAT?

**CONTEXT**

The pandemic posed a number of problems to Lacuna Lab as a whole. Members had to shift their work focus, some even abandoned their artistic work entirely or revoked their membership to ensure their material existence. These individual fates had a direct impact on Lacuna Lab and its future. Thanks to a collective effort we step-by-step found solutions to each occurring problem. We changed several internal processes to ensure the organisation's existence, such as online interviews for onboarding new member. Luckily, the majority of our communication and working processes already happened digitally but some workflows had to be adjusted.

**ANSWER**

Make sure that all vital processes can be conducted remotely and access to services, work tools and information is given.

# 4 KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

## Communication

**CONTEXT**

The first and most important step in overcoming a challenging situation successfully – as well as running a Creative Hub in general in our opinion – is always to create a safe environment for open and respectful discussions. During a pandemic, this needs to happen remotely. In Lacuna Lab, we mainly rely on GSuite and Slack for this since they offer special free plans for non-profit organisations like us.

## Transparency

**CONTEXT**

In order to allow everyone to contribute towards solutions, it has proven very helpful to ensure members access to all vital resources and processes that are needed to run the organisation. Especially in a primarily non-hierarchical collective like Lacuna Lab, it is vital to keep an overview of responsibilities and tasks at any time. In Lacuna Lab, we keep this organised on a custom dashboard filtering and preparing the most important information on our cloud drive.

## Analysis

**CONTEXT**

There are no action plans without a proper analysis of the current state: What is the situation? What are the challenges? Which tools exist to handle it? Which adjustments have to be made? Who can help with what? Getting a clear understanding of all these factors is crucial.
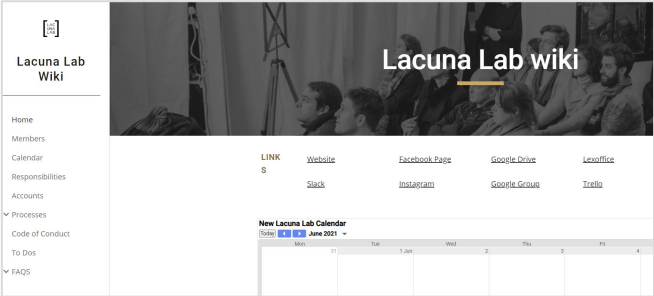
## Action Plans

**CONTEXT**

By following the first three key factors – Communication, Transparency and Analysis – we were able to extract specific actions and steps that helped us to ensure our future as a Creative Hub.

**#virusworld**
Creation of a dedicated Slack channel to help each other in the pandemic.

**Outreach**
Getting external orientation on the financial aid processes in Berlin's creative network and search for new members in an online open call.

**Custom Dashboard**
Easy remote access for all members about all aspects of the organisation.

**Strategising**
Creation of a document to trace and discuss strategies for the various challenges that we are facing.

**Financial Aid Sharing**
Sharing of information about where and how to apply for pandemic-related financial aid programs for individuals and institutions.

**Studio Usage Guidelines**
Establishing, updating and reinforcing guidelines for the usage of the physical studio space in accordance to the changing rules by the government.

**Remote Member Interviews**
Establishing, updating and reinforcing guidelines for the usage of the physical studio space in accordance to the changing rules by the government.

**Digital All-Members Meeting**
Hold the annual members meeting entirely online. All related preparations and processes are adjusted to allow full remote attendance.

