

Sensing Earth Cultural Quests Across a Heated Globe

Philipp Dietachmair
Pascal Gielen
Georgia Nicolau (eds.)

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Introduction

Georgia Nicolau
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Colourful Parachutes

Sensing Earth tells us stories of both sensory impoverishment and enrichment. In this book we try to understand how the arts and the world's cultural communities, organizations and professionals can touch and reconnect to the Earth again. We follow artists, analysts and activists on their cultural quests for an ecologically sustainable future and find out how Earth, our rapidly heating globe, affects their work and artistic creations. Our first ideas for this book emerged when most authorities around the world had just imposed a second year of more or less strict pandemic lockdowns on their societies. While new digital collaboration routines and prolonged home office confinements began to put our hectic (cultural) mobility practices into question, the ever longer periods of staying out of touch with each other confronted us with profound sensory challenges. But also with new possibilities to engage, or disengage. The temporary loss of face-to-face interaction and the struggles, or pleasures, for many to fully reconnect in physical space continue to have a deep transformational impact on us, especially in the cultural field. Our prevailing human-centred culture of exploiting natural resources and wiping out entire ecosystems in an irrevocable manner will likely result in more pandemics in the future. New public health emergencies may endanger everyone's livelihood soon again. But they will especially also threaten artists and cultural organizations whose professional existence may be affected even more than it already was by Corona. *Sensing Earth* introduces artistic concepts, practices, organizations and cultural communities that stand for moving away from the prevailing anthropocentric approaches. They show us how the rediscovery and regeneration of our buried ancestry may help us with unearthing and expanding more planet-centred perceptions for humankind instead. The texts in this book argue for a new and global culture of solidarity and respect, in which all humans become aware again of coexisting equally as a part of nature and together with all other forms of life and the non-living constituents of our biosphere.

Covid-19 made us understand that a lot of travel is actu-

ally not really necessary and that many exchanges of ideas and information can also easily be done via the world wide web. However, the forcibly booming Zoom, Skype, Teams and Collaborate encounters also taught that cultural exchanges tend to fail and especially cultural transmission becomes complicated when there is no real physical contact. Contemporary performances, theatre, music, but also visual art exhibitions can be difficult to take root if they cannot be experienced live. Physical nearness matters and perhaps even more so in the exchange between different cultures. People, but also art, are often only understood when we can see, feel, hear, smell and experience them in their totality; when we can experience how they not only rationally or logically, but with all their senses are connected with their social, cultural, political, economic and ecological habitat. But this desire and prerequisites to be near also confront us with a dichotomy between nature and culture. At the very least, it puts artists and cultural organizations at odds with the demands that the many ecosystemic crises of the planet place on us today. Does cultural exchange not require ecologically irresponsible physical nearness? And does a more responsible approach to our planet not equally call for a different, more local sensitivity; at least an embedded understanding of our environment and how everything is connected in its totality?

In *Sensing Earth*, artists, activists and scientists try to express this double-bound sensitivity to culture and nature. At least two things connect all their contributions: their plea for physical nearness with nature and cultures, and the reconnections of our histories, bonds and relationships with the ones that came before us. The understanding of a work of art, a person or a community as well as that of nature demands a live experience. It requires a specific sensitivity or an aesthesis, a unique way of coming into contact with our environment and with our ancestors. In *Down to Earth*, for example, Bruno Latour argues in favour of exchanging our distant view of the globe for an earthly experience. We need to get our feet back on the ground. Artist Jenny Odell argues in her opposition to the attention economy called *How to Do Nothing?* for more physical encounters and bio-regionalism again. Such sensitivities for the local environment

are for instance reflected in growing attention and advocacy for the cultural expressions and climate transformation-induced social struggles of Indigenous communities and regional development questions all over the world. In the practical field of international cultural exchange and collaboration, the attraction of the very local comes along with art residencies in often very remote places and the very global mobility and long-distance travel between them.

The Antennae-Arts *in* Society series uses culture and arts as a lens for thinking about and acting on the contemporary world. The current edition shall work as a call to our senses, through artists, thinkers and cultural agents reflecting the climate crisis through their sensibility, action, and place in the world. In *Sensing Earth*, we bring together some pieces in the attempt to narrate the world we live in and also to reflect on the involvement of artists in the construction of cultural policy paradigms that make sense, given what we know today about the planet's ecosystemic crises. The book is a call to think about what ways of perceiving and feeling the world can emerge or are already here and should be given our attention. The multi-layered crises we live in are cause, consequence, and experience, depending on who is speaking and where you are located. The book brings a multiple, non-linear, and not necessarily pragmatic perspective, although authors also offer very concrete propositions to review established practices in the local and international arts circuit. Above all, we think that *Sensing Earth* brings questions that displace our existential sensemaking. We question the meaning of our origin and our primitive senses. As the subtitle 'Cultural Quests Across a Heated Globe' proposes, the book takes us on a number of cultural quests and to crossroads on an increasingly heated globe. They all explore some of our most essential cultural questions and possibilities for developing a new sensorium that encompasses the entire biosphere around us before humanity has reached the ultimate dead end.

The Brazilian sociologist Denise Ferreira da Silva, however, brings us the proposal of accelerating such an end of the world, at least of this world as we know it. *Sensing Earth* could perhaps also be a proposal for how to promote encounters and

put oneself in movement in order to postpone the end of the world—or accelerate the end of this world that brought us to this dead end—and maybe turn the dead end into a crossroad that offers a continuation of our quests into a different and more sustainable direction.

It is interesting to think about the perspective of the new and the old, the future and the past, since many of the reflections are an invitation to what makes us human. Contributions in this book refer in some way to the need for breathing, the need for time, for meaning, for memory, and for belonging. Belonging as ancestry, that which came before us, but also that which remains here. 'The Dead are not dead', says a poem quoted by Luciane Ramos-Silva in one of the texts. As Naine Terena de Jesus says in another text, the Indigenous way of life is still being considered obsolete and primitive, and yet there is an increasing interest in the knowledge of the original peoples. A curiosity that may or may not be based on true listening and understanding interest. But there is something intriguing in knowing that, at this very moment, there are people in the world who have an intimate and symbiotic relationship with more-than-human beings. The lands inhabited by Indigenous people are the lands where the fauna and flora are best preserved, which in no way means to say that they are untouched. Precisely because the relationship is not one of exhaustion, but of exchange, forests don't have to be like unaltered museum pieces. On the contrary, the relationship is living, dynamic, natural and necessary. One is part of the life of the other and therefore one cannot live without the other. Interdependency.

In this sense, it is not a matter of essentialism or idealization of traditional and secular peoples and communities, but to look at it as possibilities of restoration and cure—some of them have been here forever. We have the chance to narrate this world in other ways. *Sensing Earth* is a polyphonic invitation to new ethics and aesthetics. With its obvious limitations, far from claiming any conclusion or treatise. Rather as a contribution from a spectrum of artists, curators, researchers about the many relations between producing art, thinking art, distributing art, consuming art, and its many political relations with the world.

Bernardo Toro talks about a need for us to change from the paradigm of success to the paradigm of care. The success paradigm has led us to the foretold risk of us disappearing as a species. The Colombian philosopher and educator proposes that we make the transition to the paradigm of care, which, according to him, gives rise to a new ethic that consists in knowing how to take care of ourselves, our spirit, our neighbours, those who are far away, those who are strangers, the intellect, and the planet. To speak of care is to remind us that feminists have been calling attention to the invisibility of care work and of any maintenance work for a long time. The climate collapse is also a collapse of a certain way of understanding the world from a racist and colonial heteropatriarchal system.

Ailton Krenak, a Brazilian Indigenous philosopher and environmental leader, in his book *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World*, writes that the idea of humanity is a failed project—and invented by white, European colonizers. By the time we were born the project was already in place, and had already failed. The prevailing notion of humanity separates us from ourselves and nature, and entails a project of annihilation and exploitation:

How can we justify that we are a humanity if over 70% of us are totally alienated from the slightest exercise of being? Modernization has thrown these people from the countryside and the forest to live in slums and outskirts, to become laborers in urban centers.

In 1969 the American artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles released her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!* Proposal for an exhibition 'Care': 'Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?' The modern world brings us disconnection, dressed in apathy and touches of dystopia. To think about care, maintenance and reproductive work is to think about the obvious interdependence of everything we are and do with what is around us. From the food we eat, to the garbage we produce, to the energy we use to turn on the computer and write this text.

In the book *Lumbung Stories*, published by different publishing houses and written by different writers as part of the process of documenta fifteen, one of the articles, by German journalist Mithu Sanyal, tells us that scientist Kimmerer uses the name 'honorific harvest' to propose a change in how we relate to nature's gifts: 'Never pick the first fruit, nor the last; give the plant something in return as an expression of gratitude.' The summary is that in an experiment carried out at SUNY university, where she teaches Environmental Biology, one of her doctoral students developed different relationships with an American fennel plantation as part of a study and the result was that the area that developed the most—even more than the areas that had been untouched—was the one where the researcher engaged in reciprocity. Sanyal then concludes: 'Human beings are not, therefore, the parasites of the planet. We have something to give (in return)! But we need to have access to knowledge and practices on how to do this.'

In his book, Krenak tells us that there are constellations, small constellations, filled with people who sing, dance and make it rain. And he calls on us to jump.

Who said that we can't fall? Who says we haven't already fallen? ... If this is an abyss, this is a fall. So the question to ask is: Why are we so afraid of a fall if we have done nothing in the other ages but fall? Why does the feeling of falling make us uncomfortable? We have done nothing in recent times but fall. Falling, falling, falling. So why are we worried about falling now?

And he suggests,

Let's harness all our critical and creative capacity to build colourful parachutes. Let's think of space not as a confined place, but as the cosmos where we can fall in colourful parachutes.

Sensing Earth gives its contribution in the forms of colourful parachutes that put us in motion, to relate to each

other, to look beyond the mirror, but also towards it, and to face our responsibility in the face of urgency.

The contents of this book are structured in four thematic clusters. They represent an imagined map of the artistic perceptions and new cultural territories we have charted as the editors of *Sensing Earth*. The captions of the four subsections—Reset the Senses; Slow Down; Dance Away the Crisis; and Feel Again—serve as emblematic landmarks and milestones for the reader to follow the cultural quests that the contributing authors and collectives have embarked on around the globe. They may also serve as a set of imaginative propositions and guidance for how to understand the world differently by ‘really touching the Earth’ as sociologist Pascal Gielen suggests in his text, ‘in both senses of the word: feeling and sensing. That is looking, hearing, smelling, and tasting with affect.’

The *Sensing Earth* journey begins with a compilation of in-depth reflections and proposals for conscious action that all plead for a profound reset of our senses or even a total conceptual reboot of the relationship between nature and culture, as Naine Terena de Jesus insists in her essay. We move on to a chapter that helps us to understand how slowing down and grounding our senses by travelling less but more consciously may provide us with an increased appreciation of local rootedness while it will grow our creative transformation potential and decrease carbon emissions. But without risking the collateral damage of restricting accessibility or reducing our openness to difference, as Noel Salazar cautions in his contribution. The third section of our route through *Sensing Earth* introduces the reader with a number of performative practices, conversations, and an experiential ‘wonder tale’ about the various still unfolding choreographies of our multiple planetary crises. The final stretch of our cultural quests concludes with two more unconventional text formats that feature as part poetry, part essay, part prototype for artistic action, and finishes our explorations with an urgent appeal for humankind to feel again!—deeper and more all-encompassing than for the many past decades of focusing solely on the untenable nature of our own destructive progress and losing touch with the complex and diverse ecosystems that sustain us.

Reset the Senses

The three texts under this heading all bring elements for rediscovering and finding different ways of appreciating and inhabiting the Earth. In particular by expanding our understanding of our planetary issues beyond rational analytics and technological remedies and by applying all our senses. ‘It is not enough to describe and study, interpret, calculate, control, and manage planet Earth differently’, writes Pascal Gielen. Inspired by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, he determines our potential to understand a culture, a community, our ecosystem and our ancestors as an ‘aesthetic capability’. In the line of the German philosopher, he defines aesthetics broadly as aisthesis. In contrast to the distant and categorizing scientific, rationalistic and digital view of the world, an aesthetic faculty points to the possibility of an affective understanding of culture and nature through the active use of all our senses. The contemporary climate crisis is, in Gielen’s eyes, a ‘total crisis’ in which our precarious physical, mental, social and political conditions are highly interconnected. Technological innovation is therefore not enough to tackle the environmental crisis. Instead, a cultural and aesthetic revolution is needed to respect Gaia and Chthôn, the world of the living and the dead. We need to give meaning to ourselves, our ancestors and the world in a completely different manner by learning to get in touch with our Earth in a deeply sensitive way.

Learning how to get in touch with the planet in another and much more susceptible way probably also would call for the development of entirely new ‘attentional environments’, inside our cultural infrastructures and institutions. They actually ‘design our ways of being in the world’, as curator Grégory Castéra presumes. In his essay ‘Of Attentional Environments (The Pearl Necklace)’, Castéra projects what the cultural institutions of the future would look like after the abandonment of anthropocentrism and how these should function as safe spaces ‘not only for works but also for living things’. He identifies three possible, and according to him, already progressing transformations that would lead to a post-anthropocentric reconfiguration of art practices and cultural infrastructures: collective imagina-

tion of ‘more-than-human’ forms of life and coexistence, trans-local networks and the Internet of Senses. Castéra adds another dimension to extending our sensorium by transcending ‘the opposition between ecology and technology’. Following popular culture reference points such as William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* or the *Matrix* films, he sketches a virtual scenario for a future meeting of the International Council of Museums in 2032. During this meeting the council members decide to work on the preservation of a hybrid simulation of all globally vanishing worlds and ecosystems in which humans and more-than-humans would coexist and collaborate with each other.

In a great example of what it means to say that the future is ancestral, Naine Terena de Jesus, an Indigenous artist and curator from the Terena people, midwest of Brazil, shares with us how, for Indigenous cosmovisions, there is an essential need to be in balance with nature and the spiritual world in order to exist. This can be sensed and experimented through their aesthetic expressions as she tells us:

Much of what we know as cultural manifestations, which reach our eyes via the aesthetic realm, originate from the very relationship Indigenous people have with nature. We see, for example, in body painting or the production of objects, how these connections are represented or celebrated, and they must be renewed from time to time in order to ensure the continuity of a universe in balance.

By sharing with us one of her installations, *I Am a Tree*, Naine concludes this part of our quest with a plea to reboot our senses in order for us to find unimaginable roots of ourselves.

Slow Down

The cultural field has been swept up in an ever-accelerating globalization rush in recent decades. ‘An artist who is not international is simply not an artist’, was the adage already in the early 1980s. Since then, air travel has grown excessively every decade,

especially also in the arts field. Cheap plane tickets were certainly a good bet, but for artists and other professionals such as curators, programmers, cultural managers and critics, representation abroad also provides prestige—necessary symbolic credit that they hope to transform into economic capital. For artists and culture professionals from the Global South, however, travel is not just a matter of prestige. Residencies and exhibitions or tours abroad are often simply necessary for them to survive, both economically and artistically. Or, in other words, more physical nearness and mutual sensitivity would of course also contribute to bridging the economic and social gap between the Global North and South. Especially as transnational and long-distance mobilities actually remain reserved for the privileged few, as Noel B. Salazar reminds us in his text. And not all world regions are responsible for the climate-damaging effects already caused predominantly by the Global North during previous decades.

Perhaps it was the climate marches of 2019 that really did make alarm bells go off within the cultural fields and started to question this excessive travel frenzy. At least a bit, and especially in many parts of Europe where shorter distances and alternative modes of transport would already have provided a much climate-friendlier, nonetheless pricier substitute for the permanently flying mainstream of thousands of artists in residence, cultural networkers and performers on tour. However progressive and green-minded artists and cultural organizations may claim to be: until Corona hit the pause button, they were rather rashly putting their polluting footprint on Mother Earth. For the authors featured in this section it is therefore evident that the current practice of high-frequency short-term mobilities for a rather privileged group of the internationally connected is unsustainable. Artists and cultural professionals need to substantially slow down.

Slowing down would not necessarily mean that we need to fall short of creative impulses or inspirational encounters from travelling abroad. Noel Salazar emphasizes that actually and ‘despite the global increase in various forms of mobility, many humans feel increasingly disconnected from the “Other” (be it people or the environment) as well as from themselves’. In

his text he analyzes the links between ‘motion’ and ‘emotion’ as well as the concept of ‘travel’ and its origins in the word ‘travail’. Travail still resonates in the efforts required when travelling, the transformational ‘labour’ of collecting new insights and acquiring new knowledge when ‘working’ one’s way through new and unknown territories. In many German-speaking countries of Central Europe, Scandinavia and France the centuries-old tradition of the so-called journeyman years is still alive. After completing their apprenticeship, craftsmen (and women) working in carpentry, roofing, metalworking or even organ building are sent away from home for exactly three years and one day to walk (!) from one workshop to another to acquire mastery in their profession. This practice of learning through travelling dates back to the guild system in mediaeval Europe when these journeys were also taken by stonemasons, woodcarvers and painters. The fact that such traditions still serve an educational purpose today underlines Noel Salazar’s proposition that ‘our body-in-motion is the best medium available for knowing the world, enriching us cognitively and existentially’. Indigenous cultures on all continents have always cherished this knowledge, as we will also still see from the contributions in the next chapter. Humans are an ‘integrated living system in constant motion’ Salazar concludes. Yet the working realities of the globalized art world nowadays force artists and cultural professionals to change locations so quickly that they often can hardly become really touched, sensitized, let alone transformed by the complexities of the surroundings they are moving through. Too many remain in their own bubble of cultural references and professional networks while they often receive mobility support explicitly for creating local and ‘site-specific’ works. This prevailing risk of perception deficiencies for the local environment and an evidently still widespread neglect of the planetary impact that short-term cultural mobility practices often entail urgently call for the development of a new rootedness and attention for the local. This is also a key aspect for elaborating new concepts and policy frameworks for slow cultural mobility, as proposed by Ana Žuvela and Dea Vidović.

Their text builds on a recent study of mobilities of art-

ists and cultural professionals in Europe which they carried out during and after the Corona lockdowns had heavily affected the traditionally frequent travelling cultural sector in the European Union countries. As part of promoting international cooperation between the EU countries and its neighbourhood, mobility programmes for artists and cultural professionals increasingly became an essential part of European cultural policy frameworks, as Žuvela and Vidović observe. Therefore, their ideas for the realization of a future support scheme for slow cultural mobilities that shall replace the existing European norm of high-frequency and short stays for the chosen few are embedded in a critical reflection on the prevailing realities of cultural policymaking and a plea for aligning with broader advocacy initiatives for more emancipatory and democratic cultural policies.

The full realization of the slow mobility concept in culture is possible only within a new and forward-thinking cultural policy agenda that includes many different lines of fair, equitable, participatory and planet-centric policy designs and instruments,

they argue. Critical points identified by Žuvela and Vidović particularly concern issues of accessibility at the European peripheries and structural marginalization of artists from the Global South as well as questions of fair remuneration in the arts field. Above all they also criticize the low-level support of subsidizing schemes for actually introducing ecologically more sustainable practices in the arts, which puts additional pressure on the already precariously financed cultural sector.

Although Žuvela and Vidović are not keen on adding another trend to a growing flock of slow movements, the opening sentence of the manifesto which the original slow food movement wrote down already in 1986 seems to be a quite valid preamble for a future description of slow cultural mobility principles as well: ‘Homo sapiens must regain wisdom and liberate itself from the velocity that is propelling it on the road to extinction’ (www.slowfood.com). Similar to the slow food movement ‘local needs and realities are inherent’ for

elaborating such principles as Žuvela and Vidović state: ‘The importance of localities (villages, rural and suburban settings, neighbourhoods, districts, quarters, municipalities, towns, and cities) becomes decisive and defining in slow mobility.’

The pace of work in rural landscapes and how we can refocus on the role and relevance of artistic practices in more remote localities is also central to the work of the INLAND arts collective. In ‘Watching Grass Grow’ Fernando García-Dory reflects on his work with INLAND from the perspective of the ‘rural futurist’ John Berger. The projects and ‘nurturing’ experiments of INLAND try to find alternatives for the individual authorship and careerism central in the urban contemporary art world. In the countryside they follow the speed of the sheep nourishing themselves by walking. Looking from this 2,5 km speed level to the accelerating, project-rushing art world its mobility seems ridiculously superficial and definitely unhealthy. By reading García-Dory’s text we immediately understand that there is a medicine for the mental pandemic among artists and other cosmopolitan cultural workers. We could find it quite easily in more remote rural landscapes and maybe take inspiration from rediscovering traditional agricultural practices of work.

With our feet consciously sensing the grass and rural ground beneath us, in the next section we slowly move on to a level that creates spaces of restoration and cure through movement and gestures.

Dance Away the Crisis

When words, meetings, protocols and diplomatic negotiations are not enough, what gestures should we invent to make life possible and imagine a joyful future? This chapter is an invitation to dance away the crisis in a whole and integral way. As if by dancing, we could unlearn some ingrained habits and open up space for a different experience of being. The four texts in this session call on us to implicate ourselves entirely, body and soul, and while we move, realize that there was never a solo dance. All moves we make are interconnected and the dance is always in relation. Dancing away the crisis claims a radical alterity. In

the first text, Marina Guzzo writes that ‘the gesture is created through the encounter’. It is about developing our ‘kinaesthetic empathy’ (Foster 2011), and understanding that each gesture promotes a gesture of/in the other. That our dance is also a dance with the Earth, that we are all together bound up in this relationship of movements, big and small. In her contribution to the book, the Brazilian artist and researcher proposes a choreography in eight gestures to inspire displacements and transformative gestures, for us to share senses and move together.

Moving together with the ones that came before us is one of the pillars of the conversation between researcher Georgia Nicolau and the dancer and anthropologist Luciane Ramos Silva. In the conversation we are led to think of happiness as a search for balance, the same way that development could be about finding the best possible conditions for ourselves and our communities. A deep proposal on reviewing our ethics from an afro-diasporic perspective. Luciane talks about conjuring and trembling, bringing to the conversation Martinican essayist Édouard Glissant for whom we are better able to understand the world when we tremble along with it. So trembling our bodies and learning with the ones that have experienced terror long before what we now call crisis. A call to an art that has the power to bring ‘physical and spiritual transformation’ and ‘pull people out of a kind of resignation or petulant neutrality’.

In the third text of this chapter, Dalida María Benfield, Christopher Bratton, Luigi Coppola and Pelin Tan from the artistic research platform Cosmological Gardens share their multiple stories of displacement and pushing towards other understandings of art and collectivity through a process of commoning knowledges. Like Marina and Luciane they too call for other ways of narrating the world through practice.

The practice should be an engagement in a dialogical relationship to experimentation in changing times. This seems to us to be a generative, expansive way to also think about arts research as a new epistemological framework to reconceptualize knowledge in general, larger than academic structures per se, and specifically,

as a means to not only re-order methodologies, but in fact, the world itself.

'1 chestnut = nothing, 2 chestnuts = food; 3 chestnuts = stealing.' In their 'wonder tale' that concludes the vibrant movements in this passage of our quests, the Futurefarmers collective makes the subject of *Sensing Earth* almost tangible. The drawings and the rhythm of their text let us feel how we can resonate with the world. With a chestnut as looking glass they let us experience how we can touch our environment and its history from a completely different, non-human angle. It's the moment when we start sensing the earth as Gaia: fully pregnant with meaning and life.

Feel Again

After we have moved ourselves around, opening up space and time, this chapter brings possibilities of feeling and sensing in new ways, or perhaps in ancient ways that we now are able to experience after certain crossings and undoings. Words are written as textures, as dares, as smells, as invitations. In 'Ancestors are the Future', the collectives that are part of Meander – Society for Ecological Thinking and Artistic Practice, respond to a score on their ancestry through eight short texts. These scores are short written instructions inspired by Fluxus, which can be materialized in various artistic mediums. In this specially made score we travel through speculative, imaginative, harsh and beautiful stories inviting us to think about our own family history and our relationship with territories, displacements and land. 'Ancestry guarantees the self-determination of a people, their land, their landscapes.'

In our last text, at the end of our many cultural quests, Joy Mariama Smith invite us into a mix of essay, poetry and call to action, guiding us along as if we were finally gathered all together, in the same room, on a fireside chat. Their claim in this specific form of text is full of pauses and renewed quests. As we go along, they ask: when was the last time a smell reminded you or took you back to a place? Smelling is a good way of sensing the Earth too. Smelling together. Do we feel the same when we are smelling the same things?

Beauty, too, is Science

We finished writing this introduction on the three-hundredth day of Russia's war on Ukraine. A month after another United Nations Climate Change Conference has flown tens of thousands of delegates to Sharm el-Sheikh, and mostly failed, again. But also right after world leaders have decided in Montreal to declare 30 per cent of the planet's surface as protected biodiversity areas. Regrettably without fully reflecting and respecting the voices of Indigenous community leaders and the cultural rights and practices of the people who live in 80 per cent of these areas. Europe's senseless dependency on energy resources from Russian soil has encouraged Putin to wage a full imperial war for colonizing Ukrainian ground, quite literally. His distorted legitimization attempts may reproduce preposterous cultural claims for territory which belong to centuries long gone. But Russia's new crusade for ever more territory has already left us with a devastating and quite present-day impact on Ukrainian nature and soil. The worldwide repercussions of this war and other wars and the turbulence fuelled by them may even further delay political efforts to finally join forces and stop heating the globe in the near future. Will humanity manage to return to its ancient senses and rediscover a deeper, all-encompassing understanding of our earthly interdependencies and natural embeddedness with everyone and everything on this planet? With *Sensing Earth* we tried to shed light on some of the reappearing cultural maps and emerging pathways that may help us to safely pass through the challenging crossroads ahead of us.

As if we were following the recommendation to 'slow down' ourselves, the production process of *Sensing Earth* was perhaps the longest of any of the books produced in the Antennae-Arts in Society series so far. We would have loved to let you know that this was a deliberate ecological choice, but the truth is unfortunately different. The lingering pandemic, followed by Russia's assault on Ukraine and the mental aftermath of Covid-19 left their marks on our work. One of the original co-editors unfortunately had to drop out, the fate

of Ukraine was hitting us hard here in Europe while climate summit after climate summit continued to disappoint. The contributions in *Sensing Earth* bear the marks of those personal and global dramatic events. Or should we say scars? Or is the book rather an initial process of coming to terms with all that has befallen us in the past three years?

Yet it was not all doom and gloom. ‘Blessings’ in disguise made us direct our focus more globally than ever before. It made us sympathize with the Global South and the joy with the outcome of the elections in Brazil. After the chilly social distance times of Covid-19, we also experienced the warmth of European solidarity again with Ukraine. And then there was the birth of new life in one of the editors. Small and big things that are giving hope.

Finally, of the smallest of important things that happened was the news that the Antennae–Arts *in* Society series was recognized as a fully-fledged academic book series. In the shadow of all the above, that may be the most banal ‘good news’ there is to tell. Still, knowing that we once started the series with great gusto but also out of frustration with the academic—so-called A1—publishing circus, the recognition means a symbolic moment. After all, it means that from now on, even an artistic or essayistic contribution acquires scientific value, from a poem to a drawing, from a manifesto to an interview, and—not unimportant for this book—from rationally empirical observations to subjective expressions and emotional experiences. Beauty, too, is science. Affection, sensitivity and empathy are also part of a responsible methodology for understanding the world better and, above all, for learning to deal with it better. We are therefore extremely grateful to all those who have supported us in this endeavour:

First and foremost, the entire team at Valiz publishing house, who have put their shoulders under this series with unwavering enthusiasm and confidence for more than a decade. We also thank all the editors, authors, activists, academics and artists who have made Antennae–Arts *in* Society an internationally recognized discussion partner. Much gratitude also to the university’s Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts

(ARIA) for giving the series an academic embedding.

As far as the thirty-first (!) descendant, *Sensing Earth*, is concerned, our thanks go to the European Culture Foundation (ECF), which generously supported us—and this for a subject that is particularly sensitive for its own operations. It distinguishes ECF that they dare to look into their own heart.

We would also like to thank Andrea Marsili who, as an intern at ARIA and then at ECF, supported the making process with great enthusiasm and grandiose efficiency. He did so even to the extent that we may dare to admit that he should in fact have been mentioned as co-editor on the cover of this book. The same goes for Simone Wegman of Valiz, who chipped in nicely editorially. Thanks and thanks!

Vivian Paulissen of ECF was quick to point us in the direction of the Global South at the start with lots of good advice. That was clearly the right path to take, even the only common path to raise the matter. Thanks to Marlies De Munck’s initial editorial work, the focus on aesthetics fell into the fold. Without her original view, we might have been less encouraged to take this tentative and also rather more speculative path. Merci for your generosity!

Finally, we would like to thank all the researchers, activists and artists in this book who found time between all their work to reflect with us. They made *Sensing Earth* a particularly colourful book that also fully endorsed the great Metahaven design. But we are especially grateful to them for opening up the ecological sustainability and climate debates far beyond the boundaries of science, technology and politics. Without art, culture and aesthetics, we will not get out of the impasse. With their vitality and vigour, wild thinkers, activists and artists in *Sensing Earth* let us read, see and feel that imagination, sensitivity and creativity do matter. From their contributions, therefore, we could already distil the recommendations for the next Climate Change Conference:

Reset the Senses!
Slow Down!
Dance Away the Crisis!
and last but not least,
don't forget to
Feel Again!



Part 1
Reset Our Senses

The Global
Burnout
Overheated
Cultures in Super
Cool Flatscape

Pascal Gielen



If we want to know how our current environmental mess got quite so big so quickly, this cultural political economy is a place to begin.

—Anna Tsing (2019, p. 36)

We fully understand that the temperature in the air-conditioned bubble that we live in depends on our own behaviour. This is the true lockdown, the fate we have collectively chosen for ourselves.

—Bruno Latour (2021, p. 63)

A Mental Pandemic

Corona is not yet fully under control and a new pandemic is already announcing itself. All around me I see numerous friends and colleagues becoming ill. Meanwhile, I anxiously wait and wonder: will I be next? I comfort myself with the knowledge that the current variant seems less lethal than the previous ones. The fact that none of the present vaccines seems to protect against it is less comforting. The only remedies seem to be therapy, taking walks, and taking the occasional soothing herbs. The recovery process is a slow and uphill struggle. Three months up to a year, and sometimes there is lasting damage to the patient's health. Covid-19 not only messed with our immune system, but also with our mental constitution. Admittedly, stress, fatigue, burnout, and depression have been a real pest these past two decades—at least in the former West. Economic prosperity and depression go hand in hand, according to some scientists (Bauman 2004). On this hemisphere, Corona was but a catalyst for the recently expanding psychologic variant. The phenomenon leads one to suspect a conspiracy among our mental, social, and ecological conditions. It is a conspiracy already speculated upon by Félix Guattari in the late 1980s (Guattari 1989; Cools and Gielen 2014). Gregory Bateson made the link even much earlier. According to this sociologist and cybernetic there is a connection between our individual state of mind and the ecosystems we live in. He also pointed out culture as one of the main suspects of the environmental crisis (Bateson 1972). Our post-Fordist

labour and consumption culture results in both burnouts and forest fires today. Mental, social, political, and biological systems are overheating simultaneously. The global energy crisis seems in step with profound personal energy crises.

The cultural field is not exempt from this heatwave either. Artists, curators, and other cultural workers rush from one project to the next, from one network event to the next, from one city to the next, from one continent to the next. Before a creative idea has been fully developed, a new one already requires thinking about. It's the only way for symbolic and economic capital to be in step (Gielen 2009 and 2013). After all, in museums and theatres, at biennales and festivals prestige generates income. The causal relationship between symbolic representation and economic status has been with us for already at least a century. It's just that nowadays their steps rhyme less and less. In the sweatshops of today's cultural industry competition is fierce. Whether it is inspiring mental trips or physical journeys, the hectic nomadeology is driving the genie out of the bottle. Creatives are overheating their brain hemisphere while pushing up the temperature of the Earth's atmosphere to unseen heights with their wanderlust.

The causes of our viral and mental pandemics are also strikingly in step. Whereas capitalism and industrialization install—via agribusiness—monocultures that are ideal conductors for viruses, the creative industry model—under the tight direction of the Global North—promotes competitive isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Gielen and Haq 2020). This union between colonization and homogenization also functions as the perfect atomizer, in this case of the mental variant. We are losing steam. Both biodiversity and cultural variability are affected. Our natural resistance is degrading at the same rate as our mental resilience. Nature meets culture and culture meets nature in an ominous atmosphere. Formats and algorithm lead us to increasingly more of the same. The same music, the same books, the same films, and the same travel destinations. Little variation leads to deprivation of both nature and culture. At the same time, the global ICT business is warming up the planet faster than the worldwide airline business today (Sorenson

2009). Fire, burnout, blackout, fallout. How to fight the fire? How to keep a cool head?

Ego-ecologism

On the sinking ship of the world, everyone is neighbour to themselves.

—Peter Sloterdijk (2021, p. 270)

We know by now what the problems are, but what are the remedies? While the pharmaceutical industry is steadfastly looking for vaccines against new variants, an army of bioengineers tackle our food industry and therapists concern themselves with our mental state. The business of virologists, biologists, and psychologists is not only booming in popular media these days. Their marriage of convenience has made a curious psycho-biopolitics King. Or would ‘Pope’ be a better word? Giorgio Agamben (2020) and Bruno Latour (2021) have declared the exact and medical sciences a new religion. Latour because those sciences—aided by prophets of the Elon Musk variety—are still promising heaven on Earth through calculations and technological developments. And if that is not convincing enough, they make people hope for a new Earth in heaven. Agamben points to the religious nature of the biomedical sciences as they give people something to hold onto again by providing a simple frame of reference. They do so just like God did before. Regardless, policies, legislation, and regulations can now be easily justified with a theocracy of numbers, waves, and economic climates. Too much democratic hassle or parliamentary debate seems to be highly inappropriate in this state of exception. Needless delay and loss of time, all that. Needs must and necessity knows no law, not even a constitution.

The medical sciences are however still too much in tune with René Descartes with their policy advice. Descartes carefully separated body and mind, in the process causing marital problems between nature and culture (Latour 2018; Agamben 2020). Nowadays these two have frequent short-circuits, which leads to dangerous sparks and high temperatures. We are play-

ing with fire but we prefer to keep it behind closed doors. After all, marital problems are in the first place a private and also individual issue. By taking advice from virologists and psychologists, policymakers engage with something that Michel Foucault might have termed a biopolitical variant of ‘pastoral power’ (Foucault 2007). The ‘padre’ attempts to save the marriage. He—yes, still mainly of the male sex—does so like the shepherd who keeps his flock together with stick, dog, and ‘personalized’ goat bells. Thus, the secularized pastorship today also traces and controls the people and society. The human zoo is carefully monitored through metadata, medical files, and CovidSafe apps. Within that regime, physical and mental health—just like a good relational understanding—are a matter of individual responsibility. In other words: the will to isolate ourselves, wash our hands, wear face masks, eat healthy, or work on ourselves—with yoga, mindfulness, psychotherapy, or watches that measure stress levels—is a personal matter. Within that logic reproaches are almost immediately addressed to the individual. If you caught Covid-19, then maybe you didn’t follow the instructions or you were caught in anti-social behaviour (in fact social behaviour, which suddenly became anti-social during the emergency situation). But also, if you develop diabetes or cardiac complaints, you should have paid more attention to your eating and drinking habits. Healthy-living campaigns have been warning you long enough now, haven’t they? Those who suffer from burnout didn’t handle things well themselves, are not immune to stress and can—what else—go into therapy (and preferably pay for it themselves). In all these cases the blame for becoming ill and for developing other symptoms is placed on character weakness or on deviant or somewhat reckless behaviour. And so, a collective ecological problem is easily reduced to one of individual health. I call this ego-ecologism. It is after all the egos themselves that should take into account the demands of their bodies and surrounding nature. It is a matter of personal relationship therapy. Such individualized reconciliation attempts between nature and culture, between body and mind, often work like an anti-inflammatory in cases of infection. It addresses the symptom, not the cause. The latter is still there, albeit dormant.

Eco-socialism

When politicians, journalists, and moralists hide behind an army of virologists and other health experts, an—usually somewhat smaller—army of intellectuals, activists and critics is only too willing to point out the real cause of the problem. Discursive resistance fighters and environmentalists look at the political and structural basis of the issue. The main subjects are usually immediately found guilty by them. Neoliberalism and capitalism are heating the Earth as well as our heads to unbearable temperatures. Via shocks, crises, and emergency situations they eventually lead to authoritarian regimes, or at least to hegemonic concentrations of power; of the little environmentally conscious one percent, that is. They should be put in the pillory post-haste, preferably even be guillotined right away. Figuratively speaking though, as the majority of these activists are still pacifists after all. Their main point is that biology, technology, or psychotherapy alone will not lead us out of the impasse as the problems are after all systemic, collective, and always political in nature. Counter ideology with ideology, is therefore the remedy proposed by Willem Schinkel (2021). A pandemic can only be addressed pan-democratically, i.e., globally, far beyond the scope of the nation state. Whether it is ecological disasters—even of a much smaller calibre than Chernobyl—or vicious mass murderers such as SARS, these ghostly monsters need no visa to cross borders.

Which Don Quixote still thinks he can fight these giants with border controls? What fool would chase an elephant with a butterfly net? Not Schinkel, in any case. He advocates the global rollout of eco-socialism. That should counter neoliberalism to save the world and at the same time ban that neoliberalism out of our world. Where in the past environmentalists and fighters for equality have raised their voices separate from and even against each other they must now join forces. And rightly so, as even clean air is distributed unjustly while exploitation and discrimination corrode our collective environmental consciousness as well. While Donald Trump and other populists managed to divide middle- and working-class

people on these issues, eco-socialism calls for joint action. Yellow vests marching for the climate, not for the sake of visibility but for the sake of solidarity. Hopefully, the ecologists will join the class struggle with the same enthusiasm.

Ecocide has meanwhile been scientifically proven and the causality between gluttonous capitalism and the bio-apocalypse was also given a sound empirical foundation these past few years. There are climate reports every year and their number is growing. In addition, increasingly more practical and perhaps even feasible proposals are made nowadays, from eco-socialism to commonism, bio-regionalism and circular economy. The latter two have even made it to the stock exchange. And yet climate summits are failing, one after the other. Something gets in the way and that something is definitely the lobby of big capital. The environmentalists certainly are right about that. But is that all that's going on here? Despite all good political intentions and fine ideologies, the airports are busier than ever again in these supposedly post-pandemic times. Macro-biotics, vegans, and other healthy eaters are still buying their well-considered food in plastic bags and trays. We also merrily keep holding digital meetings, thereby saving a trip by car or aeroplane perhaps, but our bicycles are gathering dust all the same. All scientific and political arguments notwithstanding, we simply go on polluting and heating. No less so in the cultural sector. Should we look for the remedy elsewhere then?

