



CLIMAVORE  ASSEMBLY

Roma 27-29 October 2023

Summary Document

Summary of Thoughts and Actions

With more than 250 attendees, the CLIMAVORE Assembly debated new cultural and artistic tactics for ecologically-driven action and policy making. It was a shared effort to reimagine the role museums and cultural platforms have as agents of transformation in food and agriculture systems within the climate crisis.

Temporarily occupying two landmark sites in Rome – Museo delle Civiltà (Museum of Civilisations) and Campidoglio (the seat of the City Senate) – the Assembly brought together a diverse set of voices to think, contend and question our collective role, as cultural producers, farmers, policy makers, activists, researchers, educators, thinkers, cooperatives, in addressing the broken food system. Over the three nights and two days of presentations, workshops, debates, meals, dances, and impromptu conversations we worked to find common ground between the manifold participants. Many ideas, agreement and dissent, emerged around the role that cultural production has in a just transition of our food system towards networks of solidarity across the Mediterranean and beyond.



Reconnecting Culture and Agriculture

Transforming our food systems requires addressing the challenges faced by agroecological food growers through cultural agendas, reminding ourselves that farmers have always known about multispecies relationships. Climate struggles cannot be separated from cultural shifts, and cultural shifts require new forms of action. Yet, hundreds of food policy reports and global recommendations have been written, geared towards industrial extractive systems without including cultural practices or the role of art in creating new horizons. The Assembly offered a discursive platform to imagine how we can reinforce the bonds between culture and agriculture to support peasants and landworkers in advancing futures that create new forms of kinship. Because when culture is erased, ecologies are also erased, and vice versa. One of the main problems is the extinction of peasant knowledge, and without it, there is no horizon for an agricultural transition.

“When we think of culture and cultural institutions in the 20th century, they are part of cultural erasure.... When we think of alliances we have to relocate ourselves, what are we offering farmers as cultural institutions?”

—Ravi Agarwal, Bergen Assembly

“Cultural institutions who have resources and assets should make them available. We (as farmers) are managing public goods that are not our own, and would like institutions to provide space for us to manage those public assets. We want work that gives us dignity.”

—Marco Notarnicola, XFarm

“We need to learn how to lose and redistribute our cultural capital as an act of solidarity.”

—Andrea Phillips, BALTIC Professor,
Northumbria University



Accountability and Disruption

Cultural institutions need to be held accountable for the food choices and metabolic narratives that are put in front of us. Through the various exemplary practices presented, the Assembly shared and demonstrated how museums, cultural and educational platforms can make practical large-scale actions with ecological, social, economic and political ramifications. These actions were highly effective in disrupting established norms when they grew to operate and create change at a municipal level.

“We need to unpack the possibilities for what Culturally Supported Agriculture might offer”

—Luigi Coppola, Casa delle Agricolture

“The government already puts a lot of money into agriculture in the form of subsidies and from banks that finance the food system. It just needs to be moved to support the kind of businesses that have been presented in the Assembly. If this group can speak as one voice to decision makers about this and we can communicate that this needs to happen and it’s not that much, we might start to see change on a more systemic scale.”

—Christine Delivanis, Sistemiq

“Purchasing is a political gesture.”

—Nicola Pagani, Deafal

Relying on market tools to solve the problems the market has itself created is insufficient. It is unjust to ask consumers or farmers to pay or run the risks for climate adaptation even if society demands it. There needs to be a structural and infrastructural change in political will. Addressing a broken food system requires breaking up the terms and structures that have led to it, including the jargon that has been appropriated by corporate and extractive industries, from green and sustainable, to circular and regenerative. Cultural institutions and other

independent platforms can support communities to expand their critical engagement in this movement by advocating and expanding the possibilities of the legal structures that govern our daily lives. They can also play a role in creating a larger-scale understanding of the real costs of our food beyond the economic realm. Within this wider struggle, breaking systems requires dismantling legal structures and advancing policy. And so, a change in law also requires a change in culture.

“I challenge large institutions, that if you want to build alliances with us, you need to help us break the law... You also need to think critically about how we centre ourselves as human beings, and consider other non-humans as well.”

—Clementine Bordeaux, Racing Magpie

“There is a lot of talk about agrobiodiversity, but it is not allowed to use seeds from other farmers; it goes against the interests of the industry. Cultural institutions should choose whether they want to talk about these topics or work with us. Institutions and municipalities do not work with us, because we work against industry.”

—Germana Fratello, Campi Aperti

“There is an Arabic proverb that guides the work of the collective: ‘They planted so we ate, we planted so they would eat.’ Seed saving is an act of self-reliance.”

—Qanat



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Uncommon Alliances For The Commons

Food growers demanded the support of cultural institutions to use their curatorial and education departments, their public programmes, as well as their in-house resources to raise visibility around the importance of agrobiodiversity, to support communities with land access and related struggles, to work in solidarity and think of the future of living collections and their propagation, calling to create and promote new narratives around food.

