unMonastery

Stakeholders Handbook



The unMonastery: an open source, secular approach to the co-living, co-working challenges and rewards of 21st Century monasticism.

The unMonastery is a social clinic for the future. It is a meeting place for the suspicious. It is of deep concern.

The unMonastery repeatedly fails to define itself in anything other than its 'real time' work. It is urgently important that it succeed.

THE IDEA

We accept at this point in history that retreat is as legitimate as growth; that models of collective effort indicate a path of optimal low-consumption human deployment; that a synthesis of urban and regional survival strategies might provide a platform for future life; that 'frugal abundance' can be an attractive strategic goal that provides significant emotional satisfaction.

The unMonastery proposal is to amplify this emotional satisfaction through evolving cultural life forms that promote valuable social spin-offs. The key is **hard work**.

The unMonastery is an infrastructure space which allows people and groups on the fringes of society, who normally have no common interface (citizens of small towns on the periphery of Europe; nomadic web developers), to interact and work together to address concerns both on the local and global scale. Combining existing resources (unused buildings; idealistic, highly educated, skilled people who are reluctant or unable to join the job market; open source culture; design patterns for sustainable living) the unMonastery addresses diverse contemporary issues such as depletion of skilled workforce in remote areas, youth unemployment, the attrition caused by automation, and social cohesion.

THE PLACE

The unMonastery is not a building nor its inhabitants. The unMonastery is the role it acquires through collaboration with its host community. It is based upon a contract offering unused resources (a building) in exchange for a residency of the best people we can recruit who are willing to adopt a lifestyle of service.

It is based upon an act of faith: faith that the inherent wisdom of the model will inspire good works. *The Art of unMonasticism* is to render our work clear, relevant and in tune with local aspirations. It is essential that these aspirations accurately reflect realistic expectations.

It also happens that the unMonastery is in fact a building - usually a temporary, possibly long-term location for a group of unMonasterians. It consists of living quarters: shared bedrooms, bathrooms, a library; and community spaces: a kitchen, areas for working and gathering. The community spaces are open to anyone while the building is open.

There is a daily cooking schedule, designated residents and friends preparing meals for everyone. Cleaning is done together; shopping, garbage and other chores are distributed. The unMonastery is modestly but functionally furnished with furniture and objects which are preferably reused, follow open source instructions or are made of recycled materials. Energy and water consumption and waste production are monitored and published monthly or in real time. The unMonastery strives to be a safe-space.

THE PEOPLE

In addition, the unMonastery is also its people. A highly diverse network of social innovators, hackers, software developers, artists, engineers, writers, farmers, designers, architects, gamers and activists working together with their local equivalent to develop practical, tangible projects strategically designed to feed both their local and global communities.

Along the chain of action points from the initial invitation from a community via the vetting of its suitability as a future location - to the first opening of the unMonastic doors, any number of concerned citizens may attach themselves to greater or lesser degrees. -- All of these can be considered **Stakeholders**; some will insist on joining us in getting their hands dirty.

What could be your contribution? What are the requirements for hosting or joining an unMonastery? How is this a key investment in improving humankind's survival potential?

This Handbook is designed to indicate what we consider to be the most reasonable response to these and other questions.

THE WORK

“When it comes to work it is increasingly difficult to reconcile making money with making sense. People do work to make a living. Others do work to make meaning. But the two works are not the same work.”

The unMonastery is an attempt to integrate work that provides food and shelter, with work that is meaningful both on a local and global scale. (please see The Book of Greater and Lesser Omissions: The Work)

THE CULTURE

The unMonastery is a technologically savvy community that seeks to emulate certain aspects of medieval monasticism. Excluding prescriptive religion, hierarchy and gender separation, unMonasterians aim to combine commitment to working on both local and global (or universal) issues.
They live a more rounded and healthier life than the urban existence they leave behind; they respect each other, the place, the people, cultural and personal difference; they share their skills and learn new ones.

We remain deeply curious as to how this loving, generous, and conscious society can evolve and still avoid the traps of becoming a cult.

