Solitude Journal 1

Collective Care & Response-ability

Published by Akademie Schloss Solitude

Solitude Journal 1

Collective Care & Response-ability

Content

Greetings

Transformation – Unfolding Care

Elke aus dem Moore and Denise Helene Sumi

When the team at Akademie Schloss Solitude began planning the 30th anniversary under the title *Transformation – Unfolding the Future*, a key question arose: Does an international and interdisciplinary artists' residency have the power to rethink the future? As a result of the complex nature of the current world situation, we are convinced that a consideration of transformative politics and processes requires an essential basic understanding, and that this can only be discussed effectively using collective knowledge. It is currently becoming increasingly apparent that, as human beings, we invariably maintain relationships with others, namely with all life forms that populate this planet. We are aware that other systems of knowledge besides our human variety exist, such as those of animals, plants and viruses, and we realize how important it is to learn to integrate them once more, to live with them rather than without them, and to see ourselves as part of a whole.

With its transcultural and interdisciplinary knowledge and its multi-perspective access to a common world, an artists' residency can serve as a model of how we operate in a collaboration with different actors, and how common ideas can be transformed into collective productions or political and social or ethical projects. In her *Manifesto on Artists' Rights*, the Cuban artist and activist Tania Bruguera writes: »Art is not only a statement on the present, it is also a call for a different future, indeed a better one.«[1] In the light of our current existence in a divided world, in which the exploitative actions of the Anthropocene epoch and the more recent world economic developments of neo-liberalism are becoming globally visible and tangible, artists, scientists and activists from all over the world are seeking models for the purposes of testing new forms of solidarity, and ways of thinking, acting and working. Akademie Schloss Solitude is setting an example with the first issue of the new Solitude Journal, which is dedicated to the contributions of various theorists and artists on the principles of care and caring.

As one of several events scheduled for the anniversary year, whose motto is *Transformation – Unfolding the Future*, the first Solitude Journal, with the theme *Collective Care & Response-ability*, features artistic works and writings in which the political, social and ethical dimensions of care and concern between humans, non-humans, other species and the material world converge. The contributions gathered here are not intended so much to provide a historical or cultural-scientific overview of the concept of care as they are to unite a close observation of the current (crisis-related) state of affairs and the voices of fellows on alternative narratives and modes of action that consolidate the common good or our planetary well-being.

The articles in the journal *Collective Care & Response-ability* seek to create an intrinsic moment of community and involvement, as well as new principles of accountability. The authors use sensitive, radical, careful, precise and well-considered concepts, creating a web of thoughts, possible actions, and even including a sprinkling of optimism. Common to all is the acknowledgement that we live in a world of causalities, in which an ideal coexistence should be tied less to the moral condition of care and concern, or to the often exploitative care sector (the health care system), for instance, but rather to the basic notion that caring for something or someone inevitably means creating a relationship. Bearing in mind the words of María Puig de la Bellacasa, author of *Matters of Care. Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*, the first Solitude Journal aims to raise awareness that the model of collective care and the ability to take responsibility for one's own actions and those of others can exist only in complex relationships that require constant attention and sensitivity to ourselves and our environment. Principles of care as discussed in this first journal require a togetherness in the sense of »becoming with«, »thinking with« and »caring with«.

Our special thanks go to the authors and this issue's editorial team, as well as to the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, whose generous funding enables us to develop sustainable models in this format. It is the Akademie's hope that these will become more firmly anchored in our thinking and actions over the next 30 years.

1 Tania Bruguera, *Manifesto on Artists' Rights*, presented during the »Expert Meeting on Artistic Freedom and Cultural Rights«, Palais des Nations, seat of the United Nations Organization in Geneva, December 6, 2012

I am invisible but you see me well enough

Alice B. Toklas (1877–1967) photographed
by Carl Van Vechten, October 8, 1949.
This work is from the Carl Van Vechten Photographs collection
at the Library of Congress, USA. Public Domain.

