

Radio 8 x 5

Background

Since the 1980s, the Tuscan city of Prato has risen, on a global scale, to become a major manufacturing center for mid- to lower-range “Made in Italy” garments, as well as a subcontracting powerhouse for luxury fashion brands.

With a complete supply chain for ready-made fast fashion, Prato has inherited the infrastructure and highly specialized labor division characteristic of post-war Italian industrial districts. It has further benefited from migrant labor and entrepreneurship, which have made the city particularly visible since the end of the twentieth century. However, this prosperity has been built upon intensive exploitation.

In recent years, the “**8 × 5 Movement**,” initiated by workers and organizers from the grassroots trade union **Sudd Cobas**, has significantly reshaped Prato’s productive landscape. Advocating the principle of “8 hours, 5 days,” the movement calls for working hours and wages that comply with labor law, and for an industrial district grounded in dignity and basic workers’ rights.

At the same time, issues surrounding fast fashion and migrant labor in Prato have become increasingly visible within public debate. Since last year, Sudd Cobas has shifted the focus of its organizing toward the fashion supply chain as a whole, **calling for more ethical labor practices across the industry**. This shift has coincided with a series of scandals involving the exploitation of workers in subcontracted workshops producing for Italian luxury brands, bringing renewed attention to the hidden conditions behind “Made in Italy.”

The 8 × 5 Movement speaks not only to a local labor struggle, but also to structural problems embedded in today’s global fashion system. Against this backdrop, the movement carries particular relevance and urgency today—and so does this project, which seeks **to amplify its voices and make its ongoing struggles audible within an international context**.

A Radio Project

Our proposed project “Radio 8 x 5” is initiated by artists, researchers, and unionists who participate in, or work in close proximity to, the 8 x 5 Movement. **It seeks to build a community platform through sound**. Rather than solely functioning as a documentary archive of a fast-changing and impactful movement, the radio is conceived as **a continuously updated sonic presence** of the workers’ struggle in Prato. It brings ongoing labor conflicts into both the

broader public sphere and the exhibition space in Arnhem, fostering social connection, solidarity, and political agency.



The radio will debut as part of The State of Fashion 2026 exhibition. In a dedicated listening space equipped with speakers or headphones, visitors to the Biennale will be able to listen to the radio. When strikes or other actions are taking place in Prato, the exhibition space will transmit live audio from these events. At other times, pre-programmed content—such as interviews, conversations, and field recordings—will be played.

In parallel, the live broadcast will be accessible via a dedicated website, where past programs and recordings will also be archived and made available for listening. The live broadcasts can also be accessed there.

A Movement of Sounds

We conceive the radio as a medium that responds directly to **the centrality of sound within the movement itself**. Chanting slogans, the noise of different machines across the garment supply chain, and music drawn from workers' diverse cultural backgrounds and played on the picket line all form a rich and layered sonic landscape.

Other than the sonic components, it is important to note that multilingualism is one of the movement's most distinctive and powerful characteristics, and one that is deeply rooted in Prato itself. Italian, Urdu, Bengali, Chinese, English, and many other languages can be heard on the

picket line. The radio programming will reflect and preserve this linguistic diversity, programmed with interviews and conversations in different languages.

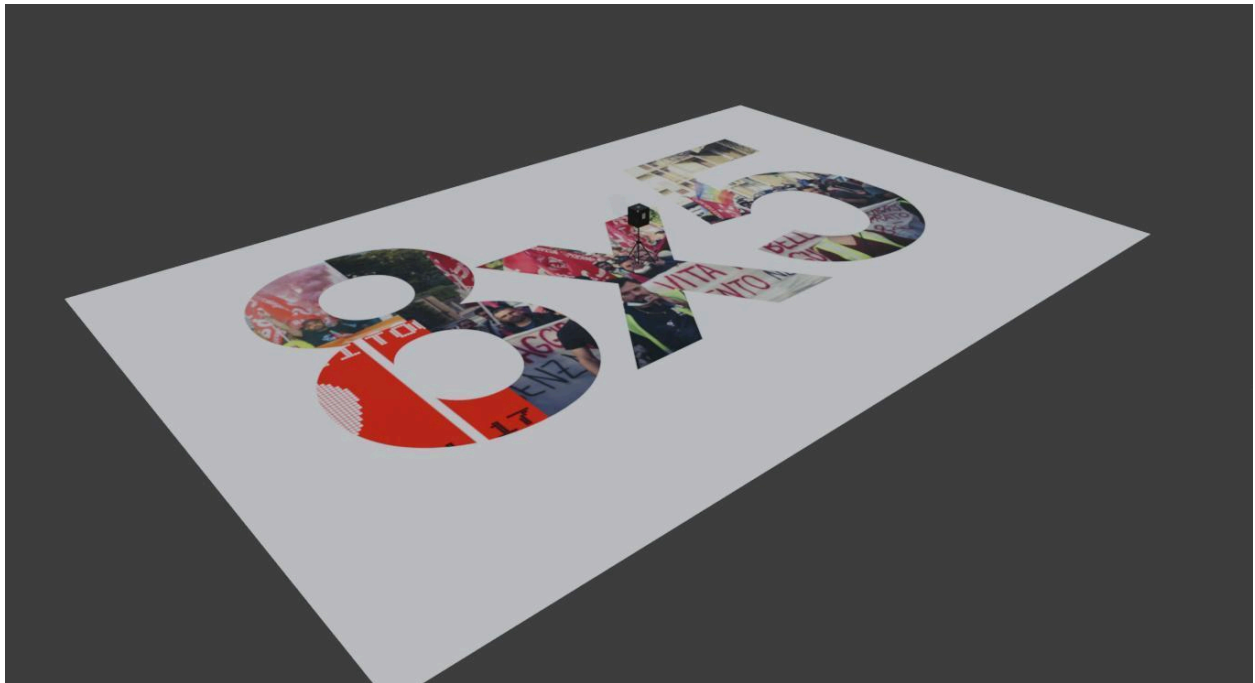
In addition, artists based in Prato will be invited to intervene in the radio through sound works or to develop their own radio programs within the platform.

Spatial and Technical Configurations

Within the exhibition space, Radio 8 × 5 will take the form of a hybrid radio installation that combines recorded material from strikes—such as chants, picket-line sounds, and interviews—with live audio streams from ongoing actions.

Each week, a playlist will be produced in alignment with the exhibition's opening hours. This playlist will repeat on each opening day of the week, allowing visitors to encounter different segments of content depending on when they enter the space.

Technically, the installation will be driven by a Raspberry Pi located on-site in the exhibition venue, functioning as a local scheduler and audio engine. It will alternate between pre-scheduled playback and live audio streams. The Raspberry Pi will periodically connect to a remote control server to retrieve daily schedules, audio assets, and metadata, which will be updated directly by the artists.



The choice of audio output devices can be adapted to the specific spatial conditions of where we will be in the venue. In an enclosed room, for example, a single central loudspeaker may be

sufficient. In a larger or shared exhibition area, rather, multiple smaller speakers or individual headphones could be used to create more intimate listening environments. We suggest a comfortable seating setting so the visitors are encouraged to stay as long as they wish.

On the floor of the space dedicated to Radio 8 × 5, we propose to install a large-scale graphic element spelling “8 × 5,” with the typography filled by photographic images drawn from strikes, demonstrations, and everyday moments of the movement. This graphic floor work visually anchors the radio within the exhibition space, while echoing the collective presence and material conditions of the movement itself.