THE EQUIPMENT

The word “equipe” comes from French, meaning team. The unMonastery equipment consists of its people: those physically present in the building, their global network and the local community. To align and nurture this community, we have developed the key tools of: ***V.A.V*** (visceral added value) ***unCivilisation Readjustment Therapy;*** and ***I Progettini.***

Visceral Added Value indicates the need to render each action into an exchange that is tactile and measurable in human terms. It can quickly become imperative that each project be strategically aligned to emphasise its value in a manner that clearly communicates its virtue. To do so, it is wise to break down often mammoth individual projects into their component, more measurable daily *‘progettini’*.
‘unCivilization Readjustment Therapy’ is how we generate team spirit and come closer to better elucidating The ‘We’. (please see: The Book of Greater and lesser Omissions: The ‘We’).

In order to preserve our experiences and create value even of our first floundering steps of the Matera prototype, we developed our great documentation tool, **The Book of Greater and Lesser Omissions.** In order to provide an overview of the unMonastery idea and develop a tool to involve people and implement new ideas in the unMonastery, we developed **the unMonastery BIOS.**

The unMonastery BIOS:

The unMonastery Basic Input/Output System is a toolkit for starting new unMonasteries and evaluating projects throughout their development. Designed on the principle that the knowledge generated by the unMonastery should be open to all, easily accessible and applicable to other initiatives, the unMonastery Bios encompasses the knowledge base generated as a result of the 6 month prototype in Matera, Italy during 2014 and project development work done since.

The unMonastery BIOS is composed of:

unMonastery Card Kit:
Designed in collaboration with MethodKit, this cardset acts as a checklist to help unMonasterians work together, nurture ideas, and get an overview of common questions. Depending on methodology the kit can be deployed in a variety of ways.

Stakeholders Handbook:
The unMonastery is no clandestine operation, it aspires to involve as many people in the process as is organisationally possible. As a result of this aspiration, negotiation between individuals and groups can feel like a minefield - the Stakeholders Handbook is designed to help orientate and coach future unMonasterians and Stakeholders in managing their relationships.

The Book of Greater and Lesser Omissions:
The companion document to the Stakeholders Handbook, the text of GLO (often rudely called by those who should know better: *The Book of Mistakes*) is annotated compilations from the written record left behind from the 2014 unMonastery Prototipo Matera. It is a source of much wisdom where unMoansterians have added comment to excerpts from a contemplative study of the unMon practice as composed by their first resident scribe. The resultant record depicts in greater depth many of the concerns touched upon in this manual. It is recommended reading both before and during devising your own unMo.

unMonastery Roadmap:
A process chart that replicates the stages of an unMonastery's development - ensuring that all stakeholders and participants can see the steps on the path at any stage in the journey. **The Scriptorium:** Much like monasteries of a bygone era, the unMonastery generates large amounts of documentation and knowledge products. The scriptorium is an expanding online repository housing everything: budgeting spreadsheets, legal documents, workshop methodologies, source code and individual project documentation.

The Talking Piece: (stone)
A facilitator of effective meeting circles.

Chronicles of the unRuly:
Volume I - Code/unCode Commissioned through The Way People Work.org this work juxtaposes interviews with three current heads of traditional monasteries with exerpts from the daily machinations around the early stages of an attempt to establish a grassroots unMonastery in Athens.
Volume II - Strategic Musings

Test Lab Manual: a step by step DIY guide to establishing mini-unMons as precursors to more major endeavors.

Design Pattern Handbook: The unMonastery Design Pattern Workbook is a hands-on integrated tool for planning, problem-solving and documentation. It is based on three of our favourite and most utilised tools: the HAs & the OOs, the concept of Design Patterns, and our beloved The Book of Mistakes.