**PROBLEM**
Governmental restriction for studio space usage

**PROBLEM**
Member loss due to individually challenging situations leading to a financial imbalance of the organisation

**PROBLEM**
No interviews for new members and onboarding possible due to pandemic restrictions

**PROBLEM**
No physical group gatherings possible

Solution

Lacuna Lab
Wiki

Lacuna Lab wiki

Home
Members
Calendar
Responsibilities
Accounts
Processes
Code of Conduct
To Dos
FAQS

LINKS
Website
Slack

Facebook Page
Instagram

Google Drive
Google Group

Lexoffice
Trello

New Lacuna Lab Calendar
Today &lt; &gt; June 2021 ▾

| Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31 | 1 Jun | 2 | 3 | 4 |

## 2. HOW CAN WE PRESENT OUR WORK TO CONNECT TO THE PUBLIC?

**CONTEXT**

As artists and creators, much of our work and process involves making our work accessible to the public. However, each member of Lacuna Lab is different and does this in a unique way. Since traditional formats weren't possible during the pandemic, we needed to figure out ways to engage with the public and still have autonomy as individual creators.

**ANSWER**

Develop a range of different hybrid formats and approaches based on the individual needs, interests and skills of the members.

**PRE-PRODUCED INTERVIEWS**

# Telling the story behind the scene

| | |
|---|---|
| **Description** | Interviews are one of the most effective ways to showcase an artist's range of practices and projects in a short time or go in-depth with a specific work or artistic research. By asking a set of predefined questions in addition to focused follow-ups, a lot of information can be gathered and presented. Combined with selected pre-existing documentation material of the discussed subjects this method gives a strong impression of the artist's specific approach. It serves as a snapshot of a particular phase that can be shared online and preserved for the future. |
| **Time** | 3–7 days |
| **Difficulty** | Medium |
| **Materials** | Camera, tripod, microphone, computer, editing software, additionally: more cameras for different angles |
| **Participants** | minimum: interviewer, optional: camera person, sound person, editor |

# Telling the story behind the scene



**Description**   A series of six interviews that reflect a momentary snapshot in the life of Lacuna Lab and its members. These interviews take a record of the artworks presented by the members during the Scattered Partners event series for Vorspiel / transmediale & CTM  along with their individual backgrounds, influences, and points of view.

**Link**   https://lacunalab.org/events/snapshot/

# Present in-depth individually

**Description**  Virtual talks are a great tool for presenting artistic works to a large audience without the restrictions of space and distance. Diverse activities can be presented and projects can be portrayed in-depth from different perspectives. The audience is only limited by the technical limitations of the selected online platform, many people can easily take part in the presentation. Many of the available platforms are free to use or offer affordable payment options.

For Lacuna Lab's goal of promoting the values of open access, free knowledge sharing and fostering multidisciplinary approaches, virtual talks are one of the tools that we adopted right from the beginning of the pandemic.

**Time**  1 hour – 3 days preparation time / 1–2 hours running time

**Difficulty**  Easy to medium

**Materials**  Slides, documentation material, bibliography, report

**Participants**  Presenter, optional: tech support

**COMPREHENSIVE THINKERS FOR A POST-ANTHROPOCENE**
**Fara Peluso**

# Present in-depth individually



**Description**    A talk showing how art and design can be mediators between science and the public to build a collective memory.

**Link**    https://lacunalab.org/events/comprehensive-thinkers-for-a-post-anthropocene/

**What went well**
The talk received many responses and reached almost a thousand people all over social media. The number of people that actively participated was around 40. The talk was planned to last one hour but people posed many questions and it was necessary to extend it by 30 minutes.

**What went wrong**
I would have loved to show more materials, demonstrating in a practical way how I work through my DIY research and material science research. I realised that a virtual talk is not beneficial to show physical works.