A transversation (*sic*) by Polly Gannon, Jaime Hyatt, and Padraig Robinson

Padraig: Where to begin this discussion of care for text? I suppose it's first best to acknowledge that all three of us are in forever-love with the written word and a giggle amongst the profound. Secondly, we are all very aware, too, of the problems in this culture of publishing for the sake of publishing. Of only ever being *visible*, of only being »heard« by the herd. Even at the level of social media, the maxim seems to be »I have an opinion, therefore I tweet.« But there are always lots of things behind the publishing of texts; invisible labor such as language editing and translation. Jaime, you work as a language editor, and Polly as a Russian-to-English translator of literature and poetry (»Everything good begins with trans-« I think Polly said once). As publishable, perishable beings, we are nowadays also directed by algorithms that (in)form opinion. Sadly, this is the only operational way that affect becomes political. And affect does need to become political; but social media technology, or rather dictating, is making people very sloppy, perhaps even to the point of not giving a shit as long as an opinion is heard; a virtue peer-acknowledged, a PhD approved. It's becoming more and more possible that language editing and translating will be done by algorithms that do away with the careful listenings and rhythms of writing.

Polly: (Listenings in the plural! That's very important.)

Padraig: I'm not sure machines can learn to give a shit. Not in *that* way. So while we always talk about the death of the author, what about the work in the work of publishing »the work?« To cut to the chase, let's call this the »giving a shitness« in the work behind »the work.« For example, Jaime, you literally just finished two volumes of pretty hard-core academic writing.

Jaime: Yes, the two leviathans I submitted today comprised of 23 different authors, most of whom were annoyed with me for giving them such an »unreasonable« turn around time to check the typesetting proofs.

Padraig: The turnaround time was not your choice, though?

Jaime: No, it wasn't. The publisher gave me one week per 500-page volume.

Padraig: Christ on a bike!!

Polly: Hahahahhaha.

Jaime: Hahahaha, yeah … But, you just have to get the job done and make sure to communicate with the authors. We are all at the will of the publishers, like it or not. If the authors want to be heard, that is, they must abide. But as an invisible voice who gives a shit, I often take more shit than I feel I deserve. »*The nerve of that woman*,« I can almost hear them say. »*Doesn't she know who I am!? I am the author, for Christ's sake!*« But to be sure, I am the only person on this planet who will have read every word in both volumes (in all *four* volumes, actually – the other two are not yet finished, although the third has just gone into production). I have literally spent years on these behemoths, carefully, painstakingly choosing just the right word to help my non-native English-speaking scholar-colleagues sound like native speakers. »Everything good begins with trans-,« said Polly Gannon. Touché, Polly. Touché.

Polly: It's giving a shit and caring enough to *Translate*.

Padraig: This issue we are skirting is to do with care, and other dubious terminology that describes the invisible labor other people do. This sounds too mechanical to say what I'm trying to say, but this »giving a shitness« for text is about legibility firstly, but also translation and rewriting, which is actually pretty complex in terms of inhabiting a voice, right?

Polly: A line in one of Robert Frost's most famous poems (one of the poems, sadly, that is most misconstrued) reads: »Something there is that doesn't love a wall, that wants it down.« The poem is called »Mending Wall« and is often enlisted, especially these days, to justify the building of new walls, as well as keeping the old ones in working order. I read this poem in a much more complex way, because translation is a practice that concerns itself quintessentially with borders and walls. And, on the face of it, it is the translator who wants them down. Conventional wisdom (buttressed by etymology) holds that »to translate is to betray« (*traduttore, traditore*).

Padraig: I am fascinated by this erotics of »betrayal« in the work of translating, and in some cases the idea of the language editor as a necessary enemy translating the author's voice into something that is legible in this more etymological, uhm … sorry, that word always trips me up … What am I saying? … Ah yes, this betrayal of the language edit and translation is actually an issue of craft and care, trespassing enough of the raw word to betray it, so it fits into this habit of etymological legibility, or, of sentences literally making sense to as many people as possible.

Jaime: »Betrayal« is a very apt word here, I find. And there is definitely something sultry about it.

Polly: Editing is very sultry!

Jaime. As a language editor, I often have to re-work a sentence for structure and flow, or for example, a turn of phrase is used incorrectly in English and needs adjusting; and well, occasionally the response I get is that of the author feeling insulted, as if their text, their words were »betrayed.«

Padraig: Is that ego in the name of the authorial »name« though?

Jaime: Yeah, some of this is ego, of course, but some is certainly due to the ambiguous nature of the act of translating or editing itself. Whereas I feel like I am caring for them and their words – their name, even – and caring for the reader, the author may feel that a line has been crossed. Who, then, is the author? Betrayal happens when that question becomes ambiguous.