THE ORGANISATION

Each unMonastery is a horizontally structured autonomous unit based on self-initiative and inclusion. Above and beyond the localised units is '**unMonastery Metanational** whose form has yet to be evolved. It is linked to but distinctly independent of Edgeryders (an early 21st Century network of social activists, hackers etc. initially recruited by the Office of Social Cohesion Research, Council of Europe, Strasbourg). Claims upon uMM/Edgeryders from the individual unMonasteries are limited to non-monetary support, they could include access to a recruitment bank, research and development networks, strategic administration aid, etc.

Claims upon the individual unMonasteries from uMM/Edgeryders are non-material, however it is assumed that each unMonastery make efforts to acquaint themselves with the

history of the movement (through the ER archives and the various editions of the Book of Greater and Lesser Omissions.) It is possible that each independent unMonastery (or endeavor using the unMonastery name in some form) be assessed a negotiable budget contribution to support the unMon Metanational. This amount is expected to be recycled into each local initiative in the form of consultant emissaries holding kickstart residencies and cross-fertilisation workshops. The amount is not an absolute percentage, and of course will not be expected before significant running finances have been procured.

In addition to this economic collaboration, each local unit is tasked with distilling and rendering available its own version of **The Protocol** or guidelines for living.

The unGeneral Assembly

We acknowledge the conceptual impossibility of satisfying all of our aspirations equally at any time. Deeply committed to the ethos of Open Source, the unMonastery movement seeks a mechanism that can preserve vital aspects of its character while fearlessly and egolessly enabling and empowering any party to modify it in any way they choose. The contradiction is self-evident; however, recognising that forks will occur at many junctures, we request that all further builds upon the unMonastery history form a key connection with whatever form of central reference that the internationally recognised the **unGeneral Assembly** deems most appropriate at the current time.

Still evolving the uMM postulates its growth into two interlinked functional groups: the unGA -- a wide membership organ that

makes its voice known partially through Vilfredo, a distributed decision making process pioneered by Edgeryder veteran Pietro Speroni di Fenizio. For more centralised concerns and daily developments we will establish **The unCouncil of unMonasterians,** this body is responsible to the unGeneral Assembly. The right to voice opinion in the unGeneral Assembly is open to all those who wish to claim status as true unMonasterians as either veteran co-livers or as active behind the scenes stakeholders. The unCouncil is conceived as the guardians of the unMonastery's ideals as laid out in the Code/unCode and illuminated in the Book of greater and Lesser Omissions.

EVALUATION/ LEGACY

The successful operation of an unMonastery is dependent upon clear evaluation of where one can locate oneself in the process. Each unMonastery should house at least one scribe whose task is to document and comment upon the choices made. An example of our core tool : **The Book of Greater and Lesser Omissions** (Il Libro degli Errori) which traces the records of the unMonastery Prototipo di Matera is available in pdf form here: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B4pbW9Qv8GR7SDdNZTZ3SUN1dzg

The invaluable depth offered by *The Book of Greater and Lesser Omissions*, should in turn be supported by the scriptorium work of the unAbbots, focused on documenting and distilling particular operational components of the journey into clear process steps, design patterns and clearly articulated documentation that can assist replication by others, without the risk of reinvention and ensuing groundhog days. In doing so, one should take great care not to jeopardise the great prototyping traditions of the unMonastery.

ASPECTS OF THE WORK

Supporters & Allies

Some of the most important allies in the unMonastery's bid for survival do not live in the unMonastery building; unMonasterians are deeply thankful to those who form the first of what are many circles that surround and amplify our efforts. In every community there are interlopers or oblates; those who believe in the unMission but who live securely among the civil population. These connections form a key role in interpreting the realistic circumstances of our presence. They are to be cultivated with great care. From an insider position they act partially as what social anthropologists call ‘informants’, partially as an unPR department that seeks not to manipulate public perceptions but to ease the occasions where people can form their own understandings.

Beyond this immediate circle are the practical support network, the suppliers of unanonymous food.

Personal Well-being

unMonasteries are inevitably composed of individuals. This is both a source of enrichment and of our vulnerability. Most modern citizens have received many years intensive training in expressing and treasuring their individuality. Renegotiating this connection with one's precious self in order to operate in a partially anonymous collective ensemble is not always done readily. Understanding and patience must accompany this accommodation. However, unMon life always presents a compromise with one's usual practice of self-determination.