**Learnings**
Important is to define a plan and dedicate time for more interaction moments, posing questions and involving the public are both important as the possibility of interaction is limited by a physical distance. Also, I learned that a virtual talk can be a good valuation tool to reflect on an activity due to the large number of feedbacks that can be achieved.
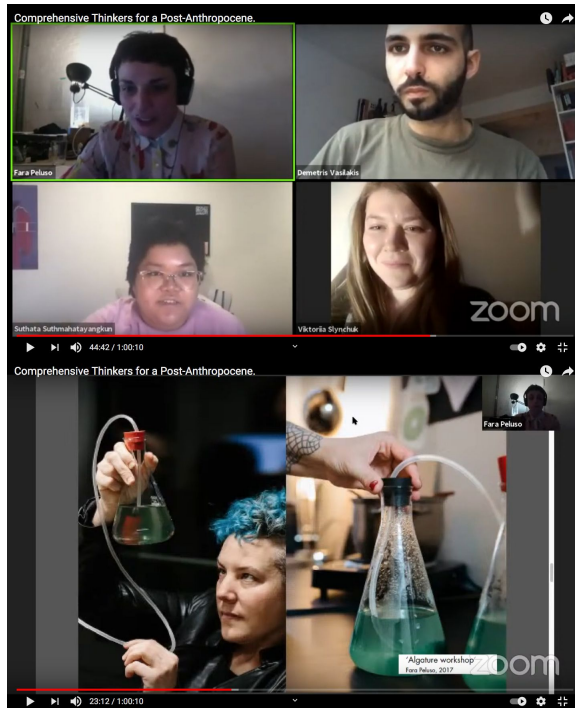
**PARTICIPATORY ONLINE PERFORMANCE**

# Engage and interact with the audience remotely in the art making process

**Description**  A live-streamed performance is a way to connect the audience with the performer and directly integrate them into the artwork / art making process. This way physical restrictions can be overcome that would otherwise make performances impossible during the pandemic. This practice specifically allows intimate moments that were previously not that easily possible.

**Time**  1–7 days preparation time / 1–2 hours running time

**Difficulty**  Medium

**Materials**  Computer, camera, microphone, specific performance material

**Participants**  Artist, optional: camera, sound, tech team

**REMOTE RULES AND RITUALS**
**Paul Wiersbinski**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Description** | The piece investigates how the rituals of theatre can be used to portray the ritualism of spiritual machines. How do we use them to make predictions about an uncertain future? The aim is to develop a format in between digitality and theatre. The audience is invited to participate actively in a collective ritual without leaving their home. |
| **Link** | https://lacunalab.org/events/remote-rules-and-rituals/ |
| **Documentation** | https://vimeo.com/506453467 (Password: RRR docu) |

# Engage and interact with the audience remotely in the art making process

## REMOTE RULES AND RITUALS
**Paul Wiersbinski**

# Engage and interact with the audience remotely in the art making process

**What went well**

I received funding from the National Performance Fund (Fonds Darstellende Künste) and collaborated with PATHOS Theater in Munich, so apart from the support offered by Lacuna Lab and Vorspiel Transmediale I had a great financial and organisational back-up. Content-wise in the rehearsals and in the discussion with the audience it was mentioned several times that the project led to a very intensive aesthetic experience, as you moved through your own apartment as if by remote control.

**Learnings**

It is interesting that the restrictions of the corona pandemic lead to aesthetic experiments that would have been unthinkable or possible without the situation. This collective experience of "being at home" can possibly also be used as a reference in the future and e.g. an extension of the project in a real theatre can be worked out as soon as this is possible again.
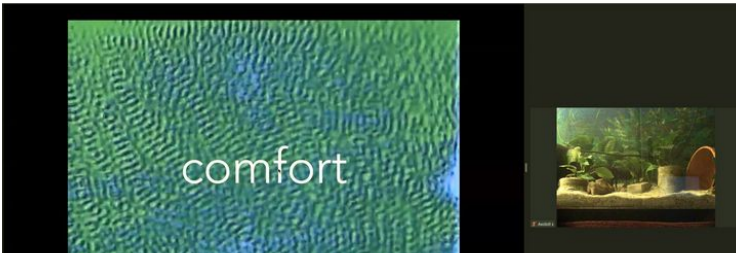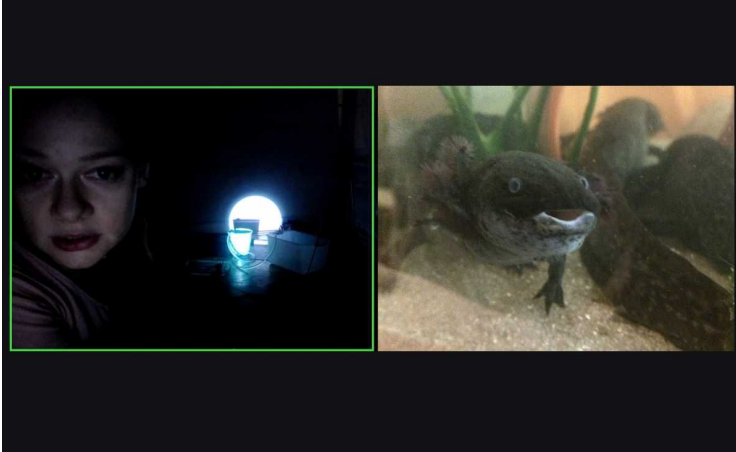
**What went wrong**