Padraig: This is also where terminology like »care« becomes murky and dangerously sentimental. And in fact how editorial care translates into an adherence to a »proper language.« Whether care has »proper ethics« is much more complicated. To think about care, we also need to acknowledge notions such as trespass and betrayal, to somehow delineate »care's« sultry ambiguity.

Polly: The reasons for this ambiguity about the practice of translation is transparent – the most obvious being this very transgression of a border (usually between »natural languages«) that would seem to keep things where they belong. In order to translate between two languages – and this is a denuded, simplistic, reductive description of »what happens«

when we translate – we make a decision to turn our backs on what is called, somewhat quaintly, »the original,« and go in search of an equivalent, a simulacrum, a reflecting mirror of that original, in the »target language.« Terrible term, the less said about which the better. But in fact, there is also a plea built into the act of translating and language editing, since we are searching for »other ears« to hear it with, »other ears« to be heard by.

Jaime: I like this idea of being heard by »other ears« – giving access to these other ears is fundamentally an act of care for the text.

Padraig: Some sentences are better cared for by being »heard« in text, and not spoken out loud, so there is a sense of being privy to a certain privacy, or there's even a domesticity, to the work of translating and editing. So it is actually a pretty ambiguous, multi-layered exercise.

Jaime: Absolutely. Texts »speak,« they are meant to be read, or »heard,« right? So, in a way, translators and editors are in the middle, trying to open the text to »other ears,« maybe to use the gaps in the wall – to use your metaphor, Polly – to liaise between neighbours (or neighbouring languages). The image of Sigourney Weaver as the gatekeeper in the first *Ghostbusters* (™) film comes to mind. Or was it Rick Moranis who was the gatekeeper?

Polly: Hahahaha ...

Padraig: ... Hahahahaha, Sigourney Weaver the actress playing Dana Barrett possessed by Zuul the Gatekeeper. So it's translator and editor as host of writers? Very Gertrude Stein meets Alice B meets the Montmartre modernism scene.

Jaime: Hahahahah, exactly ... So, thinking about one side of the wall containing the original and the other side, a »re-presentation« of said original, not only brings to mind translator-as-Sigourney-Weaver–as–gatekeeper (caretaker of wall, caretaker of ears, etc.), but it also makes me think about the text itself, right? Its existence in different forms, in various states: is it more a simulacrum or a mirror image or, rather an infinity mirror? because, let's be honest, it's a process.

Padraig: It's not as if text just arrives as mimesis of mind though anyway. Eventually, it needs a first reader, a first responder; or even a first aider if we think of the text as a living thing.

Jaime: I have been particularly trying to avoid the word *mimesis* here for the gigantic can of worms it has the power to open ...

Padraig: ... *mimesis* is out I think these digital days, as is this question of the »original« (I cringe when I see unedited manuscripts in archives.)

Jaime: Yeah, so does »the original« really exist so separately from its other-language equivalent?

Polly: In fact, the practice of translating doesn't permit one to turn one's back on the original, or even to cross the border and stay there. That (dubious) luxury, of being on one side of the border or the other, belongs, if it can be said to belong to anyone, to the speakers and hearers of each language. The translator has no such luxury. It is the fate

of the translator to inhabit the border itself, to make forays into new linguistic territory, and then return, repeatedly, to the »old world,« with its »old words,« back and forth, back and forth, but never straying too far from the border one is challenging, and dismantling, word by word. Or building.

Padraig: Multiple registers again.

Polly: The translator has too many ears, too many tongues, to do just one thing. To be just one thing.

Padraig: »Too many tongues,« I like that.

Jaime: Me too.

Padraig: Thinking of these multiple registers, like editor-translator-as-Sigourney-Weaver-as-gatekeeper, I keep thinking about Alice B. Toklas, whose autobiography was written by Gertrude Stein, her life partner. For me it's probably one of the most tongue-in-cheek titles in modernism: *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, but *by Gertrude Stein*. In the 1952 oral history interview I sent you both of Toklas, she said that she did the typewriting of her Autobiography *by Stein*. So Toklas's labor of typing Stein's writing also inhabits a weird type of border wall between authoring, translating (in mother tongue) and editing. Stein definitely did not turn her back on the »auto« in the »biography« of Toklas, but rather turned the whole interconnectivity of autobiography on its head. So perhaps Stein was a host-listener, who wrote this autobiography of … using the tongue of … typed by the hands of … Toklas. Like dressing up in each other's clothes? Could The *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* then be considered as a work of editorial or translator care? Or a betrayal or trespass into the mouth of the other?