Traditional monasteries had a hierarchical series of barriers and initiations before supplicants would be granted novice status. Fitting in with humility and obedience towards tradition was deemed a praise worthy virtue.

To become an unMonasterian requires one to acknowledge and embrace the challenge of surrendering some of what may be one's most ingrained habits. The rewards may surprise.

The Protocol

In the Benedictine tradition, *The Code* was site specific. Each monastery established and codified its own practice. In what is our key reference document: *The Highest Poverty*,* Giorgio Agamben dissects the historical evolution of monastic 'life forms' : 'The Rules' had as varied forms as they had contents.
(*Neri Pozza editore, Milano 2011.)

The early unMonasterians have proven reluctant to make choices. In a community of novices, no one has either the recognised wisdom, not the perspective to decree stabil, immutable virtues. With at least one foot still in *the culture of the self*, we released ourselves from the responsibility of defining what was best for one another except in the realm of locally-produced vegetables. That which was avoided so staunchly was the monastic premise that a surrender of the self is a negotiation to be done at the gates, not within them…

The process of generating 'a model Protocol' is highly on-going and labelled top priority see *Chronicles of the unRuly, Volume I: Code/unCode.*
https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B8gaAwrcVOLqUGU1T3NxczhXaG8

Open Sourcing

All unMonastery work is open source.

Fork it

We don't strive to invent everything we need. Rather, unMonasteries locate existing solutions and alter them to their own purposes. The fork being a metaphor and process procured from the open source community and popularised by the distributed work platform GitHub.

In software development individuals, groups and organisations frequently place their code base, the programmatic make up of an application into a publicly available repository, with the implicit invitation to others being to copy, improve and transform the code for their own purpose.

unMonastery utilises this approach both in the work it builds upon, the networks it replicates (Open Tech School, CoderDojo et al) and in the sharing and distribution of its own work - forking unMonastery is actively encouraged, and those who choose to do so are rewarded with their own subdomain (easterisland.unmonastery.org,/athens.unmonastery.org etc) and a repository of useful documents on which to build and submit back to the mothership.

Remote Working

unMonastery is an international network, and the various skills and competences we represent are a valuable asset to the whole organisation at any point in time. We work together although it is rare that all of us can be found in one place. We have developed ways to work remotely, using project management and team organisation tools such as Trello, Slack and GoogleDocs.

Online Presence

We document religiously. We keep the entire unMonastery BIOS, and all our documentation online. We also have a website. www.unmonastery.org and publish intermittently on Discourse and Medium.

Team Work

Suddenly living communally in an intimate surrounding with imperfect strangers can be a shock to the system. Unless you have grown up with team sports or in the theatre, investing in building the ensemble is not second nature. The unMonasteries are dependent upon pulling together - there is no room for tourists. It is also the case that too much self-sacrifice (relieving the weight of others) creates imbalance.

The administration of a team requires communication. unMonasteries are only as healthy as their meeting culture. Attempts to absorb best practice for converting our daily 'circles' into efficient and focused planning organs are ongoing. It is suggested that each unMonastery adopt its own physical/emotional practice designed to promote team consciousness. This could be contact dance improvisation or a volleyball team. (This doesn't detract from more introverted, contemplative practices such as yoga or jogging.)

Survival Strategies

The unMonastery model proposes a three year commitment in establishing our presence in new communities. Roughly; the first year for landing and orientation through strategic interaction, the second year for embedding and cementing collaborations, the third year is for handing over the operation of the house to local forces. Our units of exchange will vary according to local concerns. We are learning best practice and elements of rebooting democracy and social cohesion. Our key survival strategy is to localise and integrate our primary collaborators.

Division of Labour

Some unMonasterians are engineers, some are artists, and the others are anything in-between. We take roles in each other's projects so all skills and viewpoints are utilised in as many ways as possible.