Cultural Revolution

Scientists and big tech do their best to convince us of biological and technological remedies. Wind and solar energy instead of fossil fuels, nuclear fusion instead of nuclear fission; digital meetings instead of business trips; Zoom, Team, or Collaborate instead of the university campus; a virtual tour instead of the museum visit; 'live' streaming instead of live theatre, dance, music. Digital humanities instead of traditional humanities at universities. Such innovations and transformations may alleviate the pain somewhat but they hardly seem able to actually save us. That is because the problem lies much deeper. It is mentally,

socially, economically, and politically deep, but also literally much deeper underground. At least that is what environmentalists and many thinkers with them are convinced of—the so-called ‘Anthropocene thinkers’ in the first place. Earth is not only begging for a technological revolution these days, but also for a thorough change in mentality and behaviour. Not only a technological but also a cultural revolution is pushing forward. Like Mao Zedong once advocated, we need to fundamentally re-evaluate our way of life and our habits. Certainly not in the same bloody ideological direction that the Chinese leader envisioned, although a large-scale collectivization might bring also some ecological relief. For example, the collectivization of a vehicle fleet or the sharing of a home or workspaces can also reduce energy consumption and limit our mountain of waste. One thing is certain: we all need to start living differently. And this presupposes first of all that we give meaning to our lives in a different manner. And that we orientate ourselves differently in life and that we seek our pleasure, fun, or joy in life in ways that are far removed from the present hectic culture of travelling, scrolling, disposing and mass consumption.

What thinkers about the environment such as Donna Haraway, Naomi Klein, Bruno Latour, Isabelle Stengers or Andreas Weber are aiming for is a fundamental shift in our meaning-giving system, indeed in our *culture*. And there lies the big difference with techno-optimists and eco-capitalists, who still believe that with the right innovations and technological inventions we can continue our current way of life unchanged. For example, that we can still drive our cars, as long as they are electric. That we should certainly keep growing economically, as long as we do so carbon-neutral. They sometimes also believe that technological interventions are without cultural consequences. For example, that a digital lecture can simply replace a physical teaching in a classroom or that listening to iTunes or Spotify is on a par with a live concert. Likewise, they think that immersive art can resurrect dead artists. Such ideas are also still based on the Cartesian fallacy that so carefully separates mind from body and which in fact relegates all things physical to a second-rate order. Within that logic, the mind is still capable of managing and controlling the body and people

can still fully control and manipulate nature. In short, within this blind faith in progress the nexus culture–nature remains exactly as it was conceived in the seventeenth century. And this is exactly what the Anthropocene thinkers, among others, take issue with. Nature today is permeated with human action, i.e., nature is culture through and through. This is why according to Rosi Braidotti subjectivity is not an exclusively human privilege (2018). Biologists such as Weber even say that nature has a meaning-giving system that interprets and cultivates independently.

The biosphere is alive in the sense that it not only obeys the rules of deterministic or stochastic interactions of particles, molecules, atoms, fields, and waves. The biosphere is also about producing agency, expression, and meaning (Weber 2019, p. 49).

The interaction among genes, cells, molecules, and atoms is also determined by interpretation, orientation, and meaning-giving. Their mutual behaviour attests to a culture or even a ‘poetica’, says Weber. Culture and nature are close, they are rubbing against each other. Even more, they hook up and sing in chorus. This is why we should not keep our distance. According to Latour, the problem of modern science is that it is too obsessed with binary bifurcations, categorizations, calculations, and sterile observations. Modern scientists preferably float in space from where they can look down on our blue globe from a safe distance. If they come too close, their hands may get dirty. And laboratory academics fear infection with affection and subjectivity, as proximity may block their way to objectivity and to the Web of Science. For the same reason that Karl Polanyi warned against a free market, Latour points out the danger of such a scientific view (Polanyi 1944). It generates bizarre abstractions and, paradoxically, distances us from the life we are trying to understand. To paraphrase Polanyi: we become uprooted, alienated, disembedded and displaced. This is why Latour advocates proximity. ‘Down to Earth’, with both feet firmly on the ground (2018). We need to try to land back on Earth again, with a capital E.

Back to Gaia, but also back to the biosphere, which is no higher than eight kilometres above the ground and really at most and only exceptionally eleven kilometres below the ground. That is the range we have to content ourselves with. Our hands and feet are tied. We are stuck in the mud. In the Global North the water mostly rises no higher than our knees, but in the Global South it often reaches our lips or even way above. After all, even on a global scale, toxic clouds and floods are unevenly distributed.

If we are to save the world, we must acknowledge that our common living space from the South to the North Pole is limited, but this idea has not really sunk in in the Global North. Our actual manoeuvring space is limited. We mustn't float in the air or live beyond our means. Not place mind over body. Not believe in Heaven above the Earth. It's all happening down here! This is the space we have to make do with; the air bubble that we are stuck in, the body in which we are enclosed. There is no escape. There is only this earthly paradise and it is increasingly beginning to smoulder like the purgatory.

The Nearness Paradox

A cultural revolution therefore in the first place means a fundamental shift in our spatial awareness. We simply need to learn to live in a shrunken space. Our movement horizon is limited and this is why we need to reprogram our entire meaning-giving system. No more transcendence, no more superhuman or supernatural tricks. No Baron Munchausen pulling himself out of the mire by his own hair. No more Tintin or Musk who think they can escape their earth-bound existence in a rocket. We need to align our imagination and therefore also our production of meaning, art, and culture with our own Earthly boundaries from now on. With a cliché: stay close to nature! Embrace the trees. And what applies to nature, also applies to culture. An artist who wishes to make a meaningful intervention in a culture will after all have to master the full bandwidth of that culture. Here as well, the same range set by Latour for Gaia applies. Both exchanging culture and making art requires coming close or simply staying close. Making art assumes a cultural

embedding, not just knowledge of and proficiency in cultural codes and customs, but increasingly also of local political, social, economic, ecological, and geological interwovenness.

The call from both nature and culture to come and stay closer does however pose a serious dilemma for the cultural sector. Travel and pollute or stay at home? For artists this simply means the choice between touring (internationally) or remaining local. Does this then mean that environmentally conscious art will degrade to regional culture? Back to a creative localism? Working with clay from the local soil? After all, technological innovation doesn't seem to provide a way out here either. Every new technological gadget not only pushes us to buy and waste even more, it also pushes us further and further away from the world. A digital concert may go viral globally, but it cannot embed everywhere. On the contrary, an online theatre piece or work of visual art detaches us from the planet, given the too short incubation period of the Internet. The attention regime of the www culture only makes us run along and scroll on hastily. No matter how hard all the expensive technological and immersive simulations try, they don't really bring us any closer. Or rather the opposite, they bring us much too close. We are being sucked into close-ups and disorienting details. Just like the exact sciences, the digital culture leans towards a dissection that cuts up the world analytically, sometimes messing it up in the process. In short, technological alternatives either keep us at too great a distance or bring us closer in an alienating manner. Or, rather: digital technology gives us the illusion that we can come close, whereas in fact we remain at a safe distance. This results in a misleading feeling: the idea that we can very well understand other cultures and 'natures' from our comfortable armchairs. Digital communication is after all 'disembodied', feeding the Cartesian illusion that we could do without our bodies. Immateriality and weightlessness are the foundation of the arrogance of pretending that we can grab the world from behind screens. And isn't that the fundamental illusion of just about every administrator, manager, influencer, roster maker, planner, or system manager?

No matter how happily we surround ourselves with digital technology these days, for those who love both nature and

culture the nearness paradox is a given. This means we will have to travel much less and express our love of culture in a more sustainable manner: being artist-in-residence for longer periods, going on a world tour in our home city—internationalization at home; slow mobility—travelling by train instead of by plane, riding a bicycle instead of driving a car, staying somewhere overnight instead of hastily commuting for work. These are all remedies we have to try out very urgently. We have run out of our borrowed time. We have to change gears quickly now, even retroactively—if that were possible.

However, this does not solve the nearness paradox. If we are to truly understand a different culture, then we must come closer to it physically. Neither logic nor science nor digital technology are of much use here (De Munck and Gielen 2020). We will simply have to accept the paradox. All we can do is learn to live with contradictions, paradoxes, and dilemmas and for this we need other ways of observing besides the scientific look. This is why Weber calls for a poetics of the Anthropocene. We have to learn to experience nature differently, as living culture. To this, Latour adds that opposite a detached, calculating science we should have a descriptive methodology and stop cutting up the world analytically. On the contrary, it is high time to start linking paradoxical relations, to practice a kind of bio-ethnography. On its own, such a move would not be enough. If we are to arrive at a thorough re-organization of our lives and our planet something drastic must happen. That is why Naomi Klein (2019), and Schinkel too, calls for a radical political change. The ecological revolution will not be possible without reconsidering our ideologies.

It is hard to put these activists, Anthropocene thinkers, and ecologists in the wrong. In any case, our ecological problem is at least cultural, scientific, and political in nature. In my opinion, learning to live with contradictions and paradoxes requires a little bit more. It is not enough to describe and study, interpret, calculate, control, and manage planet Earth differently. We must also experience and appreciate it in a profoundly different manner.

Self-mutilation

So, neither science nor technology nor politics are sufficient to deal with our proximity paradox. Nor do they provide enough ammunition for a cultural revolution. No, to start a movement, to form a political community—whether eco-socialist or not—first and foremost a sensory foundation is needed. That, at least, is Agamben's (2020) conviction. Not rational calculation or statistics lead to political formation, but rather the visceral experience of someone else's face. There are no nations without a face. Hence his objection to face masks. Truth and knowledge depend on passionate exchanges between scholars at universities. Besides, the physical proximity of 'strangers' from other villages, towns, and countries on campuses, festivals, cultural events, and other semi-public locations constitutes the core of all democracies. It is only in these heterogeneous semi-public places that mutual trust can be won among those we don't know and perhaps don't want to know at all (De Munck and Gielen 2021). In short, physical nearness is an important 'tool' in learning to live with tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes. This is why Agamben compares teachers who surrender to the current digital dictatorship with professors who pledged allegiance to the Fascist regime in 1931 (Agamben 2020, p. 81). That may sound rather heavy-handed, but underneath such an intellectual fury lies a truth and also a deep concern. After all, a well-organized state, or 'good governance', is not enough to hold together a community of paradoxes, let alone roll out a revolution. For that, an emotionally and culturally charged mass is required. There is no climate report, technology, or technocracy that can instil a soul in a body, as Michel Maffesoli already stated by the end of the last century. Not just a shared culture of words, signs, and symbols but also sensoriality and sensitivity generate the ambience of collective life (Maffesoli 1996). And that is not only true of an exclusively human community. The relationship between humans and things, between culture and nature, also demands a different sensoriality and sensitivity.

To experience 'heterodoxal' togetherness, connection, or interwovenness among contradictions presupposes a wider

sensorial ability than science and top technology can provide today. And this in a rather literal sense. For example, digital technology often reduces our sensory sensations to audio-visual experiences, which excludes taste, smell, and temperature. This is why we could say, with Marshall McLuhan, that our computers are a 'cool' or even a 'super cool' medium (McLuhan 1964). The lack of sensory data cuts us off of context. This makes it very difficult to measure the local temperature and atmosphere, both in a climatological and social sense. In online meetings we see isolated heads; for a live stream we don't first walk or drive through town to go to the concert venue. In online experiences tactile stimuli are limited to the plastic and aluminium of our keyboards and the feel of a touchscreen. What we smell is the familiar scent of our living room, where we sit in our familiar room temperature, staring at our equally familiar screen. Because of this hyper familiarity, the other person on the screen may sometimes brazenly enter our sphere and we may penetrate the world of this other person unashamedly. Precisely because we can come close from a great physical distance, we no longer recognize our limits. Perhaps this is why digital communication and social media can so easily lead to transgressive behaviour. They give us the comfortable feeling that we understand the other person or thing, can even 'feel' them, without having to engage with any aspect of their historical, demographic, geographical, and climatological biotope. It's what Alice Marwick and danah boyd have called a 'context collapse' (2011): as soon as we sit behind a screen our notion of time and space just melts away. Temperatures, colours, smells, and undulations of the local landscape are reduced to a super cool 'flatscape'. We are now inevitably surfing the surface. No more height or depth, and no more holding still either. And certainly, no time for unsolvable contradictions and complexities.

In combination with sensory deprivation such a context collapse has little respect for integrity, whether that of an individual, a community, or a bio-culture. Perhaps this is why sensory deprivation is one of the favourite tools of torturers. Being deprived of sensory stimuli may be relaxing and meditative in the short term, but in the long term it leads to disorientation,

extreme fear, insensitivity, hallucinations, and depression. No wonder we have burnouts. Could they be the result of large-scale digital self-deprivation? Of a self-mutilation imposed by authorities, schools, universities, and companies?

Regardless of how much truth there is in this, the polemic about the advancing digitalization has made me realize that our sensory ability does indeed matter. That learning to live with paradoxes and dilemmas requires other qualities and skills. And also, that making the air clean again and making the temperature drop are a matter of affection and sensitivity just as well. Which brings me to this somewhat worn-out term 'aesthetics'. Artists, and the cultural sector in a wider sense, cannot only contribute to an 'ecological turn' by travelling less and producing more sustainable cultural products. They can also do so by stretching our aesthetic horizon, something to which they are 'naturally' prone and have the talent for. They even may have studied passionately to achieve this. So, why not take that seriously for a minute?

Beautiful Thinking

Obviously, writing about aesthetics is no clear-cut matter. The term itself is rather Eurocentrically charged and usually conjures up the image of a bourgeois and eloquent, somewhat pedantic salon culture, one that was mainly governed by a rather exclusive patriarchal structure. On top of that, its relationship with 'beauty' does make 'aesthetics' sound somewhat corny. The 'Fine Arts' are indeed not modern, let alone contemporary art. So then why hark back to this somewhat antiquated concept?

Well, it has to do with the relationship problems between nature and culture mentioned earlier. Problems that are in origin very much Western issues. The 'reappraisal' of aesthetics by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten was however one of the few attempts to glue the pieces together again in that same Western world. His focus on unclear thinking and sensorial and sensitive knowing was in any case an attempt to parry the advance of science and especially that of logic. Although Baumgarten equated beauty with harmony, his plea definitely struck a dissonant

chord in the eighteenth century. His *Aesthetica* can therefore be read as a kind of killjoy within the euphoria of scientific progress (Hruby 2021, pp. 299–301). Perhaps this is why for more than two hundred years Baumgarten's enterprise was somewhat ridiculed. In any case, this German thinker was relegated to the sideline of the academic world for an extraordinarily long time. An unabridged German translation of his *Aesthetica*, published in Latin in 1750, did not appear until 2007 and it wasn't until 2021 that a reader on his work was published in English. An unabridged English edition has not seen the light of day yet. In the opinion of many, Baumgarten's 'irrational' endeavours are food for highly un-modern notions. After all, emotions and sensitivity are a threat to clear thinking. His attempts to make room for emotion beside logic and poetics beside science has only recently gained full attention. Today, we may even regard Baumgarten as one of the ancestors of the Anthropocene thinkers. A distant ancestor, though, who still believed in God, transcendence, and Gnosticism. But perhaps that belief is also the very reason why the German thinker dares to think much further than Latour. In any case, Baumgarten has taught me that the detached, calculating sciences cannot simply be 'cured' by the descriptive methodology of the French thinker. On the contrary, to really understand the world differently, to really touch the Earth, is a question of feeling, in both senses of the word: feeling and sensing. That is looking, hearing, smelling, and tasting with affect. Getting close in the right way cannot be done without visceral tactics. Exploring the Earth by beautiful thinking. This means going beyond words, even far beyond Latour's bio-ethnography. In that regard, the author of *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991) has remained rather modern after all. No, we have to learn to think nonconceptually, dare to reason haptically in smells, sounds, and colours, not only perceive and represent the world in words and concepts. With such notions, Baumgarten destabilized the ranking between logics and sensibility in his day. Understanding is not just a matter of science, but of poetics as well. This is why he advocated a *perceptio pregnans*, as only such a sensory perception, pregnant with meaning, can put our thinking in motion, can evoke a revolution in our

experience and our existence (Baumgarten (1739) 2007; Franke 2021). And we must also learn to live with a *veritas heterocosmica*: the fact that there is not one truth, but only a heterogeneous, perhaps even paradoxical truth (Nuzzo 2021, p. 106). That means accepting ambiguity and an unutterable reality. We have to learn to listen to that (again), listen to the incomprehensible words that the wind blows through the trees and between buildings. However, our hearing capacity is not sufficient. We really have to give it all we've got. Onwards then, to a trans-sensorial methodology, and a hypersensitive, perhaps even anti-disciplinary science. We also need to progress to a way of perceiving that creates an immediate connection to what we are perceiving. So, full steam ahead to subjective research in and with the arts. For Baumgarten, learning to think 'aesthetically' is to anticipate and improvise. The aesthetic horizon, means trying to grasp the entire world that lies outside our rational and most certainly outside our individual perspective. It means to practice in playful associations and contaminations beyond any logic. But how does one go about this in a practical sense?

Landscape Art

It is clear by now that Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* is much more than just a theory about Beauty. He is in fact designing a sensitive science, which, in addition to the rational sciences, should let us experience and understand the world differently. In that sense, the philosopher is championing an alternative epistemology. Still, beauty plays an important part in this enterprise and was the first thing to surface in the current debate on eco-aesthetics (Miles 2014; Lee-Hsueh 2017). A purely visual experience can move people and inspire them. The same goes for our aesthetic appreciation of the environment or a landscape. Even a simple 'pretty picture' or the superficial scenic beauty of nature can promote an ecologically more responsible relationship with our environment and the world at large. In other words, a high aesthetic appreciation often goes hand in hand with a high ecological appreciation (Lee-Hsueh 2017). This is knowledge of over a thousand years old, known since the birth of Chinese

landscape painting. In that art form people are mostly depicted as diminutive, perhaps out of respect for the grandeur of nature. No wonder then, that eco-activists and so-called 'artists' often still use pretty pictures these days, idealized representations of how a landscape or city might look in the future. They do so both to influence the media and to mobilize the population. Just like advertising and propaganda influence buying and voting, a smart visual language can seduce people to undertake civil action. And like science, this aesthetic strategy plays with the possibilities of the detached look, except that it knows how to bridge that gap by playing on sentiment. In 1972, for example, this was the effect of Blue Marble. The NASA photograph of Earth from space suddenly made us realize how vulnerable and possibly also how lonely we were spinning around in space.

A pretty picture alone will not save the world, however. Blue Marble also looks quite nice in a poster on the wall or as a hypnotizing screensaver that pops up a few times per hour. The Earth landscape is steamrolled into a 'flatscape', one that dulls our emotions rather than that it moves us. It works like an antidepressant: no more emotional highs and lows anymore. Flatscreen, flatscape, flatline. Not interactivity but interpassivity (Pfaller 1998). At best, it leads to 'clicktivism', which by the way is also a form of ego-ecologism. Good enough for soothing our conscience and our mood for a little while, but it will hardly extinguish overheated minds and other fires. Beauty alone will not save the world, at least not if it remains only skin-deep.

In Situ

So, we will have to dig deeper, at least if we want to reach Gaia. Embedding cannot be achieved by looking, especially not from a great distance. We need to employ and mix all our senses, and to do so we have to be on the spot. To be is to *be there*, we could say after the reviled Martin Heidegger (1998). According to this phenomenologist, our existence is intertwined with the space and time we inhabit. Like a guitar we are tuned by our surroundings and the nature of this tuning determines whether we resonate or not with the life that surrounds us. How the world opens up to

us, what moves and what doesn't, is determined by this tuning. In other words, we are heterogeneous beings, marked by what our complex surroundings 'does to us'. This is why according to Latour (2021) the most important philosophical question is not 'Who am I?', but 'Where am I?' Agamben (2020) adds another dimension of time with 'Where are we now?' To be there means to be somewhere. A person doesn't think outside of society and a subject is not diametrically opposed to an object. We breathe the place where we grew up, as well as the place where we mostly are now. According to Heidegger, our consciousness is stretched over time. We simultaneously live between what was and what is to come. To be there means that we stretch ourselves between the future and the past. Such a consciousness horizon has serious consequences, as after all we stand always already in the shadow of our own future. This is why we must care for both the time and the surroundings in which we live. It is rather puzzling that such a caring thought came from the pen of a Nazi collaborator. Not 'I think therefore I am', but care makes us truly human, Heidegger felt (1998; Mazijk 2021). And perhaps Donna Haraway had something similar in mind: to live and die with other species commands a serious 'response-ability' (Haraway 2003).

No matter how great the merits of modern technology and science may be, the downside is that they make us forget our *to be there* and with it the care we should take of our surroundings. This feeling that we can float beyond place and time, high above the Earth, has made us neglect our reciprocal relationship with the planet. It has also led us to believe that we can determine our location with coordinates without the need to look after our environment. As if *to be there* can be captured in sterile longitudes and latitudes. As if we could live in a grid, in a pre-programmed matrix. But everyone knows that we can only truly resonate with the world when we put our GPS away. Only then can we step out of the slick flatscape into the bumpy, sometimes jagged landscape of real life.

We need an art that takes Gaia and all the life we once pronounced dead into account. We need an aesthetics that knows how to touch that life so that it can also touch us. To take the local temperature, beyond landscape art, presupposes *in situ* art. More

precisely, a kind of situational in-situ art. Like Haraway argues for 'situated knowledge', artists should also understand the situation on-site from their own physicality (Haraway 1988).

Not just look at the landscape, but step right through it. Artists who practice relational aesthetics know how to assess the local situation and to achieve this they remain on-site long enough— sometimes for a lifetime. This is why media artist Jenny Odell argues for bioregionalism, to turn our attention away from the flatscreen and towards local parks and water streams. We have to learn again how to do nothing, how to disconnect and escape from the digital attention economy. No more networking, no more speed dates or matching interviews, but just sitting on a bench in the park and taking the time to let the world in again. This requires a sustainable attention: a series of consecutive efforts to look at the same thing in new ways, with firm consistency. Attention, from the Latin *ad+tendere*, 'reach out to' (Odell 2019, p. 167). It can only be done 'slowful': slow and careful at the same time. It reminds me of *Beesphere*, an installation by beekeeper-artist Cosco. A giant beehive that comprises art, bees, meditation, social integration, and political sensitization. It certainly requires scientific knowledge, but also 'swarm intelligence', a contemporary variation of Baumgarten's 'beautiful thinking'; associatively anticipating and tactically improvising with what occurs in a specific environment and situation. Sustainable art, that is context ecology too. To-be-there aesthetics that should save us from the digital context collapse.

Depth Aesthetics

Going on-site off-line and especially staying there could certainly lower the temperature a bit. But can it also calm the storm in our heads? After all, in situ art and local activism also consume loads of energy. On top of that, taking care requires much mental effort. Not only have we seen this in healthcare during the pandemic, but also with the toll it took from parents working at home. To find quiet in our heads we may have to go beyond the hustle and bustle of life reported everywhere nowadays by An-

thropocene thinkers. We not only need a form of sensitivity that connects us with life, but also one that brings back silence.

Although situational in situ art responds to our need for embedding with horizontal dialogues, relational aesthetics, and small reciprocal gestures, we may also again need a big gesture and a grand narrative, beyond localism and beyond post-modernism. The current climate change issue is in any case a global phenomenon. To scale up and not become stuck in the local clay, we need a sensitivity that connects us with the whole world. Something like a universal mind. Not capitalism, transcendence, macho, or Gothic aesthetics, but 'descendence'. Humbleness before the grand narrative of which we are part for such a short time. That's why, according to Agamben, we need to go beneath the fertile layer, into a fossil world where we can lose the words. After the revelation of Gaia, it is now time to rediscover Chthôn (Agamben 2020), the topside of the underworld that connects humus with human, epistemologically. Being human is being Earthly. Explore our vertical home, from landscape to cave. For now, I can't think of a better word than 'depth aesthetics'. It nicely qualifies artistic practices that places fossils back in the centre of our lives again. A sort of ritual art in which, as with the Etruscans, present and past are connected. According to Agamben, we have an obligation to do such an exercise because 'the biosphere cannot exist without the exchange with the chthonic thanatosphere; Gaia and Chthôn, the living and the dead...' (2020, p. 106). Modernity has not only fragmented our world, as Latour claims. It has also cut off the path to our human, prehuman, and nonhuman ancestors.

Just to be clear, this is not a plea for a new religion or theology, not even for spirituality. That's all fine, but I think that we have run out of superterrestrial escape routes by now. Nor am I referring to a national rhetoric of blood and soil. Chthôn is universal and breaks through all geopolitical boundaries. The only faith we have left is that in a sedimentary culture, one that understands that in all speech and in any contemporary art work our ancestors resonate and reverberate. Like fugues, not escape routes but polyphonic lifelines in which our predecessors sing along with our offspring (Latour 2021, p. 94). Depth aesthet-

ics then is a kind of secularized Gnosticism, a cultural geology through which we attempt to touch the historical layers of our *to-be-there*. Because what is the impact on our culture if, according to the Anthropocene thinkers, we should understand nature as culture? If we are to see life in everything we have so far considered as dead, shouldn't we also make the opposite movement? Give death a central place in our lives again. Acknowledging Chthôn simply means embracing the transience in and of our own culture. We see it in the fragile art of Frida Kahlo, of Louise Bourgeois or, more recently and closer to my home, that of Els Dietvorst. With these artists we find a profound awareness of vulnerability. Theirs are all artistic practices that paradoxically find their vitality in our finiteness. 'Sein zum Tode', in the thinking of Heidegger again (1998). We create culture because we know that we are mortal. Being aware of death makes us look for the meaning of life. It is the only way in which a depth aesthetics in the Anthropocene is free to no longer focus on the individual transience of one's own life, but instead of that of a future community. Existence is always coexistence. That is why we have to look after the common fate of the generations after us. Climate consciousness requires an almost unfathomable time perspective and exceptional empathy. An empathy that allows for solidarity with life and death still to come. Not because our own lives are finite, but because the life of a community will be on the brink of the abyss, we have to give meaning to our lives in a different manner, here and now.

In other words, a cultural revolution not only means learning to live in a shrunken space. It also means learning to act within a stretched-out time horizon. As the space we have to live in is shrinking, we have to stretch our time perspective. And not towards heaven or eternity this time, but towards an inevitable mortality. In short, depth aesthetics should bring us the simple awareness of our own physicality. In that awareness of our own finiteness, we can then recognize and acknowledge the vulnerability of others (Gielen 2021; De Munck and Gielen 2022). And that of humans and nonhumans from a faraway future too. Those who manage to reconcile themselves with their own mortality may perhaps truly find some rest. A possible remedy against stress, burnout, and depression.

But to acknowledge Chthôn not only provides mindfulness or self-therapy. It also brings us the realization that we don't have to be everywhere all the time. That the understanding of different cultures starts with something that is very close to us. The strangest and most alienating culture today is our own death culture, certainly in the Global North. We have been exorcizing and suppressing death for ages through the Enlightenment and modern science, and yet it is something we have in common with all cultures. Again: our universal vulnerability and transience. In this common realization lies the potential for reconciliation with the nearness paradox. The culture that is furthest from us, is after all the closest to us. It literally lies beneath our feet. And if we manage to reach that culture, then maybe we don't need to travel that far any more to arrive at understanding a different culture. Cultural mobility can start right here, with a trip to the realm of death. Becoming earthly can only be achieved by grounding ourselves somewhere. Be at peace with what we have right here. That provides some nice serenity.

And to avoid any misunderstanding, this peace does not necessarily lead to neutrality, political apathy, or escapism. On the contrary, in this liquid world depth aesthetics provides us with a stable ground to stand on. A sensory base to hold our own with much self-assuredness and determination. If fear of dying makes us conservatively long for a safe, closed world, could not embracing our mortality then mean the opposite? Confronting death right on as the basis for a progressive politics? In any case, the awareness of universal vulnerability connects environmental activists with social champions of equality. In that sense, depth aesthetics might provide an important sensorial foundation for a radicalized version of Schinkel's pan-democratic eco-socialism. That means collective care that not only in solidarity encompasses both culture and nature, but also the living and the dead, both what was and what is in store for our offspring.

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Of Attentional Environments (The Pearl Necklace)

Grégory Castéra



What Cultural Institution Model for the Twenty-First Century?

This essay is about the collective rituals that will emerge this century and the infrastructures that will sustain them. If the institutions that have developed throughout history, such as churches, theatres and museums, all have their own rituals and infrastructures, what institutional model will emerge in the twenty-first century?

The founding principle of these new institutions is likely to be the abandonment of anthropocentrism. Art is often defined as a specifically human activity, but the human it refers to excludes a whole section of humanity on the grounds of gender, race, class, and disability. While some modest reparative work is afoot, it is now, in the Anthropocene, the nonhumans¹ that are knocking on the door and, each in their turn, are challenging the modern Western human ontology. Today's art and culture are already created and shared *with* and *for* the more-than-human, while the categories of evaluation, and the principles according to which institutions are imagined, remain human-oriented. The post-anthropocentric institution will offer an infrastructure for coexistence and reciprocity among the more-than-human, a 'safe space' not only for critical ideas and works but also for living things. Its workings, like the artistic regimes it espouses, are as alien to contemporary art as contemporary art and its institutions are to those of the Renaissance.²

This type of institution does not yet exist, but a series of ongoing transformations allow us to imagine its possible emergence and, in turn, to reflect on our present situation. No matter the values that underpin it, I am convinced that attaining a speculative horizon is always disastrous. The interest of speculation is not to reach this horizon, but rather to follow the imaginative path that such a horizon allows us to explore. I am interested in the impact that writing and reading these ideas has on our actions. If this speculation is, therefore, amoral, and most likely false, albeit carefully constructed, it nonetheless attempts to describe both potential futures and the ambivalence of the values and desires that underlie our contemporary condition.

This speculative imagery reflects an effort to exist despite and with these contradictions, to resist the temptation of the absolute and to comprehend nuances.

Institution and Cosmopolitical Design

Unfortunately, before desire there is fear generated by three phenomena that shape contemporary societies: ecological crises, digitalization and cultural diversity. The alarming reports from the IPCC (International Panel on Climate Change) prove that solutions, whether inspired by theories of degrowth, eco-modernism, or both, will not be able to save the world as we know it from the multiple, unpredictable and inhumanly pernicious disasters brought about by the ecological crisis. It is no longer a question of solving the problem but rather of minimizing the losses. Despite the progress it enables, digitalization will also continue to ravage social structures by fostering ever more casualization, surveillance, mental disorders and post-truths. Finally, even though 'anti-woke' attacks and rhetoric may seem like the last gasp of a dying privileged white hetero-patriarchy, cultural diversity will continue to be seen as a threat. The futures that are emerging are violent ones. With deglobalization, efforts to reduce the ecological footprint of human activities will depend on struggles for state sovereignty in the face of regionally fragmented economies, while a panoply of fascist and libertarian movements will most likely continue to be part of the political mainstream in the coming decades.

As I articulate in the essay *Composing the Near and the Far*,³ I am convinced that a transcultural and cosmopolitical make-up, between local and global scales, remains the only valid and sufficiently consistent alternative in the face of the climate crisis, fascist and libertarian currents, and the other upheavals that go hand in hand with deglobalization. Maja and Reuben Fowkes define cosmopolitics as 'the desirability of an ambitious reframing of politics that reaches beyond settled categories, borders and territories'.⁴ Following on from Isabelle Stengers, Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser insist on 'the possibility of divergence among collectives composed of humans and nonhumans

that [...] agreed to gather around a concern'.⁵ One of their remarks is particularly inspiring for this text: 'Cosmos is always an emergent condition resulting from disagreement among divergent worlding practices participating in the discussion.' How do cultural institutions contribute to the creation and preservation of a diversity of worlds? How can they provide a space for them to coexist, despite their differences?

Let us imagine for a moment that a cultural institution is not merely an infrastructure for preserving and presenting works, but that it is above all an infrastructure that 'designs' ways of being in the world. Following Arturo Escobar⁶ and Benjamin Bratton⁷, in this essay I consider how cultural institutions have an *ontological* effect, ritualizing the relationships between subjects and objects (and the transcendence of this divide). The rituals *designed* by the cultural institution is as much the material organization of these relationships as their integration into a history. If we *design* our world, and if our world *designs* us back, how can we preserve local ways of being in their radical diversity? By imagining a convergence at the intersection of ecological thinking, digitalization and emancipation movements, this essay adopts Bratton's critique of the technophobia and Arcadia present in some currents of ecological thinking, but rejects his global plan for terraforming and his model of governance based on planetary-scale rationalism. Based on Escobar, this essay aligns with an urgency to reconstruct and imagine local worlds, but its study extends beyond Indigenous cosmogonies.

Of Attentional Environments

Let us therefore assume that cultural institutions are infrastructures that design our ways of being in the world. Among the many perspectives that this framework allows us to develop, this text pursues the hypothesis that post-anthropocentric institutions take the form of 'attentional environments'—physical and virtual spaces linked by technical ecosystems with which a diversity of attentional regimes are sustained.

Attention is a rich term. It combines the neurological dis-

position to identify a phenomenon, the ability to decide what is being observed, and the care given to something. In a famous quote Simone Weil writes that 'The formation of a faculty of attention is the genuine and exclusive purpose of all study'.⁸ Lorraine Daston explains that it is through the attention given to certain phenomena (and the techniques inherent in this attentional regime) that knowledge and beliefs are formed.⁹ Another famous quote from 2004, this time from the CEO of the French television channel TF1 Patrick Le Lay, is unambiguous about the attentional war that has been raging for decades:

*For an advertising message to be perceived, the viewer's brain must be receptive. The purpose of our programmes is to make them receptive: in other words, to entertain them, relax them and ready them between two messages. What we sell Coca-Cola is receptive human brain time.*¹⁰

In other words, with digitalization, attention has become a fundamental condition for the formation of our experience, our way of being in the world and our knowledge. The maintenance of diverse modes of existence and local ways of being in the world depends largely on preserving diverse attentional regimes.

The 'Instagram' attentional regime has long since entered the museum, with each visitor averaging a few seconds in front of artworks downgraded to content for ambient experience 'as ignorable as it is interesting',¹¹ i.e. a background for selfies and first dates. How can cultural institutions be preserved, and where new ones are invented? As with most institutional developments, artists have long anticipated these issues. For example, numerous artists are exploring sensory practices at the intersection of choreography and care. There is a common genealogy between, in particular, the works of Lygia Clark, Lisa Nelson, Jennifer Lacey, Valentina Desideri and Myriam Lefkowitz, Isabel Lewis, and Jamila Johnson-Small. Similar genealogies can be traced in poetry, film, and food, among other mediums. On the other hand, the ideas of attention that inter-

est me, such as those of Julia Bell,¹² Yves Citton¹³ and Simone Weil, explore the intersection between the economy of attention and care.¹⁴ Theorists, artists and activists have been forging a critical framework for thinking about care as a form of resistance to the capture of attention by digital capitalism.

The idea of an attentional environment conjures up a multitude of images associated with the term 'mindfulness' where, for the most caricatured practices, a belief in the intrinsically moral dimensions of 'nature' and a total and innate connection with it translates into a mixture of exoticism, technophobia, neo-paganism, and a rejection of language. On the other side of the same coin, a plethora of neo-behaviourist apps to increase productivity by overcoming distraction through planning and focusing exercises. If, like these trends, this text is concerned with the relationship between attention to the body and attention to the planet, it attempts to transcend the opposition between ecology and technology which, although long articulated in the academic field, is no less influential in shaping the collective imagination.

This text, therefore, chooses to take a methodological side road: before describing a possible attentional environment, let us look at three transformations in art practices and infrastructures that are profoundly reconfiguring our relationship to attention: forms of life, translocal networks and the Internet of Senses. These three possible structural transformations are already underway and are interdependent, although sometimes contradictory. Speculating on their development allows us to imagine the extent of their impact and what helpful stances can be taken.

Forms of Life

First transformation: Art as the production of autonomous works by individual geniuses is replaced by another model focused on the maintenance, repair and collective imagination of forms of life.

The notion of a 'form of life' is derived from Wittgenstein and Foucault, as well as in theories of care. Sandra Laugier defines *Lebens-*

formen as 'configurations of human co-existence whose texture is made up of the practices and actions that produce or modify them'.¹⁵ I will adopt a more ecological perspective by focusing on forms of life as a configuration of *more-than-human* coexistence.

While the challenges of visualizing and interacting with a form of life are already at the heart of many artistic practices,¹⁶ let us first look at the emergence of communal living experiments as a global cultural phenomenon. Experiments in communal living are, like monastic existences, the organization of specific attentional regimes in their relationality, through the more or less regulated ritualization of ordinary communal living.¹⁷ Despite the prevailing status and further dissemination of individualism via mainstream media culture, meanwhile, what I call the 'co-culture' (collective, collaborative, cooperative, and so on) has infiltrated all areas of society. Co-culture centers the desire to connect and commune as a core value, sometimes higher than freedom or solidarity. Growing up with reality TV, rave parties, anti-globalization movements and peer-to-peer communities, my generation, born at the turn of the 1980s in France,¹⁸ has contributed to the promotion of collaborative and leisurely working environments, communal gardens, the Zone à Défendre (ZAD) movement, participative democracy and social networks. Many of the values that were once considered transgressive are now key features of capitalism: embracing cultural diversity, collaborative work, horizontal forms of governance, and environmental awareness. Experiments in communal living have become a cultural phenomenon, so it is unsurprising that, in recent years, communal and rural living has become a desirable way of life once more and materializes a variety of ideologies; that LARP (for Live Action Role Play) has permanently infiltrated entertainment culture; and that local and sustainable collective art projects have asserted themselves as a paradigm of decolonized art *in action*, over and above the critical stance, of which documenta fifteen was the most visible manifestation.¹⁹ Each in its own way, and with its own ambivalences, these experiments involve developing techniques for collaboration between humans and with nonhumans, and the mapping of increasingly complex ecosystems. Whether in relation to animals and

landscapes, or in relation to virtual worlds, these experiments are attentional gymnastics with nonhumans, a daily practice of changing one's sense of scale, rhythm and orientation where-by human size and perception are no longer central.