“Permanent culture is a troubled term. The permanence in culture takes for granted the ownership of land... To rewild our surroundings, we need to rewild our imagination and the stories that we tell... Pre-colonised mythologies can be resurfaced through pedagogy. We need to create new, sustainable mythologies.”

—Sakiya

In the pursuit of food justice culture can play a key role in supporting growers and influencing policy with real case studies on the ground. Agroecological practices and small farmers have been taken over by the big agroindustry, without any considerations on ecological and social justice. To effectively impact large scale lobbies uncommon alliances for the commons are needed to ensure that farmers and peasant communities reclaim their rights to freedom of seeds and alternative cultivation methods, while creating political demand to push for new food policies and collective support. This requires trust.

“Trust is built among equals without hierarchy unlike the industrial food system which relies on inequality along the whole production and supply chain. An ecologically regenerative and socially reparative food system needs to empower people through conversations between people.”

—Keir Milburn, Abundance



Storying Time

Building the trust and understanding needed for effective alliances takes time. We share the frustration of many participants about the inability to reach or build a common agenda across territories and shape a common strategy around a common language that could lead to shareable outcomes. We need to obliterate the division of rural and urban. We need trust to build and repair. To do this, we also learnt more time is needed together, to build new narratives, new ways of retelling stories, expanding conversations in smaller groups, one-on-one conversations wherever each one lives, dreaming in order to dream together about grounding collective resolutions and actions for all. Industrially produced cheap food is not cheap if the real cost of food is taken into account. And so, long-lasting social and ecological value cannot be measured in immediate economic return without internalising the ecological damage that is currently being offsetted or externalised.

“It’s important to converge not only in a common language but to build relations and alliances but also to try to create some common steps we can elaborate together”

—Tommaso Fattori

“People are not policy makers, but policy is informed by what people do.”

—Nadia El-Hage, International Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture



Takeaways for Future Gathering

Challenging questions were raised, starting from whether cultural institutions are best placed to make change at all. Suggestions included using their mediatic power and agency in society to raise awareness and create impact, even when voices may be dissonant. The Assembly managed to bring together a considerably diverse crowd but was still not comprehensive in terms of geographical or professional backgrounds. We must acknowledge that there will always be someone missing in the room and need to work on why those voices are missing, and who has the privilege to ‘make time’ and be part of a conversation.

“I could not have anticipated that where and when we assembled could mean so much. But the architecture of imperialist, fascist and democratic histories and functions insinuated the systems and administration of our everyday life, which we must resist and re-imagine to yield new shapes and foodways.”

—Andrea Andersson, Rivers Institute

Cultural institutions were asked to give space and stage for land workers to lead the change of economic and governing systems; to enhance the cultural value of working the land, building soil and cultivating kin and alliances even when treading on an unequal terrain. Cultural institutions should offer their platforms to access land that needs to be given back to those communities who lost it; to regrant and mutualise resources, be they human, financial or intellectual; to facilitate training and opportunities to come together; to enhance pleasure and create desire, to eroticise our sensorial experiences; to open up their education departments and collaborate with schools in expanding radical pedagogies; to trigger people’s imagination about how to cook healthier ingredients and the ecological relations to the landscape behind them; to share their press and communication platforms and give voice and visibility to a necessary

shift that supports and advances agrobiodiversity; to train and enchant the next generation of farmers and landworkers.

“If collections and museums preserve artworks, how can we extend this idea of collection and preservation beyond objects and towards networks, ecologies, heritage and material knowledge?”

—Liv Laumenech, University of Edinburgh

“It is important for us to take a more humble position, and promote not so much the ego of the institution, but give the space to artists and food producers... We need to rethink what we mean as Art. We need to change the institutional structures we are making and that we operate within. We need artists that recognise the labour of alliances is administrative and bureaucratic. It is not glamorous, it is essential.”

—Ulrikke Neergaard, KØS

Perhaps working with cultural institutions is not what is strictly needed; and instead we must use them to subvert and create a common agenda that promotes citizen participation and initiatives to address the crisis of democracy, to build a collective force that brings about legislative change. Freedom of speech within culture is really genuine, and it must be protected. We learnt that institutional and monumental spaces can force one to subconsciously reproduce institutional and monumental discourse, but we must work to create more everyday parliaments, where art can truly transform people’s thinking.

“We are pushing new models of funding and establishing new stakes for how art organisations can participate in placemaking. Our food is cultural and our ways of producing and consuming are inherently mutable-- art and food belong to one another.”

—Tiziana Baldenebro, SPACES



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Collective Dreaming

“There is an old saying: If the end of the world is upon you, the best thing you can do is make time to plant a seed.”