Legal, Budget & Administration

The everyday bureaucratic pandemic of unMonastic living is no small feat. Like any household there is a need to maintain close and rigorous attention to the legal and budgetary needs of your home. We've found that to date it's advisable to have a single budget holder, who is responsible for maintaining a rolling overview of all expenditure - delegating chunks of budgetary needs to other unMonasterians, such as the food budget in the Matera prototype.

Inline with the tradition of other secular open source development, we believe in maintaining an open data policy, so it is a mandatory requirement that all budgets and administrative detritus remain publically accessible. In each stage of our development we also seek to ease the bureaucratic burden, by creating templates and replicable examples of various budget sheets and legal documents - these are stored within the scriptorium.

unMonastery Analytics

Drawing from the frugal traditions of monasticism, of optimising one's sanctuary so to enable more time to be spent with god. The unMonastery seeks to make efficient the consumption of all resources within the building. As part of the prototyping process of the unMonastery we focused on tracking and quantifying various resource flows through the project.

Tracking all utilities, food consumption, budgetary expenses and numbers of visitors passing through the building with a view to effectively tweaking and iteratively improving the effectiveness of our work. This approach is a mandatory aspect for the development of any cohabitation experiment brandishing the flag of the unMonastery.

APPENDIX

The following ‘Stakeholder profiles’ describe the forces that build any unMonastery and are designed to be readily applicable to exploring the unMonastery BIOS roadmap game:

The unMonastery (International Network)

A highly diverse network of social innovators, hackers, software engineers, artists, writers, designers, architects, gamers and activists working together with their local equivalent to develop practical, tangible projects strategically designed to feed both their local and global communities.

Wide network of people working on specific projects both within individual unMonasteries, unMonastery Metanational and beyond. Identifiable by manner rather than uniform.

unMonasterians

Residents of the unMonastery building, who live, work and engage in the local community according to unMonastery principles. Recruited specifically for each unMonastery, their skills and interests serve the community that hosts them. While building strong and deep internal relationships among themselves, unMonasterians also act as magnets to activate their community space as an open social hub of the city.

unMonasterians act as connectors between their hosts and the international network of the unMonastery, and other global initiatives.

A mutual support between stakeholders is a key aspect of the unMonastery, and unMonasterians do their best to analyse, grasp and build on the complex relationships that surround them.

unMonastery (the Building)

The unMonastery building where unMonasterians reside.

Usually a temporary, possibly long-term location for a group of unMonasterians. It consists of living quarters: shared bedrooms, bathrooms, a library; and community spaces: a kitchen, areas for working and gathering. The community spaces are open to anyone while the building is open. The unMonastery is modestly but functionally furnished with furniture and objects which are preferably reused, or made of recycled materials. Energy and water consumption and waste production are monitored and published monthly. The unMonastery strives to be a safe-space.

A place for co-living and co-working, for cultivating unMonastery traditions and grow new ones. Physical container of the ‘we’. Place of unMonasterian learning. An open space for people from host community, visitors, and friends to come to work, hang out, learn, teach and eat with us. The building and its physical state is one of the key placeholder for trust between unMonastery and the local community. It is of the utmost importance to take care of it, improve its state if possible, make it welcoming and comfortable for residents and visitors. The perception of unMonasterians in the city will be greatly influenced by the state of their home in most places.

There are clearly stated times when the building, its community spaces, are open, and when it is closed, to make sure resident unMonastrians can rest and work in private.

The Matera School

The first unMonastery opened its doors February 2014 in Matera, Italy. Working with Matera2019, the prototype hosted projects including CoderDojo Matera, a node of the international initiative to teach children coding, Mapping the Commons, placing the city's cultural assets on OpenStreetMap, unTransit, an app to follow the city's transport system in real-time, and more.

Upon closing the doors of the prototype, we collected the unMonastery design patterns as a method kit card set, distilled the journey into a Process Map; we wrote its history and evaluation as The Book of Greater and Lesser Omissions, and developed the BIOS,

Our experience in Matera laid the foundations for the entire unMonastery project, and will continue to shape its development. To honour this connection, this original branch of unMonastery is called the Matera School.