The repair and collective imagination of forms of life also concerns worlding art practices that aim to produce forms of existence where technology is autonomous and not anthropomorphic. For example, the works of Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno contribute to shaping one of the elements of the globalized artistic canon. Beyond their aesthetic qualities, and their advanced use of technology, their works become relevant when the visitor pays attention to the algorithms and artificial intelligences that orchestrate them. They are, in a way, interfaces for directing human attention towards these nonhuman hyperobjects²⁰ that remain difficult to materialize despite the gigantic infrastructures that bring them into existence. These practices have developed in parallel with the rise of the video game which, both in terms of its uses and its technologies, has become a cultural revolution on a scale comparable to that of cinema in the twentieth century. The video game lifestyle, with its puzzles, rewards and fantasy environments, has infiltrated commercial, working and educational environments—in the form of grades, points, ratings, and metrics—from an individual's GPA and credit score, to their follower count on social media. Meanwhile, following Second Life, the metaverse promises to offer infinite (and infinitely marketable) spaces for virtual forms of life.

Translocal Networks

Second transformation: translocal networks of support for local initiatives are becoming sufficiently sustainable to make it no longer necessary for artists to travel to create or to distribute artworks through dissemination platforms if this is not intrinsically necessary for their work.

Nothing reveals the fragility of forms of life better than collective disasters, where human vulnerability is

exposed. New Orleans ravaged by Katrina, the Fukushima region by the earthquake and nuclear accident, etc., are paradoxical theatres where distress, destitution and the loss of the ordinary bring about new ways of existing, expressing oneself, and caring for others. In the face of disaster, contingencies and the unexpected, in the midst of urgency and uncertainty, how do we define the 'boundaries' of what merits care? If care is a daily concern for those close to us, how can it be applied to distant and exceptional situations, and what type of 'partial', real attention should be given to others in this context?²¹

In their present form, the art world's dominant infrastructures can only modestly support artists and cultural initiatives on an international scale in facing the imminent risk of a destruction of local forms of life. The main existing mechanisms (schools, residencies, and public forums like museums and festivals) provide conditional support mainly based on the movement of artists and students. But it is clear that many of these organizations have failed to compensate for the precarious nature of mobility and to support attempts at cultural translation. On the other hand, the ecological cost of visitor mobility makes the biennial and tourist exhibition model obsolete and leads, structurally, to a local regression. At the same time, it is becoming impossible for even the most conservative organizations to ignore the rich cultural ecosystems that exist all over the world, and their influence on the artistic canon. With several decades of regional and translocal alliances in the so-called Global South, support structures are diversifying while public support dramatically decreases in Western countries and international philanthropy is criticized for its saviourist and extractivist bias. With the multiplication of platforms for dissemination, funding and education of various scales internationally, it sounds reasonable to question how and for whom Western institutions' prescription is built as well as its fundamental dependence on a broader decentralized ecosystem. Having a presence in platforms such as biennials and museums is no longer the only

way of building value for works, whether symbolic or financial. Precarious working conditions, countless concessions and structural violence become too onerous when the exposure promised by these platforms is no longer so desirable.

At the same time, the cultural infrastructure itself becomes not only the object of study but a field of action for a variety of artistic and curatorial practices.²² Artists and institutions are joined by private and public funders in developing alternative models to those of the market. A major shift concerns the de-indexation of funding based on territorial criteria: place of birth, place of residence, place of work, and even, for the most conservative institutions, nationality. This funding over and above territorial criteria is no longer simply a critical cosmopolitical position, but a necessity for the cultural ecosystems of the so-called 'rich' countries to remain relevant, as much as a choice of soft power in the face of the regional fragmentation brought about by deglobalization. No longer indexing funding based on territorial criteria has considerable effects, since these same criteria, whether they apply to a city, a region, a country or a continent, impact programming, themes, and also the physical presence of artists and visitors in a given place. The link to a specific territory is what assures museums and biennials of their dominant position. It is the point of convergence between debates as diverse as the role of tourism and gentrification, the restitution of works, the mobile art precariat, and the carbon impact of travel and transport.

With the relationship between institutions and their territory being transformed by the ecological crisis, technology and decolonial movements, it is likely that prescriptive institutions, with their visibility and influence, but also financial capacity, will emerge in the form of networks whose existence is not contingent on nationality or territorial borders. Their model will offer artists the advantages of other institutional models (knowledge, critique, funding, contacts and visibility) while enabling the maintenance, repair and imagination of local forms of life. Networks such as Arts Collaboratory and Afield,

or the lumbung at documenta fifteen, are three examples, each on its own scale, of this structural transformation. Based on different understandings of the *commons*, the fundings, infrastructures and knowledge are considered as shared resources to sustain the network. documenta fifteen can be seen as an attempt to extend the model of translocal network to a larger scale, a model potentially equivalent (in terms of funding, visibility and prescription) to an international museum or a large biennial.

But collective governance and funding can be the limits of this model. If, as Starhawk describes in her many books and manuals, collective organization is a space of emancipation and joy, collective governance can also be the autoimmune disease of collaborative projects. And, even if more and more collectors and patrons are interested in supporting more informal practices, moving images and performance prove that, despite its absorption of every form, the art market keeps the works that can't be displayed in a bourgeois salon in the margins. Blockchain technology²³ promises to facilitate a change of scale via collective governance protocols using DAO (Decentralized Autonomous Organizations) and the fractionalizing of projects ownership into tokens, which are often indexed to NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens). DAOs allow collectives to form across massive geographical distances, sharing crypto resources. And, while governmental policies are still catching up, DAOs are self-regulated according to principles that manage speculation and experiment with programmatic forms of collective governance. Let us imagine, therefore, translocal networks with hundreds or even thousands of members and initiatives. With these new infrastructures, it is no longer necessary to conform a practice to a market (galleries, public commissions, research, theatre, film, education). It thus becomes possible to cultivate more process-based, informal, transdisciplinary and collective practices.

The Internet of Senses

Third transformation: the Internet of Senses includes hearing, smelling and touching within the internet experience and

makes people aware of hybrid worlds, both real and virtual, beyond the myth of immersion.

'In the twenty-first century, we will be grappling with who we are as extended humans.'²⁴

Made popular by, in particular, William Gibson's short story *Neuromancer*, the film *The Matrix* and Nick Bostrom's text *Are We Living in a Computer Simulation?*, the Internet of Senses in its completed form (perhaps in several decades or more) has often been presented as total immersion in a virtual world via the direct connection of sensors to the human brain, sometimes to the point where the rest of the body disappears. This dystopian culmination of the metaverse, though making it possible to trace a speculative horizon, has nevertheless relegated the potential of the Internet of Senses to science fiction or gadgetry. Indeed, this technological fantasy has recently come back into the spotlight with the development of 6G, a technology that is expected to replace 5G by 2030. The descriptions offered by those promoting this technology are more prosaic than the Wachowskis' Promethean tale: 6G could make it possible to smell a dish before ordering it online, to touch the organs of a body during remote surgery, to fall asleep alone in the warmth of your lover. Beyond the invention of sometimes useless needs, this capitalism of the senses leads to the development of ecosystems of prostheses and interfaces, also called the Internet of Things, through which our bodies are sensitized to a tangled web of real and virtual worlds. The metaverse, as defended by the digital industries, is based on the myth of immersion in a virtual world, a vision which, even if it has the benefit of simplicity, does not allow us to grasp the reality of such an entanglement.

The example of hearing implants is revealing as to the sensitive and political implications of a hybridization between living bodies and technical environments.²⁵ Cochlear implants, some users of which call themselves the first cyborgs, consist of hundreds of electrodes implanted along the cochlea, a spiral-shaped organ near the ear that amplifies sound signals and distributes them to the brain. Designed for

deaf people, the implant transcribes surrounding sounds into electrical impulses, which are transmitted to the nerve endings in the cochlea. Sophie Woolley describes what she hears with cochlear implants as 'much better than hearing'. It is also possible to 'switch off' and return to organic sound perception. Beyond the debates on bioethical issues surrounding the modification of the senses through technology, cochlear implants also give rise to other debates on the disappearance of Deaf culture, a specific culture largely linked to the visual, choreographic, spatial and tactile system of sign languages. In another part of the hearing spectrum are all users of headphones, whose technology, usually branded as 'noise cancelling', uses algorithms to facilitate listening and soundproof surroundings. With voice recognition technologies and artificial intelligence, many activities and jobs will soon no longer require a screen or keyboard. With an earpiece in their ear at all times, people will be able to communicate verbally with an artificial intelligence. Given that it is already technically possible to modify one's own voice, or to train artificial intelligence to imitate a voice and language structure using deepfake technologies, it will soon become impossible to distinguish the real from the virtual when it comes to sound. However, users of these advanced forms of technology are not 'immersed' in a virtual world in line with the metaverse model. They are rather, as Pauline Oliveros puts it, *extended humans*.

But the Internet of Things extends far beyond wearable devices. While much has been written about the impossibility of escaping data collection and surveillance, the Internet of Things is also helping to design the olfactory, acoustic, sonic, and tactile dimensions of commercial environments and public spaces according to desired user behaviours, and it may soon extend to the interior of the body through nanotechnology. The sensitive experience of what is real is thus fundamentally influenced by technologies. Each experience contains within it an entanglement of virtual and real, near and far, present and past, human and nonhuman. The Internet of Senses in the guise I describe here may lead to greater alienation by offering ever more attentional space for capture, but it could also offer a greater diversity

of attentional regimes towards nonhumans and a decentring of the human scale through an extension of the interfaces between the body and its environment.

The Pearl Necklace

It was by discussing these three different practical and structural transformations that the members of the International Confederation of Museums initiated a mini revolution one fine afternoon in November 2033. True to their vocation, the institution they created aimed to, in essence, collectively preserve a virtual copy of vanishing worlds and share them with the Earth's inhabitants.

Anticipating their tragic end, the nine islands of Tuvalu in Oceania had already begun to digitally copy their entire territory in 2022. They had recently been completely submerged but their virtual version existed and continued to be legally considered a nation. Virtual copies of Tuvalu's inhabitants and landscapes continued to grow, live and die under fully Earth-like conditions in a simulation governed by former inhabitants who had migrated to Australia and representatives from international organizations. For its part, the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, had, for some years, managed to completely reassemble its collection thanks to 3D copies of frescoes, recordings of Amerindian songs, fossils, Andean mummies, meteorites, textiles and ceramics burnt during the fire of 2018 and reconstructed with the help of artificial intelligence.

Like Tuvalu's islands, this new institution's collection included endangered worlds. They were, in a sense, being *uploaded* as their degradation gathered pace, in a form of anticipatory archaeology. The collection also reconstructed worlds that had already disappeared, such as the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, thus expanding restoration practices to the scale of an institution, a landscape or a city. The worlds that entered the collection continued to evolve as simulations. Basically, a date was chosen at which the two versions of the world in question would branch off, one heading to oblivion, the other to a potentially perpetual evolution via a simula-

tion where climatic conditions remained stable. Simulations of already disappeared worlds were added, such as the cities of Lisbon, San Francisco and Val di Noto before the earthquakes of 1755, 1906 and 1693, but also simulations of worlds linked to ancient civilizations. It also happened that numerous parallel simulations were developed for any given city.

The concept of a universal digitalization standard was soon abandoned. The worlds were all too different and complex, and, despite countless fixes, the persistence of discriminatory archetypes had led to the consensus that optimization and automation inevitably result in homogenization and discrimination. Each virtual copy was, therefore, considered a work of art in itself, collectively produced, unique in form and production, and involving artists, inhabitants and all the relevant expertise. Various lobbies attempted to infiltrate the development of virtual copies and occasionally succeeded in influencing the course of a simulation, for example by giving access to the resources in ruined worlds to the countries and companies they were acting for.

The code for a simulation went far beyond anything that could be imagined. It included, for example, tree growth algorithms, symbioses between mycelium and other organisms, the weathering of bricks over the seasons, the degradation of the layers that make up the surface of a painting, the movement of ants' antennae and wind fluctuations. It also included presences and deaths. The codes were updated as scientific research progressed, while being adapted to the cosmogonies inherent in each world. They could testify to presences that are or may be but do not correspond to modern knowledge and therefore cannot be proven in such terms.

The digitalization methods used, and the parameters of the simulations themselves, were the subject of continuous debate. Was it morally acceptable to eliminate suffering for the inhabitants of the simulations, or to remove the basic parameters of terrestrial life by making the inhabitants immortal or by creating a time loop in which a scene repeats itself endlessly? Why not test a multitude of scenarios, each with a specific form of social organization and justice, with a view to emancipating

ourselves from capitalism?²⁶ When the discrepancies were too great, some worlds had two or even three different simulations, making the distinction between a potential scenario in an existing world and an invented world even more subtle. Thus added to the collection were fabricated worlds which had already existed in fictions. The distinction between museums dedicated to culture and those devoted to nature became obsolete.

News from the simulations was reported in the newspapers in the same way as other 'real' world news. The simulations did not have one form but several: if code formed their core, they were rendered palpable via myriad means, conceived by artists, designers and other practitioners according to the sensory interfaces available. If the total immersive experience in a simulation was a founding idea behind this institution and remained a possible option, it was soon supplanted by hybrid experiences, whereby different forms of existence of these same simulations coexisted and where each user, human or nonhuman, arranged them together, like creating a pearl necklace. It was common for artefacts made in a simulation to be reproduced and displayed in the real world, for digital copies of artefacts from the real world to circulate in simulations, for beings in simulations to have avatars in the real world and vice versa. So the disappearing worlds, which made up a major part of the Earth's surface while they remained habitable, were not abandoned. As the preserved ecosystems became the memory of past worlds, they also became the spectrum of potential worlds, in the way that algorithms predict the future from the past. The ruins of the world were repaired and imagined as hybrids composed of the different forms of past lives, sometimes thousands of years apart but linked by similar catastrophes.

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- 1 • In this text, I will use the terms 'nonhuman' and 'more-than-human' distinctly. I include within the term nonhuman those entities that are not human but exist on Earth, either living (animals, plants), or artificially reproducing human characteristics (in particular artificial intelligence), or indeed presences that are or can be but do not conform to modern knowledge (especially animistic cosmogonies). The term nonhuman doesn't include humans whereas more-than-human does. From the more-than-human perspective, bodies usually defined as 'human' are in fact more-than-human ecosystems. Internally, they are composed of a multitude of bacteria and other organisms in symbiosis, most of which are 'foreign' to the original embryo and its DNA. Externally, they are continuously entangled with other more-than-human bodies, including, for example, those habitually defined as 'animal', 'plant' or 'fungus', as well as bodies on larger, smaller and more complex scales. I extend David Abram's definition of the more-than-human, 'the broad commonwealth of breath', to technological entities that share certain characteristics with humans, in particular artificial intelligence. The term 'more' doesn't mean better or higher than human. 'More' means that any individual entity is more than one. 'I am many. About the term 'more-than-human', see *More-than-Human: A Reader*, Ed. Andrés Jaque, Marina Otero Verzier and Lucia Pietroiusti. Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, 2020.
- 2 • In an interview, Philippe Descola argued that '...the absolutely central challenge for this century seems to be finding ways of articulating local ways of inhabiting the world and integrating them into institutional systems that can unify them without destroying their individuality. A kind of federalism of the local if you will, the implementation of which requires a considerable conceptual effort, of the same order of magnitude, for example, as that accomplished by the Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century or their socialist counterparts in the following century.' Interview published in Marin Schaffner, ed., *Un sol commun: lutter, habiter, penser* (Marseille: Wildproject, 2019).
- 3 • Grégory Castéra, 'Composing the Near and the Far', *Groundings* 2 (April 2021) (www.eva.ie/project/occasional-groundwork/).
- 4 • Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, eds., *The Posthuman Glossary* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).
- 5 • Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser, eds., *A World of Many Worlds* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018).
- 6 • Arturo Escobar, *Design for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).
- 7 • Benjamin Bratton, *The Terraforming* (Moscow: Strelka, 2019).
- 8 • Florence de Lucy, ed., *Simone Weil: Sagesse et grâce violente* (Paris: Bayard, 2009).
- 9 • Lorraine Daston and Peter Gallison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

10 • Les associés d'EIM, *Les Dirigeants français et le changement* (Paris: Huitième Jour, 2004).

11 • Brian Eno, linear note to *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, Polydor Records, 1978.

12 • Julia Bell, *Radical Attention* (London: Peninsula Press, 2020).

13 • Yves Citton, *Pour une écologie de l'attention* (Paris: Seuil, 2014).

14 • '...care [...] includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our "world" so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining "web."' Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher, 'Toward a Feminist Theory of Caring', in *Circles of Care*, ed. Emily Abel and Margaret Nelson (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990).

15 • Laugier Sandra, 'La vulnérabilité des formes de vie', *Raison Politique* 57 (2015), pp. 65–80.

16 • On the visualization and decription of forms of life, see Franck Leibovici, (*des formes de vie*): *Une écologie des pratiques artistiques* (Aubervilliers: Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, 2012). Concerning the issues of interaction with forms of life, see in particular the work of the Counter Encounter collective (Laura Huertas Millán, Onyeka Igwe, Rachael Rakes). If Leibovici is part of a genealogy of practice linked to the notion of the document as an 'intellectual technology' (see his work *des documents poetiques*), Counter Encounter pursues a critic of visual ethnography with decolonial ecology (see their online publication *Technological Ecologies of Encounter*, World Records Journal, 2022).

17 • On monastic forms of life, see Roland Barthes, *Comment vivre ensemble: Cours et séminaires au Collège de France (1976–1977)* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), and Giorgio Agamben, *De la très haute pauvreté: Règles et formes de vie* (Paris: Payot and Rivage, 2013).

18 • Although I emphasize the personal experience from which this narrative is constructed, I am convinced that similar trajectories across different collective cultures could be traced for readers from other generations and backgrounds.

19 • This chapter is inspired by encounters with several collective projects since 2020 within the Collective Agenda programme and Afield, in particular Casa delle Agricolture, Art Labor, INLAND, Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center, Karrabing Film Collective, Mediateca Onshore, Rojava Film Commune, ruangrupa, Woodbine, and the ZAD de Notre-Dame-de-Landes.

20 • Timothy Morton defines a hyperobject as 'something which is happening to us—around us—but which is abstract, covert, and almost too immense to comprehend'. Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

21 • Laugier 2015 (note 16).

22 • On system change practices, see in particular the work of Caroline Woolard.

23 • On the issues related to the application of blockchain to resource sharing infrastructure, see commons.art, initiated by Yin Aiwen and Binna Choi, the book *Radical Friends: Decentralised Autonomous Organisations and the Arts*, ed. Ruth

Catlow and Penny Rafferty (London: Torque Editions, 2022), and the book Bassam El Baroni, ed., *Between the Material and the Possible* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2022).

24 • Laurie Anderson, 'Quantum Listening is Full of Space and Questions', in Pauline Oliveros, *Quantum Listening* (London: Ignota, 2022).

25 • This paragraph builds on 'Infinite Ear', a research project I conducted with Tarek Atoui and Sandra Terdjman for Council from 2013 to 2020 around the concept of 'Deaf Gain' and the transformation of listening through deaf culture. The experience of cochlear implants is shared in texts by Sophie Woolley, accessible at: www.council.art/inquiries/30/infinite-ear.

26 • On speculations about post-human forms of social organization and justice, see the work by Fabien Giraud and Raphaël Siboni, *The Unmanned*, ed. Anne Stenne (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2022).

I Am a Tree

A Reboot to the Notion of Culture-Nature

Naine Terena de Jesus



In the cosmology of Brazilian Indigenous peoples, the universe is made up of connections between the human world, the plant world, the animal world and the spiritual world. These 'worlds' need to be in balance and all of them pass on knowledge to one another in order to reinforce their own existence. Thus, it is well understood that culture is not detached from nature, which in turn is composed of multiple thinking beings, contrary to the way in which 'modern man sees himself as disconnected from nature, thinking of it as something outside himself and therefore amenable to control',¹ subjugation and exploitation.

We talk and hear a lot about Indigenous cultures and we need to understand that these cultures cultivate these relationships between worlds, because in manifesting them aesthetically through what we might call art, for example, we see the influence of the plant, spiritual and animal in native populations' output. What I mean to say is that much of what we know as cultural manifestations, which reach our eyes via the aesthetic realm, originate from the very relationship Indigenous people have with nature. We see, for example, in body painting or the production of objects, how these connections are represented or celebrated, and they must be renewed from time to time in order to ensure the continuity of a universe in balance.

The knowledge shared long before this earthly world comes from a world where animals, men and plants had equal status (a position commonly found in Indigenous peoples' creation stories and myths). The history of the Terena people's emergence on Earth explains this relationship a little. According to the elders, the twin brothers known as the 'Yurikoyuvakai' were walking through the world when a bird informed them that it had heard sounds beneath the ground. The twins then pulled humans out from the bowels of the earth, with the help from animals, who attempted to interact with these very grave beings. The Yurikoyuvakai then realized that these humans were not all the same and spoke different languages and they distributed them across the world. To the Terena they gave the gift of agriculture. They taught them to cultivate the land and make tools for that purpose. And so the Terena continue to this day—in the culture of the land, recognizing the natural cycles and

practising subsistence farming. In this brief summary of the history of creation, we observe the partnership between the being (Yurikoyuvakai), animals, nature and humans (the Terena) so that humanity itself subsists within a cycle of relationships that is revised from time to time, in line with human attitudes towards the teachings passed on by the Yurikoyuvakai.

For Indigenous people, this status of respect and partnership remains unchanged at this time, known as the twenty-first century, yet the arrival of other peoples with other ideas has led to some forgetting and erasure, as new world relations have arisen from the imposition of different values and concepts. In the global north, a scientific and rational way of thinking appears to predominate, which for a long time denied the existence of this dialogue between worlds as experienced by native populations. The force with which colonialism pursued its perceptions also began to cause changes in the Indigenous relationship with nature. However, such changes were not enough to bring about the total loss of this connection with other beings, and all the cosmological notions that permeate Indigenous life here on Earth propose forceful action to maintain the equilibrium of the planet and thus prevent natural catastrophes from affecting humanity.

Many of these beings, although present in Indigenous beliefs, cosmologies and philosophies, reside in the trees, rivers, stars, and everything that moves the natural universe. What I am trying to say here is that in this relationship of balance between man and the environment, Indigenous people were taught to take from it only what was necessary for their survival. Although the need to buy food, clothing, pay bills, and meet other demands stemming from income generation is clear, it is largely from nature that they borrow the raw materials for creating their ornaments, utensils, dwellings and everything else that constitutes Indigenous life, because the trees, the birds, the river and the rain are our relatives, our beings.

Beyond this gift of resources, nature also affords us beauty and knowledge. In Indigenous history and cosmological thought, trees and animals stand as masters for continuous learning: they provide us with knowledge because they are thinking beings, able to communicate with some of us, especially our shamans.

Many of our spiritual masters communicate with elements of nature and bring their messages, as well as learning from them, teachings that are (or should be) applied in everyday life. However, the advance of the non-Indigenous perception of the world, leveraged by the colonization process and the establishment of other economies, is causing a rupture with what was understood as ways of living well and being in the world. This is because the intense exploitation of the environment has rendered scarce the raw materials necessary for the production of what we call Indigenous material heritage, thus making it impossible to reproduce the elements associated with intangible heritage.

Feasts, rites, celebrations and even planting seasons have often been discouraged or affected by environmental, climatic and consumption changes. A scarcity of seeds and feathers, rivers having their courses diverted and being polluted (which causes fish to die or cease breeding), all of which are necessary for some rituals, are examples of how human action directly interferes with this relationship between culture and the environment experienced by Indigenous peoples. In short, there is a pressing need to reboot the very concept of nature and culture and the relationship between the two, as has been a goal of numerous Indigenous leaders, to reinforce the idea that chaos ensues when nature is no longer respected as a wise and living entity.

A Necessary Reboot

In computer language, a reboot is the forced start-up of a computer. This is done by pressing the power button on the machine and fully load the operating system. This action can only be performed, or considered, when a person presses the button and it is only complete when the operating system can be used by a person. I use the word reboot to evoke this action performed in the field of computer technologies, to say that human beings are an important agent for restoring a system that everyone will be able to benefit from, while at the same time being responsible for the precariousness of this system, which is permeated with obsolescence. With respect to obso-

lescence, it seems that knowledge such as that possessed by Indigenous people has always been the target of replacement by what is deemed modern, bold, appropriate to a civilization in constant 'evolution'. The common perception is that all Indigenous knowledge appears outdated, uncivilized and inhospitable, thus being entirely disposable, with Indigenous people having to adapt to other ways of viewing life.

This necessary reboot requires society to follow a path that is contrary to prevailing and dominant thought—it is necessary to recognize and acknowledge other seats of knowledge, especially as they relate to those other worlds mentioned in the first part of this text. To achieve this, we have seen a gradual rise of Indigenous activists, using non-Indigenous tools and technologies in order to establish a dialogue about these other ways of being in the world.

As part of this attempt to reboot and create narratives that reach out to the general population, we can identify in the field of visualities Brazil's very own organized Indigenous movement, headed by the organization Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), reinforcing Indigenous narratives based on the aesthetics of street movements, as enabled by Indigenous communication vehicles and art interventions. This type of communication by Indigenous people is spreading throughout Brazil and the wider world, drawing attention to the fact that environmental changes cause not only physical harm, but also psychological and social harm. An example of this type of action is Acampamento Terra Livre (Free Land Camp), which brings together Indigenous peoples of different origins in Brazil's capital Brasília for a week, during which Indigenous needs are discussed, as well as environmental protection policies, in an attempt to reach out not only to political leaders, but also the general public. This event culminates in a grand procession to the Federal Chamber of Deputies, with the aim of calling attention to Indigenous people's demands and dilemmas, which may ultimately affect humanity as a whole.

On this journey, the diversity of these peoples is showcased through their songs, dances, clothes, colours and ways of being seen. Other aspects have also been added to attract the

attention of non-Indigenous people, through languages and symbols that they recognize more readily, such as the use of coffins (2017), a large circular shape representing planet Earth (2022), the Brazilian flag with red marks alluding to bloodshed (2019), covering their bodies with materials that refer to blood and the mud in the mines (2022), and more. These are shocking images that stir the popular imagination, while also making us think about the constant changes to the landscape caused by deforestation, rivers drying up, and the appearance of concrete buildings and the effects these can have, as the changing landscape in everyday living spaces contributes to health conditions. We can also consider within this scope of space, time, and landscape, the everyday views of places that lack even minimum support like basic sanitation, with unregulated construction, almost always caused by the total lack of public projects for popular housing, which impact on the behaviours and daily lives of each and every individual. This gradual deterioration of spaces has affected Indigenous villages and cities alike.

Some disciplines, such as psychology,² have conducted studies on these interrelations and how they influence human perceptions, assessments and attitudes. In Brazil, the Federal Council of Psychology launched the Working Group on Environmental Psychology in 2021. In an informal conversation with the author, psychologist Anayê Chinelatto³ explains that mental health is partly based on the subject's interaction with spaces, emphasizing, above all, the search for well-being. Physical spaces become meaningful and integral spaces for people. The ethnocide and ecocide committed daily and continuously against the native peoples of all regions of Brazil and the enormous suffering recounted by these people is a clear example of how the disintegration and fragmentation of the individual-environment relationship leads to increased levels of anxiety, depression and stress.

From this perspective, one can conclude that global warming and deforestation directly influence life in general, having psychophysiological impacts and leading to physical and psychological health symptoms.

The influence of environments on human health, due to different conditions and processes, can be such that it may even lead to ill-health. Existing in spaces, in the urban context of the city, in the countryside, in the interior, in villages, in quilombola communities, in short in the various socio-economic and cultural structures of this country, incorporates the full magnitude of human experience. Places are configured and arranged as components of subjectivity and in connection with culture, with physical and symbolic aspects,

explains the psychologist.

The issue that is perhaps not yet considered in any decisive way, as far as public policy in Brazil is concerned, is that mental health (low risk of psychological suffering) is rooted in improved well-being. This underlines the importance of thinking about the factors that influence the feelings of contentment or discontentment that are experienced in certain environments.

In seeking the restorative psychophysiological effects of environments, there is a need to explore three key concepts: restorative environment – environmental meaning – social identity. In ancestral terms, Indigenous people have also been saying that environmental changes affect us all to various degrees. Yet what Indigenous people say is not always intelligible to or considered important by non-Indigenous people.

I Am a Tree

This is the title of a performance textile art series I produced in 2022 for the Festival Theaterformen,⁴ which takes place in Germany every year. The work was brought to the event as an activist artwork that in a way seeks to express to people that trees are important entities for human life and that there can be no dissonance in all the roots we maintain as living beings. Roots inspired by the memory of our parents and grandparents; of the places we frequented in childhood, or of the seasons of the year, which in some places are changing over time.

Sometimes the grouping of words in text form or in spoken language fails to translate the importance of teaching and learning relationships between humans and non-humans, which is typical in the Indigenous universe. For people with deep-rooted notions of rationality, it can sometimes be more difficult to embrace language and ways of seeing the world that are not exclusively based on rational experience but have powerful sensory and subjective capacities, as is the case with Indigenous peoples.

I Am a Tree is, therefore, an experiment in materializing Indigenous ideas, which connect humanity to everything that inhabits the animal, plant and cosmological world. It is the transposition into artistic form of this strong Indigenous cultural component, which drives actions and attitudes: the experience of connection between environment and culture, because the environment is alive and sustains entities that govern human/Indigenous actions.

In this way, *I Am a Tree* searches within the visualities that connect non-Indigenous people, seeking what it is that Indigenous people try to say about how the time-space in which we live cannot ever be detached from the natural environment. It emphasizes that according to some cosmologies, human action in nature, when it wreaks devastation on the environment, causes these beings to manifest themselves in countless ways, creating what we know as natural disasters and provoking phenomena that shake the very structures of big cities, among other issues that negatively impact on human life.

In *I Am a Tree* what we have is a documentation of the plant world in visual form, with trees and shrubs from South Africa, Brazil and the Prinz-Albrecht-Park in Braunschweig being brought to the general public, not in their usual form, but with contours and nuances that are able to represent their beings. To do this, I use image processing programs, where a photo essay was created that was displayed in the windows of Kleines Haus during the entire Festival Theaterformen,⁵ which took place in Braunschweig in Germany (2022 edition). In addition to the photographs in the shop windows, the technique of mirroring images and reusing fabrics (upcycling) materializes trees that have a life of their own and to a certain extent represent the healing of the world. At the same time, *I Am a Tree* poses a pertinent question for the present time:

'And you? Who are you?' This provocation happens in the encounter between the aesthetic materiality of art and the problematization of the relationships between humans and non-humans, where the prevailing logic operates based on rationality.

For me, parks have been special places of coexistence with nature, with trees. Travelling through Europe, I had the impression of an immense happiness in this direct contact between people and plants in urban parks. Maintaining these micro-environments appears to satisfy various groups of people and keep them removed from realities such as those experienced in Brazil, with deforestation and burning from the Amazon to the Cerrado. Will it take a reboot to burst these bubbles formed in the parks in large cities?

These are thoughts that drive the embodiment of trees, achieved by constructing their visible face through textile sculptures, in an attempt to challenge people about the nature-culture-chaos relationship. Trees that move from their environments visit cities in order to see other environments. Beyond the physical aspect, these trees, which take physical forms that can travel, also encounter thoughts and knowledge grounded in Western philosophies, in a confrontation with old and new world narratives; new ways of relating in society in the post-pandemic era, where one must make one's own analysis of humanity and its relationships. The emergency calls for a reboot, whereby each individual may need to recognize his or her inner tree and connect to roots that are far deeper than they ever imagined.

Notes

- 1 • Elisa Zacarias, and Maria Inês Higuchi, 'Relação pessoa-ambiente: Caminhos para uma vida sustentável', April 2017, p. 1, doi.org/10.20435/inter.v18i3.1431 (accessed on 18 September 2022).
- 2 • site.cfp.org.br/cfp-institui-grupo-de-trabalho-sobre-psicologia-ambiental/.
- 3 • Anayê Chinellato was one of the first psychologists to enter a Terena Indigenous area to monitor incidences of suicide among young people. Although she is not an environmental psychology scholar, she is one of my advisers on issues involving psychology.
- 4 • linkin.bio/festivaltheaterformen.
- 5 •youtu.be/bi_xrkkLPvM.

Part 2
Slow It Down

**Routes and
Rootedness**
Revalorizing
Cultural Mobilities

Noel B. Salazar



In the cultural and creative sector, mobility commonly refers to the temporary cross-border movement of artists and other cultural professionals (Kjaerulff et al. 2018). This can be an individual endeavour (e.g., taking up an artist residency, touring, or networking between creators, researchers, and centres of art) or it can involve group works or performances. In this context, frequent and long-distance mobilities are justified as a tool for learning, dialogue, and exchange (Mendolicchio and Huleileh 2015). A cultural mobility's perspective attributes to artists, as particularly mobile subjects, the role of crucial carriers of cultural creation and meaning.

Seen from a broader perspective, cultural mobilities are but one specific case of human mobility. In general, the lived experiences and attributed values linked to physical movement are important ways by which people express their adaptation to, and understanding of, periods of personal, social, or environmental change (Salazar 2018a). This is illustrated by the many etymological and historical links between concepts of travel, transition, and experience. Because mobilities are at the core of how our interdependent world is currently structured, they are also key to some of the most pressing challenges our planet is facing (Salazar 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic, with long-distance mobility as main vector of diffusion, provides us with important insights in this respect. Authorities across the planet (re)classified the most common mobilities along essential and non-essential axes, the latter category (which included cultural mobilities) being temporarily restricted or even forbidden.

The coronavirus crisis, marked by periods of lockdown and travel restrictions, made people more aware of the role of physical movement in their lives (Salazar 2021a) and of the potential value of immobility (Salazar 2021b). Even more important, the rapidly worsening planetary emergencies related to climate change and global warming force us to reflect on the ecological costs associated with how mobility is currently organized, and to take urgent action. This leads us to question how future cultural mobilities can be organized and structured in a way that is sustainable to all stakeholders (human as well as non-human) who are directly involved and indirectly affected.

This chapter provides some context and in-depth reflections about how to best address this complex question.

Mobility-in-Motion, Travel-as-Transformation

Mobility entails, in its coinage, much more than mere physical motion. Rather, it can be understood as movement infused with both self-ascribed and attributed meanings. All human mobilities are moulded by sociocultural knowledge and practices. We should not forget that mobility is a contested ideological construct; it is socially embedded, manifested in metacultural discourses and imaginaries. Whereas mobility has come to mean many different things (Adey et al. 2013), this book project makes reference of two elements that are deemed particularly important for cultural mobilities. For analytical reasons, it is important to keep these two aspects apart.

Emotion through Motion

First, the title of this book, *Sensing Earth*, refers unequivocally to a phenomenological understanding of mobility. According to phenomenologists, the human being is, first of all, a 'moving body' (Farnell 2012). People have always been on the move, for a variety of reasons; from subsistence to experience, from necessity to privilege. Granting that the act of moving is a universal human trait, the ways in which people move, and the processes of identity construction and imaginaries of belonging attached to these movements, are strongly linked to sociocultural factors

Moving, thinking, and feeling with and through movement, is foundational to being human. It is not an etymological coincidence that motion (bodily movement) and emotion (feelings) have such a strong linguistic link. As we move our bodies through space and time, we become our movement, phenomenologically and in terms of identity and social position (Ingold 2011). Despite, or perhaps because of its omnipresence in life, the physical practice of movement is rarely analyzed on its own terms, as a distinct category of scholarly investigation (Salazar 2018b). Existing research in the social sciences and human-

ities ranges from analyses of individual ‘body motions’ to broad (and often too abstract) investigations of ‘moving bodies’ in the context of migration, tourism, or other forms of travel such as cultural mobilities (Adey et al. 2013). Most studies, however, reveal extraordinarily little about the dynamic experiences of the very act of moving itself. Mobilities are not only linked to ontologies (who we are) but also to epistemologies (how we know). Our body-in-motion is the best medium available for knowing the world, enriching us cognitively and existentially. Through our feet, we are directly ‘in touch’ with our surroundings (Ingold 2004), allowing for sensual experiences of place (Edensor 2010). All knowledge creation processes—and we could also add artistic creativity here (cf. Hautala and Nordström 2019)—are built on the dynamics of movement across space and change through time, but how those dynamics are understood, lived, and represented varies among traditions, cultures, and periods. The topokinetic nature of knowledge through movement has been described by Indigenous people on every continent, including Aboriginal song lines and dreaming tracks in Australia, and some Amerindian trails and taxonomies that order creatures via their type of movement (flying, swimming, walking, etc.). It is important to acknowledge this type of knowledge because the Indigenous history of a place is often the last record of people engaging in a meaningful (and often also sustainable) way with the environment.

For geographer David Seamon (2018), bodily mobility is the key component to the understanding of place. In a similar vein, anthropologist Tim Ingold (2011) convincingly argues that places become embodied precisely because of the human movement in and through them. Philosopher Michel de Certeau (1984), too, demonstrated the critical significance of people’s mobilities in the formation of place, as well as the contesting and disturbing of its normative order. Some serious questioning of the normative order is certainly in place here. The current era confronts people, particularly the more privileged ones, with an ironic conundrum. Notwithstanding the incredible progress made in transport and communication technologies, and the global increase in various forms of mo-

bility, many humans feel increasingly disconnected from the ‘Other’ (be it people or the environment) as well as from themselves. As this situation goes together with physical and mental health problems, people are desperately searching for ways to reconnect—often erroneously imagining a once harmonious relationship with or a sense of belonging to ‘nature’ (Morton 2016). There is increasing recognition, also scientifically, that the emplaced body-in-motion plays a crucial role for human wellbeing (or, better, well-becoming). In various countries, doctors and other health professionals are now prescribing nature walks. Such stress-reducing ‘green prescriptions’ are meant to improve people’s mental as well as physical health.

While human mobilities have received a lot of scholarly attention, we know much less about other-than-human mobilities. Working with flow and change, philosopher Michel Serres (2000) suggests, is the basis of a revised human contract with nature. The epistemology of commons thinking, for example, believes that we live in a shared lifeworld, which recognizes the interdependence of life on Earth on which we all rely. Commons are worlds in movement; they are communities that create forms of life in common and that together produce and share and are continuously transformed. Such thinking leads to the acknowledgment that protecting ‘the environment’ does not come at the expense of human prosperity and well-being; it is the source of it. Unfortunately, many people are unaware that the vast, expansive living system that inhabits our planet is who ‘we’ are. We are an integrated living system in constant motion. Engaging with this insight is an important task for the cultural and creative sector, as is being done for example by the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA), an informal international network of forty-five art organizations contributing to environmental sustainability through their creative practice.