—Sakiya

What is the transdisciplinary move and movement that needs to come out of such a gathering? Throughout the Assembly, a repeated call to action echoed the desire to plant a seed. We see the Assembly as a seed and this is how we hope to nurture and cultivate it. More concrete, public and intimate conversations are needed to continue gathering together. Our call to action for participants is to join us in a series of working groups that continue to shape common aims and objectives, and distil them into joint actions through cultivation and self-cultivation, such as:

- Group with quarterly meetings to connect independent food producers with museums, cultural and pedagogical institutions that want to start a process of Becoming CLIMAVORE, sharing ideas and tactics across differently connected geographies.
- A dedicated working group in Italy to think about acts of solidarity and sharing of resources to bring culture and agriculture together, meeting quarterly online or in-person.

There is no time to lose for further action. If you are interested, get in touch.

[The bell rings]



CLIMAVORE - The Near Future

Since the Assembly, the CLIMAVORE team have come together to reflect and respond to it in many different ways, aiming to incorporate the lessons from the discussions. After these months dedicated to implementing action, we want to share with you how the conversations from the Assembly have informed and impacted the next steps for our various long term project plans.

ITALY

Cultivating Rights of/to Seeds in Sicily and Apulia

Developed as part of CLIMAVORE x Jameel at RCA, Monoculture Meltdown is a three year project engaging with agroecological movements and practices as the forerunners of a more just and environmentally reparative food infrastructure. Since the Assembly, we have had over 50 meetings with a range of stakeholders in culture, agriculture, law and policy, intending to support and expand with the intention of supporting and expanding the existing agroecological toolbox. We have identified a threefold plan of action:

- Creating focus groups of continuing dialogue to ensure the challenges of agroecological food production are represented in and supported by our cultural agendas. We are working in partnership with six Italian cultural institutions and museums to foster local alliances between seeds, soils, artists, and farmers as hubs and catalysts to bridge the cultural/agricultural divide.
- Creating a network of farmers and seed keepers interested in enhancing a value system for the propagation and cultivation of an increasingly diverse selection of drought-resistant seeds that can raise awareness about new legal frameworks for the rights of future generations.
- Creating a forum for legal support to advance policy around the rights of and to seeds.

ISTANBUL

Cultivating the culinary heritage of post-industrial wetlands

Water Buffalo Commons is also growing its mission through the CLIMAVORE x Jameel at the RCA initiative. It is located in the outskirts of Istanbul, where wetlands are home to water buffalo, their herders, and other companion species. Since 2013, the region has seen a number of hyper-scale constructions, and the plans for digging a new shipping canal to overpass the ones in Panama and Suez. Located in the lands of the Buffalo, these megaprojects have rezoned the area from rural to urban, draining the wetlands and fragmenting the grazing commons as a side-effect. The project aims to develop different strategies for the preservation of Istanbul's post-industrial wetland ecologies. Following the Assembly we completed a baseline study mapping the historic and current reality of the Buffalo and their herders using the periphery of Istanbul as a multispecies food belt. Next steps include:

- Connecting water buffalo herders to distribute milk from pastoralist networks across Istanbul restaurants, supporting the creation of economic viability for the herding communities and creating an awareness campaign of the product to this disappearing landscape.
- Bringing protection to the wetland landscape at a regional, national and international level by trialling new collective common grazing areas.
- Celebrating the political agency of pastoralists in restoring and preserving ecological relations and culinary heritage through the upcoming 2nd edition of the Water Buffalo Festival on 1 June.
- To learn more about the project click [here](#) or read the [Baseline Report](#)



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ISLE OF SKYE and RAASAY: The Tidal Commons

For seven years at the CLIMAVORE Station in Skye and Raasay, Scotland, we have been developing tools to divest island economies from polluting open-net salmon farming and transition instead to alternative aquacultures. Since the Assembly, we have been working on:

1. Producing a series of new artworks by Cooking Sections, Bivalve Murals, in collaboration with five island communities made from crushed waste seashells collected from our partner restaurants who have removed farmed salmon from their menus and replaced it with regenerative aquaculture alternatives, such as seaweeds and bivalves. Offered to public art collections, the profits from acquisition sales are 100% reinvested into developing a production facility making tiles with this new material in Skye which provides employment for 8 people. [Watch the video](#) and get in touch for more details.

2. Begun a series of conversations in collaboration with Abundance about the creation of a Common Good Fund for the islands that can begin with reinvesting the revenue streams from the waste shell material fabrication facility through the murals into areas of local need.

Becoming CLIMAVORE

The Assembly was a pivotal moment for reassessing and redefining our Becoming CLIMAVORE process. It became clear this international campaign and network is much more than removing ingredients from menus and replacing them with regenerative alternatives. Based on the learnings from the Assembly we have updated our Becoming CLIMAVORE toolkit. We continue to strengthen existing collaborations while we are always seeking long-term partners who are interested in joining the process and movement.