Nothing.
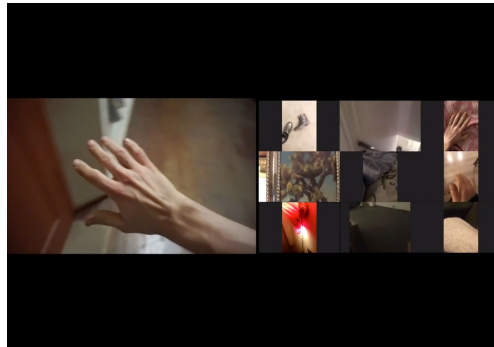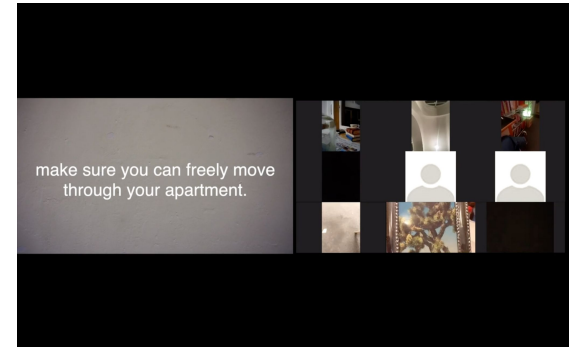
**MIND BLIND PATHETIC SUBLIME :**
**EXPLAINING THE PATHETIC SUBLIME**
**TO AN AXOLOTL AUDIENCE**
**Sarah Hermanutz**





# Engage and interact with the audience remotely in the art making process

**Description** Sarah Hermanutz revisits the problems of social cognition in this time of isolation and multiple intersecting crises.

**Link** https://lacunalab.org/events/mind-blind-pathetic-sublime-explaining-the-pathetic-sublime-to-an-axolotl-audience/

**VIRTUAL PROTOTYPES/EXHIBITIONS**

**Move the exhibition experience into the Metaverse**

**Description**  The virtual prototypes/exhibitions method is the most complex of all the listed strategies. Depending on the scope of the project, it can contain and combine all the other tools mentioned. It requires a lot of preparation in advance and time to get finished. It highly relies on collaborative efforts to successfully overcome all the various challenges in the production process. Its biggest value is the numerous possible interaction methods that can be achieved. It can either be used to replicate a real-world artwork/exhibition experience or be entirely tailored to a virtual experience with its own unique laws and benefits. This makes it especially useful in a pandemic situation.