The Invisible Stakeholders

The Masons: unMonasteries require homes. Moving into a building with previous history will demand that we study this history: someone has been here before. We must honour their labour, hopes and absence.

The Watertable: Both upstream and downstream from the life of an unMonastery we will make an impact. Through among other processes as unMonastery Analytics we seek to maintain a radical stance in regard to our consumptive patterns.

The Future: Among those with a major stake in our success are the unborn. Whatever forms unMonasteries might take in the future it is certain that groups gathering to serve the common good from disused buildings will form a positive force in any renegotiation of civilisation.

The Smitten: Our pilot attempt to test the unMonastery idea in Matera produced one major surprise. We received truly global attention. The latent force in the imagery of revitalising a lifestyle of monastic service caused us to receive a flurry of inquiries wishing to study, visit, emulate. An open letter from a prominent Roman Catholic activist based in Ecuador to the newly elected Pope mentioned us by name. We, humbly aware that our first child-like tottering was not providing us reliable balance, were aghast but took the enthusiasm generated to reflect the pure contagious power in the idea of rebuilding an intuitively very human institution upon the foundation of a contemporary reality.

The Land / The Infrastructure

The unMonastery reactivates and reimagines resources, like land and infrastructure, which lay unused or under-used. We are fully committed to make the new infrastructure spaces useful, active and meaningful for the community.

Funders and Benefactors

People who either make the decision of bringing unMon on or those who contribute generously through financial resources to the growth of the unMonastery. They have their own vision as to what role the unMonastery is to play in their city and organisation, how it would shape their relationships in town and in the world.

It is crucial that Funders communicate their expectations clearly from the very first time they consider supporting an unMonastery. The BIOS Game was developed to aide this process, but a significant effort needs to be taken on both sides to understand the expectations, the ideals, the limitations and the feasibility of the cooperation between Funders and the unMonastery. Clear communication channels and accessibility in case of a crisis need to be established from the beginning.

unMonasterians support their supporters. The Funders can help this process by revealing crucial information about their network of alliances and its operational range, including its limits.

Supporters

People of the local community who support and work with us, and whose stakes in the project are complicated by the fact that they stay in town whatever happens with the unMonastery. unMonasterians need to keep in mind that in order to lighten the burden on the people who risk their personal reputation and potentially livelihood by being associated with them, supporting these supporters may indeed require unMoanasterians to understand and comply with social norms that are alien to them.

Supporters also need to keep an open mind - unMonasterians come from very different walks of life and not every one of them may fit the Supporters' expectations.

The City

Each city is not only a geographical location, or a collection of objects in space, its buildings and landscapes, but its entire history. unMonasteries work towards contributing to this history in meaningful ways.

Citizenry/Community

‘Community’ is the people within a 5 mile radius of the unMon building. Not simply neighbors, creating and nurturing trust and a good relationship between unMonastery and local community is one of the tasks that all Stakeholders are responsible for. unMonasterians’ patterns of social interaction and ways of effective communication may differ radically from the local customs. The challenge is to find a way to understand and at least partially follow these unfamiliar patterns without compromising personal values and expectations.

The structure of funding of the unMonastery will have an impact on these relationship. unMonasteries are either supported (at least partially) from public funds, the taxes of the local community, in which case unavoidably the arrival of the unMonastery will be viewed by some people as using local resources to support foreigners; or funded by private benefactor(s), in which case their alliance will be assumed to completely align with the funder(s).

Asset holders

The person(s) who own the building and/or land that the unMonastery occupies.

The unMonasterians take care of the property in such a manner that it's value is increased by the time they return it in comparison to when it was handed over to them. Apart from possible building improvements, each unMonastery provides detailed documentation of the use, characteristics, needs, and repairs to the property, together with tried solutions to emerging problems. unMonastery analytics is integral part of each unMonastery, and our consumption of electricity, gas and water, and waste production is continuously monitored.