A major challenge has become how to connect to other humans and to the other-than-human. Because of technological dependencies, people find it increasingly difficult to relate in an unmediated way, particularly when it comes to unknown ‘Others’. Technological intermediaries such as smart phones highly distract from establishing true multisensorial contact. Most

people have no more personal awareness of hazards such as climate change, pollution, or deforestation if they do not communicate about the (externalized) environment, especially the non-human aspect of it. If the 'body-in-motion' is important for people in general, it is particularly meaningful for artists and other creative professionals. It is through the moving body that they develop intimate sensitivities for the environment through and with which they move. However, this requires a process of becoming 'rooted' somewhere, which by necessity takes time (and lots of patience). Many similarities exist between creative participation and being absorbed in the environment. Both experiences rely on sensory perception, embodiment, imagination, emotions, and a sense of beauty. A lot can be learned here from dancers, mobility experts *par excellence* (Hunter 2021).

Transformative Travels

Second, there is the more abstract but common connection this book makes between (cross-border) mobilities and processes of change. Pre-Socratic scholars already distinguished between movement as change in location (*kinesis*) and transformation (*métabolè*), the process through which something becomes something else (Laplantine 2015). Since then, people have connected the two, believing that physical journeys to an 'elsewhere' act as opportunities to transform the Self (Lean, Staiff and Waterton 2014). The rationale is that experiencing 'Otherness', which implies leaving one's comfort zone and known environment (e.g., cultural exchange), leads to new insights.

An important corollary here is that the expected transformation does not come naturally but requires effort. It is no coincidence that the concept of 'travel' derives from *travail*, hinting at the physical danger and toil that was historically related to being 'on the move'. Wandering through unknown lands, travellers could reflect on their identity and relationship with the environment. Note the link here with the first characteristic of mobility, described above. Worldviews, identities, and horizons of understanding could be transformed in the course of travel (Islam 1996). The physical experience of the voyage became the epitome and the metaphor of the quest for the spiritual and

the searching Self. Pilgrimages are the archetypical journeys of such 'becoming', trips towards new identities, new Selves, and a more fulfilling way of being-in-the-world. In sum, those who suffer *travail* are believed to undergo a transformation and metamorphosis during their journeys, gain new insights, and reach self-understanding (Lean, Staiff and Waterton 2014).

As history progressed, the travel concept itself transformed. During the Enlightenment, for example, travel became strongly influenced by its connections to science and (colonial) discovery. Consequently, explorer-travellers were encouraged to provide first-hand narratives and precise assessments of visual aesthetics rather than emotional or spiritual interpretations of their experiences. For the sake of comfort, modern transport technologies and tourism service providers alike took the *travail* out of travel. Recent phenomena such as experiential tourism and slow travel can be seen as partial attempts to try to recover what has been lost. Among those who want to bring back the *travail* in travel, journeys are imagined like quest-like activities that require stamina as well as emotional strength ('no pain, no gain') to reach uplifting experiential and existential 'authenticity'.

Cultural mobilities have clearly been influenced by the ways travel developed more generally. Thanks to travel technologies, cultural exchanges and collaborations happened at increasing (geographical and cultural) distances. Willingly or not, this also meant buying into the current global economic capitalist system, which rewards flexible hypermobility (at all costs). Consequently, artists and other cultural professionals got used to changing locations more quickly than they could become familiar with them, meaning that also the true potential for transformation, through unexpected and unplanned encounters with the unknown, is much more difficult to realize. Moreover, the (dis)connection conundrum mentioned above may be at play here even more than 'at home'. In the interconnected world we currently live in, it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to distance themselves from their 'world' (the one they leave behind while travelling). They may be physically removed from 'home' but still very much connected through their laptops, tablets and smart phones. This has an impact on performers,

for instance, who do not feel enough 'grounded' when performing elsewhere. Paradoxically, virtual connectedness is precisely what is needed to receive instantaneous social rewards for the supposed transformative travel one is trying to experience.

In today's world, the argument that one needs to travel far to experience difference, the difference that is needed to be transformed, is much less valid than it historically used to be. Processes of globalization have seriously stirred up things, including populations. Hyper diverse natural environments and societies are as much a part of our reality these days as the Internet is. In other words, also artists and creative professionals do not really need to travel all that far to encounter many types of differences and be 'touched' by them. However, here it matters of course where one's home base is located. It is much easier, for instance, to be immersed in cultural diversity in metropolises such as London, Berlin, or Paris than in a small village somewhere in the periphery of Eastern Europe. The same goes for having an audience for whom to perform, exhibit, or otherwise share one's creative work with.

It is in this context that the ongoing debate about modes of transportation plays an increasingly influential role. Particularly the airline sector is under attack for being the most polluting (in terms of greenhouse gas emissions). Well-known (and thus privileged) artists such as Jérôme Bel (France), Tino Sehgal (Germany), Katie Mitchell (UK) and Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker (Belgium) have opted for non-flying and to travel around much less and/or use less polluting means of transport, such as trains. Collectives or cultural institutions such as performance venues with this policy are much harder to find. Here, too, there is the issue of location and access. It is easier to stop flying and rely on fast train connections as an alternative if one is based centrally rather than peripherally. This also points to the importance of taking into consideration social and economic factors in developing solutions for environmental problems (as the traditional concept of sustainability does).

Alternative modes of transport such as electric cars or trains may be slightly more environmental-friendly, but are only sustainable if the overall volume of travel diminishes. In other

words, we do not (only) need to travel differently but also less. It is equally naïve to think that virtual technologies are the solution. By now, people have become very aware of the ecological costs of flying (even leading to 'flight shame'). However, climate mitigation involves so much more than the mere reduction of carbon emissions. For one, the gigantic environmental damage caused by our massive use of the Internet is much less known. Luckily, organizations such as the London-based charity Julie's Bicycle, which supports the cultural and creative sector to act on climate change and environmental sustainability, are already at work to make people and institutions aware of their digital carbon footprint. In sum, what is needed are radical systemic changes, changes for which the cultural and creative sector should not carry all the burden but certainly has an exemplary role to play.

Conclusion

The assumed association between embodied physical travel and transformation—apart from being a metaphorical one with spatial or geographical references—is embedded in the etymology of the word 'travel'. Those who suffer *travail*, as experienced in slower and self-propelled modes of travel, are believed to undergo a transformation and metamorphosis during their journeys, gaining new insights and reaching self-understanding. Travels beyond a familiar home base confront people with the elsewhere and the Other. Importantly, these experiences also (re)produce socially shared meanings of mobility and inequality. It is important to remember, for instance, that transnational mobilities remain the exception rather than the norm. This also implies that not all people are equally accountable for the environmental damage caused by mobilities.

Mobility research calls attention to the myriad ways in which people become parts of multiple translocal networks and connections. Attention to mobilities, broadly conceived, necessarily leads to a rethinking of the human. If we humans are (re)learning anything in the late Anthropocene, it is that we are not separate at all. Humans cannot be simply separat-

ed from the dynamic environment in which they live and are engulfed. Human movement and knowledge assemblage are constantly interacting in adaptive co-production processes. The Anthropocene suggests that these localized environments or lifeworlds are, indeed, not isolated unto themselves, but part of a planetary conviviality. More generally, every event and thing in the cosmos appears to be intertwined with everything else in the universe—a thought that is also present in many Eastern philosophies. The cultural and creative sector has a crucial role to play in making people all over the world aware of this.

If we like to see ourselves as cosmopolitans, or world citizens, we should stop thinking and behaving anthropocentrically and evolve to planetary citizenship and conviviality. This starts in a world that is lived and experienced nearby, an idea that is very present in contemporary ideas of ‘commoning’. We need new religions, not in the dogmatic sense, but to cherish again the idea of *religare*, of connectedness and relationality. We should not forget that the word ‘ecology’ was originally coined with the aim of stressing relations among organisms within their environment of life. Recognizing humanity’s embeddedness in the natural world requires an epistemic attitude that is really ecocentric rather than anthropocentric.

The task ahead, certainly also for the cultural and creative sectors, is to reimagine how to inhabit the planet we share with the vast but delicately interconnected community of life within which we are interdependent, and thus to radically rethink what it means to be human. There is also a pressing need to integrate Indigenous sources of knowledge, which have historically been neglected, with academic scholarship, so that we can come to understand the complexities of many ecological networks and their mobilities much better.

The future of cultural mobilities will to a considerable extent be decided by how the cultural and creative sector positions itself in respect to the great challenges our planet is currently facing. It is self-evident that current mobility practices will need to be thoroughly evaluated and that long-distance travel will need to decrease. However, in trying to solve one problem (e.g., carbon emissions) it is important not to end up adding oth-

ers as collateral damage (e.g., reducing openness to difference). It should be clear from this chapter that arts and culture need both a rooted knowledge-through-motion and travel-as-transformation to thrive. Particularly the latter element will have to be done differently. Changing the way of moving through/with the environment and of cross-border travel will ultimately change the way art is created. This, in turn, has the potential of bringing wider societal change, which still is one of the fundamental aims of art.

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Slow Mobility

Ana Žuvela
Dea Vidović



As Pascal Gielen describes in this publication, Earth suffers from global burnout syndrome. The state of the Earth is characterized by emotional, physical and mental breakdowns due to the unrestricted, redundant, and chronic exploitation of the ecosystem. Systemically infiltrated hegemonic globalization has caused multiple degrees of exhaustion in all areas of society. The entanglement of the economic and political game of mass deregulation and redistribution of wealth further increased the inequalities already sewn into the fabric of society. The dogma of neoliberalism and obsession with economic growth propagated as a dream for people has been turned into Earth's nightmare (Latour 2018).

Behind us are years of promises of a better future which, however, may never come. The protests that appear across the world prove that something is not working well (Harvey 2020). This dissatisfaction is political, economic, and environmental, and there are more and more voices talking about systemic failures in the field of culture as well. As a result, there have been increasing numbers of people attempting to take responsibility themselves and create alternatives to the dominant accumulation of capital and power that has brought planetary boundaries to the breaking point. Now, we are faced with the challenge of finding a way that will not only prevent the imminent environmental catastrophe but also create a political, economic and social utopia in which contemporary societies will sustain and manage to live on a recovered Earth. Such endeavours and efforts require comprehensive and genuine transitions in all areas. Without exception, all must participate and move from imagination to concretization, however big or small.

In this chapter, we take a miniature example of a possible transition and analyze it from various perspectives while exploring how the changes in this minuscule area can contribute to the wider shifts and attempts to introduce and endorse more fair, equitable, social, environmentally responsible and sustainable (public) arrangements. As expected within the context of the book's theme, the example pertains to the area of mobility in arts and culture. A focus on mobility in arts and culture as a fundamental and indivisible part of cultural circulation be-

comes especially challenging in the present time of destruction by war, economic deprivation and climate crisis, and migration being everyone's concern (Latour 2018).

Existentialism and Essentialism of Cultural Mobility

The mobility of artists and cultural professionals comes across as a relatively straightforward common-sense topic. Movement between places and contexts and cultural interactions have been an inherent part of artistic and cultural activity and creation since antiquity (Klaic 2007). The concept of mobility has various definitions and understandings (Salazar, this publication pp. 93–104; Salazar and Jayaram 2016; Salazar 2017; Urry 2007; Sheller and Urry 2006; Cresswell 2006) yet in the specific remit of the cultural sector, it can be defined according to the profile of actors and their motive to engage in movement, as well as the purpose of that movement. Insofar, mobility in culture pertains to cross-border travel of artists and cultural professionals to create (the working purpose), connect (networking opportunities), explore (creative research), and learn (education and capacity-building opportunities) (Demartin et al. 2013; OTM [On The Move] 2019).

The mobility of artists and cultural professionals became a very relevant topic of cultural policy at the European level as one of the essential aspects of international cooperation, external relations, and the development of the globalized flux of cultural production and exchange (Duxbury and Vidović 2022a; Vidović and Žuvela 2022a; Voices of Culture 2022; Roberto Cimetta Fund 2012; Richard 2011; The Council of the European Union 2011; ERICarts 2008). For this reason, the movement of cultural professionals and artists has been fostered by a number of supranational bodies and programmes¹ and has become an indispensable part of the EU-funded projects affirming internationalization of arts and culture (OTM 2019). In the hyper-globalized world, the internationalization of arts and culture is one of the key criteria in working and valuing the success of artists, institutions, and cultural professionals. The

more one works abroad (internationally), the more one's work is considered valuable. There are plenty of cultural events that present foreign artists and their works, such as festivals, art fairs, biennials, and so on, while some of the cultural forms, such as artists' residencies, were established precisely with the purpose of transnational exchange as well as 'international mobility and interaction' (Elfving and Kokko 2019, p. 11).

Using Salazar's (2021) thesis on mobility as existential (i.e. linked to the existence of 'liveliness') and essential (i.e. considered of utmost necessity and importance), it seems that both forms of mobility are immanent to the cultural sector. For many artists and cultural professionals, mobility represents the primary source of their income as their national and local cultural policies do not offer them decent conditions to make a living and mobility provides them with conditions to survive at home (Ilić 2021; Rodríguez 2021). In that sense, many artists and cultural professionals depend on mobility and funding opportunities for mobility (in many cases international financing). Along the same line, mobility has been an inherent part of artistic and cultural activity as many cultural activities are creatively dependent on international collaboration, making mobility essential from the perspective of artistic and cultural creativity and expression. Movement or temporary migration of arts and culture actors across diverse territories and contexts have a unique trait of fostering artistic recognition and visibility, new audiences, intercultural exchange, and so on. Considering the essential and existential function of mobility in the cultural cycle, as evidenced by many studies of mobility in culture, there is an obvious lack of research that provides data on the number of mobility grant schemes, invested amounts in mobility, artists and cultural professionals who experience the mobility, and so on. However, many previous studies have thematized and considered various challenges that mobility in culture faces, the most common among them being the absence of geographical diversity of mobility funding schemes,² unequal access to mobility, the absence of adequate working and living conditions at the destination, lack of capacity, resources, infrastructure and support for environmentally responsible travelling, along

with many others (Demartin et al. 2013; Ilić 2021; KEA 2018; On the Move 2019; Duxbury and Vidović 2022b; Rodik and Jalšovec 2022).

Critique on the Bubble of Mobility in Arts and Culture

Mobility cultivates the interconnectedness of peoples, cultures, and ideas, and cross-border experiences, thus challenging traditional models of citizenship, and scrutinizing inequalities and power relations between the centre and peripheries that can contribute to dealing with asymmetrical patterns of knowledge production and exchange. Despite this, the constraints caused by the pandemic (re)opened the issues of equality and equity in mobility in arts and culture between developmentally disparate parts of the world and between motives, opportunities, access and backgrounds of the actors engaging in mobility and their ability to cross borders, those being national border or class, political, ethnic, gender, economic, cultural, social divisions. Cultural actors play a prominent role in bearing responsibility and contributing with their selections and curation to the unequal access to mobility, as many artists remain excluded from international circulation. Although for some artists and cultural professionals mobility is an integral part of their routine, for many it is an unattainable or very risky and uncommon practice. In the majority of cases of residencies, for example, the participants in mobility are 'the young, healthy, always flexible artist, independent of any personal commitments, which also matches a neoliberal concept of work' (Möntmann 2019, p. 106). When we add socio-political and cultural criteria to this praxis, which involves the compliance of the host or funder, mobility in culture reveals its exclusionary side. This brings us to the question of protectionist policies in immigration, culture, or economy that boil down to the structural marginalization of artists and cultural workers coming from the Global South, European periphery, and developing countries. Socio-political, cultural, and economic possibilities of movement in culture raise the question of distances and proximities in mobility, as well as the length of stays.

Inequalities exacerbated by systems of mobility in arts and culture become even more complex in the context of mobility's environmental responsiveness and responsibility that are increasingly present and relevant. They bring various risks, tensions, power relations, and inequalities between those who have access to more sustainable means of transportation and environmentally friendly funding incentives and those who do not. Responsibility for counteraction and prevention of catastrophic effects of climate change also seeks the recalibration of crucial functions, meanings, and contestations that define the field of mobility. In parallel, the cultural transition to green represents an additional pressure on culture as a sector that is already in a very precarious position, particularly in countries without developed environmental and cultural policies and infrastructure that cannot adequately support mobility as such and especially green mobility. Other challenges of eco-friendly mobility relate to the need for more environmentally responsible forms of travelling and a more extended stay at the destination, higher costs, lack of infrastructure, insufficient flexibility of funders, lack of knowledge and capacities of mobility actors, and current geographical disparities in policies, capacities and resources. Making ecological and informed choices needs additional structural support to move from small steps of decarbonization of their everyday practices and travelling, taking into account inequalities across disciplines, fields, sectors, geography, and many other aspects.

*The ID of Slow Mobility*³

Mobility in arts and culture needs a thorough shift. Considering a variety of implications for culture and mobility in a time of uncertainty, the precarity of artists and cultural workers and their adaptation to environmental urgencies, a radical turn of mobility practices in arts and culture can only happen far away from the dominant narrative of strong economic growth, individualism and the existing cultural policies and ecosystem. Responding to the urgency to connect and facilitate interdependence of artistic and cultural knowledge, the slow mobility

concept could represent this new typology of transformative mobility in culture. The slow mobility infrastructure denotes a broader remit of the resource base, spreading beyond the conventional transport options, spaces for staying and working on location, available technology, and organizational support onto systemic provisions that involve various aspects of cultural policy encompassing legal, governance, and financial instruments. This line of extension of mobility infrastructure aims at creating better working conditions and working perspectives for various actors in the cultural sector (in different sectors, fields, and disciplines), thus impacting cultural and artistic, as well as social, economic, and ecological traits of mobility. It encompasses various aspects of time, care, localities and main principles of social, economic, environmental, and cultural justice. The slow mobility concept is based on shifting the focus from fast mobility to prolonged local interactions within transnational and cross-border flows of people, goods and ideas through responsive policies that recognize and address the need for systemic changes in arts and culture. Embracing slow mobility as an integral part of artistic and cultural practices can contribute to better stability, sustainability and security of artistic and cultural work, as well as a lower carbon footprint of arts and cultural activities.

Slow mobility is not an intentional extension of the previously established slow movement(s).⁴ However, it does correspond to the main principles of those movements in proposing a decrease in the pace of production, work, interaction and general living. The introduction of the slowness or slowing down in cultural mobility is a step towards embracing slowness as one of the principles that can add to achieving more meaningful, calmer, healthier and egalitarian modes of functioning in and with the cultural field for all the actors involved—from individuals to communities. The notion of mobility implies moving, sharing, connecting and the right not to move. Since slow mobility relies on a shift to shorter distances, less travel, slower travel, and a longer duration of stay, it requires changing the goal and considering other forms of mobility. Slow mobility encourages the choice for short-distance travel wherever possible and travelling less but making more out of the journey. It refers to getting back

in touch with the surroundings while travelling by train or combining it with other forms of eco-friendly and shared transportation. The slow travelling takes more time for the journey itself and implies stops en route to visit artistic, social and cultural events, to meet friends and colleagues, and so on. This different approach to travel also requires the development of slow infrastructures such as slow trails, and networks, green transport, and paths for pedestrians and cyclists, accessible transport, a smart and new breed of technologies, and so on.

The local needs and realities are inherent to slow mobility. It links to slow movement(s) in shifting focus to the localities, more extended stay at the destination, the importance of bio and cultural regions, and the vitality of organic forms of production, presentation, representation, exchange and distribution of cultural and artistic work. The importance of localities (villages, rural and suburban settings, neighbourhoods, districts, quarters, municipalities, towns, and cities) becomes decisive and defining in slow mobility. In the local communities, political, economic, social, environmental and cultural trends materialize and configure a complex social order, where huge inequalities and disparities exist. In that respect, localities represent a myriad of potent and diverse points that make up the reality of contemporary political, economic and social global circulation. Their importance for the future lies in their potential for building interdependence among citizens, reconfiguring care and togetherness as the most valuable aspects of local communities (Vidović et al. 2021).

The pandemic period imposed the experience of local confinement offering a unique opportunity to reassess the importance and modes of inward and outward mobilities (Sekhar 2022) in relation to the construction, understanding and perceptions of the local epistemologies (Porcello et al. 2010). Cultural interaction, social connectedness, and feelings of commonality, encompassing caring for others and being cared for as categories that were radically accentuated in the pandemic period are dependent, for the most part, on the *in-person* engagement and experience (Perkins et al. 2022). The practices of slow mobility in arts and culture enable different conditions for all

those categories to be addressed whilst allowing for more comprehensive cultural interactions in producing new forms of cultural knowledge, experience and configuration (Porcello et al. 2010). As such, mobility highlights the roles of localities in international axes of cultural development and cooperation whilst having a profound effect on the direction of development and position of socio-cultural considerations in local cultural place-making (Arroyo 2017). The contribution of mobility in culture to the local modes and directions of cultural planning and development has been scarcely addressed by cultural policy, yet the interrelations between the locale and movement in arts and culture have gained unprecedented momentum during the recent pandemic, which caused a general standstill across the globe raising numerous theoretical, conceptual and practical questions on the meanings, relevance and repercussions of mobility in cultural policy.

The proximity and duration of stay during mobility in arts and culture are closely linked to numerous factors. The first one is comprised of already mentioned interactions and mutual modifications of the local cultural fabric and the actors that come to stay at the locale. Their connection to the local communities charts new pathways of psychogeography. Namely, in lieu of the conventional (and often faulty) 'impact assessment' logic, the mutual interplay in the place can be perceived through the lens of psychogeography, i.e. 'the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotional and behaviour of individuals' (Debord 1955 in Hadley et al. 2022, p. 27). Exploring mobility from the angle of psychogeography connects to interactionist perspectives that have had a long-standing interest in the senses (Gibson and Vom Lehn 2021). Sensorial action, i.e. the involvement of sense in the communicative practice of everyday life and how people make sensorial experiences linkable to one another is a pivotal component of the mobility in arts and culture, mostly so in the register of the entwinement (Gibson and Vom Lehn 2021) of the locale as the physical, cultural, social environment with the expectations, experience, needs, interpretations and perceptions of the incoming/

visiting artists and cultural professionals.

Entwinement and mutual sensory interaction imply the involvement of care as one of the main principles in mobility practices. Effective care for the whole system, ‘care for their peers, audiences, communities, cities, countries and the environment’ (EUNIC 2022, p. 9), is inherent in slow mobility. Care is not seen as a single-dimensional concept but a ‘social capacity and activity involving the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life’ (The Care Collective 2020, p. 5). As such, care extends from the social realm onto the environmental concerns with new considerations on how the arts and cultural sector can contribute to climate urgency and justice through social preoccupations with equitable, emancipatory and participative ethics of sustaining, affirming and developing arts and culture as essentially public goods with public interests.

Forward-thinking Cultural Policy

The full realization of the slow mobility concept in culture is possible only within a new and forward-thinking cultural policy agenda that includes many different lines of fair, equitable, participatory and planet-centric policy designs and instruments.⁵ One of the main assumptions of the successful transformation of the cultural-political framework is the provision of decent working conditions in culture by improving the well-being of artists and cultural professionals. The key mechanism includes providing fair remuneration as proper validation of their work according to specificities of respective artistic disciplines, cultural fields and sectors, and local standards and living conditions. Within the logic of wealth redistribution in society, there are more and more advocates of a universal basic income that may provide a guaranteed regular income for artists and cultural freelancers, which is sufficient to meet local standards and ensure economic security. As such, the slow mobility concept aligns and fits into the growing number of initiatives and advocacies for creating more emancipatory and democratic cultural policies built on the goals of cultural democracy, diversity and

equity. However, little progress will be made or, rather, nothing will change unless social, economic and environmental justice becomes treated as an issue of ‘*politics and culture*, rather than as cultural policy problems that can be fixed by new initiatives, funding streams’ or programmes for groups that are traditionally on the margins of cultural sectors’ primary areas of interest (Hadley et al. 2022, p. 1). It is futile to expect that concepts like slow mobility will manifest necessary changes in cultural policy, but it might induce the process of self-reflexivity in all cultural actors involved in mobility practices, from those who engage in it or fund it to those who govern the communities in which the mobilities take place and decision-makers that shape policies outlining the possibilities for changes to happen. For this reason, slow mobility should be understood as more than one of the hopeful responses of the arts and culture sector to environmental urgency that has no choice but to perpetuate the same power dynamics in the cultural sector.

A significant proportion of debates that are currently taking place in the cultural sector evolve around social, economic and environmental justice. Yet, the concrete shifts towards substantial transformation are hidden behind the fact that a cultural and funding infrastructure that legitimizes relations of equality and the perpetual state of social and environmental crises

cannot accommodate within itself an oppositional cultural politics and its attendant resistance to domination, unless these are eviscerated of their radical potential for change and transformation, and turned into perfunctory tokenism
(Hadley et al. 2022, p. 6).

As Sandel (2012, in Hadley et al. 2022, p. 6) noted, the ‘depoliticization of these debates is particularly problematic in a political climate that has seen, across the globe, a marked shift from “*having a market economy to being a market society*”’. Cultural policy, like any public policy, can be used more actively as a social change instrument supporting civil rights, environmental rights, intercultural tolerance, understanding, and so on

(Yanow 2015). In the scope of policy for mobility in arts and culture, the circle of policy actors seeks to be widened in order for the policy to address the issues and provide adequate responses. Hence, mobility actors cannot be positioned as sitting ducks just waiting for policy solutions to hit them but should be given an opportunity to utilize their agency over their own actions and the legitimacy of their specific and local knowledge grasping the diverse circumstances and context (Yanow 2015).

The future policy on mobility in culture can no longer maintain a neutral, 'business as usual' quality. To this end, the slow mobility overflows into the domains that overcome the narrow remits of (conventional) understandings of mobility, accentuating the tremendous potential that mobility has in the scope of conjuring new forms of interrelationships between culture and localities, societies, and the environment. As such, mobility can (finally) become a powerful agent of cultural and social change rather than a side-liner in cultural policy.

Notes

- 1 • Mobility in the arts and culture has been fostered by the i-Portunus programme, the first EU demand-driven mobility scheme for individuals, as well as EU programmes that support mobility such as Erasmus+ programme, Erasmus for young entrepreneurs, STARTS Residency programme, the STARTS initiative and Worth Partnership Project.
- 2 • For example, among the many previous studies on mobility, OTM (2019) revealed that within 1611 funding schemes analyzed across 41 countries, 'over 50% of both offer-led and demand-led mobility opportunities identified concentrate in only 5 to 8 countries' (p. 19).
- 3 • Socially and environmentally responsible and responsive work of artists and cultural actors, as well as funders who provide financial support for mobility in arts and culture, has been at the core of the interest for the research conducted between 2020 and 2022 in the framework of the 'The i-Portunus Houses—Kick-start a local mobility host network for artists & cultural professionals in all Creative Europe countries' project. It was implemented, on behalf of the European Commission by a consortium led by European Cultural Foundation and partners MitOst and Kultura Nova Foundation and it was dedicated to testing and analyzing various transnational mobility schemes for the cultural sector. The conducted research has yielded invaluable insight into the cultural sector's stands, needs, issues, aspirations, reflections and constructive ideas on how to progress

with adaptations of the future policy for mobility in culture. Combined insights and new knowledge on the state-of-art in mobility in arts and culture brought forth the concept of slow mobility.

4 • Slow movement started in the 1980s in Italy, initially in the domain of gastronomy, harnessing the legacies of food traditions before the overwhelming expansion of the global fast-food chains. The slow movement promoted the concept of slow living, developing a plural citizen movement of slow philosophy of life that fosters calmer living, counteracting the imperative of speed living. One of the conceptual proponents of the slow movement is Carl Honoré with his book *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed* (2004).

5 • A more comprehensive proposal of policy transformations and adaptations that would lead to more progressive, socially and environmentally attuned mobility, and a 'policy manual' for slow mobility providing concrete conclusions in form of policy recommendations are available in the most recent publications published by Kultura Nova Foundation in the scope of the i-Portunus project (Duxbury and Vidović 2022b; Vidović and Žuvela 2022b).

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Watching Grass
Grow
Forms of Care &
Cultivation

INLAND
Fernando García-Dory



In the late 1990s, after a decade of triumphant neoliberal policies around the world, with multinational corporations heavily influencing the treaties and mechanism enhancing the so-called free trade, a social movement erupted, first in Seattle during the WTO conference in 1999, then Prague, Genoa, Barcelona... Activists of a different kind constituting what was called by some the anti-globalization movement or *alter-mondialiste*. It was in that context that some of us started to wonder if the summit-hopping to those different capitals around the world would really constitute an effective response to that tsunami of globalization. Those famous words by Buckminster Fuller saying: 'You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete' resonated with us, and we started land-based projects in various rural locations. It was also a logical extension of what we found were the most transformative and inspiring alternatives and discourses, coming from Social Ecology and Libertarian Municipalism, the so-called 'environmentalism of the poor' and Agroecology, as presented by the peasant and Indigenous movement of La Via Campesina. Their leaders would make the effort to be there in all those big cities and counter-summits, in person, protesting and blocking the meetings of the financial elite, but bringing the cry of despair from their land and villages, and taking back some hope and empowered capacity of response.

The most effective and real form of protection of the land was to live in it, tending it with care.

At the same time, it started to become very clear that the way in which contemporary art functions acts as a major vector of globalization. Today, there are an estimated hundred to two-hundred biennials, fulfilling a wide array of functions. Many contribute to marketing cities or strengthening the tourist industry. They assist in the consolidation of cultural infrastructures in metropolises, making them more attractive locations for businesses there. Medium-size cities or those located on the periphery of larger cities seek to draw attention to themselves by putting on biennials. As critic Simon Sheikh puts it, the advantage of the biennial format is that it embodies 'where

the lure of the local meets the glamour of the global'.¹ And we could also count the art fairs around the world, and the herculean transportation they involve.

The artist and the artwork are conceived as the vital fluid to circulate between these poles of artistic projection, a sort of high-speed nomad or ambassador of liquidity, based in between global capitals and cultural centres.

By doing so, often the artists reaffirm the city as a space of concentration of cultural production, distribution and consumption. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent urban growth of smokey brick-and-steel Behe-moths, the artists have felt the opportunity to answer to the increasing yearning for an Arcadian rural idyll of the bourgeoisie. It was when the first artists' rural colonies sprawled around Europe. Capturing the essence of that—presented as pristine—form of life with other rhythms and simplicity, the artists flocked to villages, extracted images to represent, *en plein air*, and returned to the cities with canvases of all sizes and colours as pastoral ornamental trophies.

As the imaginery multiplied, the rural communities were languidly decaying, and the very same inhabitants of those villages and landscapes were being displaced. This process is marvelously narrated by John Berger's *Into Their Labours* trilogy novel of 1979. It depicts the peasant experience and views from a village in the French Alps as they to move to the city with its increasing need of labour for the new factories. Moving from the art critique field, Berger engaged with the accurate description of the image of the end of those small worlds, all around the world. That same year he was commissioned by the BBC to tell about the book and turned his thesis into a TV documentary. There, in conversation with Theodor Shanin, a main figure of the Peasant Studies field within Rural Sociology, Berger tells how unlike in his book, where a young peasant couple is relocated to the city, in today's rurality 'the younger generation is badly missing in the picture'. The destruction of the rural landscapes turns into desintegration and dying out, in the most physical sense, of ageing. The symbolic end of a way of living that has survived ten millennia but could not resist capitalist moderniza-

tion. Vanishment and undervaluation of peasantry can be understood as part of an actively administered invisibility that frames the groundwork for extractivism as Nixon explains in his concept of 'slow violence'. On the other hand, before they disappear completely, the lessons of these cultures' living and ecological caring should be reconsidered as a space of possibility within the huge contemporary environmental challenges, and their legacy be substrate for new ruralities and land-based livelihoods.

John Berger moved to the alpine village of Quincey, in rural France, in the 1970s. His move to the land was at times misunderstood as a kind of resignation, a man turning his back to urban culture, modernity even. This move to the country was interpreted as his farewell to politics, that his belief in progress had been replaced by a circular worldview in which everything—animals, the seasons—comes and goes, and humans cannot do much about it. The opposite was the case, as *The Seasons in Quincy*, a film initiated by his friend Tilda Swinton that explores his secrets through four portraits, showed laconically at its premiere at the 2016 Berlinale. In the mountains, as if their alpine air had sharpened his perception, Berger developed a *poetology* of the political. To him, the country was not a refuge behind nostalgia's wooden doors and comforting cottage curtains, but rather a space of opportunity, more free and less defined than overly controlled and *museumized* inner cities. As Niklas Maak points out, 'one must think of Berger not as a modernity-adverse ruralist, but as a rural futurist'.²

It is in this same sense that Inland was started as a collaborative agency and a project connecting art, territory, and social change. It provides a platform for diverse actors engaged in agricultural, social and cultural production.

During that first stage (2010–2013) we took the Spanish countryside as an initial case study. The country's territorial imbalance concentrates eighty per cent of the population on twenty per cent of the land, with vast areas mostly depopulated in a process of rural exodus strengthened in the 1970s.

We engaged with artistic production in twenty-two villages across the country, with local and nationwide exhibitions

and presentations, and an international conference.

The initial premise departed from the idea of situating artists in rural contexts, so they confront the situations there with the intention of initiating co-creative processes with an agroecological perspective. While we provided some prior training, many of the artists did not have a prior understanding of the rural question nowadays. We secured resources both for fees and production for the artists, and a local host in each village, for a stay of two or three months. The projects varied enormously, from proposing a Little Museum of the Commons in one village, to a psycho-geographic rural *derive* in another, or re-thinking an edible dimension of the landscape through a common feast and *gastrosophical* inquiry.

In general we succeeded in opening collaboration models that activated local creative potentials and connected later with broader audiences, questioning the assumption that the cities are where art happens, and the principles of individual authorship and careerism so central to industrial contemporary art. But in our intention to question that model there were other two aspects we didn't sufficiently act upon and change: the hyper-mobility and productivism as essential parts of cultural production today.

The thirst for 'the new', the succession and fast programming and the allure of a global scale of artists and institutional exchange associated with the metropolitan as epitome of the cosmopolitan, is something that would have no currency in our vision of re-rooted practices but nevertheless interconnected reflective and nurturing processes of creation in rural contexts.

In that sense, after two years developing those twenty-two projects in villages, we realized the importance of questioning the prevalent model of artists residencies. Often inheriting the idea of the artist's need of retreat for solace and contemplation, ideally 'in nature', it involved a fleeting moment of connection with the local communities we were working with. At the end of the artists' stay, the neighbours often asked 'why is the artist not staying a bit longer, how could we exchange more?' Artists move fast, just because the art system is based on the need of freelancers to be available and responsive to always arriving opportunities.

So, after that intensive period of instigating and accompanying the residencies we felt it necessary to have a period of reflection and evaluation, launching study groups on art and ecology, and a series of publications. We also conceived a new way of intervention in rural contexts, called Mobile Method, with emphasis on longer stays and collective production with a travelling group of artists and specialists from other disciplines, such as sociologists or agroecologists. Since 2016, INLAND is focusing on land-based collaborations and economies developing communities-of-practice as a substrate for post-contemporary art and cultural forms. In those spaces, we are configuring forms of stay and hosting for other visiting artists that connect and contribute to the ongoing lines of work we develop in those specific contexts where we are based (Madrid city, an abandoned village we are recovering in the North of Spain, and in the Balearic Islands).

It is a process of transition we are immersing ourselves in as well. The multiple lines of work we carry on, from our radio station, an academy or post-graduate programme, the Shepherd School, or the exhibitions and cheese making, can easily put ourselves in an intensive production mode.

As a declaration of intentions, we once were asked to contribute to Hans Ulrich Obrist's vast exhibition titled 'It's urgent'. We sent a piece of paper containing some hand-written lines:

*Stay in a place
Cultivating bounds
To store fruits
For the cold days.*

The idea of cultivation and keeping harvested fruits was not only in an agricultural sense, but also referred to the need to build stronger cooperation and forms of mutual support within our social contexts, allowing forms of resilient communities to confront the risks of authoritarian populism and excluding ideologies. Those conservative forces can profit from the rural discontent, that is often essentially a healthy reaction against neo-liberal globalization and the primacy of the

city. Unfortunately, the left has usually not been very good in connecting with the rural question, often assuming the countryside to have a backward culture and be reactionary in essence, using the term 'provincial' in a derogatory way, instead of praising it as a space of possibility for a post-scarcity of time and praise of slowness as Pierre Sansot posited.³

What seems more necessary at this moment is to generate and experiment with regenerative economies hand-in-hand with the cultural strategies that we are articulating in relation to the rural. Here, we are considering the rural both as a physical support, a territorial basis crucial for maintaining the life cycles, and as a symbolical sphere of references and values. An agroecological rurality where aspects of peasant culture and values could permeate society and sustain the transition to a more ecological models. Limited mobility, re-use and repair of goods, observation and patience to accompany the seasonal agrarian cycles, mutual support and commons, amongst others, could be part of that re-peasantification of our civilization paradigm.

An example of rural symbolical configuration of the cultural field was proposed by the Indonesian collective ruangrupa, when they chose 'lumbung', a collective granary for sustaining a village's needs or solidarity.

The concurrency of those values systems (the airport terminal VIP global player, always in movement vs the gardener or the shepherd, and their microcosms of expanded experience) with their respective legitimation mechanisms will be growing, placing the arts field between two poles. What are the incentives that are in place for the behavioural change of the forthcoming generation of artists and cultural producers? Associated initiatives, as we try by taking the para-institutional form in INLAND, can propose economic systems for an alternative welfare, rooted in the land.

In fact, what applies to the de-carbonization of the art field in relation to durational engagement and re-rooting, would also have to be considered in other sectors and professions. Working with the youth section of established farmers unions in the Netherlands, mingled with a 'Back to the land' youth movement from a city background, it was interesting to see

that the main challenge for many of those who had inherited or had access to 'successful' profitable conventional farms was to design a transition to de-intensify and regenerate the agroecosystem, while minimizing the risk of having the outputs of the farm drop in free fall. A new set of skills and networks of support (e.g., CSA, Community Supported Agriculture) or consumers cooperatives instead of supermarket contractual purchase) is needed and starts to take place.

In the case of Inland, to give an example, by continuing with the flock of sheep that retiring shepherds were going to sell, we are placed in a direct co-responsibility relation with the nonhuman animal, and that opens up a new reality. Every year, we have to walk with the flock to the seasonal pastures at a different Inland location, a form of mobile management called transhumance that mimics the ancient movement of following and chasing wild herbivores' transient patterns before Neolithic times, placing us at a 2,5 kilometres per hour speed, because the sheep are nourishing themselves while walking, bringing into it part of the Inland team who usually have been doing office-based works for the projects at our city headquarters.