**Time**  Several weeks or months

**Difficulty**  High

**Materials**  Varies highly depending on the targeted scope but it always requires a computer

**Participants**  Artist, designer, tech and documentation teams

**K(NOT) A CONVERSATION –**
**COMMUNICATION THROUGH KNOTS AND AI SYSTEMS**
**Ambika Joshi, Nayeli Vega Vargas, Thomas Heidtmann**

# Move the exhibition experience into the Metaverse



**Description**   An installation exploring the concepts of artificial intelligence, creativity and labour. Inspired by ancient indigenous communication systems of Quipu knots, it instigates a communication and

**Link**   reflection process through the use of knots and AI systems.

https://lacunalab.org/events/knot-a-conversation-communication-through-knots-and-ai-systems/

## K(NOT) A CONVERSATION – COMMUNICATION THROUGH KNOTS AND AI SYSTEMS
**Ambika Joshi, Nayeli Vega Vargas, Thomas Heidtmann**

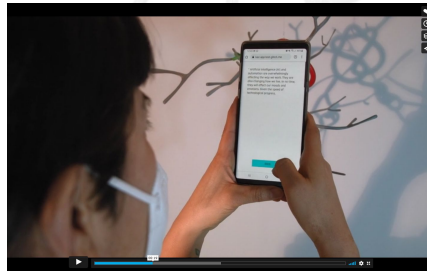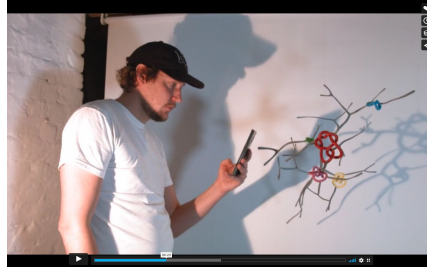## Move the exhibition experience into the Metaverse

### What went well
The collaboration between us was exceptionally strong. We found great ways of including and combining our different working methods, artistic interests, personal backgrounds and skills to focus on our artistic vision and overcome technical challenges. The project derived from the BeFantastic CoLab Fellowship in October 2020. And the Scattered Partners event series gave us the perfect opportunity to continue it and raise it to the next level while keeping our global workflow.
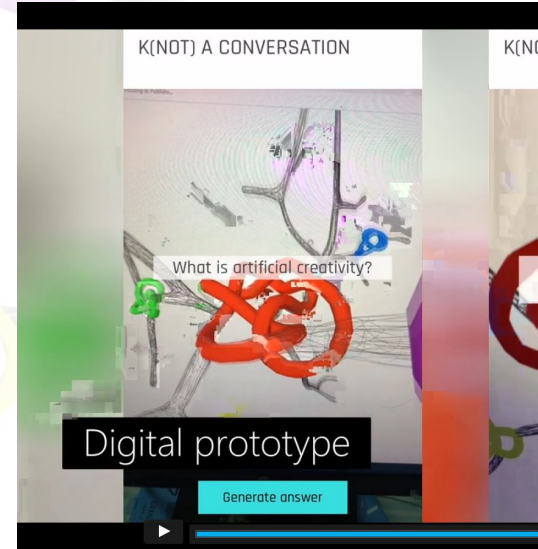
### What went wrong
Nothing really went wrong but at times the technical solutions were challenging.

### Learnings
A well made virtual prototype/exhibition is very time and labour intensive. We learned that it is very important to develop a clear idea for the desired scope of the project, narrow down the necessary interactions and working steps to be ready in time.

# Show what could have been presented

**Description**  Every artist knows about the importance and relevance of proper documentation of her/his work. Nonetheless, this method becomes a different value during a physically restricted time like the COVID-19 pandemic. Especially, when an artwork cannot adequately be replicated virtually, or there is neither enough time nor financial resources available to allow this, the online documentation of the existing process can just be the right strategy to show the state of an artwork and to keep it aware in the public eye.