APPENDIX : PROVOCATIONS / QUESTIONS FROM THE FOUR WORKSHOPS

CULTIVATING GROUNDS / CAMPI DI CULTURA

In che modo possiamo sfidare il modello economico estrattivista dell'agricoltura attraverso l'adozione dell'agroecologia? Quali tattiche e strategie creative possono essere adottate a tale scopo?

How can we challenge the extractivist economic model of agriculture through the adoption of agroecology? What creative tactics and strategies can be employed for this purpose?

Quali strategie possiamo adottare per creare e diffondere un immaginario che trasformi il ruolo culturale dell'agricoltura e influenzi le scelte alimentari dei consumatori sia nel presente che in futuro?

Which strategies can we adopt to create and disseminate an imagery that transforms the cultural role of agriculture and influences consumers' food choices both in the present and in the future?

In che modo le istituzioni culturali possono trasformarsi in laboratori per sperimentare modelli alternativi di agroecologia e di definizione delle politiche? In che modo possono diventare spazi per azioni e connessioni? Come possiamo interagire con queste politiche per renderle più vantaggiose per i piccoli produttori?

How can cultural institutions transform into laboratories for experimenting with alternative models of agroecology and policy formulation? How can they become spaces for actions and connections? How can we engage with these policies to make them more advantageous for small-scale producers?

FIELD TACTICS / TATTICHE DI TERRA

Quale ruolo possono avere gli agricoltori nel creare cambiamenti nella politica?

What role can farmers have in creating policy changes?

Che tipo di esempi servono ai policy makers per valorizzare future collaborazioni?

What kind of evidence do policy makers need to value input from culture?

Come possono i musei sostenere la sperimentazione con futuri sistemi alimentari alternativi e che valore avrà per i policy makers e gli agricoltori?

How can museums support experimentation with alternative food futures and how can this be of value for policy makers and farmers?

LIVING COLLECTIONS / COLLEZIONI VIVENTI

Qual è il potere culturale e politico dei semi?

What is the cultural and political power of seeds?

Come possono i musei utilizzare la loro conoscenza e pratica nel campo della conservazione per sostenere gli agricoltori e i produttori alimentari?

How can museums use their collecting knowledge and practice to support farmers and food producers?

NOURISHING PUBLIC BODIES / NUTRIRE IL CORPO COLLETTIVO

Quale ruolo possono avere i ristoranti e le attività legate al cibo nel cambiare la cultura degli agricoltori e dei consumatori?

What is the role restaurants and food businesses can have in changing the culture of growers and consumers?

Quale ruolo può svolgere un'istituzione culturale nella trasformazione dei sistemi alimentari?

What is the role a cultural institution can play in transforming food systems?

Come può l'infrastruttura delle istituzioni culturali essere utilizzata per promuovere la giustizia alimentare?

How can the infrastructure of cultural institutions be used to promote food justice?

Our Gratitude

Assemblies happen by inviting people to come together and rely on the acceptance of a call to gather. We are extremely grateful towards everyone that joined us and made this such a special encounter.

We are extremely grateful to the CLIMAVORE team: Dani Burrows, Rosa Whiteley, Shona Cameron, Kelly Tsipni-Kolaza, Merve Anil, Enrico Milazzo, Kubilay Ercelep. Without them, none of this would ever happen.

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Research for the CLIMAVORE Assembly to advance foodways in drylands and wetlands has been produced with CLIMAVORE x Jameel at the Royal College of Art, London. CLIMAVORE Assembly is promoted by Visible (a project by Cittadellarte - Fondazione Pistoletto and Fondazione Zegna), long term partner Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation, and CLIMAVORE x Jameel at RCA, in collaboration with Museo delle Civiltà of Rome, Roma Capitale, Gaia Art Foundation, Teiger Foundation and Hartwig Art Foundation. It was made possible thanks to the support of: American Academy in Rome, Academia Belgica, Real Academia de España en Roma, German Academy Rome Villa Massimo and Circolo Scandinavo in Rome.

Images

1-9: CLIMAVORE Assembly in Rome, 2023. Photo: Giulia Valentini and Mohamed Keita

10: Seed Collections, Sicily, 2024. Photo: Cooperativa Karadrà, Cooperativa No.E.

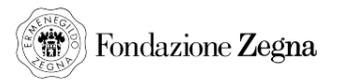
11: Manda Conversation / Sohbetleri Buffalo Commons Workshop Climavore X Jameel at RCA, Istanbul, 2023. Photo: Kalt Film

12: CLIMAVORE Bivalve Mural production, Isle of Skye and Raasay. Photo: Jordan Young

13: Buffalo wallows, Istanbul, 2022. Photo: Deniz Sabuncu.



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