Through it we end up questioning efficiency and performativity in the managerial tasks, and the division between hand labour and creative and intellectual work, breaking that divide, out of necessity.

In that sense, we also connect with the Food Sovereignty movement of small producers around the world, and distinguish between living in the land and living of the land. That is a way to break from the romantization of the pastoral and instead start to understand that the farmland is somehow a battlefield for the production models.

In that sense, the vision by Berger, not articulated entirely, but embodied, and also by his son Yves Berger, is about the importance of bringing the attentive gaze of the artist, the poet, to give voice and present the richness of that form of life that was, and that is to come:

The peasant is a guardian. His life is a reply not to the question: What will you leave behind you? but to the

question: What did you save or preserve?

Life is essentially effort interspersed with moments during which one recovers one's breath.

Weather is the master. The Weather decides. The peasant curses and blesses the sky.

Every change is at first a threat.

After, one gets used to it.

What has been lived is expressed in spoken language, above all in its silences.

Whilst moving mountains, certain questions come up and others don't.

A peasant's questions are not those of an intellectual. But both can join each other in sleep.⁴

Notes

- 1 • Simon Sheikh, 'Marks of Distinction, Vectors of Possibility. Questions for the Biennial', *Open: Cahier on Art and the Public Domain, Issue The Art Biennial as a Global Phenomenon* 16 (2009).
- 2 • Niklas Maak, 'John Berger, The Happy Centaur: Visiting a Rural Futurist', *032c*, 3 January 2017.
- 3 • Pierre Sansot, *Du bon usage de la lenteur* (Paris: Payot, 1998).
- 4 • 'A Sketch for an Ethical Portrait of a Peasant', by Yves and John Berger, published at the INLAND-Campo Adentro conference 2010.

Part 3
*Dance Away
the Crisis*

Choreographing
the Crisis
Enchantments,
Refuges, and
Impossible
(Re)positionings

Marina Guzzo



We know that there is no solution to the problem of the climate crisis. Today's climate action movement is based on a deep misunderstanding of planetary relationships. Choreographies and flows of destruction, suffering and tragedy. Exhausted in our attempts to rationalize what could be done about it, it is now necessary to imagine the impossible. To cast a counter-spell (Pignarre and Stengers 2005) and throw it to the wind. A choreography that enacts new politics of existence and positions humans and other-than-humans to experience radical new ways of living, feeling, knowing and, most importantly, moving.

This text is offered as a dance. A choreography based on the notions of enchantment and refuge, (im)possible practices that reflect on the role of artists and creators faced with the climate crisis.

Refuge is understood here on the basis of the ideas of Bona (2020), who understands poetic experience and the 'rehabilitation of dreams' as a way to understand and survive the climate crisis. In other words, the notion of refuge is not only physical, real, and territorial, but also one that takes dreams, desire and cosmopoetics as a 'point of life' (Coccia 2018).

Faced with the intrusion of Gaia, it is necessary 'to regenerate the capacity to think and act together' (Stengers 2015, p. 152). All experimentation, in the sense of fostering change in the face of a crisis, must be aesthetic and therefore political. Not as a representation, but rather 'through the production of repercussions... the constitution of "resonance chambers"' (p. 153). Experimenting and spurring on action with each other because '*However precarious or small it might be each achievement matters*' (p. 153).

But how can we act together over such distances? How to grow closer despite the inequalities?

How can we conceive of mobilities based on what it might be like to exist as artists in different parts of the world?

How to get closer to each other if the crisis itself suggests that we best follow local, sustainable and regionalized practices?

This is not to think about separating groups, but it is important to understand that although we all live on the same planet in crisis, *we do not all experience the crisis in the same way*. We are not all in the same boat. Some are on transatlantic su-

per yachts, others on rafts with flimsy moorings. Others still are cast out to sea, literally, desperately treading water and trying to find some piece of flotsam to grasp on to for dear life. The choreography of creating refuges is therefore the responsibility of all of us, especially of those who stand safely on dry land.

But how can this proposition be enacted in a way of life? How can we leave the plane of ideas and ideals, speeches and theories, and truly act? *Again, I invoke this text as a dance:* an attempt at corporeal knowledge. Dance allows us to understand that movement is how we constitute the world, and how it constitutes us in turn. And it is not just some kind of movement: it is a gesture. Gestures are loaded with all the perceptual, affective, and symbolic dimensions that are involved in the organization of the body and, as such, the world.

The gesture is a 'system organized around a particular way of feeling and perceiving' (Launay in an interview, Lima 2013, p. 106). This 'feeling' and 'perceiving' are constructed in the relationship between the body and the environment, which is located simultaneously inside and outside the body. The notion of gesture thus allows us to understand the dimension of the sensory in the production of the body, which is necessary to rethink issues of mobility, art, and the environment. Each and every action makes a difference.

Gestures are always entangled with and exist on the foundations of others. The gesture is created through the encounter. It is about developing our 'kinaesthetic empathy' (Foster 2011) and understanding that each gesture promotes a gesture of/in the other. That our dance is also a dance with the Earth, that we are all together bound up in this relationship of movements, big and small. The term 'kinaesthetic empathy' seeks to explain the connection between artist and audience, which is dependent on the history of those who make it and those who watch it, but also on the technologies present at the moment the scenic experience is constructed. It is a concept we can also extend to artistic experience more broadly. Kinaesthetic experience arises from intention, from the desire to share the sensory and to move together.

Empathy offers us the possibility of deciphering this

perception or, as Susan Foster (2011) argues, empathy consists of the act of providing kinaesthetic sensations with the images that synthesize their physical and emotional experiences. *What empathic gestures are possible to give rise to refuges?*

Here, I organize some of them for the purposes of composing a choreographic text. I underline that this is *NOT* a manual or a score, but rather an *open field to open lines of escape from a problem that words can no longer tackle*. Words that I want to spill, to spread out in order to generate a desire for movement. It is necessary to imagine, to fabulate, to speculate. And speculation requires a body. It is an earthly relationship. It demands that we throw ourselves into and play in another plane of change. In a ‘cat’s cradle’—that children’s game played with string—as Donna Haraway (2016, p. 10) puts it:

Playing games of string figures is about giving and receiving patterns, dropping threads and failing but sometimes finding something that works, something consequential and maybe even beautiful, that wasn’t there before, of relaying connections that matter, of telling stories in hand upon hand, digit upon digit, attachment site upon attachment site, to craft conditions for finite flourishing on terra, on earth.

Choreography

First, it is important to expand on the very idea of the gesture of choreography. If we look to the etymology of the word, we see that it originates from the Greek *chorus* (circle) and *graphe* (writing, representation). The element of the circle is a reference to circular dances and the orchestra, the place in which the Greek theatrical chorus danced. To choreograph, in the etymological sense, is to draw and mark space with the body in movement. To choreograph is thus to position something in relation to time, to space, to writing, to movement. *To choreograph is to organize the possibilities of transformative gestures in space and time.*

André Lepecki suggests that in 1700, the word choreography—or chorégraphie—began to denote writing and move-

ment, body and sign, paper and floor (Lepecki 2006). With that, and from that, the term *chorégraphie* was established for the writing or notation of dance, thus confining dances that had previously taken place in public and profane spaces to a specific room, the theatre, at the service of the eighteenth-century monarchy. As Lepecki puts it in *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (p. 3):

...the development of dance as an autonomous art form in the West, from the Renaissance on, increasingly aligns itself with an ideal of ongoing motility. Dance’s drive towards a spectacular display of movement becomes its modernity, in the sense Peter Sloterdijk... defines it: as an epoch and a mode of being where the kinetic corresponds to ‘that which in modernity is most real’ (2000b, p. 27, emphasis added). As the kinetic project of modernity becomes modernity’s ontology (its inescapable reality, its foundational truth), so the project of Western dance becomes more and more aligned with the production and display of a body and a subjectivity fit to perform this unstoppable motility (Lepecki 2006).

Lepecki goes on to point out several ways of creating and existing by starting from the pause, or the motionless body. In the ambiguity of the term *exhausting*, there is, for Lepecki, a dance that also tires us by always proposing the same structure of movement, without any concern for the problematization of the present moment. At the same time, it also indicates a desire to rethink a politics of movement, to exhaust the idea of movement.

Choreographing here is understood as the verb that enables us to (re)position ourselves, from our own bodies, to think about the climate crisis and artistic mobility.

The Pause

The first gesture I propose for this dance-text is the pause.

One of the most important aspects of the climate cri-

sis is the speed and volume of production that we humans have set as a planetary rhythm. Before doing anything else, we simply need to pause. However, it is important to ensure the sustenance of all, so that everyone is able to pause.

The capacity of artistic activity can help build new regimes of perception and, as an invaluable resource of human existence, empower us to face up to the climate emergency (or *Capitalocene*, to include the economic system at the centre of the climate emergency). It is not possible to speak about a crisis without also addressing the neoliberal capitalist system that underpins the arts regime and market. As such, it is also necessary to combat the inequalities put forward by this system in the field of those who play the leading role in this market.

Let us take a long, deep breath.
Feel the chair and feel the armrests, feel your feet on the floor.
Feel your spine in space, its supporting curves.
Close your eyes.
Rest for a brief moment.

Landing

Moving on to the second thought-gesture: landing. While Bruno Latour (2020) mentions this gesture in his recently published book, I would like to focus on the landing that concerns *the ground itself*. Landing is making 'particular and immanent an action whose main object is what Paul Carter calls, in his book *The Lie of the Land*, the politics of the ground' (Lepecki 2012, p. 47). For Carter (*apud* Lepecki 2012), the politics of the ground involve an awareness of all the elements of a situation, especially their physical particularities (such as the ground we are standing on) so as to include it and everything it carries as situated knowledge, together with the body, in the composition of a story or a history. Visible and invisible elements that inhabit the space of encounter. Humans and other-than-humans that inhabit and move the ground. The ground that carries stories and struggles, memories and ancestry. The ground that is also our future. To

choreograph from the ground, to land on your own territory and take it with you, is to assume that every choreography is political, or *choreopolitical* (Lepecki 2012). To land is to be aware of your own gesture, your own ground.

Feel your feet on the ground. Feel the weight of your body. Feel the texture of that surface. If you can, lie on the ground, roll on the ground, feel the ground. With it and from it, we can propel each and every gesture.

Aquilombar

From the ground, from the ancestral, we come to the next gesture: *aquilombar*. I ask permission here to use this Brazilian Portuguese term derived from the word *kilombo*, of Bantu origin, also known in Brazil as *quilombo*, a place where escaped black slaves gathered to take care of themselves and keep alive the memory of the heritage that sustained them.

One of the most important forms of resistance to the slave plantation consisted in escaping and blending into the forest. This practice, known as *marronage*,¹ is a form of social, political and cultural opposition, which often gave rise to the formation of organized societies that shared their preparations for war, for celebration and for a life together (Glissant 2014; Bona 2020).

Even with the end of the slavery regime (which is still perpetuated by plantations), the idea of the *quilombo* as a refuge is sustained as a technology and a device of survival and resistance against forms of oppression (Nascimento 2006 *apud* Souto). '*Aquilombar-se* is a verb which designates the seeking out of a *quilombo*, the formation of a *quilombo*, the becoming of a *quilombo*. In other words, *aquilombar-se* is the act of assuming a position of counter-hegemonic resistance by a political body' (Nascimento 2006 *apud* Souto, p. 141).

An important technology/choreography that the *quilombo* teaches is the notion, the strategy and the awareness that being together expands the power of action and transformation. Of doing together. Of sharing. It is an aspect of the ancestral

knowledge of Afro-Brazilian culture that deserves to be cited, disseminated and understood with respect and care.

Make alliances for your work. Hire a professional from the Global South for your project. Pay better fees to those who are less known. Create conditions to work with mothers and their children. Make groups and collective strategies. We are not alone. Set up strategies to create a common plan.

Othering

To choreograph the climate crisis is to choreograph with and for the Other—a key element for thinking of ways out beyond discourses. *Othering* is the fourth gesture to choreograph the crisis. The Other is here the other-than-human. Authors such as Latour (2014), Stengers (2015), Haraway (2019) and Tsing (2019) point out that, together with the Anthropocene,² the separation of nature and culture is unsustainable.

We should remember (if we dare) that the philosophical, artistic and political constructions of the history of Western civilization were based on the climatic stability that characterized the Holocene—that is, on ecological conditions stable enough for humans to stop perceiving and feeling the protagonism of other-than-human agents in matters relating to their own existence, to collectivities, creating instead an idea of ‘Nature’ that exists as a backdrop or stage, inert, on which human action takes place (Guzzo and Taddei 2019). The most worrying aspect is not that capitalism does not care about the atmosphere, but that the atmosphere does not care about capitalism (Stengers 2015).

In the face of this, we stand at a crossroads, needing to conceive of practices not only to confront this crisis, but to include the Other and create refuges to not only survive, but to flourish. It is important to broaden the political meanings of the arts, to create new forms of contact between living creatures, due to their provisional, ephemeral, mutable presence.

The field of arts and culture has a great responsibility in

pursuing this task. Yet it is precisely in the sensory encounter that we are able to invent new ways of existing, feeling, dreaming and confabulating. It is important to point out that it is not just any art that does this, but one based on Dénèm Touam Bona’s proposition of:

An art that is like a celebration of the earth, a celebration of the sky, a celebration of the cosmos. An art that is a great Yes to life. And as such, an art that forces us to say No. To bear witness to the intolerable, the filthy, the destruction of the world. Whether of the 6th mass extinction of living species or of the sinister agony of the right to asylum (Bona 2020, p. 34).

The proposition of an art that is truly engaged in forms of social transformation, and that does not reproduce what the art market claims as to be urgent, based on its own agenda established in calendars and spaces delimited and accessed by few. An art for which the climate crisis does not become merely one more product to sell a certain type of art that serves the minority that attends museums and galleries, in a circuit that also implements modes of exclusion and the exploitation of nature, of objects and of cultural workers.

Besides bearing witness to the intolerable, the art proposed from this reflection can offer us ways of imagining other meanings, practices, bodies, movements, materials, alliances. To amplify regimes of perception and sensibility. A certain ‘technology’ of invention and existence, of the production of imaginative, subjective and social health. Without magical idealizations or ready-made formulas. As Stengers (2010) suggests, this ecology of practices consists of situations/tools that enable us to think, decide, and produce frontiers between what is visible and invisible in relation to disputes about possible futures.

But how to make art without an encounter?

Without a presence?

Without a body?

An art which is multiple and diverse can also intensify sensibilities and the perception of the problem before us, without

necessarily pointing to solutions. By inhabiting the problem, as Donna Haraway (2016) puts it. To remain and sustain it as an understanding that there will not be a single solution, but multiple exercises, imaginary and speculative exits, narratives that can tell other stories, about other worlds, other species and other landscapes.

Dance with plants, with animals, with the earth,
with the wind, with the sea. Call on those who
are very different from you to dance. Who you
cannot even imagine. Approach the stranger.
Touch them.

Displacing the Protagonists

This is a fundamental gesture to make this whole dance possible. And, perhaps, the most difficult. To displace the protagonists.

This will demand deeper articulations and alliances. Haraway (2016) points precisely to these alliances and articulations between different peoples and cultures as the protagonists of transformative actions, including humans and other-than-humans, as being critical for the development of the problem itself (the climate crisis). We must turn to the idea of interspecies companionship (Haraway 2016), our relatives and neighbours, as Ailton Krenak would say.

We are all neighbours (Krenak and Cesarino 2016).
Yet some of us don't have a house to live in.

The relations of kinship and neighbourliness must be rethought and reinvigorated from other places and displacements, including in art and its forms of production and circulation. With whom art is made. And for whom. A displacement of protagonists, an exchange, so that we avoid the risk of continuing to promote an endless spectacle of disassociation from the ongoing ecocide.

The destruction wrought by colonization has given rise to a movement that Antônio Bispo dos Santos, or Nêgo Bispo (2015), calls counter-colonization, referring to all processes of resistance and struggle in defence of the territories of the counter-colonizing peoples, along with their symbols, meanings and

ways of life. Throughout this struggle, Nêgo Bispo's work and thought promote a chance of 'becoming a *quilombola*', to understand the land and the territory in the sense of existential universes that are linked, not only to economic production, but to the bodies and spirits of these peoples, to be able to care for and protect the physical and symbolic territories that are at stake in this war of worlds (Bispo 2015).

*Because even if they burn the writing / They cannot
burn orality / Even if they burn the symbols / They
cannot burn the meanings / Even if they burn our
people / They will not burn our ancestry* (Bispo
2021).

In this sense, we can think of an art (or many arts) in the face of climate emergency as a potential method of establishing alliances between different ontologies: to bring different forms of life and knowledge into contact and exchange in a sensory (and not only rational) sense. A capacity to establish dialogue between different worlds and ways of life. These different worlds point to the transit between Indigenous and *quilombola* communities, but also between scientists and their scientific data, concrete numbers and measures that only make sense to scholars and subject specialists. The displacement of protagonists can be thought of as a transit and a crossing of knowledge. Diaspora choreographies, which consider the body and differences as a possibility of (re)existence and futures (Silva 2018).

Art as an Exercise in Alterity (beyond that which the circuit and market define as 'other')

An art that can diffuse the gravity of a situation through different languages, something that can have a positive impact on our awareness and engagement with the crisis. A way of facing fear and snapping out of our paralysis in the face of the terrible future that is approaching, with courage (acting with the heart) and joy, which is, according to Spinoza, the greatest of refuges.

Artists, educators, researchers, cultural producers, and curators all need to incorporate the environmental issue (in the sense of understanding this issue in and from the body). The environment has never been separate from us, other than in the modern illusion of separation of culture and nature. We are nature.

An art that becomes accessible to the imagination, or that is proposed as an ethical opening to be glimpsed through the dissolution of 'understanding' in favour of the imagination (Silva 2019).

If you have an opportunity to present your work, invite along another person who would not normally be able to go with you. Open spaces to invite people who have not yet been called in. Change the protagonists of your actions and creations, including other-than-humans on the stage. For curators: curate other people, not just those you like and know (and who please the market).

Enchantment

In what way are we nature? In the sense that we are not separate from it. It is in the aesthetic and sensory field that this union gains power of action, and can help us escape a narrowly theoretical perspective. I invoke here the notion of enchantment as a political practice of life that can help conjure this choreographic 'counter-spell'.

According to Simas and Rufino (2020), the notion of enchantment is the integration of all forms that inhabit the landscape, of the visible and the invisible (materiality and spirituality), and the connection across different space-times (ancestry). The enchanted figure is one who circulates between these times and planes, who transmutes colonial oppression and domestication into different worlds and landscapes. In other words, 'enchantment is a political grounding which challenges the limitations of the so-called consciousness of Westernized mentalities' (Simas and Rufino 2020, p. 7).

Enchantment involves approaching the knowledge and practices present in Afro-Amerindian cultures. These are our neighbours and Others who have sustained ways of approaching the end of the world several times, in many ways, over many years. The presence of the 'enchanters' is vast and can be found at all the world's crossroads, especially in Brazil. It is important to also rescue contents to preserve together with these landscapes: the enchantments, the enchanted, the enchanters. Technologies of existence, in the face of plantations and disenchantment, deserts of monoculture.

The enchanted is the one who has obtained the experience of crossing time and transmuting into different expressions of nature. In Brazil, the enchanters, embodied in the beating of the drums, the forests and the trance of its people cross countless references to draw on the shores of the New World, a policy of life based on cosmic and cosmopolitan principles (Simas and Rufino 2020, p. 6).

Organize a large circle of people, sing, play drums, shake your hips, sway, perform an 'umbigada' belly bump. It's during the dance that all enchantment takes place.

Rebolar

Just as Malcom Ferdinand (2022) proposes that we think about the climate crisis from the Caribbean and its history and seas of exploitation, I propose that we dance the crisis from that which emerges from Brazil. We need to decolonize the crisis, including the way we think about it. I join Taísa Machado (2020) in seeking to develop a 'science of the *rebolado*', an idea that presents concrete proposals to deal with issues such as the liberation of female body, the confrontation of racism, and the circulation through peripheral territories—all necessary actions related to the way we feel and commune with the Earth.

To *rebolar* is to see dance and gesture as a possibility to rein-

vent our perception of the cultural production of the peripheries (Taísa speaks especially of the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, the birthplace of funk, but we can think of many other peripheral cultures that hold the gesture of invention of the world in the hips). It is through a woman's hips that we come into the world; it is through her hips that we can also connect to it, and to the way it resides in us. To rebolar is much more than moving physically, it is moving sensualities, fertilities, spiritualities. Moving the hips can help us connect to our ancestry, and therefore to the future.

Feel your feet on the ground, listen to the sound of funk, of samba, of the drums. Begin to move your hips. Draw circles with them. Draw an infinity symbol with your hips. Feel connected.

Sharing

The social inequality imposed on non-European peoples is especially grave in the field of arts. We live kinetic realities of discrepant mobility, diffusion and circulation. Perhaps it is a moment for Europe to rethink the alliances of destruction it has caused and continues to cause in the world subordinate to its 'centre'. From here in the Global South, we do not have to think of 'decreasing' flows of labour or displacement, since the flows have already been held back by public and private economic policies. To catch a train to emit less carbon is not a choice for us. Down here, we want and need to keep travelling. We need to circulate ideas, we need structure for creation, we need respect, listening, and the possibility of encounters. We need to earn euros. We need a programme of dissemination for artists in the Americas and for them to be able to circulate to other parts of the globe. We need culture and art to receive generous incentives, in order for artists no longer to starve or require parallel activities to sustain their creative processes.

The climate crisis is the fruit of an unequal society and the destructive processes of colonization. Trying to solve the crisis without thinking about or considering social inequalities is yet another way of reinforcing this structure. From the form of contracting labour and distributing income to the means of institutional sponsorship

of companies that pollute and destroy the environment.

If the climate crisis triggered in the Anthropocene is common to all of us, as a political and aesthetic crisis, art not being separated from life, and therefore from nature, then care and the power of imagination of other possible worlds will play a fundamental role. The simplified ecologies of plantations require a rehabilitation of the power of dream and poetry: 'that sensual intelligence, which redefines the rainbow of the possible' (Bona 2020, p. 10).

Circulating, finding and flying make it possible to apprehend the world as a living totality, with the experience of community, of the commons, along with everything that inhabits and constitutes us: vegetables, minerals, water, air, and other people. This can be done in the backyard, but it can also be done at an art festival, at a large exhibition, at a show.

Instead of proposing the reduction of artistic and cultural mobility, maybe we should imagine just the opposite. Enlarge it so that new protagonists present their works, dreams, ideas, refuges, technologies, expanding modes of circulation and transit. Because from the notion of enchantment, there are many ways of moving that do not use carbon, unlike planes and trains, but a simple knowledge of hapticality, of knowing how to care for something, of being able to dance with the other, both human and other-than-human.

With nature as the protagonist of our longing to experience and protect life, and not as a 'background' that is separate from us. Without fear or hope, but with the awareness of our repositioning (Tsing 2019). Or of enchantment.

The word 'enchantment' comes from a French word, *chanter*, which means to sing. And maybe that's what it's all about: 'singing' the world to bring it into being. Or better: 'dancing' the world to bring it into being. This 'song' or 'dance' includes poetics, aesthetics, the transmutation of values and ideals. It is radical, and very difficult to do.

It is choreographing the crisis, dancing with it.

It is a spiral bodily movement that always reaches out to the other, that extends a hand, a listening ear, empathy.

It is a realization in chorus and as part of a multiverse landscape: a path in a closed forest, towards which, on the horizon, points the desire to move forward: still enchanted by the power of life.

To finish, take another deep breath. Feel your feet on the ground. Look around you. Create the presence that is necessary in the world to really propose other (re-)positions.

Notes

- 1 • *Marronage* is derived from the word *marrom* (brown), a term that is in turn derived from the Spanish *cimarrón* (feral). The term is also used to designate a slave who ran away from the Plantation or Estate and sought refuge in the surrounding hills and forests. These escapes were undertaken individually or in small groups. Some *marrons* remained isolated for a long time, while others formed bands around a chief or joined a pre-existing band. In Portuguese, the term corresponds to the *quilombo* and the figure of the *quilombola*, an Afro-Brazilian resident of a *quilombo* settlement (Glissant 2014, p. 89).
- 2 • Haraway and Tsing have criticized the term Anthropocene, suggesting Capitalocene or Plantationocene in order to remove the centrality of *anthropos* and place the focus on the economic system that produces death, misery, exclusion and species extinction.

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To Have Eyes in the Back

Georgia Nicolau
in Conversation with
Luciane Ramos Silva



The first time I saw Luciane Ramos Silva, she was dancing. We were at the Afro—Corpo em Diáspora (Afro—Body in Diáspora) dance class she has been leading at an arts and educational centre in São Paulo for some years now. She is an artist in movement, an artist of movement, an artist who stimulates movement, with a particular focus on strengthening South-South relationships between Brazil and West Africa. Through her pedagogy, body and thought, Luciane calls on the bodies present to cast off the apathy instilled by wearingly regular reports that the end of the world is nigh. Her presence and ideas trigger a surge of vitality and strength; there is no longer any option to remain static or indifferent. It is the power of those who came before us—vital in understanding the artist's imagination—which triggers our own imagination as we walk along with 'eyes in our back and a smile at the corner of our lips' as one of her performances instigates. As well as a dance artist, Luciane is an anthropologist, cultural mediator, co-editor of the magazine *O Menelick 2° Ato* and project manager at Acervo África.

This conversation took place in several instalments, starting the day before the most important election in Brazil since it became a democratic country—an election that was significant for the rest of the world and represented a turning point for the issues addressed in this book. Ultimately, just as there would be no art without politics, there would be no politics without art... or life to tell the story. This is very clear from our conversation, which continued as she moved towards the empire, as she calls it, or Boston, where she is performing with the Anikaya Dance Theater dance company. For the artist and thinker, art cannot be separated from life and our conversation reminded me of a quote from Luiz Antonio Simas and Luiz Rufino: 'Either we listen and talk with other voices or we silence ourselves forever.' We must train ourselves to listen carefully, as the poem by Bira-go Diop that Luciane recites invites us to do.

Georgia Nicolau • *Presenting very different threads of the conversation around climate awareness and art, this book contains reflections by various authors on ancestry and other ways of being in the world that transcend the rational, modernist logic of what is known as the West.*

They advocate sensing, intuition and extra-territorial connection as a different way of life. You perform an important task with your research into gestures, decoloniality and African diaspora movements. What does this ancestry mean to you in your research as a movement artist and thinker?

Luciane Ramos Silva • I think when you say that either an Indigenous person or a European is talking about ancestry or pondering how ancestry relates to our lives, these are ethics or ways of narrating and reflecting on the world that may not have been immediately obvious or may not have been at the top of the Syllabus. I use the word 'Syllabus' because one of my performances reworks the university dance curriculum, which is deeply Eurocentric. These days, we've experienced a shift in perceptions and this has occurred in various parts of the world. In the United States, where I've been building artistic and intellectual relationships for more than ten years now, people are calling for a greater focus on Afro-American dance techniques and dancers like Katherine Durham, who had strong ties to the Teatro Experimental do Negro and to Mercedes Batista, one of the founders of modern dance in Brazil, and was among the proponents of the first law criminalizing racism in Brazil.¹ Of course, this is a very different socio-political context but the ties with the African diaspora have prompted me to establish connections to enable critical discussion both here and there and to create networks of solidarity. Interacting with artists from the African continent also leads to expansion and emphasizes the need to build more South-South relationships to help us understand what we call ancestry, because this concept or premise is practically a prerequisite for life in deepest Africa. Besides an awareness of ancestry, this deepest Africa brings with it the idea of the extended family that creates community and the idea of solidarity itself, or, ultimately, the very notion of bodies carrying ancestry: here, I view the body as a comprehensive whole—the body of flesh and entrails,

the body of invisible things and the body shaped by society. For many African peoples, ancestry leaves a legacy in the land that is vital for the community's continuity. Perhaps in the capitalist world, an ancestor can only be someone who hands down a seafront apartment as an inheritance. Until recently, these cultures and peoples had been mere objects of study or of sensationalist headlines calling for humanitarian aid; now, they are our interlocutors, suggesting ideas for a more liveable world. These interactions remain on a very small scale, but they are present in these microspheres. In macro terms, Brazil's South-South relations with the African continent have regressed over the last six years. However, this ancestry is so strong in the places where I was on the African continent, which is the basis of Brazilian Black ancestry, and do not only concern the invisible, it structures our body and our presence in the world.

GN • What is the purpose of this research into ancestry? Is it about restoration and healing? Sometimes, it almost seems like a quest for redemption. A search for sanctuary, for possible ways out.

LRS • Delving into our ancestry requires us to look within ourselves and those around us and to look back at our history to understand what made us who we are. It obliges us to look beyond the hegemonic understanding that is limited, at best, to viewing ancestry as something genetic or related to the past or to 'the dead who are dead'. As an anthropologist and dancer, I welcome my ancestry because it supports me in producing what I put out into the world. Perhaps ancestry is misunderstood because it is a complex idea. Could it be that? Or perhaps it has been overlooked precisely because it is so valuable to subordinate cultures. I am slightly sceptical of this desperate search for ancestry among certain sectors of society. It might be yet another movement seeking to appropriate our forms of creativity. We shall see. I interpret and produce realities based on an awareness of ancestry, but it

can also drive political and social constructions. Ancestry is about knowing where we come from so we know where we are going—this idea that I am repeating has become a kind of slogan, but it fits what I am trying to say. Ancestry fosters relationships, connects us to the sacred part in every person (I am not referring to religion necessarily, but to spirituality) and is even linked to ways of enchantment or searching for meaning. I think that this relationship with ancestry—in other words, reviving what we are made of in relation to memory, that is, my ancestors, those who live within me, the stories of my ancestors who live within me, in my imagination and in my physical body, my anatomical form—inevitably carries a sense of struggle. I am here to continue their story, to strengthen and honour the blood and sweat of the ancestors I carry within me. Our Black and Indigenous ancestors shed blood and sweat, as we know. Those same ancestors also bear knowledge generated within the family, community and society. So, this cure that I aim for also has to do with a certain social possibility of cure, which only happens collectively.

GN • I think that in recent years non-white intellectuals have been highlighting the importance of ancestry, a non-binary world, and humans and other-than-humans together. Are we finally listening to them? I was reading about Exu² today. The problem isn't talking to Exu; Exu is the Orixá³ of communication and speaks every language. The challenge is being able to listen to Exu.

LRS • It seems inevitable that Black religiosities will be remembered as a place where nature and culture come together. These spiritual forms offer a closer relationship with nature—they are non-fragmented and take human energies and their flows into consideration, for example. The body as the sum of the whole. The elements of nature have an intrinsic relationship with the deities, or rather, the deities are elements of nature in some way, taking on human forms, virtues and limitations. Oxum⁴ and

the waters of the rivers. The deity associated with plants or a plant herself, like the Orixá Iroco. In Black religiosities, the relationship with space, nature, and the environment echoes an ancestral Africanity. In the everyday lives of Black communities, this relationship is also present as there is a history of these Black forms even outside the Candomblé yards. Our elderly grandmothers and great-grandmothers taught us about leaves. I am thinking here of the African healers persecuted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when hygienist models of health based on Western medicine were being imposed. These hygienist models were imposed in several regions in Brazil. There was a relationship between treatment and cure that was based on the science of herbs but also took into account the role of invisible factors in the diagnosis and cure. Of course, references can also be found in Indigenous ways of relating to the world, which is not my area of research. Different communities develop different relationships with their surroundings and adapt the relationship between nature and culture in their own way. As these dichotomies are broken down, the relationships between body and mind or between real and imaginary are also subjected to different interpretations when analyzed from non-Western perspectives. If we think about Afro-Brazilian forms of cultural expression such as *capoeira*, African diaspora dances, and folk dances, they all point to the idea that human beings are living organisms that participate, feel, and are constituted, shaped and understood as people in this relationship with the context. And that context is the community, the group. There can be no *capoeirista* without a *capoeira* group. What dance teaches us, for example, regardless of whether it takes place in Candomblé yards, at street festivals or on stage, is that besides breaking down dichotomies, we also reconfigure the very notion of the person. A person is a person rather than an individual precisely because they are constituted within a community. There is a relationship with the community that forms the per-

son. The idea of the individual is deconstructed and the notion of the person emerges. It is possible to adapt these practices so that they do not drain life, but they must be analyzed, as we are doing now, as part of a complex mechanism based on patriarchal, whiteness-oriented, imperialist, racist capitalism. We have accepted rupture as an integral part of this new understanding. I'm thinking of the crack where water springs up from the soil, where the elements emerge, as a necessary component of that shift towards a new ethics, or rather of an ethics that is taking root, because it is not new. It is an old ethics that we need to bring up to the surface.

GN • How does that affect our relationship with nature? You wrote a text that I really enjoyed where you evoke Joseph Ki-Zerbo's thoughts on development as the idea of making the best use of what we have so that it bears fruit without exhausting our resources.

LRS • If we think about our direct relationship with the natural world, I would highlight our relationship with medicinal plants, for example. My relationship with herbs is a practical one; I do not grow plants; I just have one thing or two here and there in my garden at home and pots in the yard. I am familiar with basil because my grandmother Benedita used to make tea and she said that it was a herb that was good for everything. My grandmother would always show me the basil in her little garden and she would say it was good for everything, even sadness. And my grandmother was no poet. She would say: 'This one here is good for everything, even for sadness.' During the pandemic, I was desperate to keep my body healthy and I began to research basil. I found out that it has an antioxidant effect on the intestines and the digestive system. A digestive system and intestines that work bring us balance. Could it be that state of balance that was able to cure the sadness my grandmother mentioned? Does less sadness equal more joy? Is happiness a state of balance? Professor Muniz Sodré has a phrase about joy:

to think of joy from the point of view of Black aesthetics is to understand it almost as a metaphysics. Happiness is a state of balance between a person and their surroundings. In other words, if I reflect on what the ancestors who live within me, who I carry with me, can teach me with regard to ancestral principles, perhaps it has to do with understanding happiness not only as ecstasy, fervour or an electric state, but as a search for balance. A search for balance in this body, which is capable of drawing on these ancestral teachings to generate, enable and reflect on states of healthiness and happiness, or, in other words, balance. When I mention balance, you mentioned Joseph Ki-Zerbo, a thinker from Burkina Faso. He presents a series of ideas about development that go beyond the neoliberal, capitalist logic of resource exhaustion. This is what we have been taught, either explicitly or implicitly: drain, drain, drain, use, use, use, squeeze, squeeze, squeeze, it's all gone, move elsewhere, drain, drain, drain, squeeze, squeeze, squeeze. So, development from this point of view is to think about what kind of optimal relationship I can have with my context. I'm not a farmer, I'm not someone who cultivates the land, but this way of thinking has prompted me to think about my surroundings. Understanding dance in terms of the resources I have, in terms of the ways in which we move our bodies. Ki-Zerbo will point out the incompatibility of the idea of development in the European perspective and his experience as a man of African societies. Instead, it is about finding the best possible conditions for ourselves and our communities—development is about using the resources we have in the best way possible. Ki-Zerbo criticized the way in which the European model of development served to guarantee development for Europeans while draining Africa of its resources. Not only natural resources—that's rather obvious, but I think that capitalist logic overlooks and runs roughshod over this kind of notion. Things get used up and we get screwed over. It also exhausts people's bodies, through neo-colonial exploitation mechanisms or

prevents communities from discovering their potential. After all, they work to meet the desires of the European world. But I'm interested in incorporating this practice, this concept into my cultural work to make it accessible to other people. Joseph refers to the concept of endogenous development. Development from within. In some of his work, Muniz Sodré also talks about making optimal use of our own resources. When I think in terms of the body, making optimal use of our resources or looking for an optimal use involves making use of our stories and our ways of moving, of our technologies! As we identify our resources, we also identify our stories and the traumas and pain we carry with us, discovering ways of opening up space in our muscles and fascias to heal these wounds.

GN • How does this come out in your work?

LRS • As a Black person and researcher of African diasporas, reflecting on Black history, its challenges and its creations in such difficult circumstances is part of the process of recreating oneself. I have talked a lot about dance techniques from an African diaspora perspective, which inevitably break away from the logics of body organization based on classical ballet, to give just one example, which is a principle and a school of body training that is highly valued as a way of educating the body. How can we think about a Brazilian body, a body conceived primarily through aesthetics, through Black and Indigenous ways of life and a tiny layer of Europeanness? How can I speak of training the body through classical ballet as the most important method when it carries within it ideas of idealized, normative bodies? It is not possible to think of a Brazilian body from a technique that reflects systematically colonising ideas of being. It makes no sense; it does not allow us to put our own resources and structures to use. This is not to say that studying ballet is inherently wrong, but there is a need to situate it and update it to fit the Brazilian context. If we talk about development

using local natural resources, I can say that if we think of nature in a holistic manner, my body cannot be separated from constructions using those resources. I can see that this approach and this concern with exhausting resources has led us to feel the world, feel ourselves and be aware of our bodies, taking us to another level of listening, sensitivity and perception of things in the world. This brings about change, making me a more sensitive person, making my body more aware. I do not only use my eyeballs to see, I see beyond the capitalist world with its powerful visual incentives, where we would become disorientated if we were to leave the house and walk five steps with our eyes closed. We are unable to perceive smells or use our other senses to orientate ourselves. That's why we get lost. At some of the residencies I teach, we use an exercise based on an idea from my friend and fellow artist, Sherwood Chen, where we go out into the city near where we are training with our eyes blindfolded and we spend some time wandering around familiar places that have become utterly foreign to us upon closing our eyes—with help from someone keeping an eye on us, of course—and then we discuss what we felt and perceived with our eyes shut. What do I gain by keeping my eyes closed? In this society where everything comes to us in a rapid succession of images moving before our eyes, when we are able to perceive the world using our other senses, we are strengthened and our bodies are empowered to do what is needed to act politically in the world. I mean, we are acting politically all the time. When I open a door, I'm engaging in politics. But I think my concern with nature opens my eyes and opens up my body, my pores and my entire structure to other senses and to the expressed recognition of others who live here. As a dance artist, I need to talk about the corporeal senses that trigger within me other senses, understandings and perspectives of the world.

GN • It seems to me that everything you are saying points to another

way of being in the world, one that does not result in every last bit of our resources being used up. Every time you mention ancestral thought, that divide between nature and culture makes less and less sense, or no sense at all.