**Time**  1–3 days

**Difficulty**  Easy to Medium

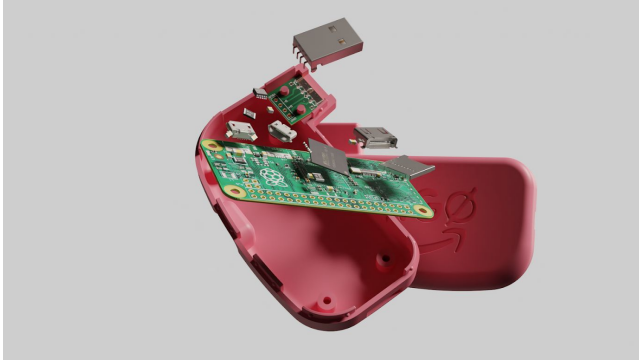**Materials**  Selected documentation material, such as photos, videos and texts

**Participants**  Artist, optional: writer

**"FANGo"**
**A DEFENSE WEAPON AGAINST SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM**
**Martín Nadal**

**Description**  "FANGo" is a defense weapon against surveillance capitalism. Hidden under the appearance of a mobile phone charger a microcontroller takes control of the smartphone plugged into the device. It makes queries to Google, Amazon and other search engines, and launches videos on YouTube to deceive data brokers in their data capture process.

**Link**  http://martinnadal.eu/fango/

# 3. HOW TO BALANCE COLLECTIVE VS. INDIVIDUAL NEEDS?

**CONTEXT**

Every member was faced with the challenges of the pandemic in very different ways. Many planned exhibitions were cancelled or postponed and projects couldn't be realised due to the restrictions.

**ANSWER**

Create a new value exchange for members by providing a caring environment where each member can communicate their story, discuss strategies, share helpful information and find support.

# NEEDS / SURVEY

As a member-driven collective and organisation, Lacuna Lab has to understand the individual situations of its members as well as how to enable and foster collaboration during restricted times.
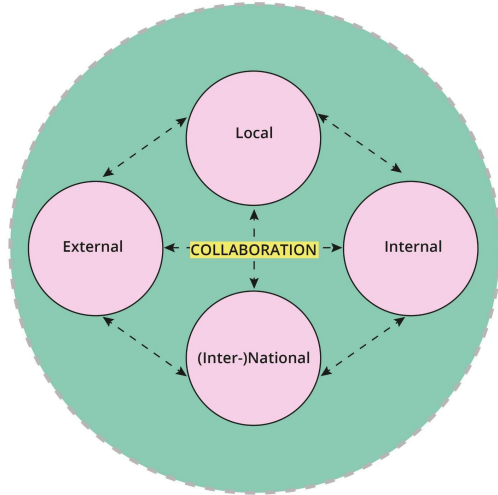


What kind of tools did you use?
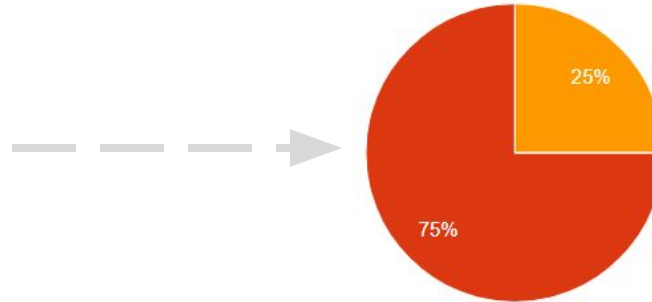
- More analogue
- More digital
- Both equally

25%

75%

We asked our members what their biggest challenges were during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Biggest Individual Challenges

"Channeling my worth to clients and finding the projects I'm truly passionate about."

"A lot of festivals I was invited to were cancelled and others were transformed into online events when my work was not meant to be shown online."

"Due to the pandemic, physical offline projects have been cancelled or difficult to plan, like exhibitions, festivals, workshops, research travel and so on."

"Adapt to the continuous changes and restrictions that prevented a stable work routine."

"Financially, and adapting to new ways of making work."

Here are some of the answers to how they solved those challenges.

**Individual
Solutions**

"Since the pandemic broke out in early 2019, all my plans were cancelled and the networks that I used to work with, have disappeared. I had to completely change my work strategy. I gave up art and dedicated myself to working as a freelancer with companies that previously refused to work, in order to earn money and get out of the debts that I had accumulated during the first half of that year."