LRS • In a way, we are influenced by an understanding of the world where this idea of nature and culture being separate is present. It's there in science and, to some extent, in common sense, but all of this is based on a Eurocentric narrative. Western scientists viewed the relationship between nature and culture as a dichotomy until around the 1950s. I'm speaking from an anthropological perspective here. When Lévi-Strauss began to question this duality after publishing his book *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, he based his thoughts on a reading of non-Western cultures. I am speaking of 'the West' here despite it in itself being a slippery, generalist term. The ideas of culture overcoming the biological world, of culture as the complete opposite to an essential, immutable nature or even of science and technology distancing human beings from nature, as people believed for a time, have been increasingly challenged in Western schools of thought over the years. In Brazil, looking to Amerindian cultures was a game changer. Going some way to dispensing with this dichotomy was the radical idea of Amerindian perspectivism explored by Viveiros de Castro⁵ and Tânia Stolze⁶: animals and plants... could be people! For some Indigenous populations in Latin America, other beings have a soul and recognize themselves as human, despite being perceived as plants, animals or objects by humans. Yet we must not forget that, throughout its long history, this anthropology was also associated with a more scientific narrative that drew on daily life, research and observation but was shaped for many years by the relationship between 'us and the Other' or by us and the 'Same', in the words of Congolese philosopher V.Y. Mudimbe. It centred around white men explaining the world based on their bodies, their assumptions, and, above all, their du-

alistic, hierarchical perception of the Other as primitive and 'us' as civilized.

In everyday life on the ground, the nature-culture divide does not make sense in dark-skinned communities in this way. I'm talking about communities with African roots, Quilombola groups, Candomblé communities, small rural communities, peripheral groups where traditional practices play a central role. They have a more holistic relationship with nature and the intangible. Now, we mustn't idealize that holism. It's not all harmony and symbiosis [laughs].

GN • This art that you profess to see, an art that is fire in the sense of the element, of something that trembles—do you think that it will change or that it has a role to play in a world whose collapse is repeatedly being foretold?

LRS • In the face of that foretold collapse, we are busy conjuring up other things. 'Conjuring' is the term I chose for a series of critical conversations in 2022 as part of the *Amor Catastrófico* (*Catastrophic Love*) project that I led in São Paulo. We have a commitment to life in this world of deadly technology. In a way, we are reflecting on our own responsibility for this collapse. Human collapse is paired with climate collapse. A human project that didn't work out. Why didn't it work out? The answer seems to have been foretold long ago. I think that we are starting to accept that the Earth is trembling. I have been talking a lot about trembling because in my work we have been viewing trembling as an opportunity for... trembling to achieve balance, so when I think about the axis of gravity, when I think about the organized relationship of the body, this entails accepting the trembling and cracking of the Earth. The Earth is cracking and trembling, energy is rising up from the Earth's core to organize my body. The idea of trembling can also be viewed as a critique of the logic of a beginning, middle and end to the world's nar-

rative, of time indicated by a clock or stopwatch—is this enough to structure or restructure our lives? I have read a lot about trembling in the work of Édouard Glissant, who is from the Caribbean, and Leda Maria Martins, from Minas Gerais, who see time as a spiral. Édouard Glissant was a poet, essayist and anthropologist born in Martinique, who published a series of reflections on ways of understanding the world through the diversity of diasporic populations. In one of his essays, *Pensée du Tremblement* (*Trembling Thinking*), he speaks of the need to understand things from the perspective of natural chaos. An understanding based on this chaos would move away from 'beginning-middle-end' and towards a model of objective-justification-conclusion. This way of thinking could lead to a kind of solidarity and exchange that would overcome hegemonic thought systems and bring about a coexistence with the Whole-World, a term coined by Glissant. In his opinion, we are better able to understand the world when we tremble along with it.

When I read Glissant, I immediately connect his thinking with the technique used by dancer Lena Blou from Guadeloupe,⁷ who creates a way of thinking through dance, Techini'Ka, by drawing on the traditional Gwowa dances from her country. She explores how bodies move in the Caribbean and how they offer an insight into unique worlds. One of her basic premises is imbalance. Lena encapsulates imbalance with the concept of *bigidi*, which advocates for an imbalance that leads us somewhere, where we teeter but do not fall, an imbalance that brings about an organization of the body and society. On the other hand, Leda Maria Martins⁸ draws on Black traditions with this concept of spiral time, teaching us to understand memory as a recreation of our lived experience and temporality as something that transcends the linear logic of past, present and future. Ultimately, these people are talking about ancestral ways of handling time, ancestral ways of handling the organization of our bodies in the world.

I'd like to read a poem by Senegalese writer Birago Diop out loud. I discovered the poem thanks to Professor Acácio Almeida, who is an important intellectual role model for me and a respected anthropologist researching African contexts.

Le souffle des ancêtres
The Breath of the Ancestors

*Listen to things
More often than beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the sighs of the bush;
This is the ancestors breathing.
Those who are dead are never gone;
They are in the darkness that grows lighter
And in the darkness that grows darker.
The dead are not down in the earth;
They are in the shivering of the trees
In the groaning of the woods,
In the water that sleeps,
They are in the hut, they are in the crowd:
The dead are not dead.
Listen to things
More often than beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the sighs of the bush;
This is the breathing of ancestors,
Who have not gone away
Who are not beneath the soil
Who are not really dead.
Those who are dead are never gone;
They are in the woman's breast,*

*In the wailing of a child
And the burning of a log.
The dead are not down in the earth;
They are in the dwindling fire,
They are in the weeping grass,
They are in the groaning rock,
They are in the forest, they are in the hut,
The dead are not dead.*

GN • *When you talk about trembling and restoration to bring out this ethics that is already there, are you also thinking about an aesthetics?*

LRS • That's right, an aesthetic that cannot be separate from ethics. Another way of relating to one another, of relating to the environment, of relating to the different things in the world, but what things in the world? The way we do science and think about science? The intellectual models we value more or less? These Black and Indigenous aesthetics have inevitably reached the field of hegemonic, established scientific knowledge. So, there are the so-called other epistemologies. In the arts, discussing epistemologies, ways of carving the world and carving one's place in the world, from an Indigenous perspective, from a Black perspective, has been an urgent, inescapable task. The political experience and historical trajectory of Black movements means that there is still an imbalance when it comes to the presence of Black and Indigenous aesthetics. In the academic field of the arts, there is still a recognition and respect for Indigenous epistemologies that needs to be much stronger and deeper, especially in the case of Indigenous intellectuals themselves.

GN • *The book Torto Arado by Itamar Vieira Júnior was hugely successful in Brazil, winning prizes and entering the urban imaginary with a story containing some of all of this: silenced voices and hidden experiences, slavery, colonialism, plunder, land, ancestry. But it is interesting that one of the main characters is a healer, a master of enchantment who was sought after by everyone, even the mayor of the city. I really like this passage:*

Families put their hopes in the powers of Zeca Chapéu Grande, a Jarê healer, whose life's purpose was to restore the health of body and mind to those who needed it. From an early age, we had had to live with our father's magical side. He was a father just like all the others we knew, but his paternity extended to the afflicted and the sick, those in need of remedies that were not available in the hospitals and of wisdom that was not available among the doctors absent from that land.⁹

It seems to me that there is a growing interest in this alternative way of inhabiting the world. A quest to be enchanted. You once wrote that Black and Indigenous epistemologies and cosmologies can be a step towards enchantment if our feet are firmly anchored to the ground. How do you perceive enchantment in your work?

LRS • I think it's certainly interesting, important and relevant. This path is a quest for a different way of understanding the things in the world, based on these models, methods, moulds, drivers, and so on.

Believing in what is visible and invisible means being aware that what shapes me and what I imagine is both tangible and intangible.

I think of enchantment primarily—this brings us back to the idea of development—as the relationship with our surroundings, the relationship with our foundations. How do I balance myself? How can I stand tall with deep roots if I am not familiar with my history? Knowing my history, knowing my land, without essentializing it. I use this metaphor a lot in my teaching—deep roots that remind me of the multiple places I come from, as well as long branches. I have been studying a Beninese-Senegalese dance researcher and choreographer called Germaine Acogny and she uses the metaphor of the baobab in her teaching. The baobab is a tree that is native to some parts of the African continent, and it lives for many years, for hundreds of years. It has very deep roots and a

thick trunk. Even if the tree dies, the trunk remains and is inhabited by a guardian of local memory, a griot, who is a master of words and preserves the oral tradition. Upon the death of the griot or *jeli*, as they are known in some local languages, they are buried inside the baobab tree. In other words, the baobab is also a place of cultivation, where the wise man's most important material is kept. Baobab trees have enormous branches. With this, I am emphasizing the idea of being able to establish these deep roots as a synonym of awareness of our land, what it can offer us and what we must offer it in a reciprocal relationship. In other words, giving, receiving and reciprocating. There is an interesting discussion among anthropologists about the idea of reciprocity. When European anthropologists began to explore the customs of so-called primitive societies in Polynesia and Melanesia in the 1900s, they studied their systems for exchanging wealth and tangible and intangible assets such as dances and feasts, observing how the circulation of these assets was governed by a notion of reciprocity. So, as you can see, this is nothing new. The idea is that relationships can be based on principles that are the polar opposite of the principles of the Western exchange economy. Those anthropologists were more concerned with market forms and their symbols, whereas I apply the notion to social relationships. Reciprocity must be the foundation. But I was talking about the baobab, about roots, so...

GN • *You were talking about branches.*

LRS • That's right. The idea of the branch is our body's ability to go to different places. That enchantment that comes from knowing about my land and feeding from that land does not mean that I do not establish contacts and relationships. Healthy contacts. Critical contacts with other lands, too. So the idea of the branch is that it takes me where I want to be, it takes me everywhere, but I have the

foundation here in the form of the root. Germaine Acogny calls it a root in terms of deep relationships—and I think of depth in terms of responsibility and commitment to the territory. The land is more than just matter. I think this enchantment arises when we trigger the pulse of life; the idea of the pulse of life is strongly present in diasporic bodies. How do I continue to vibrate? How do I avoid succumbing? Through the pulse! Recently, I wrote a text to the magazine *O Menelick 2° Ato* discussing the threat against the democracy in the country using the term Palmarine yearning.¹⁰ There's something about it that isn't revolutionary, perhaps, but it's a drive, a... when I talk about the pulse of life, this world as we see it, in the midst of collapse, demands our drive; it demands the strength of our muscles, bones and internal fluids; it demands our presence and full attention. Why do I mention this? Because this enchantment is the opposite of contemporary disenchantment, if we think of this contemporary as [a narrated world]... as a European contemporary. Every time I think about this European contemporary, a whole series of footnotes are required because Europe too has its own multiplicity. Pulsating means challenging indifference and the empty gaze of a certain contemporary. Inflating and strengthening our bodies with ideas, values and ways of understanding that do not carry us towards this sadness that is the curse of our age or towards a disenchantment felt perhaps by this contemporary, even when they are critical; this contemporary forged by hegemonic ways of being; even when they are critical, they have no pulse; even when they are critical, they have no drive; even when they are critical, they see themselves as individuals rather than people because they do not envision the collective; the collective is not important to them—not so much important, it's not a cornerstone. I have thought a lot about how contemporary art by non-hegemonic bodies engages ancestry. An ancestral contemporary art. That art has the power to bring about physical and spiritual transformation. I believe that it can pull people out of a kind of resignation or petulant neutrality.

GN • *When you speak of other epistemologies, you're talking about different ways of being in the world and of relating to the Other, whether they are human or other-than-human. I'm wondering what that has to do with art, or, in other words, what is the role of the artist?*

LRS • You're good at summarizing. I'm not so good at summarizing, but I'll try to address the things you've mentioned. Art boosts our ability to know how to act. For me, there is no art without community and there is a setting common to me that shares and practises the idea that art is made and constructed collectively. Beyond this idea of community that has been taken over by hegemonic capitalist logics to become a catch-all where everyone is happy, I think that this perception of community entails confronting our issues with courage, tackling our differences with due responsibility, with due spirit... I'm talking about that Palmarine spirit, because it is a state of body that knows it will not be easy, that knows it's not enough for us to come together, that knows we must come together to tackle our differences, to tackle our contradictions—contradictions between equals in terms of social class, gender or race. *Eyes in my Back and a Smile at the Corner of my lips* is the name of a dance solo I created in 2018, where I highlight the importance of a critical, vigilant body. I think that this dimension of community is very deep and complex too. But it's like we're able to establish something in common that is no salvation in my eyes, but it is a continuity that allows me to imagine. What do I imagine? I imagine the future, but I also imagine the present. I think imagination is also part of this idea, of this ancestral inspiration. Imagining untold stories, imagining relationships with plants, with nature, with the invisible world that I certainly never imagined. By imagining, we reconsider official history, we understand that the archives used to research this familiar history were compiled by very particular hands belonging to white men, and so on and so forth. Imagination plays an important role that is enabled by art. Art is no salvation

but it provides spaces for imagining. What is the purpose of art? To answer your question, it provides spaces for imagining. Is imagining the same as fantasizing? No. Imagining means being certain that the world as we know it was a possibility. We now understand that it has failed, it has collapsed. But imagining means understanding that we will have to brush off our other senses and delve into other stories; I'm going to have to discover the stories my grandmother never told me. How can I do that? Well, changes, what changes can art bring about? Art provokes, evokes, causes a stir and arouses all kinds of things—energy, dynamism, a need to move, sadness—it provokes... it shakes things up, it prompts bodies to move. There is also a search for some kind of sanity in terror. A search for some kind of calm in times of disaster foretold. Art creates a sense of strangeness too. It prompts the people who see, experience and participate to reconsider their place or find it strange or intolerable, and this place can be multi-layered and multi-faceted: the place of the body, the place within society, the place of gender, etc. Art disturbs us, bringing disquiet, trembling, cracking, uncertainty, and distrust of some of the certainties we were taught. Art makes us look into our dark corners. Counter-hegemonic arts specifically are opportunities for identification; people see themselves and understand that it is possible to be and exist within the bodies they inhabit.

GN • Let's end with love. You recently wrote the preface to a Portuguese translation of one of bell hooks' books, an intellectual who talks a lot about love, and you have also held a residency and performed a show on Catastrophic Love. What is the role of love at this crossroads we are at? What kind of love do we need? What does it have to do with ancestry and movement?

*LRS • Yes, I wrote the preface to a book titled *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, part of a series of books by bell hooks translated in Brazil for the first*

time in 2019. This book itself does not specifically explore love, but other works by the same author do. I've tackled love in my own work, with the *Catastrophic Love* project. This is love as something very different from the Western romantic perspective, love as a liberating force that fosters closeness. Love as a power that can even transform politics and society.

For the *Catastrophic Love* project, which I carried out after receiving funds from the city council of São Paulo as part of the Fomento à Dança initiative, I joined a wonderful group of artists to study the notion of love, taking philosopher Cornel West's idea of catastrophic love as a springboard. As well as being a philosopher, West is a blues man, a jazz and Afro-American Black traditions specialist. He says that blues is an example of catastrophic love and a deeply rooted response to terror. The Black person, seeing his brother hanging dead from a tree, responded with the blues, responded with depth and lyricism. Well, the Black population could have chosen only revenge. But also chose the generation of life and beauty, grace and dignity. This catastrophic love is the answer to the challenge, the construction of sublime forms of the self that enable collective survival.

In the history of the Black people's movement, love and resilience were intensely engaged in the quest to build territories for their own reasons.

Notes

1 • The Afonso Arinos Law (Law 1390/51 of 3 July 1951) was proposed by Afonso Arinos de Mello Franco (1905–1990) and enacted by Getúlio Vargas on 3 July 1951. It criminalizes racial discrimination in Brazil. It was the first law in the country to label acts motivated by prejudice based on race and skin colour as criminal offences and it was introduced after Katherine Durham condemned her experience of racism during a tour of Brazil, where a luxury hotel refused to give her a room after discovering that she was a Black woman (source: Wikipedia).

2 • The figure of Exu[∞] attains a complexity in Afro-Brazilian religions that is rarely seen in other divinities. Olorum, the supreme force, created Exu from Érupé (mud) and gave him the function of providing beings with the ability to move. He is the

energy that is present in everything that exists (source: Wikipedia and @simas_luiz).

3 • Orishas (singular: orisha) are spirits that play a key role in the Yoruba religion of West Africa and several religions of the African diaspora that derive from it, such as Cuban, Dominican and Puerto Rican Santería and Brazilian Candomblé. The preferred spelling varies depending on the language in question: *orishá* is the spelling in the Yoruba language, *orixá* in Portuguese, and *orisha*, *oricha*, *orichá* or *orixá* in Spanish-speaking countries (source: Wikipedia).

4 • Oxum is one of the *orixá* deities, one of the manifestations of the Yorubá Supreme Being in the Ifá oral tradition and Yoruba-based religions of West Africa (source: Wikipedia).

5 • Eduardo Batalha Viveiros de Castro is a Brazilian anthropologist and professor at the Museu Nacional da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.

6 • Tânia Stolze has a PhD in Social Anthropology. She is a Brazilian ethnologist and associate professor at PPGA/UFF.

7 • Guadeloupe is an overseas department of the French Republic in the Caribbean, which is made up of two islands, Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre, and other nearby islands.

8 • Brazilian poet, essayist, playwright and lecturer.

9 • Itamar Vieira Júnior in *Torto Arado* (2019).

10 • Quilombo dos Palmares is considered the most prominent symbol of resistance against slavery in Brazil. The first records of these groups appeared in around 1580 when slaves fled the Captaincy of Pernambuco and headed for the Serra da Barriga region. They held out for almost a century, forming a community of Black people brought from Africa.

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Cosmological Gardens

Center for Arts, Design,
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Dalida María Benfield,
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Pelin Tan



Cultivating Knowledges

The destruction of...cultural heritage...is the weapon of a pathological paradigm that has dominated the world and the human spirit for the last 300 years, with its fixation and pretensions of superiority, its wilful application of savage violence and expropriation, but most terrifyingly, its inability to conduct an examination of conscience and consciousness.¹

This essay is a brief overview of Cosmological Gardens, a series of ongoing arts research and education projects. These are collective and global works, developed from 2019 to the present, that engage questions related to the forms and practices of planetary knowing and world-making as challenges to the current unchecked exploitation of human communities and planetary resources. The work also addresses the need to undo the concomitant belief systems that provide rationales for this exploitation, including modernity/coloniality, racism, and other systems that categorize the inferior and unworthy. Conceived and created by the research communities of the Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research (CAD+SR), Cosmological Gardens is an evolving and mobile platform for inquiry, knowledge exchange, and transversal research practices. Key to this is the creation of spaces for exchange that are designed as occasions for trans-cultural and cross-border knowledge sharing and epistemic disruption. These encounters of people, places, and things test the limits of knowability, not just of cultural paradigms, but of all human knowledges, pointing towards the other-than-human as co-presence and collaborator. At the same time that senses of the human are destabilized and decentred, however, the importance of interdependence and mutual relation with each other and the beings with whom we inhabit the planet, is underlined and valued. This includes learning from diverse Indigenous knowledge systems that inform the renovation of our thought and practices towards non-exploitative resource commoning.

Cosmological Garden's pedagogical spaces are convenings of artists and researchers, each of whom brings diverse

disciplinary, transdisciplinary, or anti-disciplinary methods. The gatherings, which involve extensive research and planning periods, are co-designed with collaborators who are located in the conceptual or physical territory in which the encounter is held. They are also co-created with participants, with their collaboration and contributions designed into the programmes. Thus, the research residencies and workshops are designed around practices that are relevant to specific locales and open onto multiple horizons of transnational inquiry. The pedagogical approach, consistent across the Center's programmes, emphasizes dialogue and exchange, horizontality and experimentation, and intensive, structured time spent together, alongside open spaces for individual and collaborative work. Each field of research unfolded in distinct yet parallel trajectories. Cosmological Gardens developed as an online workshop in 2020, and, since then, as four *Encuentros* (encounters), three online, and one as an in-person research residency and workshop in Spoleto, Italy, in July 2022. The researchers involved include activists, agronomists, artists, choreographers, composers, environmental scientists, filmmakers, historians, journalists, media and art historians, theorists, poets, sociologists, technologists, writers, and many others. Participating researchers live in Brazil, China, Cuba, Denmark, Finland, Fort Berthold Reservation (Three Affiliated Tribes: Arikara/Hidatsa/Mandan), France, Germany, India, Italy, Kenya, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, the UK and the US. Migratory identities not captured by these nation-state designations are also represented in the research communities.

Cosmological Gardens was initiated by CAD+SR Senior Research Fellow Pelin Tan, and it emerged coincidentally with the Covid-19 pandemic. The title of the project indexes an epistemological and ontological paradox, one that reflects the existential crisis of the present. We find ourselves in a world, with multiple social systems that must be undone. This undoing requires not only a recognition of the need for their undoing, but a recognition of the many existing practices, albeit subjugated or marginalized, that precede and

survive its systems. In our work, resonant with Paulo Freire's description of *conscientización*, we began with a process of commoning knowledges, from beneath and beyond existing zones of common sense. Making other ways of knowing and doing present, mobilizing them in relation to one another, as well as narrating other possibilities, pluriversal and open, that instigate a new sense of living in interdependency and planetarity, requires a different ordering of global narratives.

The series of projects began with an online workshop in October 2020, entitled *Cosmological Gardens: Land, Cultivation, and Care*, that considered care ethics as both a position and an affective concern that demands innovative and sustained responses to the planetary crisis. It addressed the following questions: How can human conduct and its effect on the other-than-human environment be rethought as an ontological project that requires multiple ways of knowing? How can we co-design practices that are centred on Indigenous and decolonial thinking and related critical approaches? How might artistic strategies contribute to the long process of reinventing a collective imaginary? These initial seminars addressed these and other questions through dialogues with activist researchers in Chile, China, Italy, Nigeria, Palestine, the UK and the US, who all share a commitment to relational and transversal methods that cut across contemporary art, architecture, and social and environmental science. Given the recent arrival of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020, the workshop created an online space in which to consider the particular urgencies of the moment, highlighting the need for thinking through sustenance and interrelation across local and global scales, as each researcher was struggling to understand the impacts of the pandemic on their communities, practices and visions.

Artist, researcher, and curator Ou Ning's contribution to *Cosmological Gardens: Land, Cultivation, and Care* included the following observations, drawing from historical research on agriculture in China:

The Chinese...invented a new system of land distribution...about 5000 years ago. It is called the 'well-field

system'. People divide a piece of land into nice squares and the size of each square is the same, and this piece of the land will be private, but the central piece will be common land. People need to cultivate their private land, and at the same time they also need to cultivate the common land. Actually, this is a model of land distribution very similar to the cohousing idea today in Europe.... Agriculture is about producing food, and it's about food distribution. To produce food you have to cultivate the food on the land, and the land distribution is about how to foster a community to distribute the food.²

Informed by this and other historical research, Ou Ning established an autonomous experiment in communal living in the rural depopulated village of Bishan, in Anhui Province, China.³ Establishing autonomous gardens, schools, and communal housing, this experiment in forms of living otherwise lasted many years before it was eventually forcefully ended by the Chinese government. The fact of the danger and precarity of proposing other forms of living is dramatically evidenced by Ou Ning's case.

Yet, the ancient redistribution of land that he described, erased in more recent Chinese histories, and enlivened by his own projects, mirrors the distribution of knowledge that is at the core of *Cosmological Gardens*. Distributed pedagogy is key to creating communities of knowledge that cultivate and care. The geographically and culturally distinct knowledges that are non-hierarchically brought together challenge the forms of economic and cultural extractivism that dominate both academic and art world institutions. The still dominant mode of education, compulsory schooling, requires a suspension of political values and practices. Its hidden curriculum is the claim to have a monopoly on learning and to conflate education with development and consumption.⁴ De-institutionalizing begins with refusing this claim in its most basic articulation: the distinction between teaching and learning, expressed as the singular authority of the teacher. Instead, *Cosmological*

Gardens considers all to be teachers and learners in a new relational structure. Learning is non-compulsory and convivial: ‘a simple setting for encounters...which are both autonomous and anarchic, focused yet unplanned and ebullient’.⁵ It is a process that understands differences yet connectedness in our transnational relations. Ou Ning’s discussion raised many different examples from across participating artists’ and researchers’ experiences of commoning planetary resources, and other ways of organizing land, cultivation, and care. The historical fact of different arrangements, in our many places, makes it possible to not only imagine but reproduce and enact these alternatives to existing dominant orders.

Impossible Spaces Revisited

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, organizing our convenings directly engaged the question of how to construct seemingly impossible spaces. The first Cosmological Gardens workshop, as well as the three *Encuentros* that followed, occurred on corporate digital communication platforms based on extractivism. Its imbrication with neoliberal formations, including information technologies, is a dimension of the paradox of Cosmological Gardens. With this recognition, we seek to intervene in the digital spaces that we inhabit, and engage multiple forms of communication, including the array of artistic practices represented in our communities. Elsewhere, we have discussed our building of virtual spaces for the CAD+SR community and actualizing forms of digital collective practices.⁶ These experiments include interventions in existing platforms, as well as designing new VR spaces. We have learned that virtual settings can meaningfully connect people who face challenges of distance and access, whether due to economic and political forces, or disability and neurodivergence. While Cosmological Gardens events have occurred mainly on the Zoom platform, they have also included Instagram live dialogues and tours of localities, WhatsApp group chats, notebooks, drawings, and music conveyed via Dropbox and Google docs, along with other ad hoc forms of online sharing. The depth of discussion

across these platforms reveals the unlimited capacity of participants to invent forms of communication on existing channels when mobilized as a community of care. The video and audio archive of the sessions, along with other online artifacts, also create opportunities for ongoing research and learning.

Digital technologies and platforms provide important forms of mobility and connection that may appear to have a less deleterious effect on the environment than, for instance, air travel. However, these technologies carry significant hidden costs, as activist John Mpaliza detailed in his workshop, held as part of Cosmological Gardens, Encuentro IV: Cultivating Caring Cultures, in Spoleto, Italy. Microchips require heavy metals, including coltan, the extraction of which continues to devastate the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) through mining, fuelling conflicts with Uganda and Rwanda and a wider civil war.⁷ Mpaliza, formerly a computer scientist, is known as ‘Peace-walking Man’, and has travelled thousands of kilometres across Europe on foot to draw attention and engage communities in discussions of the social cost of digital technologies for the people of the DRC. His is an embodied translocal practice of analogue remapping that intervenes in our collective understanding of what communication can and should mean, given the conditions of production of digital technologies. By doing so, he underscores the meaningfulness of actions such as repair and reuse over ever-newer ‘upgrades’, holding those companies that trade in blood minerals accountable through boycotts, and engaging in community research activities in support of environmental and social activism. He also places an emphatic value on face-to-face communication, which is why he walks—to meet people and talk with them, in person.

Flows and Redistributive Travel

Who travels? A simple question that, when unfolded, reveals a tissue of interconnected relations that sustain a global order of inequality. It is necessary to frame questions of travel within a larger understanding of mobility as a key term in contemporary regimes of domination and control. Mobility explicitly

positions people as material, whether as subject or object, as labour or expendable life. Where an individual is and where they go is regulated by complex regimes. Yet, the ability to engage in physical, translocal exchange is crucial in the pedagogical practices of Cosmological Gardens and many of the artists and researchers who make up its community.

In the work of Vivien Sansour, artist, chef, and seed keeper, the search for seeds that have been displaced is one of the motivations for her travel. Parallel to John Mpaliza's, her project also includes the desire to connect geographically distant communities to the realities of her motherland, Palestine. In her contribution to Cosmological Gardens: Land, Cultivation, and Care, Sansour explained the following:

The reason we need to share these stories of our ancestral genius, the watermelon seeds...is that I heard so many stories while living with farmers ten years ago and trying to understand rural practices, and a lot of elderly women in particular talked about the days of the watermelon. They were economically stable, the seeds were their seeds, women gave birth in the watermelon fields...all these beautiful stories. They would describe it as this gigantic thing. And the more I would ask about the watermelon, the more they would say you're looking for a dinosaur, something that doesn't exist. So I found myself looking for the seeds that I love so much.⁸

Sansour's work takes place locally and globally, and includes seed keeping and sharing, and their cultivation in soils distant from their origin. As a daughter of the Palestinian diaspora, this search for seeds and interconnection occurs in a world defined by military occupations and disposessions, as well as a geopolitical order that produces vast resource disparities and requires the tight regulation of flows of people within and across national borders. Projects such as Sansour's engage travel towards the construction of translocal, material interdependence between precarious communities. The material

connection to land, in those geopolitical spaces that offer her safety and peace to cultivate, are crucial for her, her seeds, and her community's survival.

Cosmological Gardens actualizes a web of relations that frames mobility as an essential human activity towards creating proximities and new knowledge. In July of 2022, we held our first in-person convening, Encuentro IV: Cultivating Caring Cultures, in Spoleto, Italy. Recognizing inequalities in access to travel as a structuring fact, we worked on strategies of redistribution by decoupling travel from privilege and making it available to those who, whether as a matter of resources or location or more, are typically excluded. This made possible the attendance of Visiting Researchers with different economic means and from such places as Iran, Kenya, Russia, Singapore, and South Africa, who joined together for horizontal knowledge sharing and convivial workshops with the artists Rirkrit Tiravanija, Gediminas and Nomedas Urbonas, and others, along with CAD+SR Senior Research Fellows. At the same time that we value the construction of such hospitable spaces for diverse people to safely gather in person, we remain committed to minimizing the environmental effects of all forms of travel by interweaving face-to-face and online interaction.

Concluding with a Beginning: Speculative Research and Worldmaking in Two Gardens

How to not only imagine a world but actually make it? Cosmological Gardens is one practical expression of a world in the making, a proposition about how the so-called impossible becomes possible, focused on learning from and sharing practices of transversal arts research, pedagogy, agriculture, translocal solidarities, and resource redistribution. These are all in support of new forms of community, geographically dispersed and variously connected by thought and action, further bound by the generative power of their differences. How might we describe these methodologies?

Much of the writing on arts research we find to be un-

helpful—preoccupied with genealogies and typologies, efforts to locate arts research in a filiation of existing knowledge and institutional practices; in short, reinforcing things as they are rather than proposing things as they might be. We know that words such as ‘creativity’ and ‘imagination’ carry other histories—and therefore, other possibilities—worth staking out and fighting for. How then to rethink these and other ideas with new meaning and purpose? We look elsewhere for analogous theoretical and practical challenges in, for example, Stuart Hall’s retrospective writing about the emergence of Cultural Studies. In his 1992 essay ‘Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies’, Hall insisted that Cultural Studies was no identifiable orthodoxy. Instead, he asserted that it contained ‘multiple discourses’, ‘different methodologies’, and ‘theoretical positions’.⁹ It was for him, both ‘a project and formation’, full of ‘theoretical noise’ and was ‘open-ended’ but ‘not simply pluralist’.¹⁰ The practice should be an engagement in a dialogical relationship to experimentation in changing times. This seems to us to be a generative, expansive way to also think about arts research as a new epistemological framework to reconceptualize knowledge in general, larger than academic structures per se, and specifically, as a means to not only re-order methodologies, but in fact, the world itself.

We understand Cosmological Gardens to occur in complex, global, historical, and emergent fields of inquiry. Over the past few decades, many artists have focused their research on urgent ecological issues, to understanding environmental dynamics and how to interact with them. These artists work with a renewed awareness of human connectedness with the environment, implementing projects of aesthetic, scientific, and social research and reflection that draw on many disciplines, including the biological and earth sciences, social sciences, and philosophy to elaborate new narratives and stimulate the creation of new imaginaries. These artists seek to explore complexity, proposing connections that act transversally and result in building community and other social effects. Often, the scale of their activity raises the ecological focus of artists beyond a style or a movement to an epistemic challenge, suggesting a fundamental

shift in paradigms of what art is and who artists are.

The artists discussed here, through widely varying practices, also propose the activation of territories by involving the people who inhabit them as co-creators and collaborators. This includes farmers, workers, and artisans, adults, youth, and children who have the already existing ability to transmit and renew values and knowledge through various material forms, not only aesthetic objects. The self-organized artist space Maquis Projects, part of Cosmological Gardens, Encuentro III: Cultivating and Composting Histories (2021), is situated in İzmir, Turkey as a part of an indigent community also inhabited by temporary refugees. Maquis artists and curators work with neighbourhood residents to cultivate small, patchy vegetable orchards. These have eventually become a community-wide infrastructure that not only provides much-needed fresh produce but also a new space for neighbours to articulate shared vulnerabilities. From this, a new awareness has emerged about the impact of urgent ecological and climate issues on the community and how to mitigate these through sharing and co-creating. Here, artistic practices helped create new senses of solidarity and resilience.

Art can play a fundamental role in constructing the commons that is already present in all fields of our daily actions, but in latent forms repressed by cultural and economic limitations. Artists, precisely because they work on the imaginary, have the ability to synthesize complexity, to recognize symbolic and narrative formulas and bring them to the surface, freeing them to become action. By making the commons apparent, as a means to not only re-narrate, but also act upon daily life, art provides social and political connections towards creating communities of cultivation and care. This is the case with Luigi Coppola’s work with the Casa delle Agriculture in Castiglione d’Otranto, Italy. Coppola, who is also a Senior Research Fellow of CAD+SR with the Cosmological Gardens project, is, as an artist, a member of this local collective formed mainly by farmers and activists. It started precisely as an effort to reclaim the land, trying to cultivate and care for it, rescuing it from abandonment, chemical poisons, and neglect. They began by reconnecting the land through the restoration of a network of historic pathways that

gave the landscape a palpable shape. In preparation for planting and cultivation, they researched the question of local biodiversity and gathered, selected and reproduced seeds. They created a common infrastructure to make the processes sustainable by building a community mill, key to an ethical food production chain. They also organized an annual festival, Notte Verde: Agriculture, Utopias, and Community, now eleven years old with over 20,000 attendees per year. This has become a ritual of passage for the entire local community as ‘change growers’ transform the village into a site of knowledge exchange, circular economics and cultural reproduction.

The collective’s processes integrate artistic research, work on the imaginary, narration, and representation as equally important to other forms of knowing, including the agro-ecological, economic, and the social. The collective continues to experiment with the role of the artist within transformation processes, challenging the inherited idea of the individualistic artist within an enclosed zone of privilege. Precisely because they believe in the potential of art as an engine of change, it is practiced in relation, designed to build common horizons of action. By reimagining places and relations, acting in the present while working to build possible futures, communities modify and refine their shared practices over time. The collective adopted a motto: *Chi semina utopia raccoglie realtà* (who sows utopia harvests reality), a phrase borrowed from Carlo Petrini, founder of the Slow Food movement.¹¹ The phrase fits well with the very concrete approach the group has in relation to utopias, cultivating them every day and seeking in every step to overcome the limits of the present. Practices of doing in common by taking charge of their own needs, identifying resources, asking the right questions, falling down and getting back up, with the aim of building new social networks that restore ecologies and produce food, care, conviviality, and even love.

Thinking in terms of the commons requires a different aesthetics. Commoning pushes us to radically change the attitude we have towards planetary resources, to no longer consume without responsibility, but to act with a sense of interconnectedness, sharing, and passing on. As it is rural spaces that are the

most extracted from in the twenty-first century, many artists, activists, and solidarity networks are acting in rural areas in order to rethink our lives in relationship to the recent climate cycle. Rural territories may connect us to processes that we are disconnected from, including the cultivation and distribution of the food we eat. Returning to Ou Ning’s project, rural areas also invite the reversing of depopulation and abandonment and the construction of commons. Yet, in the interstitial urban spaces in which Maquis Projects formulates their commons, an analogous process is also occurring. Through these sites, we come to understand the many ways resources may be shared, and how these forms are generative for both communities and the environment, experimenting with new models of coevolution.

Bruno Munari wrote in *Design as Art* in 1966:

*Today it has become necessary to demolish the myth of the ‘star’ artist who only produces masterpieces for a small group of ultra-intelligent people. It must be understood that as long as art stands aside from the problems of life it will only interest a very few people.*¹²

Those were years during which there were consistent calls for a radical transformation of social and political processes, including the systems and values upon which art was based. Those demands have been partly swallowed up by the advance of modernity/coloniality and neoliberal processes, in which the art system itself is still fundamentally implicated. However, we must remember and enact other versions of what it means to be artists and researchers, and animate other logics outside of these paradigms. By doing so, we unhinge invisible cultural barriers and open up new imaginaries and territories of action, informed by other criteria of subsistence and planetary survival.

Notes

1 • Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, ‘Remarks for an Opening’, De-Archive East Africa Research Residency, Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research, Ongata Rongai, Kenya, 18 January, 2020.

2 • Ou Ning, ‘From Well-field System to Smart Agriculture:

- A China Case'. Presentation, Cosmological Gardens: Land, Cultivation, and Care, Center for Arts, Design and Social Research, online convening, 7 November 2020.
- 3 • Ou Ning, *Utopia in Practice: Bishan Project and Rural Reconstruction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).
- 4 • Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 25.
- 5 • Ibid., p. 26.
- 6 • Dalida María Benfield, et al., 'Impossible Spaces and Other Embodiments: Co-Constructing Virtual Realities', in *Art as Social Practice: Technologies for Change*, ed. xtine burrough and Judith Walgren (New York and London: Routledge, 2022).
- 7 • John Mpaliza, 'Intervention'. Presentation, Cosmological Gardens, Encuentro IV: Cultivating Caring Cultures, Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research, Spoleto, Italy, 8 July 2022.
- 8 • Vivien Sansour, 'The Palestine Heirloom Seed Library'. Presentation, Cosmological Gardens: Land, Cultivation and Care, Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research, online convening, 30 October 2020.
- 9 • Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan Hsing-Chen (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), p. 263.
- 10 • Ibid.
- 11 • Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean, and Fair*, trans. Jonathan Hunt (New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2007).
- 12 • Bruno Munari, *Design as Art*, trans. Patrick Creagh (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 26.

The Chestnut, the Sea Urchin & the Tuning of the Bells

Futurefarmers



Today, the atmosphere is busy with anticipation. Bumble bees, moths and wasps stock up on the last of the autumn pollen—the echo of distant hammers, sheep bells and the echo of axes preparing wood for winter. We are in the season of the chestnut and the local collection protocols:

*Eins ist keins, zwei sind eins, drei sind ein rübendieb
(One is none, two is one, three is a turnip thief)**

*A local saying that doesn't refer exclusively to chestnuts. Hence the chestnut presumably stands in for any kind of crop.

We write this contribution from South Tyrol on the mountain farm ASPMAYRHOF * HOTEL AMAZONAS above Bolzano, Italy where we are not guests, but 'friends who live here in the winter'. We teach two days a week in the valley below and for the rest of the time we root ourselves in the steepness of this place. The following text is a variation on 'The Chestnut, the Sea Urchin & the Tuning of the Bells', originally written between 2020–2021 by Futurefarmers' seasonal constellation: Amy Franceschini, Lode Vranken and Livia Cahn. Of the 'printed matter' a physical form emerged (from the depths of the seabed)—its modularity, its mobility, its orality, its polyphony, its annuality, its young audiences... We dare not call it a book, but a tale of wonder set in the Alpine Amazonas.

A story about
...gravity
about what matters
where things and bodies
sense each other
and attract each other
lose themselves,
shift properties and become entangled

a story about
—*tension*

between
the *physical* law of gravity where matter attracts
matter—the physical sensibility of things
that come together
and
a *meta-physical* sphere of gravity
in which things that matter come together—
come in relation—and intertwine

—*a tention*
between
the matter that needs care and the matters of concern.

—*a (t) tention*
between

being
rooted in a physical place—
being resident—connected to the local (life)
the living creatures
and things we co-exist with

or

being
together through the electromagnetic sphere, books, the

shadow of the clouds...
how we are together with distant voices, dead people, gone
rivers and megahertz?

are these non-present things not also very present, even physical?

there is the question of
what is being in-situ?
the many levels of being together
how we are together in a particular situation

gravity is sensing each other

1. I sense you
2. We connect with others—individuals, going into
relation—getting in inter-action
3. Together, becoming one body—intra-action—losing
one's properties as individuals

In this wonder tale, there is a search for the tension between
interaction and intra-action.

how do we root, how do we live together, how
do we make love...
as a body together.

—*a tension*

...How (im)possible it becomes if we lose all our properties.
and become something totally other.

There is a certain point where one draws lines—
defines properties
—try to get a grip of existence through
classification

but then we want to get rid of these borders and
being (a)part

coming together in total
chaos
one can(not) image the infinite possibility of
being intertwined
is it heaven?
does it become unliveable?

—*a tension*

between staying the same alone or shifting
together
temporality
is not death part of life—not the end
aren't we all the time sein-zum-tode

—*a tension*

in the end one has a feast of coming together,
a making sense of the tension between
properties and
shifting properties.

Love becomes the space where you can find the
balance between the two.



—a tension

between *individualism* where we do not share—
where one does not do things together anymore
where the universal law of gravity fades away

and *ALL SPEAK*
where you share everything
and the ALL becomes one big pile of mud
where one
loses oneself.

—

*ASPMAYRHOF is the farm where life shifts with hours of sunlight, the hatching of chicken eggs, apples falling, unexpected guests, hikers who stop for wine or chestnuts as they trek the common path, sheep to be sheered, neighbouring cows out of bounds, screeches of the cats, pigs, grapes, a small kitchen garden. There is life, there is rooting and there is also death. There are roads that slide in the winter, soil that demands input, (the sheep help with this), there is a forest where trees are falling more and more from drier summers and wetter winters. There are neighbours who trade goods for services and keep an eye out for each other. There are unspoken rules and new rules to be made. Things are changing here; tensions old and tensions new—new subjects of concern call for new attentions. There is a small room inside the farmhouse—'the Stube'—where a weekly restaurant has run for over thirty years. Guests have found their way via word of mouth. It is heated by a wood-burning stove that extends through a wall into the kitchen where the dishes are carefully prepared sometimes weeks or months in advance. Ingredients on the menu come from the farm.

A small bookshelf in the 'Stube' hints at the presence of artists...
• *The Middle Matter: Sound as Interstice* edited by Caroline Profanter, Henry Andersen, Julia Eckhardt
• 'Nature's Queer Performativity', by Karen Barad, *Kvinder, Kon & Forskning* nos. 1-2 (2012)
• Plant-Age, *Das geheime Denken der Pflanzen*.

There is also HOTEL AMAZONAS where the sheep are invited to concerts, guests are invited to bathe in tubs full of wool and large seashells that dot the garden—reminding us, we once were sea. Hotel Amazonas is the lens through which artists visit. There is a persistence at work here on this farm. This is not a practice of being in residence, but of being at home.

Amy Franceschini & Lode Vranken, Futurefarmers,
October 2022

The Chestnut, the Sea Urchin & the Tuning of the Bells

Futurefarmers

The chestnut is our looking glass into the dense landscape through which we meet the Dolomites, their steepness, their history of mobile trades people nestled in them, the stories of witches they stir, the underwater pre-history and today—where sea urchins (that once lived among the starfish and lilies of the deep sea forest) become chestnuts residing in the Alpine Amazonas* where they dance on the rooftops of a farmhouse where this story takes place.

*The Alpine Amazonas is the place and the Amazons are the people, beings, sounds and animals living in this place.

*Once upon a
mountain time...*



—
A Farm

Long ago,
the Amazons lived near the sea
where they swam and sailed.

And every day their spiked friends,
the sea urchins, came for a cup of soup.
The Amazons liked the urchins
very much,
even though they were quite prickly.

—
This all came to an end
when people and fish
came out of the sea
and banned the beautiful Amazons.

And so it happened
that the Amazons made a boat
from scrap wood
and together with two witches
and a dwarf,
they sailed far, far and away
to the high mountains.

The sea urchins also joined them,
sticking to the hull of their boat, dancing—*They always do that
when no one is looking.*
The Amazons' horses
followed over land,
otherwise they would get seasick.

—
Far beyond
and a long time later,
the Amazons arrived
on a palm island in the Alps.
Their boat turned upside down

and became a beautiful farm.

From that day
everything turned upside down
and inside out.

The sea became mountain,
mythical warriors became farmers,
sea urchins became chestnuts,
fantasies reality,
horses became pigs,
boats houses,
and so on, and so on.

The Amazons really enjoy
their life with the high mountain.
However, the way to the farm is long
and the slope is steep,
so they do not receive many visitors.



*Division
of Things*

Uni-verse / Multi-verse / (in)dividual

When the Amazons were pushed
out of the sea,
so too Mercator emerged
with a big, big net
that covered the entire globe.
The Amazons got tangled in the net,
but eventually made their way,
and were freed from the lines.

The net Mercator spun
was made of (in)visible lines
that he called longitude and latitude.

These lines flattened and divided
the earth into rectangles.
People began to put poles in the ground
and straight rope
to mark their own property.

Lines, lines and more (power) lines
filled the world.

The lines restrained movement
and divided spaces.
In fact it was not the lines
that were important, but the
p(rope)rty
between the lines.

Some lines held
'a wood to fatten 300 pigs'.
Others had apple trees,
a big house and a red car.

And other people wearing striped suits
had a hundred times more land.

If you were the first
to put a line around a piece of the earth
it became your property
—*what a weird way of thinking.*

Before, the land was shared,
but now there are maps with squares
and texts that say who is the owner
—*what a weird way of acting.*

Now one needs permission
to step over the line
and others have to pay
if they want to use the land
—*what a weird way of doing.*

The Sheep still wonder
who came up with these funny ideas.*

Everything and everybody got a name
and properties that came with it.

There were now *red* apples,
sports cars, *wild* chestnuts,
cultivated chestnuts.
There was *this* and *that*.
All with their own name.

Neatly divided in separate groups.
Impossible to mingle again.

High, high up, the Amazons
exist outside of the coordinated register
of the surveying mind.

There exists no good map
of the 'Alpine Amazonas',
bringing into question their existence.

** For the Sheep, the world is not limited
to any kind of boundaries,
not on a piece of paper and not in our minds.*

Mutual Attraction



Falling in Place

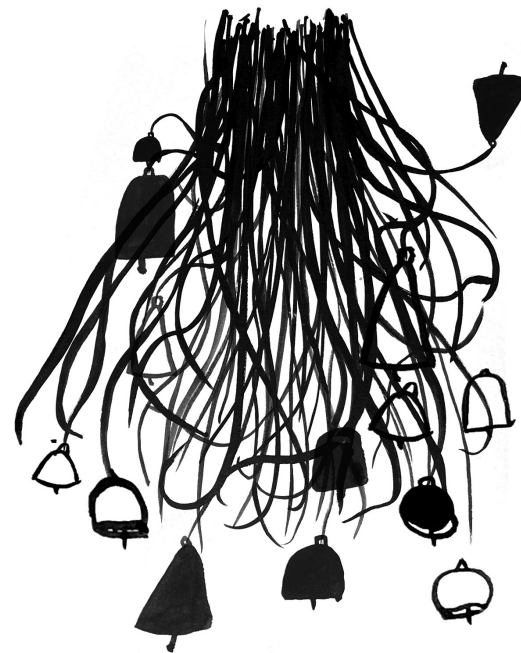
Living on the top of the mountain,
The Amazons had developed
incredible balancing skills.

They could be seen from the valley below
moving about, jumping

and balancing on their tightropes
tethered between the trees.
Even Gravity was surprised
by their ability
(to defy her).

Yes, Gravity is their friend.
In Latin her name is Gravititas.

In the Great Barrier Reef,
they call her 'The Bearded Lady',
but in the Alps
they call her 'Donna Barbuta'.



She always walks around backwards,
on her elbows, since her feet are so light.

Other times, she walks upside down,
on the strings of her beard,
like the sea urchins and chestnuts do.

Everywhere she goes
things start to fall
—

(in place).
Rain drops,
children and leaves.

Snowflakes and stars,
and even lovers fall
(in love).

And so too do tears,
curtains and taboos
and Empires fall.

And the soil was falling
down the mountain.
—

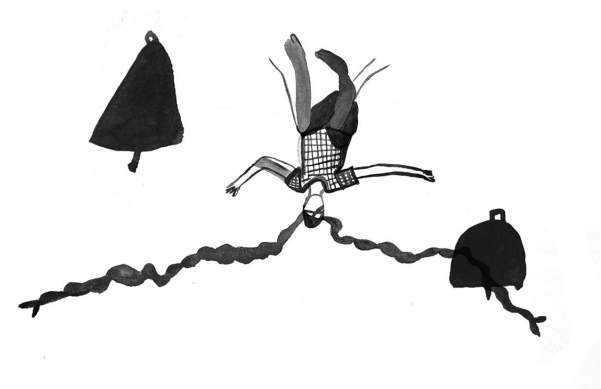
Donna Barbuta herself, never falls.
She has no weight.

In fact, she is *not*.
And yet, she *is*
e v e r y w h e r e.

She can be in three places at the same time
and three times in the same place.

The Amazons' clever neighbour,
Isaac, says The Bearded Lady
is the natural phenomenon
by which all things with mass,
and all things that matter
are attracted to each other;

*planets, stars, chestnuts,
galaxies, humans, sheep,
and even light, telephone
poles and apples...*



Isaac once met Donna Barbuta
in the valley under an apple tree
as he sat in a contemplative mood.

Occasion'd by the fall of an apple,
he asked,

*Why should that apple always descend
perpendicularly to the ground?*

Why should it not go sideways,
or upwards?
but constantly to the Earth's centre?

Assuredly, the reason is,
that the Earth draws it.

There must be a drawing power in matter
and the sum of the drawing power
in the matter of the Earth
must be in the Earth's centre,
not in any side of the Earth.

Therefore does this apple
fall toward the centre.

If matter thus draws matter;
it must be in proportion of its quantity.

Therefore,

the apple draws the Earth,
& the Earth
draws the apple.

—
We cannot see Gravity,
only the things she moves.
Gravity has no colour,

no sound and no meaning
except when two or more matter(s)
come together and connect.

Donna Barbuta is a connector,
a wanderer, a storyteller, a story maker,
a weaver...

Oh yes,
and Donna Barbuta
has a very long, magnetic beard
that grows in all directions.

Long, luminous lines
attract all kinds of things;

a tangle of sun rays,
radio waves,
gossip, pollen,
and things she picks up on her travels.
In her beard she carries all kinds of tools.

Among other things,
she is pulling around a loom
and stacks of cloth
to make warm pullovers for the farmers,
a tool sharpener, and an excavator
to repair the road
when the soil slides down.

She also brings a sauerkraut slicer
to cut the cabbage so that it can ferment,
a smithing furnace, spices,
and 382 other things.

The Bearded Lady has something
for every occasion,
something to help people stay at home

and connect with their neighbours.

—

Every time Donna Barbuta visits
the farm on the hill
things start circling around each other.

Ants, soil, shells, pigs, chickens,
and blue eggs slide down the mountain
and come together under the chestnut trees
to rest.

Of her many connecting skills,
bell making
is one of the exceptional crafts
of the Bearded Lady.

—

She is widely known for shaping
the acoustics of being together.

She is pure force
wandering in between beings,
making them connect, fall and settle,
making them feel at home
on the farm on the mountain.
Here they resist further movement
while having a pleasant chat.

Is Gravity resistance?

—

Shifting Properties

One day,
Donna Barbuta paid an unexpected visit
to the Amazonas.

On this day, she did not arrive
in her usual manner of grace.

She tumbled down, down,
to the bottom of the farm
and fell around the world,
spreading her things
and attracting other things as she fell.

While she slid down the slope,
glimmering threads unravelled
from her beard
drawing closer and closer together
as she slid.

Until, finally,
her beard was caught
in the limbs of the chestnut tree.

—

A most curious net it was!
Irregular lines and intricate knots
swayed above the ground
tethered to the tree.

All matter and all that matters
were now gathered
in the spell of her beard.
The lines were moving
and connecting in funny ways
and every *body* and every *thing*
could change them.

Things lost themselves
—intermingled—
becoming pure difference.

As for all things the Bearded Lady does,
the net also had the function
to bring things in place, home.

Of course, since the Bearded Lady

is the principle of attraction and relationality,
the net is where everything is possible
—the best of all possible worlds.

Unusual constellations formed
in Donna Barbuta's beard.
One can (not) imagine!

*Green, chestnut, star, fast and raincoat
came together with two witches and an elf.
Giant snails, fruit trees,
soft sheep's wool and the smell of soup.
Clusters of noses, breasts, 1200MHz,
water and flutes... imagine... fill in.*

Things fell, flew, came together,
divided, danced,
and came back together.

—
From now on,
what was in between the lines
was not important any more.
What became important in this new net
were the lines and knots that connected.
Every thing and every body
started to shift.
Everybody and everything was happy
to be connected in their own particular way.

—
In the farmhouse,
the Sheep found a swarm of bees
stirring a big pot of honey
and in the garden
the snails were dancing on a bed sheet
hung as a sign for the *Great Soil Event**.
In the basement, the swans and chickens
were turning fruits into spirits.
And in the sky,

the bats were conducting
a high-pitched symphony,
while the ants were busy
scrubbing and sanding
each and every detail of the farmhouse.

Echo came jumping up the mountain,
followed by a procession of blue eggs,
and juggling handfuls of warm chestnuts.

All around from every direction
things and beings
stars and dust
and megahertz gathered
and joined the parade,
Annie and Beth in front,
all in one persistent stirring,
followed by piles and piles
and piles of soil.

Life that was once submerged
deep in the earth
appeared out of (now)here.
The chestnuts started to dance
and Simona was bending saws
to harmonize with the bells.

A new way of being together
on the mountains was installed.

—
Mass Movement

As Donna Barbuta's beard spread out
over the farm, out of her long,
tangled beard,
bells tumbled about
sliding down the mountain
among soil and stones.

*Big bells, small bells,
different forms of bells,
steel bells, copper and bronze bells,
cowbells, low bells, high bells, and so on.*

—

The pigs had already forgotten
about the time (not so long ago)
when the cows and sheep
wore bells around their necks.

And the movement of the animals
echoed through the mountains
creating an acoustic map
in which everybody
could locate the others.

—



Gathered under the chestnut tree,
one pig was tossing and turning
in the grass and came across a bell
upon her snout.
The scrabbling chicken did too.
And so did the cat.

—

Everybody found bruised bells
to hang on their beak, foot,
or around their neck
—each attached in some strange way.

Except the butterfly and the beetle.
The bells were all too big for them.
The only thing they could find
were bits of scrap metal.

A confusion of sound rattled the mountain.
The Sheep tried to speak,
but the un-tuned bells
around feet and necks
and ears and branches were ringing
in a most unsettling sound soup.

—

It had not stopped raining for months.
The valleys were filling, filling filling.
The rain was falling
down
down
the earth was moving,
taking the roads with it.
Everything was moving,
the chestnuts too!

The Alpine Amazonas were losing ground,
This happened often...
but every year it seems to become worse.

The Sheep say that it is the humans who
changed the weather.

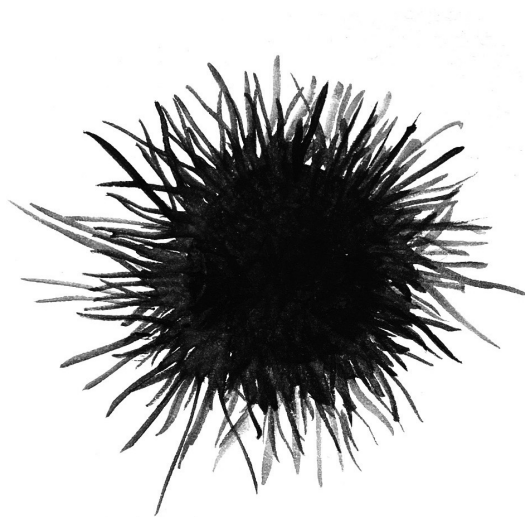
They will need help
to move the soil back up the hill.

—
*THE GREAT SOIL EVENT

Every year, a wild choreography of bodies
can be seen pushing the soil from the bottom
of the hill up the steep, cultivated slope.
Hearsay has evolved many readings of this
event.

—
Rooting

The Amazons had been so busy
that the chestnuts fell before they could mow
the grass.
Make-shift tools,
and gloves cobbled together,
were used to pick up the prickly nuts.



The chestnuts were falling
in all directions,
crashing through the leaves
—*they like the noise*—
rolling down the hill,
tumbling away.

They were dancing in the fresh rain,—
chestnuts do this when no one is looking
—*it reminds them of their relatives,*
the sea urchins.

—
Everyone was busy
and everything was falling.

When Donna Barbuta sneezed,
the ground shifted even more,
and at once, all the chestnuts fell.

One hull with three chestnuts
—they always come in three—
fell towards the Bearded Lady
and asked why she stopped
their falling fun.

*'So you can take root and become a
wonderful tree,' she answered.*

Struggling, the husk moved a bit,

*But our roots are at the seaside
where the horses and sea urchins live.*

The chestnut got up on her spikes
and whirled around Donna Barbuta.

In this ecstatic dance,

she thought about the black sea
where once the big chestnut trees,
(the Kestane) grew.



*Long ago,
we walked all the way from the sea
to the Alps,
but we did not adjust*

*to the change in altitude.
And a fungus made us very sick.*

*Even though the Amazons
helped us to grow
by grafting us onto the old trees,
we never really set root here.*

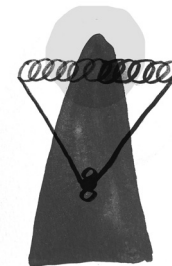
*The only thing that awaits us here
is to be sorted, roasted and bruised.
Or we might be used as firewood
or become 'bread for the poor'.*

Yet, the chestnuts remain.
They love falling down the steep slopes
of the Alps.

And besides,
they loved living among
their friendly companions,
the Amazons.

Choreography of Acoustics

*On the Loss of the Commons
& Sound Crafted from
Old Hammering Languages*



'Do you hear what I hear?,'
said the chestnut to the pig
'I think I hear what you hear,'
said the pig to the chestnut
'I didn't know pigs could talk,'
said the chestnut to the pig
'I didn't know chestnuts could hear,'
said the pig to the chestnut.

On an unusually rainy day,
everyone and everything
was scattered around the mountain
moving about collecting chestnuts.
The neighbour and his cat
were fiddling with Echo over a bell...

when all became silent.

—

The bell around Echo's neck
transmitted the most divine melody.

This was a big relief for Donna Barbuta.
We all know that bell making

is one of the exceptional connecting crafts
of the Bearded Lady.
She is an expert in the acoustics
of being together.

She thanked the neighbour
and pulled a very small hammer
from her beard.

Echo and the neighbour began to hammer
and tinker on every last bell,
while Donna Barbuta taught them
a few tricks.

The skill of tuning is a very special skill.
In fact,
the art lies in the hammering language
of the tuning of the bells.

It is best to do this at night
when everything is silent

—

The neighbour and Echo
continued ticking and tuning.
For the butterfly and the beetle,
they made two tiny jingle bells,
hammering the little pieces
of scrap metal together.

—

Low bells, high bells, round bells,
square bells, brass and copper bells.
Every bell was rung,
each with its own tune.
Soon the bells began to resonate
with each other
and with the trees, and the mountains.

All the animals and birds and bees
and Amazons
stopped on the mountain to listen.

A new Alpine melody
could be heard through the valley
over the oceans and further to the moon.

Now the sheep and cows and humans
could wander again
on the steep mountainsides
and be together
in a common Alpine soundscape.

*What a strange assembly of sounds.
That could be heard by all.*

—
This was the language of Gravity.

*In the Alpine Amazonas they called it
ALL SPEAK.*

A language that moved everyone
and everything.
A language that moved all matter
and all things that mattered.

In the resonance of the bells
all could be understood.

Even the pig could relate to the chestnut.

And so it happened.
From under the chestnut tree,
a sound crafted
from old hammering languages.

A common language.
It can be in three places at once
and in three times at once.
It holds together many elements
at one time—

all things with mass and all things that matter –

*planets, stars, chestnuts,
tractors, blue eggs
and galaxies,
humans, sheep, bees
and ... even light*

Is this love?¹

Notes

1 • *The Chestnut, the Sea Urchin & the Tuning of the Bells*, 2021, in its original form is a small full-colour book, offset print with embossed cover and includes illustrations and is bundled with the *Distant Voices Pamphlets* 1-6, a series of texts by Ignacio Chapela, Jason Groves, Ulrike Kindl, Siegfried de Rachewiltz, Roberta Raffaetà, Michael Swaine with introduction by Livia Cahn.

Curated by BAU in collaboration with Hotel Amazonas.



Part 4
To Feel Again

Ancestors
are the Future

Meander



How to Make a Crossing

Scores as meandering tool for navigating through the contradictions of sustainability, consumerism, ecocide and colonialism.

Hold an animal's gaze in yours (or imagine doing so) for a little longer than normally, then close your eyes, and start to imagine being inside the other's body. Try to picture how the animal senses you and holds you in its mind.

The forest, the house of protection, and in it a community of people and plants, animals and spirits. In a world that needs regeneration, how do you make a forest?

It is a few days to landing and you are awake, observing Earth from your spaceship. You get closer and closer... Imagine how it would be to see Earth again after a very long time.

In English, the term bog has a double meaning. As a noun, it refers to a particular type of wetland. As a verb, it refers to being stuck in one place as in the mud. Share a field note from your local bog.

Mix yourself with a plant, dance a small dance with it.

If some words still have a connection to the physical world, do some also have special powers?

What if, in times of uncertainty and doubt, we first turned to a rock, a tree, an ant, or the tides as a source of reflection and possible understandings?

How to cross the contradictions of the idea of sustainable life and the fact that the climate crisis cannot be thought of outside the colonial system. Propose a crossing.

These are all questions and themes forming part of scores shared and published at Meander International Platform. The

platform is a forum where members of four collectives and initiatives situated in different parts of the world come together online every month, to exchange ideas and questions regarding our relations to our environments and our fellow living beings. Through the exchange of practical and poetical scores, the members actively re-examine everyday behaviours, beliefs and ideas about ourselves and our environments. The scores are short written instructions, which are to be materialized in mediums ranging from text and drawing, to photo, collage, sound, video, and film. The practice is inspired by the way Fluxus artists used scores to shift perceptions of self and one's surroundings.

Central to the scores are questions that invite sensitive exploration of the complex patterning of life on Earth. How can we develop models for new and less harmful ways of living, and for making and sharing art? And how can we better acknowledge the other-than-human as part of our societies, of our cultural practices, as well as the basis for our lives?

Meander's scores and participants' responses are available on the platform's webpage and we share our most recent here in this publication. Anyone can read the scores, experience participants' responses, speculate and perform the scores themselves. The platform's practice is dialogical—we share methods and ideas, across cultures and oceans.

The members of Meander do not travel to meet, but spend time together online. Responses and ensuing discussions can open up new meandering paths from the original inquiry. We are sensing food, animals, rocks, places, earth, plants and bogs, together, in different continents and across several time zones. We are speculating through taking in each other's questions, methods and perspectives. Sometimes our experiences offer revelations about what it means to be human within political and economic structures that overlook the other-than-human. And sometimes we are suddenly able to sense the world as open, abundant and alive.

Ancestors Are the Future

Responses to Score #13

Meander International Platform

Tell a Story about Your Ancestry

Ancestry guarantees the self-determination of a people, their land, their landscapes. Through ancestry, the history of a people, its place, a political unit, cultures, and a collective identity that sustains a way of life is constituted. Over the centuries, due to the dispute about the power over the world, many ancestors were killed and this produced people who do not know their origins. The erased memory of a people means the disappearance of ancestors, entities and spirits that took care of them, which causes helplessness in the present.

I invite you to research your ancestry. What did your ancestors do? What did they work with, how did they organize themselves socially, what songs did they sing, how did they dance? How is your ancestry expressed in your territory? We suggest that you talk to your elders about their memories and ways of life; search for family history records; try to materialize this search in your body; look around and try to decipher what is ancestral in the street, in the buildings, in the landscapes you inhabit; tell us a memory you have about yourself or about someone who talks about the ancestry of your people. Demonstrate this ancestry in any way it needs to be shared.

Score by Kidauane Regina, Santos, Brazil, 22 September 2022

Tree-Tellers

Caitlin Franzmann, Ensayos

My grandmother listened to tables. She could understand ‘yes’ or ‘no’ from their trembling legs. I like to imagine that her father, my great-grandfather, was named Odin as a nod to possible Norse pagan roots—roots of a tree of which ‘no man knows from where its roots run’.¹

*From half a world he came
to live and then to die
‘midst sacred bushland that he loved
he chose herein to lie*

These words are carved into my great-great-grandfather’s gravestone. He was born on the island of Fyn, once a sanctuary for worshippers of the Nordic god Odin, and perhaps for worshippers of trees too. He was a gardener in the palace of King Christian of Denmark. For reasons not fully known, likely economic, he followed a promise of free passage and ‘open land’ in a distant new British colony called Queensland, Australia. He lived and died on unceded land of the Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi people. Whereas he was afforded the freedom to choose his resting place, the Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi people who had survived the violence of frontier colonialism were forcibly removed from their lands and subject to regulations that controlled almost all aspects of their lives.

I recently went to visit his grave without really knowing the way. I went in search of what he found sacred and loved, at the same time asking ‘what happened here?’² Lost and far from his bones, I encountered Ian, a local geography teacher whose grandfather knew Odin well. Was this fate? My legs trembled ‘yes’.

On that afternoon, I moved with trust. Ian introduced me to pine trees my great-grandmother planted. We travelled across land on which my forebears felled prized cedar and built fences. They seeded hoop pine plantations too. We approached the banks of Moocooboola (Mary River) where Odin was photographed rolling logs into seaward currents. An impenetrable growth of weeds—unwanted plants—now occupy the edge.

A week later, on Dungibara land, I met an old cedar tree in a small pocket of remnant rainforest. ‘Grandfather tree’, my friend remarked, as we worked together to pull lantana roots from the earth.

*Grandfather tree trembled.
I listened...
and longed for my grandmother.*

Ramona was her name. She was a Guarani Indigenous woman who came from Paraguay at the age of twelve to work as a maid at my grandparents' house. She helped raise my mother, my aunts, me, my brothers and cousins. She cooked, washed and ironed.

Ramona died in 2018, in the care of my mother, who did not leave her alone (despite her loneliness).

This relationship within my family history reveals the complex network of affections in which colonialist, racist and patriarchal Brazil was built. Ramona's presence made it possible for my family to live a life full of white privileges—just as many Indigenous and Black women still 'take care' of white families in Brazil.³

My great-grandparents arrived in Brazil at the end of the nineteenth century, coming from Italy on a ship. They arrived through the port of Santos (where I live and work today). As soon as they docked, they went to work in the coffee plantation, in the interior of the state of São Paulo—more precisely in the city of Catanduva (today there is a neighbourhood there called 'Vila Guzzo').

There were many like them. They were always workers. They came without any wealth, but already had a series of white privileges, evident in the promissory notes of a bank loan made out to my great-grandfather (it was with this document that I also obtained Italian citizenship, and which today grants me several privileges to travel around the world).

Sueli Carneiro warns us that these were the 'quotas' given to Europeans in Brazil, a racist cut that made the inequality between whites and Blacks just out of slavery grow even bigger. This text assumes that the ancestor is the future. Or that the future is ancestral (as Kátiuscia Ribeiro [2020] reminds us). It is therefore important to expand the dialogues and complexities in an attempt to respond and/or identify what cracks expose human relationships today. Ancestry presents itself as a form of recognition in the way of building our ontology, therefore, our future. I don't know much more about Ramona. I don't know who her parents were, how she lived, how she spent her childhood. Nor do I know the secrets of the forest, the animals and

the plants—because that was something she did not share (or maybe she didn't even remember anymore?)

In Brazil, the process of violations and violence aggregated ways and behaviours of the different ethnicities that strengthened and valued ancestry with a structuring value where black and Indigenous people found space and breath to support themselves and defend what was left of their subtracted human identity kidnapped by colonial violence (Ribeiro, 2020).⁴

I'm sorry she couldn't find that strength, that space and breath. I also feel sorry for my family, who sadly contributed to the structuring violence in Brazil. And if our ancestors are the future, and it teaches us to follow, it also teaches us to break the cycles of violence.

Cluster Farms and My Grandmother

Randi Nygård, Meander Society

I could have written about how romantic notions of a nation's soul came from the continent and influenced local identity where I am from. How the fjord and its people were used as an idealized representation of the nation, after Norway's independence from Denmark. Or about the fact that my grandmother grew up in one of the few intact farm clusters in Norway, Agatunet, which later were protected and turned into a museum, because state organizations such as the Directorate for Cultural Heritage paid great interest to their old buildings. My family had then lived there for generations. Or about how come the farm where my grandfather grew up is still a cluster farm. Cluster farms are thought to be a premodern way of living closely in tiny villages in the countryside.

I could have wondered about how cultures are influenced by external views and values that partly become internal, like the romantic one about the vitality of the landscape resonating in a place's culture and dialect and in a nation's identity. Or

the need to protect older things and cultures from changing. But it doesn't feel right to my grandmother, as she seldom discussed things in this manner. Nor do I think that she thought much about her own identity, or that of the places where they lived, for that matter, even if the fjord was depicted in numerous paintings and photos from the 1800s and onwards, with its costumes, waterfalls, mountains, fruit fields and glaciers. Her world was very concrete. They knew that if one disturbed or moved a magpie's nests, big rocks could fall from the mountains. Rocks and snow avalanches still fall down every year.

What my grandmother was really good at, was to allow time for other people. People had time to sit still together, resting in each other's company. 'Do you lay here sleeping away your life?', my grandmother's best friend would shout as he arrived at her house before breakfast every morning, craving coffee. And in the cluster several tasks were done together with family and neighbours: harvesting, chopping wood, playing the fiddle, pruning trees, brewing cider and beer, drinking and crying, and baking flat bread. The women turned the pruning of apple blossoms into a festive activity, with wine and laughter.

My family left the cluster farm as their land was consolidated and the houses protected, and built a new house in the surrounding landscape. Modernization would not replace traditions, but it did change the way they socialized, as they now lived further away from each other and shared fewer tasks.

One of the traditions in the cluster was to sit still without speaking, for one hour, at dusk, watching the daylight fade into darkness. The birds and animals would first become wild and loud and then quietly settle into the night. I invite you to do the same, together with someone. But outdoors this time. You choose whether you do it like the animals or the people in my fjord.

Black Mirror

Kjersti Vetterstad, Meander Society

Last night I dreamt that my brother, my deceased mother, and I

were in a hotel room, dressing up for an unknown occasion. The room looked anonymous. It could have been anywhere. The floor was covered in a soft wall-to-wall polypropylene carpet, and the interior was bathed in a warm, soothing, artificial light. The atmosphere was joyous. We were trying on different clothes. The clothes felt unfamiliar. It looked like they were all bought in the same store. I realized that I was wearing my brother's jacket, and that my mother was putting on my pants. We were laughing. Some stains appeared on my arm. I had a tool in my hand made out of a worn wooden handle and a metal hoop. It looked at least a hundred years old, and I used it to remove the stains. The tool was sharp as a razor and my skin came off in many places. It started bleeding. When putting on my blouse, I was worried that the blood from my arm would come through the textile, but nothing happened.

An old, wooden door opens. Music from a flat fiddle is seeping through it. I see flickering light and sense the smell of a bonfire. Some people are dancing. Others are talking, laughing, and sometimes screaming loud into the summer night.

At sunrise, I'm walking on a sandy path through grassland and yellow wheat fields, overlooking a winding river. A lonely swan gazes at himself in a black mirror. People are already out and about. Some carry wood and rusty metal tools. Their faces are gaunt, and their clothes are dirty and worn. I continue into dense pine forest. Birdsong, an axe felling trees, and the chatter from lumberjacks can be heard in the distance. I rest by a lake. An old man is fishing from a boat that floats silently on the surface. In the late afternoon, I reach a village that is divided by a wide river. A ferryman takes me across. I continue my journey through forest and farmland into the night. The following day I reach an open valley with scattered white farmhouses and red barns, surrounded by corn fields, grazing cattle, and rows of apple trees.

From between the branches I see a mother and father waving goodbye to a young boy. He's going to cross the Atlantic Ocean with a ship and settle in Little Norway, from where the Potawatomi people had to leave, and where wild onions used to grow. The young boy looks like my brother.

We went out for dinner. The restaurant was classy. We drank wine and ate well. Piano music could be heard from the speakers. When I woke up I felt a deep peace inside. All my worries were gone. I hadn't slept that well in ages.

A Familiar Vault of Silence

Søssa Jørgensen, Meander Society

The spruces that grow above the tree line often look distinct. If shielded from wind on a mountain slope, they become straight and tall. Even in the Norwegian mountains. Seen from the ground, they grow wide like a nineteenth-century lady's skirt, with branches hanging down to the mossy ground, and above the waistline, slim and tall, with dark green needles on short branches. Hidden by the branches of these trees, at dusk, my grandfather would sneak in, without us kids noticing it, and suddenly, with a roar, jump out of the darkness and scare us to death! Other times he would only pick the greyish-green hanging hair lichen and make himself a moustache, inhaling to keep it under his nose until he had to breath out again, losing his simple disguise.

I believe that on his mother's side he descended from forest Finns who immigrated to the forests surrounding Oslo, via Sweden in the seventeenth century. The forest taught him to become a good skier and with some friends from the local ski club, he joined the fire brigade as an adult. They were probably fit and brave boys, without any formal education, coming from farms and smallholdings. My grandfather was tall and dark, with pale blue eyes.

At times I've discussed with my sisters who his ancestors were, and since my mother never told us about them, we launched a theory that he was a tater (Romani) or rather that his father was a tater, a traveller, since we never heard of him. Someone who just came by the hut on the forest hill, to sell or to repair something made of metal.

When I asked my mother who her grandfather was, she replied that she never wondered about it. One evening

I kept on asking, and the next morning she came out of her bedroom with red eyes, witnessing a sleepless night. She mentioned all the people she remembered in her father's family and where they lived, in one single breath. Without mentioning her grandfather, only uncles, aunts and cousins, and that they were poor and drank too much. Some time later I learned that she gave away all the pictures of that family to one of those to me unknown cousins.

My grandfather rode his bike to Sweden to ask for my grandmother's hand. Her father asked him if he was a communist, which he denied, and so became a married man. But was he a communist anyway? When I visited my second cousin across the border, she told me that we had a war hero in our family. I was a bit puzzled and started to think about my father, but then I realized that she meant my grandfather. But what did he do during the Second World War? There are almost no traces, and he did not give us any clues.

I believe he was in the anti-Nazi resistance. He smoked in a poisonous fire and got lung damage. His best friend and colleague at the fire station was tortured to death, another firefighter friend did a lot of sabotage. I just learnt that after the war, this firefighter had connections to a clandestine paramilitary organization, a network, secretly supported by the state, for use in case of an Soviet invasion. But was my grandfather involved? The questions will never be answered, the silence was buried with my grandfather.

From Subarctic Marshlands, Kinship, and the Physiology of the Brain

Geir Tore Holm, Meander Society

The land I come from is where the national borders of Finland, Sweden and Norway meet. I grew up in a nook at the brim of the rich and salty Arctic Ocean. Generations before me found their living in this village, Olmmáivággi/Mannndalen, on the steep, but hospitable Norwegian coast. I have a craving for seafood, maybe to keep my raised iodine levels balanced, and I love berries and reindeer meat. My ancestors came from the pine

tree forests and marshlands in the wide inland river valleys, where the tributaries run in from the cold and barren rocky mountain plateaus. They came from the round mountaintops, softened by the glacier's caress over thousands of years. From shifting seasonal faces of the fells. They came from the since time immemorial reindeer migration tracks along lakes, creeks and from fragrant lush light green birch and willow woods.

I feel I belong to this land. To the shrubs, moss, lichen, algae, and fungi. I carry it all with me, my digestion, my brain, my blood, my respiration. The joiks singing this landscape bring tears to my eyes. I feel related to the pitch range of my relative's vibrating voices, the never-ending play with words, metaphors, understatements. And when I meet people from the inland, I recognize eyes, noses, cheeks, mouths and hands and feel at ease in their company. Not many words need to be exchanged. The togetherness can very well be quiet.

All this fits into my human cells. It is stored in the molecules and organelles, mitochondria, ribosomes, golgi, proteins, endosomes, lysosomes, membranes. It's not foreign land. Enzymes show the way and make communication, migration and division possible. This is under harmonic control—or not. What is determined? What is incurred? What is will? What is hidden in the cells defines the landscape and connects.

So much is sentiment, it's yes and no, or a lot between. Sentimentality is a key element in patriotism, a driving force in chauvinism, indispensable in nationalisms, necessary in all kinds of—even the most cynical—self-assertive, greedy, violent, territorial mindsets. What hasn't been done for the sake of revenge?

What would we be without feelings? We can't go on. We can't sense our inner, nor our outer. To belong is to be held tight by a connection between what the cells tell the brain and what the brain is able to process into action. What the shrubs, moss, lichen, algae, and fungi throughout generations have wanted us to do. They want us to wander in love and health, but are we able to use what we like to think is human indigeneity to give love back? Are we sure that our growing pride makes us good, coexisting custodians of our lands?