"I've learned how to organize workshops, conference and exhibitions in virtual spaces. The learning process is still in development but I appreciate the possibility to reach long distances and more people."

At the start of the year, we started a theatre project with Dusseldorf Schauspielhaus called RegieKI to create a "cybernetic theatre" driven by AI. However not being able to meet regularly or closely meant we had to completely rethink our approaches from the ground up – where productions like this involve all parties working closely together. It sends you to many new places, and initially, we experimented with modifying open source video conferencing platforms – this led to something called Hyrdritsi, a hacked version of an open-source equivalent to Zoom called Jitsi that combined creative coding toolkits like Hydra and P5 with machine learning algorithms from TensorFlow (face, body, emotion tracking etc).

"I had to adapt some of my performances and talks to an online format. Also, I had to get involved in more educational projects."

"Balancing work-from-home hours in order to set boundaries between private life and working life. Be patient and prepared to receive cancellations, change schedules, etc."
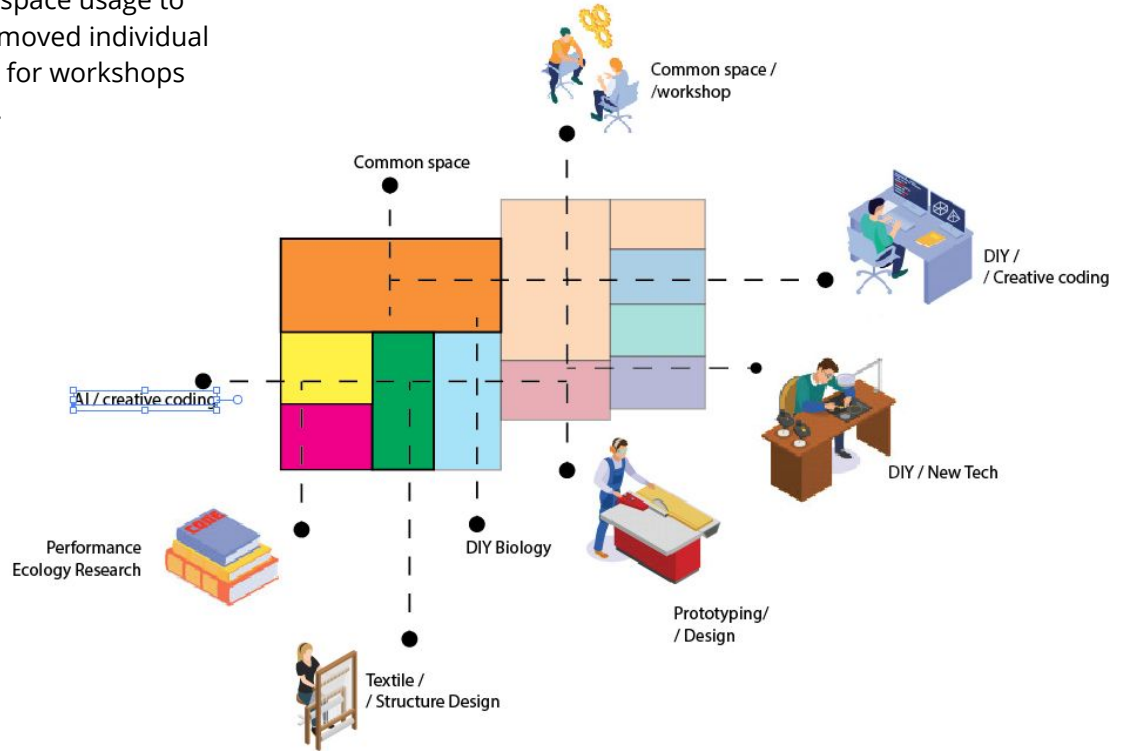
"I tried to build a remote/online structure as my works styles. Many people, clients, and projects were thinking the same things. So I joined some remote projects. For example, I was involved as a WEB/UX director and Project manager with an online art platform project that distributes barrier-free accessible and multilingual translated artistic works and learning programs such as theatre, contemporary dance, film, and media arts so on. Other things I've involved with, are cultivating an online community/platform to think about the future planetary society in new areas of various fields like business, art, and ecology, etc, and with an art gallery, we are trying to build the online/offline experience, a community for various people in art or non-art fields."