Pillar a New World – UNIFESP

Kidauane Regina, Body and Art Laboratory

In the midst of a dance of research on the memory of our body, a gesture emerged in me. A force was brought up from the ground through the suction cups on my feet, up to the centre of my body, bulging my back and causing my arms to meet in front of my torso, over and over again. A strong and tiring gesture. I kept it in my body's memory.

In a conversation to research my ancestry, I turned to my grandmothers. My family comes from the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. A state that has always been plundered because of its riches in ore: iron, copper, gold and diamonds were taken from the land through slave labour. My paternal grandmother has a strong connection with nature because she has been a farmer since childhood. She used to plant coffee and, when talking about her life, she goes back to the entire cycle of the coffee harvest: planting, waiting for the fruit to turn red, harvesting, exposing the beans to the sun, waiting for them to dry, roasting, returning to the sun, roasting and grinding. My grandmother, when talking about herself, talks about her relationship with the earth and grains.

In this conversation, she tells the story of her pestle: in her adult life, married and with children, she had to leave her homeland and migrate to São Paulo, the richest capital in the country, accompanying her husband in search of work. On this trip, he brought his wooden pestle. In her house, my grandmother reproduced, on a smaller scale, life on Earth: there was a vegetable garden, a wood stove and an excavated wooden pestle. One day, this pestle caught fire because it was too close to the wood stove. There were no large pieces of wood in the city to make a mortar out of. My grandmother decided to make a cement mortar so that neither time nor fire could consume it.

I realize that the gesture that pulsed in me was my grandmother's gesture. The pillar gesture persists in the memory of my body because I inherited the strength of women farmers who built their lives through the hard work of survival. My grandmother taught me how to make the cement pestle and

she taught me how to make a pillar. Ancestry is a force that keeps a people alive, culture is the affection that people build around what makes them at their best. The people who migrate to large cities in search of a dignified life maintain a way of life that values care for nature, as they understand that without its substrates, no existence is possible.

Notes

- 1 • Stanza 138 of *Hávamál* which means 'songs (or words) of the high one'; the high one being Odin, the Norse god of war, wisdom, poetry and magic. *The Poetic Edda*, trans. and with an introd. and notes by Carolyne Larrington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 32.
- 2 • Shannon Brett, *Kindred Spirits: People and Plants* (Queensland: State Library of Queensland, 2021), p. 84.
- 3 • Women represent 92 per cent of domestic workers in Brazil, and Black women represent 65 per cent of this total. Most of them earn less than the minimum wage and do not have a formal contract (Data Agência Brasil, 2022) In agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/geral/noticia/2022-04/mulheres-negras-sao-65-das-trabalhadoras-domesticas-no-pais#:~:text=J%C3%A1%20o%20total%20of%20workers,%2C7%20million%C3%B5es%2C%20in%202021.
- 4 • Katiúscia Ribeiro, 'O futuro é ancestral', *Le Monde diplomatique Brasil*, 19 November 2020, diplomatie.org.br/o-futuro-e-ancestral/.

[[the spell smell of
consent][

Joy Mariama Smith



This text is part somatic poetry, part essay and part call to action

Now it is November and i am in the northern hemisphere in a part of Europe that is a bit central and certainly western. The time has just changed (spring forward/fall back) and i am still very much ~~searching~~ feeling the loss of this missing hour. i enjoy watching the light change and the darkness getting longer. There are also certain smells that I associate with this autumnal context. Most of those smells [i now realize] have to do with burning or roasting or some sort of transformation by fire. Or even the smell of fire itself, the smell of burning leaves.

i am also sitting in a place where i was not born, surrounded mostly by people that do not share a culture with me. And while i very much consider the place i am in my home, it comes with a slight undertone of displacement....

i wanted to say something about being an immigrant and name the fact that where i am from, the language used to ~~differentiate~~ allege an 'immigrant' from a 'native' has embedded in it a relationship to the land. Being a person with a fractured history/histories because of being a child of the African Diaspora, and also having ancestry that is Indigenous to the Americas, how i understand my personal relationship to land and being 'of it' is quite specific. Or in my cultures, i am always in relationship to the land, and that relation is not based on the preposition/pre-supposition/proposition of being 'of' or 'not of' it.

When was the last time a smell reminded you or took you back to a place?

~~As a child of a Diaspora~~ being an 'immigrant' now definitely influences and colours the way i relate to certain concepts. If i am tasked to think of the relationship between culture, the environment, and art, i don't actually have a choice—based on my lived experience—to not think about the systems at play that make it difficult for the dynamic relationship between these things to be healthy and sustainable: Capitalism, Patriarchy, Sexism, Ra-

cism, homo/trans/femme/fat/etc Phobias—let's call these the Capital Harms—are in the way. Capital Harms are inextricably linked to our understanding of how we are in relation to others, how we locate our Self and position ourselves. Moreover, i ask, how do these Harms influence and affect our understanding of concepts of consent?

Consent is not just a one-way translation; it is an ongoing multi-directional continuum of relation that must be actively refreshed.

i reflect on the conversations i have had around consent with the philosophers (who also work in the practice of the poetical) Denise Ferreira da Silva and Mijke van der Drift. In a triangulation of discourse, ideas around ethics, sensing, and anti-colonialism all swirl around in my head. Denise helped me understand that the etymology of consent is 'sensing together'. This is a concept that i can easily apply to both the human and other-than-human realms.

When i think about how the senses are being used in consent, i think of emotional intelligence, empathy, feeling in the somatic sense, and more. All these levels registers are needed in order to get to a level of understanding that is necessary to be ~~holistical-~~ly most fully in relation. Which means checking in constantly (and consistently) with oneself and others about what feelings/senses are active. From there one can start to understand the consent dynamic. When consent is viewed as a transaction, this actually places consent in a realm that is static, which it isn't.

i'm not sure if it's because i'm queer, or because i live with a disability, or if it's because i come from a matriarchal family structure, or if it's because i'm an ambivert that was once a shy extrovert. Or if it's because i'm an orphan, an only child, an artist, an architect. Or if it's because i'm kinky, non-monogamous, or demisexual. Maybe it's because i'm an activist that centres people of colour, or because i am a facilitator, or a weirdo or a

nerd. Maybe it's because i have a cat, or talk to my ancestors, or because i think spatially, and not linearly. Maybe because i understand that most things presented as a binary—as polarities—are really just part of a spectrum. Maybe it's because i used to sing but don't anymore; maybe it's because i like to learn, as much as i like to read, as much as i like to cuddle. Maybe it's because my mother taught me to always ask questions. No matter what the reason, it has been very easy for me to understand things as different registers and fields of relation. However i was socialized and whatever labels i evade or that stick to me i am always in relation with.

In relation with means not only my relationship with my Self, my ancestors, others, the built and non-built environment, the land ... the land i am currently on, the land i am 'from' and the land i am going to. I am always already all the time in relation. i use my senses to cultivate and strengthen these relations. And like most, there are layers and levels of intimacy.

Intimacy involves trust.

i think about the link between how we treat our body/bodies (singular and collective) and how we treat our land. If we don't update/refresh that link then what would the consequence be?

Understanding relationality in different registers or different modes of sensory perception allows me to raise my awareness so that i can both feel with, and feel together. This takes me through consent and empathy, but what about communication?

Now what about communication, ~~but also~~ and what is it about (regarding) communication?

What role does communication play in ~~this relationship~~ these relationships?

Let's have a pluralistic approach.

Communication is about not just transmission, or commoning, it is also about sharing. Just think of all the things (seen and unseen,

known and unknown) that you share space with.

Who taught me to be in relation with the land?

The first time i picked something from a plant, i asked permission.

i am thinking now of all the things i talk to, my plants, my cat, my ancestors, my Self, the television, other people...

Do i need to be in communication with something to understand and raise my own awareness around my relation to that thing/things? Is communication always reciprocal — as in how we understand (some of) our senses? For example: touch. Touch is a straightforward way of understanding reciprocity. Or what is an instance where you are touching something/one and also not being touched by.

Lines of Inquiry

Where are you from?

~~What was it like when you decided to become white?~~

~~What's it like to be white over there but not white over there?~~

When was the last time a smell reminded you or took you back to a place?

What kind of relationship do you want to have/how do you think this relationship will unfold? (with this text, with the land, with each other)

Who is in relationship with the land?

How does ~~land~~, place ~~geography~~ yield culture?

Who reveres the land?

[Yes reverence not severance]

In order to be in relation with in order to sense together, feel together, (consent) feel with (empathy) we first have to establish connection.

A list of smells:

Sweetgrass
Cinnamon
Ginger
Turmeric
Coffee

Consider:

Can you recall or imagine these smells? Some of them, all of them? Are there any you have never smelled? Have you smelled these smells as synthetic, or fresh? Do the smells in the list below link to a certain identity, a socio-cultural context? Time period? If you wanted to smell each of these things over the course of a week, where would you need to go? What would the outcome be if you invited a friend to join you on this curated list of smells and what if your aim was to share these smells and understand not just your own memory relation with these smells, but also the histories of these smells and how you or i gain access to them.

Proposal:

Make a list of five smells that you can think of clearly. (that take you to a specific place)
Write them down.
Go and find (at least one) of the smell(s) you wrote down.
Smell it.
What did it make you think of?
Write it down or tell someone.

~~Commune with nature~~, communication, compassion, consent, empathy.

What is up for consideration? For me, the triad of body-environment-culture is something i am trying to look at, but to look at from the space between and from the margins. In Konstantina Georgelou's book, *The Practice of Dramaturgy: Working on Actions in Performance* (that i often reference) there is an exercise on ways of looking that highlights a dynamic field of relation. It is within that field that there is also space for consent.

But before this idea emerges and takes form as a thought bubble, there is something that happens. How to simultaneously raise awareness, and also include our Self in the equation? The issue with the Capital Harms is that there is no easy way out, no way to not be implicated in the system of oppression that affects our body/community/land.

Pay attention to the space between things because there is information there.

From the position i am in
i have one ear bud in my ear — the right one
The tiny low-quality sound is beating against my eardrum. i am aware of the bass and frequencies that are missing, although the drumming is persistent
i know that my eardrum is doing a little dance

That was me listening through one ear
From the other ear i can hear the irregular (tick-tock that is more of a thud) sounds of the second hand moving around the centre of a broken clock

My hands have been stuck for at least a minute
Stuck long enough for me to realize...
Stuck—poised each finger in a series of slightly bent attitudes

ready to hit the next key

But stuck as in the channel or conduit from my brain to my
fingers has a temporary block

This blockage creates space
Creates time
Allows times
Gives time and space
For me to notice

How many pounds per square inch do i need to produce in
order for the keyboard to register that i have made a keystroke

i am sitting in the dark
How many sources of light are there?

The colour temperature of my screen is warmer than the cool
fluorescent light hitting the keys on my keyboard

The light hits my keyboard a different way than it hits my brown
skin even different than the wood veneer.

i noticed a moment—a pause

i looked at my computer screen

I looked at mySelf, i became aware of mySelf inside mySelf
My body and the body of the computer

Slightly more weight on my left foot than my right
Slightly more pressure on my right buttock than my left
Slightly more tension in my left buttock than my right

Or is it the other way around

And is my posture ergonomic in this office chair

And how i am acutely aware of my shoulders and how close they
are to my ears because of going to the osteopath

But

i look at the screen,
i look at my hand—opposite on the colour wheel
Warm cool
purple/yellow
orange/blue

i looked at the screen body
i looked at my own body

Or the body that is represented by this point of view
Human-eye point of view

And i did as the exercise
i focused on me
Then the screen
Then the space between

(i also listened)
Back and forth
Me/screen/space between

Until we became the same and i understood a connection
And a relation simultaneously

Which in turn caused me to write.

This above scenario i also do as i walk around my neighbour-
hood, or ride my bike. i try to look at trees, buildings, mySelf,
other people, plants, animals and the spaces between them and
try to understand them as all part of the same 'field' all having
their own unique sense/sensitivity, and each/all having their
own awareness. i make sure to include mySelf in this.

Right now it's dusk, one of my favourite times, and as i look out the window i can see the slow gradation of the sky fading from a warm yellowish orange to a cerulean blue. And if i look behind me (as i am fortunate enough to be writing in a space that gives me slightly more than a 180° view of the city) the cerulean gets darker and darker as it gets closer to the eastern part of the horizon. On the western part of the horizon where the colour is still warm, all the buildings are in sharp silhouette. Some of them have small light sources, i can also see the movement of bike and car lights on the street below. i view all of this as a part of an elaborate choreography of entanglement.

I am ~~writing~~ offering up this writing as a technology against the Capital Harms. i am also writing this to disrupt, to flip the script to change perspectives, to invite, to conjure.

A different Techno(logy)

TECHNODRIFT¹

maybe to tune a ravers diaspora *alone together*—while waiting—keeping the pulse alive

This is a *technology of ecstasy*, done alone, together. It relies on *entrainment*, the built-in ability of the human body to fall into rhythm
And on stepping, walking forward or on place with a down-spill, *playing the earth* with some intention and thrust.
It relies on techno music and on the privilege to *access* an environment that allows you to be lost in public, in a sonic bubble of your own.

BERLIN is suitable. With 2 or 3 people or more depending on your agreement and management of social distancing regulations.

Otherwise said, for the profane, it is a *walk on a beat*.
Though it is a *conscious spell* to revive the earth, to become host of an

inner rave, a requiem to the dance floor, a feast to the sacred Relationship/entanglement of our bodies with gravity and levity. A Covid-suitable *medicine* to support the physiological and physical effects of social distancing, isolation, disorientation.

It affirms the need to *exchange energy* amongst friends and strangers, beyond verbal communication. It's *analogue*.

It affirms dancing as a form of *misbehaviour*.

It bows to *the vibe* as the master.

It is not fitness, though it's a *workout*.

Its success at becoming an altered state of consciousness relies on your desire to raise aliveness within yourself.

Thus, it is a *self-reviving spell*, an agency builder.

It's not dogmatic, though it is intentional. So no guru cosmology, but also no 'whatever'. Treasure the instructions, they are portals.

It has a *beginning* and an *end*.

If shared with other bodies, alone, together, its potency grows exponentially. Plus you need at least a *buddy* to feel the permission to be a bit idiotic or wonderful in public space. They become helpers for you to shift the legs and arms patterns and let the body unfold.

Thus, spread the vibe, cultivate contagion.

The above text is the prelude to a collective practice of walking by my dear friend and colleague Maria F. Scaroni. It again is an exercise in understanding a relationality, through movement. But before that

But before that

There were choreographies...

i keep coming back to the question of what it is i am trying to get across.

What is it that i am trying to transmit, what can i offer, and offer humbly to you dear reader?

What if this text has no point? No clear direction, no linearity. Does this mean it has no value, that it cannot serve as a catalyst of change?

i keep coming back to some points:
(these points are not my own point, nor are they the point...

But maybe they point you in a direction)

When we take care of the land, we take care of our body

Moving away from capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy culture
is a start to a solution

Cultivating empathy is a daily practice, and so is good communication

Consent is not transactional it is dynamic

The body in relation

The body in relation to space (architecture)

The body in relation to space (choreography)

The body in relation to space (scenography)

The body in relation to space (community)

The body in relation to space (dramaturgy)

The body in relation to space (consent)

The body in relation to space (activism)

The body in relation to space (storytelling)

The body in relation to space (compassion)

The body in relation to space (walking)

The body in relation to space (looking)

The body in relation to space (listening)

The body in relation to space (vibration & frequency)

The body in relation to space (technology)

The body in relation to space (connection)

The body in relation to space (critical thinking)

The body in relation to space (intersectionality)

The body in relation to space (culture)

The body in relation to space (here)

The body in relation to space (now)

The body in relation to space (breath)

Have you ever heard of the term kinesphere? Maybe you can look it up, or better yet maybe you can ask a friend. Think of the ~~notion-idea~~ concept of kinetic. Think of motion, think of

your body in motion. Then think of a sphere, a bubble around your body. Combine these two ideas to extend the potential of movement/motion of your body in all directions, based on the range of your [the limbs of your] body.

Back to Space

Space—the concept—is the only thing i can manage to wrap my head around. I have been busy with the body in relation to space for over two decades. Both as a movement artist and an architect. Through the framing of these disciplines (architecture and dance) my world view has shifted.

Touch

Here is an excerpt from an email a friend sent to me:

...however you're doing and wherever you are

*my fingers tapping onto keyboard thinking of you
touching a device to read this and not that our witch-
craft moves through the touching of devices so much as
the movement from feeling something to words to read-
ing and receiving words and how that language changes
us so of course is touch ...*

*everything you touch, you change
everything you change, changes you
the only _____ is change*

...

...

*And that's how I'm reaching out to touch you today,
knowing that if my touch reaches you, it will change
you, and that change will change me... etcetera*

Relax your shoulders

A takeaway

Our sense of smell is a way to understand the space that connects us. Smell has a spaciousness, a tangibility. Space itSelf is not empty, it is a medium of connectedness. We are not separate from our environment; we are part of it. Taking care of ourselves is also taking care of our environment. Becoming aware of the environment you/we are in and being responsible for how you inhabit and behave in it (accountability culture) is in itSelf transformative. Understand that you/we/i are in constant relation, even right now. The space between us allows us the opportunity for movement, change, discourse, communication, shifts, slippage, doubletakes, confusion, growth, learning, negotiation.

Being in relation with means there are multiple sites for consent and empathy. Inhabiting these sites is a way to resist various systems of oppression. Smell forward.

Asimina Chremos, editorial assistant

Notes

1 • Maria F. Scaroni, 'TECHNODRIFT', 2020,
www.allalways.org/technodrift.

Epilogue

The End of History and the Last Human

André Wilkens



The relationship between humans and nature is broken. Humans are to blame. They have taken nature for granted, as something not to take care of. Even worse—humans have exploited nature, raped her, enslaved her. Nature is full of scars, has lost weight, has withered skin, has circulation problems. You can still see her extraordinary beauty but also, more and more, signs of sickness. Humanity too is sick, although it has robbed nature of so much. Humans always want more and take what they need from nature without mercy. Of course the relationship is broken. It is a toxic relationship in which the one only takes and the other only gives. But now nature rebels. She becomes angry, she is raging, she storms. She tries to break out of the toxic relationship. Will she succeed or can we get back together? The latter will only work if humans change. If humans change their behaviour towards nature. If humans start loving nature again. If humans become part of nature again. Can that happen after centuries of violence and exploitation? So far it doesn't seem likely. Humans want a Disneyland nature that is beautiful at the push of a button and otherwise exploit it without giving it a thought. But that is no longer possible. Nature is making a revolution. She wants to break her human chains. She wants out of the dictatorship of humanity. Will she establish a dictatorship of nature? Can we find a good compromise? Let's try.

In well-tempered conference rooms and with a rich culinary offer we discuss the very real coincidence of pandemic, war, hunger, inflation, climate change and more. The apocalypse as a panel discussion. It is still a few days away, the apocalypse, and we can talk about it as an illusion on the horizon. Maybe the apocalypse is just a *fata morgana*. Let's drink a well-chilled white wine on it at sunset. There will be an easily digestible cultural programme to go with it.

Putin is turning off the oil and gas tap to Europe. We have to save energy and need to find new energy for our social model. Putin is forcing us to do what we have to do anyway, because of the climate crisis, because of our dependence on corrupt regimes, because of the lack of social innovation. Now we have no more excuses, we cannot put it off until tomorrow any longer. We now

have someone to blame for the inconvenience and hardship of transformation. We knew it was necessary before, but now we have a villain. That's how simple human beings work.

The author Wolfgang Herrndorf kept a digital diary of the last three years of his life, cut short by cancer, which he called 'Work and Structure'. Why does this come to mind? Perhaps because I am looking for structure in these times. Maybe because I have a growing sense of human finitude. Climate change, extinction, war, violence, mental breakdown. Can humanity cope or will it abolish itself? I am no longer sure. Humanity doesn't yet have a death diagnosis like Herrndorf had. But let's imagine there were such a diagnosis and an estimate of humanity's chance of survival. So: Dear humanity, you are facing total climate collapse and death. Your chance of survival is 30 per cent, your possible lifetime between ten and thirty years. To increase your chance of survival, the following therapy is prescribed: immediate carbon detox, slowing down, preferably a cure, then reintegration into the world in harmony with nature. Who can prescribe this therapy for humanity? God would be a candidate. But he doesn't do it the nice way. He tends to solve these problems brutally through shock therapy. Maybe this time humanity will die and recreate again in millions of years. Maybe a better version will emerge than last time round. The Gods have time for such experiments.

I'm in the office making the world a better place. I write papers, sign contracts, meet with staff, plan a business trip, write the introduction for a publication. Will this make the world a better place? I hope so. Yesterday I read that the biggest problem with the energy transition is the lack of skilled workers. In other words, engineers who can replace gas heating systems with heat pumps. Glaziers who can install triple-glazed windows. Plumbers who can install water-saving showers. Craftsmen who don't sit at desks but work with their hands. These are the real change makers we need now. And what do I do? Should I rather become a plumber? I'm honestly thinking about it.

Ravi is an artist from India who has been concerned with the environment, nature and climate change for a long time. He no longer believes that humanity will survive. Hu-

mans will become extinct, like the dinosaurs, he says. The earth will keep turning and probably new species will evolve that are better adapted to the new climate. Humanity has evolved over 200,000 years, the dinosaurs lived on Earth for 165 million years. Why should humanity be the end of history? Things will go on, with or without humans. And maybe in the future there will be attempts to recreate humans, like they did with dinosaurs in the movie *Jurassic Park*. Will the reborn humans in the Anthropocene Park fight each other then? Maybe. Ravi sees the big picture and is optimistic. He can well imagine a better world without humans.

The weather is fantastic by the way. 22 degrees, the sun is shining autumnally warm. The trees are surreally colourful and beautiful. It's the end of October and we would normally have our heating on. Now the weather is giving us a mild autumn and we need fear Putin much less than expected. Maybe the weather will win the war against Putin. That would give hope for the future: nature defeats dictatorship and war.

I make tea and a jam sandwich. Bob Geldof is singing 'I don't like Mondays' on the radio. Another climate conference has come to an end. For a fortnight, thousands of politicians, scientists, bureaucrats and activists from two-hundred countries negotiated about climate protection in a holiday resort in Egypt. The result was a few warm words that will soon be forgotten. This reminds me of peace conferences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Everyone negotiates peace and shortly afterwards there is war again. Thousands or even millions of people die. Only when the war ends are there real negotiations. Ideally, this leads to peace, at least for a few decades. Then the cycle starts all over again. What does that mean for the climate? Do we need a really big bang for people to react? Oh man, the week is off to a good start. I need a strong coffee.

Responding to the climate crisis is a huge societal challenge and task. It will test the resilience, cohesion, solidarity, and democratic governance of our societies. It needs a new model of societal and economic organization that is at peace with nature and not at war with it. This sounds big, and it is big. It is the most important movement of the twenty-first century:

the movement to save our planet for future generations.

What can culture do? Culture is a key to negotiating humankind's response to the climate crisis; technology is not the answer. It will need cultural change, economic change, social change. Culture creates experiences. Shared experiences create a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose. Throughout times of crises, culture has been inspirational and vital to our everyday lives.

There is hope.

Contributors



Contributors

Dalida María Benfield (*Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research*) (1964) is an artist-researcher, theorist, and Research and Program Director of the Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research. Her practice is focused on decolonial and feminist re-arrangements of the geo-political and gendered embodiments of knowledge, especially in the context of information technologies. Recent publications include: *Affecting Technologies/Machining Intelligences* (co-edited with Gabriel Pereira, Bruno Moreschi, and Kai Ye) (2021); and *Tiempos Migratorios* (Migratory Times) (co-edited with Pedro Pablo Gómez Moreno) (2018). Benfield lives and works in Helsinki and Boston.

Christopher Bratton (*Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research*) (1959) is an artist and educator, Executive Director of the Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research. CAD+SR was founded on the principle that speculative creative work is essential for building sustainable planetary cultures, and its projects address issues of wide significance linked to specific contexts. He is the former President of the San Francisco Art Institute and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Recent publications include: *Impossible Spaces and Other Embodiments: Co-constructing Virtual Realities* (Routledge, 2022); *Histories and Pedagogies from the Underside of Modernity* (Routledge, 2022); and *_rt Movements* (ARTMargins/MIT, 2021).

Livia Cahn (*Futurefarmers*) (1984) is an anthropologist who studied at the University of Cambridge, and is currently at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society digging into her PhD.

Grégory Castéra (1981) is a curator, institutional advisor and educator. He is a founding member of Council (2013) and AFIELD (2014). He is currently director of Council, and advisor for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Jan van Eyck Academie and the Kerenidis Pepe Collection. From 2020–2022, he was Professor of Collective Practices at the Royal Insti-

tute of Art, Stockholm. From 2010–2012, he was co-director of Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers. His work focuses on the transformation of art practices and institutions with ecology. council.art

Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research (CAD+SR) is an independent, international non-profit arts-based research center that supports the social practices of artists, scholars, and researchers through workshops, fellowships, residencies, exhibitions, and publications. CAD+SR was founded on the principle that speculative creative work is essential for building sustainable planetary cultures, and its projects address issues of wide significance linked to specific contexts. Workshops are designed around topics that are relevant to the specific locale and open onto multiple horizons of transdisciplinary and transnational inquiry. The pedagogical approach, consistent across the Center's workshops, emphasizes dialogue and exchange, horizontality and experimentation, and intensive, structured time spent together alongside open spaces for individual and collaborative work. The Center is a site for experiments in the arts, technology, and research methodologies, and creating the future shape of planetary cultures. Cosmological Gardens is an ongoing research project of (CAD+SR), engaging an intensive consideration of the planetary geographies of caring cultures and their implications for anti-extractivist and decolonial action.

centerartsdesign.org/workshops/Cosmological%20Gardens

Luigi Coppola (*Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research*) (1972) is an artist and agroecologist and senior researcher at the Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research. His practice is connected to the process of social re-appropriation of the natural commons and the activation of a shared social imaginary. He is part of the collective Casa delle Agricolture, a project in Castiglione d'Otranto, Italy, which seeks to revive abandoned land, repopulate the countryside, generate a sustainable economy and strengthen community cohesion. Recent projects and exhibitions include: 7th Lubumbashi Biennale, RD Congo (2022); 5th Istanbul Design Biennial (2020); Quadriennale di Roma (2017).

Philipp Dietachmair (1973) has been working in the field of global cultural relations for more than twenty years. He currently co-directs the programmes division of the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam. Previously, he has been developing international cooperation programmes with artists, cultural community initiatives and civil society activists in Central Eastern Europe, the former Yugoslavia, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Turkey and North Africa. He has been leading the design of a number of European emergency response funds for arts and culture. For example, for supporting artists and cultural recovery projects in Ukraine and for co-financing cultural eco-sustainability initiatives in remote regions of Europe. He has also been involved in a number of field studies and book projects that analyzed the role of autonomous art spaces in civil society or explored scenarios for a slower and greener future for art residencies and cultural mobility.

Amy Franceschini (*Futurefarmers*) (1970) is an artist and designer whose work facilitates encounter, exchange, and tactile forms of inquiry by calling into question the 'certainties' of a given time or place where a work is situated. An overarching theme in her work is a perceived conflict between 'humans' and 'nature'. Her projects reveal the history and currents of contradictions related to this divide by challenging systems of exchange and the tools we use to 'hunt' and 'gather'. Using this as a starting point, she creates relational objects that invoke action and inquiry; not only to imagine, but also to participate in and initiate change in the places we live. Amy received her BFA from San Francisco State University in Photography and her MFA from Stanford University. She has taught in the visual arts graduate programs at California College of the Arts in San Francisco and Stanford University and is currently a faculty member in the Master of Eco-Social Design at the Free University in Bolzano, Italy.

atlas magazine.com • flatbread society.net

Caitlin Franzmann (*Meander*) (1979) is an artist based in Australia who creates installations, sonic experiences, performances,

and social practice works focused on place-based knowledge and embodied practices. She originally trained as an urban planner, working for several years in policy and strategic planning roles. Since completing her studies at Queensland College of Art in 2012, she has presented work nationally and internationally, as a solo artist and as a member of the feminist collective LEVEL. She is a member of Ensayos, a collective research practice focused on eco-political issues impacting Tierra del Fuego and other archipelagos.

caitlinfranzmann.com

Futurefarmers (Seasonal Constellation, 2020–2021, Bolzano, Italy/Brussels, Belgium). Founded in 1994 in San Francisco. This seasonal constellation aligns through a common interest in the possibilities of ethnographic methods to address various nature-cultures by working through collaborative contexts, across disciplines and practices on urban ecologies, interspecies relations and lively soils. Futurefarmers work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the New York Museum of Modern Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim, MAXXI in Rome, Sharjah Biennial, Taipei Biennial, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Oslo, and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. They have published *A Variation on Powers of Ten* with Sternberg Press (2011) and *For Want of a Nail* (2018) with NoPlace Press and distributed by MIT.

futurefarmers.com

Fernando García-Dory (*INLAND*) engages with the relationship between culture and nature, as manifested in multiple contexts, from landscape and the rural, to desires and expectations in relation to identity, crisis, utopia and social change. Interested in the harmonic complexity of biological forms and processes, his work addresses connections and cooperation, from microorganisms to social systems, and from traditional art languages drawing to collaborative agro-ecological projects and actions. He studied Fine Arts and Rural Sociology, and is preparing his PhD on Art and Agroecology. He was granted the Socially Engaged Award by Creative Time New York, the Chamberlain Award

and finalist of the Rolex Prize, He is fellow of Council of Forms (Paris) and board member of the World Alliance of Nomadic Pastoralists. He has developed projects and shown his work at Tensta konsthall, Van Abbemuseum, Museo Reina Sofia, SFMOMA, Centre Pompidou, documenta 12 and Biennales of Gwangju, Istanbul and Athens. Since 2010 he has been developing a project about a para-institution called INLAND, in which to dissolve his authorship. In 2022 he exhibited at BAL-TIC Newcastle, Madre Napoli, Biennales of Istanbul, Kosovo and Urals, and for documenta fifteen. He is also coordinator of the European network on Rural Arts called Confederacy of Villages, supported by Creative Europe program and the Daniel and Nina Carasso Foundation.

fernandogarciadory.info

Pascal Gielen (1970) is writer and full professor of sociology of culture and politics at the Antwerp Research Institute for the Arts (Antwerp University, Belgium) where he leads the Culture Commons Quest Office (CCQO). Gielen is editor of the international book series *Antennae-Arts in Society* (Valiz). In 2016 he became laureate of the Odysseus grant for excellent international scientific research of the Fund for Scientific Research Flanders in Belgium. In 2022 he was appointed by the Flemish Government as curator of the Culture Talks conference. Gielen has published many books which have been translated in Chinese, English, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish and Ukrainian. His research focuses on creative labour, the common, urban and cultural politics. Gielen works and lives in Antwerp, Belgium.

ccqo.eu • uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/aria/

Marina Guzzo (1978) is an artist, teacher and researcher who concentrates her creations at the interface of the body and the landscape, mixing dance, performance and circus when tensioning the limits of subjectivity in cities and in nature. Since 2011, the climate crisis and the role of the artist in the production of imagery for crossing a ruined world on the Anthropocene have been at the centre of her research. She works in partnership with

health, culture and social assistance equipment, thinking of art as a political action that weaves a complex network of people, institutions, objects and nature. The artist has a post-doctorate from the Department of Performing Arts at ECA-USP and a Master's and Doctorate in Social Psychology from PUC-SP. She is an Associate Professor at *Unifesp* at the Baixada Santista Campus, a researcher at the Corpo e Arte Laboratory in the Society and Health Institute. Marina Guzzo is also a member of *Meander – Society for Ecological Thinking and Artistic Practice*.

cargocollective.com/marinaguzzo

Geir Tore Holm (Meander) (1966), is a Sámi artist, writer and curator. Grew up in Olmmaivággi/Mann dalen, Northern Norway. Lives and works together with Søs sa Jørgensen at Øvre Ringstad Farm in Skiptvet, Southern Norway. Graduated from Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts in 1995. PhD in artistic research at Oslo National Academy of the Arts with 'Poetics for Changing Aesthetics' in 2017. Part of establishing Sørfinnset skole/the nord land in Oarjelih Bájjdár/Gildeskål in 2003. Head of project founding Tromsø Academy of Arts in 2007. Since 2009 holder of the Government Guaranteed Income for Artists.

INLAND (various locations in Spain) is a collaborative agency started in 2009 by Fernando García-Dory. It provides a platform for diverse actors engaged in agricultural, social, and cultural production. During its first stage (2010–2013) and taking Spain as an initial case study, INLAND was engaged with artistic production in twenty-two villages across the country, nationwide exhibitions and presentations, and an international conference. This was followed by a period of reflection and evaluation, launching study groups on art and ecology, and a series of publications. Today INLAND functions as a collective focused on land-based collaborations and economies, and communities-of-practice as a substrate for post-contemporary art and cultural forms. INLAND has a radio station, an academy, produces shows, and makes cheese. It is also a consultant for the European Union Commission on the use of art for rural

development policies, while promoting a European Shepherds' Network, a social movement to question those same policies.

INLAND is currently coordinating the Confederacy of Villages network and has exhibited and worked with institutions such as the Istanbul Biennial (2015); Casco Art Institute, Utrecht (2015); Macbashi Museum (2016); Serpentine Gallery, London (2020); Casa do Povo, São Paulo; Centre Pompidou, Paris (2015); SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin (2019) and documenta fifteen.

inland.org

Søssa Jørgensen (Meander) (1968), lives at the farm Øvre Ringstad, Skiptvet. She graduated from Trondheim Academy of Fine Art (1995) and holds a master in Landscape Architecture from NMBU, Ås (2011). Parallel to individual work that includes video, photography, drawing and performance, Søssa has worked long-term with radio and sound art in collaboration with Norwegian peer Yngvild Færøy. In 2003 she initiated together with artists from Thailand and partner Geir Tore Holm the never-ending art and ecology collective Sørfinnset skole/the nord land in Oarjelih Bájjdár/Gildeskål, Northern Norway.

Meander – Society for Ecological Thinking and Artistic Practice was initiated in 2018 by artists Kjersti Vetterstad and Randi Nygård, and established together with fellow artists Geir Tore Holm, Søssa Jørgensen and architect Kristin Astrup. The international Platform for Sustainable Art and Life Practices is the association's first public activity. Meander International Platform is a web platform where members of four collectives and initiatives situated in different parts of the world come together to exchange ideas and questions regarding our relations to our environments and fellow life forms. By inviting Ensayos (US, France and Chile) and ODD (Romania) and Instituto Procomum (Brazil), we aim at establishing a platform for exchange of ideas that can be communicated and shared through a set of artistic strategies.

meandersociety.no

Georgia Nicolau is a Brazilian creative professional, researcher, trained facilitator and consultant in the areas of civil society organizations, collective action, innovation and culture and arts. She is interested in everything that has to do with a transition to a fairer, more egalitarian and cooperative world. She is a Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Fellows for Social and Economic Equity programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). In 2016, she co-founded the Procomum Institute, a commons-oriented NGO where she is currently director of programmes and partnerships and institutional development.

nowcommons.org • lab.procomum.org

Randi Nygård (Meander) (1977), lives in Oslo and has an MFA from Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts. Nygård combines ideas from the humanities with facts from the natural sciences. Time may only arise between things, glaciers are breathing, our teeth are closely linked to memory and words with similar sounds often stand for things with similar visual forms. In 2022 she is working with how glaciers respond to our way of life and with scents of bogs for the Chilean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Nygård writes about art and she is member of Meander, ENSAYOS and Paviljong.

randinygard.com

Luciane Ramos Silva is a Brazilian dance artist, anthropologist, editor and cultural mediator. She holds a PhD in Performing Arts and a Master's in Anthropology from UNICAMP, the University of Campinas, where she was a visiting professor at the Arts Institute in 2021. Over the past ten years, she has developed projects on the body, culture and coloniality, deepening South-South relations between Brazil and West African contexts. She is co-director of the magazine *O Menelick 2° Ato*, an independent platform/printed magazine focused on the art of the Black diaspora. She is a project manager at Acervo África, a São Paulo-based research centre on African culture, and a professor at Sala Crisantempo. She is a member of Anikaya Dance Theater, a dance company based in Boston.

Kidauane Regina (Meander) (1995), born in São Vicente, Brazil, and descended from the Puri Indigenous people. Researcher, social worker and artist. Graduated in Social Work from *Unifesp*, works as a social worker promoting access to social rights for vulnerable populations. Takes a Master's degree in Health Sciences at *Unifesp* and studies the interfaces between body, territory and socio-environmental vulnerability on the periphery of the capitalist system, using the arts of the body as a way of knowing reality. She is a performer and researcher linked to the Interdisciplinary Dance Center of the Corpo e Arte Laboratory (*Unifesp*).

Noel B. Salazar (1973) is an anthropologist who obtained his PhD at the University of Pennsylvania, and is currently Professor in Social and Cultural Anthropology at KU Leuven, Belgium. His research interests include human mobility (broadly defined), planetary well-being, discourses and imaginaries of Otherness, cultural brokering, and cosmopolitanism. Recent publications include: *Pacing Mobilities* (co-edited with Vered Amit) (2020), *Momentous Mobilities* (2018), and *Keywords of Mobility* (co-edited with Kiran Jayaram) (2016). Salazar lives and works in Brussels.
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Joy Mariama Smith (1976) is an installation and movement artist, activist, educator, and architectural designer. They* studied at the Dutch Art Institute in Arnhem; the NewSchool of Architecture & Design in San Diego; L'École Internationale de théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris; and Oberlin College in Ohio. Their work has been performed internationally, including at If I Can't Dance Edition VI—Event and Duration, Amsterdam; SoLow Festival, Philadelphia; Freedom of Movement, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and Ponderosa Movement & Discovery in Stolzenhagen, Germany. Currently, they teach at the School for New Dance Development (SNDO) in Amsterdam and was a BAK fellow 2019–2020.
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Pelin Tan (Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research) (1974) is a sociologist, art historian, and senior researcher at the Center for Arts, Design, and Social Research. Her practice is transversal methodologies in art and design on the commons and thresholds. Tan is a member of The Silent University and IM-ECE solidarity. Selected publications include: *Architecture and Commons* (Routledge, 2023), *Designing Modernity: Architecture in the Arab World 1945–1973* (Jovis, 2022), *Radical Pedagogies* (MIT Press, 2022), *Re-Production of Social Architecture* (Routledge, 2016), *Climates: Architecture and The Planetary Imaginary* (GSAPP Books & Lars Muller Publication, 2016). Editor of *Autonomous Archiving*, Artıkışler, Istanbul (2016).

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Colophon

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