"I eliminated 90 per cent of the things that did not work, changed the medium for a while and then saw the reality from another perspective."

"Luckily I had a residency so I had things to do. I was working on a project focused on workshops and had to try to adapt it to online workshops. Also, I had to do online versions of the exhibitions."

## LACUNA LAB SPACE USAGE

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to adjust our space usage to comply with governmental rules and regulations. We moved individual working desks into the common space, formerly used for workshops and meetups, to increase the distance between them.





Common space / /workshop

Common space

DIY / / Creative coding

AI / creative coding

DIY / New Tech

Performance Ecology Research

DIY Biology

Prototyping/ / Design

Textile / / Structure Design

# CORONA TIMELINE

An overview of events and actions that took place at Lacuna Lab from the beginning of the first lockdown to the end o the second.

**#virusworld** / Creation of dedicated Slack channel to help each other in the pandemic.

**Studio Usage** / Establishing guidelines for the usage of the physical studio space in accordance to the rules by the government.

**Homeoffice** / Many members decide to work from home or isolated places.

**Financial Support** / Sharing of information about where and how to apply for pandemic-related financial aid programs for individuals and institutions.

**Strategising** / Creation of a document to trace and discuss strategies for the various challenges that we are facing.

**Outreach** / Getting external orientation on the financial aid processes in Berlin's creative network and search for new members in an online open call.

**Stricter Rules** / Care and social distance measures are reinforced to accommodate the stricter governmental rules and ensure people's safety.

**Remote Member Interviews** / Adjusting the interview process for new members to allow remote online presentations, voting and onboarding.

**Members Joining** / After successfully implementing new strategies for member recruitment, we can stabilise the membership situation even without physical meetings.

**Members Joining** / More new members are joining until all vacant spaces are being filled in.

**March 2020**  **April 2020**  **May 2020**  **June 2020**  **July 2020**

**Members Leaving** / Some members decide to revoke their membership.

**Members Leaving** / More members decide to revoke their membership due to pandemic-related reasons.

**Members Leaving** / More members decide to revoke their membership due to pandemic-related reasons.

# CORONA TIMELINE

An overview of events and actions that took place at Lacuna Lab from the beginning of the first lockdown to the end o the second.

**Partnering** / Lacuna Lab becomes a EMAP/EMARE partner organisation.
https://emare.eu/partners

**Public Engagement Research** / Some members decide to participate in transmediale / Vorspiel & CTM. Hybrid public engagement formats are being explored.

**Reimplementing Strict Rules** / Strict care and social distance measures are brought back to accommodate the governmental rules and ensure people's safety.

| August 2020 | September 2020 | October 2020 | November 2020 | December 2020 |

**Members Leaving** / Again members decide to revoke their membership due to enduring pandemic-related financial struggles.

An overview of events and actions that took place at Lacuna Lab from the beginning of the first lockdown to the end o the second.

**Digital All-Members Meeting** / Due to the restrictions, the annual members meeting is held entirely online. All related preparations and processes are adjusted to allow full remote attendance.

**Studio Usage Update** / Adjust guidelines, the maximum number of members working and their distribution in the studio space in accordance to the rules by the government.

**Public Engagement** / Implementation and sharing of the developed strategies for hybrid public engagement formats as described in our toolkit and case studies.

**January 2021**

**February 2021**

**March 2021**

**April 2021**

**Members Leaving** / Again members decide to revoke their membership due to enduring pandemic-related financial struggles.

**Thank you.**

See you in Berlin.

Visit our website www.lacunalab.org