Polly: Your questions touch upon one of the most discomfiting and awkward issues in translation – what we might term a kind of »voyeurism.« And the notion of care is central to this issue, too. If we consider voyeurism – with all its (dubious, but real) pleasures and dangers – to be about seeing while remaining invisible (i.e. »I am invisible, but I see *you* well enough«), then the translator and language editor is open to these charges of voyeurism.

Padraig: Cleaners have access to things in a similar way, and can also be prone to invisibilities that make them privy to a voyeuristic form of »looking« too.

Polly: Did you know proofreaders were referred to as the »cleaning ladies« of the text in the American South as late as 1995?

Jaime: Really!? You know, I'm embarrassed to say, but I find it slightly irksome when someone refers to what I do as »proofreading« or »copyediting« because my job actually involves a lot of re-writing, or rather »writing-with.« But, proofreading and copyediting are absolutely vital steps in the production of the written work. Yet, the differences between them lie, not so much with the particular job in question, but with permission. I am given permission to »write-with«; a cleaner is given permission to enter the private space of the employer; what they see there will never be the same thing the employer sees. The same is true of the »proofreader« who is permitted to look for errors that the author, who is so close to the work, cannot see for herself.

Polly: So even if one is cleaning, translating or editing »with permission,« there is a sense in which there is a kind of voyeurism at play, because the »author« can never see herself, her thoughts, or her (written) words, in their entirety. We are always blind to parts of ourselves that others can see, that others have access to. And when we are being translated, being edited, those parts of ourselves we can't or don't (wish to) see come into view. So the edit, the translation, is also a kind of mirror; and it is by definition a distorting mirror, if we are forced to see what we want to hide, from ourselves and, or, from others. I would say that it is very likely Alice and Gertrude »had each other's permission« – their mutual vulnerability was the pact, and the pact was given the name of »Autobiography.« They definitely inhabited the wall together … they made the wall, the border, their home. And in reading *their* (oh, the fecundity of pronouns these days!) *Autobiography*, we actively contribute to its legibility, writing it (translating it, editing it, living it, loving it …), too. That's care, all right. And it's a way of making the mirror gentle, not harsh and unforgiving. (Here, in this metaphor of the mirror, the notion of mimesis makes its entrance again; but we'll turn our backs on it, because it's not just a looking-glass, but a rabbit hole!)

Dan Kane, *Jean, 270-6*, 35mm Kodachrome, New York, 1981.
Copyright Studio Dan Kane.

Jaime: All of this very much strikes a chord with me on the notion of sincerity, which you and I have discussed at length in the past, Padraig.

Padraig: Yes. The voyeurism, in my writing about trespass in archives, particularly in *6—9: Notes from the archive of Dan Kane* (Publication Studio Rotterdam, 2016). Significantly, Dan is also a translator of German, so his disappearance into pictures, and in the mirror's in the *Kopfkino* pictures, was really interesting editing the final sequence of photographs with him. Where I was, as such, learning to edit in his vocabulary, or »pictorial pitch« as he describes it (there's a beautiful photograph that did not make it into the final picture sequence, it's a 1981 portrait of Dan's friend Jean, a simultaneous interpreter whom I met sometime in 2015).

Jaime: The voyeurism, the autobiographical pact, the mutual vulnerability, the care – all topics or themes of the »new sincerity« moment. We talked about it more recently too, in Weimar.

Padraig: Ah, Cathal Kerrigan and I spoke about Toklas when finishing *Gaze Against Imperialism* (Metaflux Publishing 2019), with the historical »scenes« we were talking about. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is a peculiar sort of transcription too, as it is very likely that it was edited in some form by Toklas, who wrote in her *Cook Book* that her autobiography was already *done* (read: transcribed) by Gertrude. I think we talked about the »new sincerity« moment because neither *6—9*, nor *Gaze Against Imperialism*, were sentimental books?

Jaime: Right, and Stein was clearly no sentimentalist either. What I find interesting about this supposed »new sincerity« moment, is that it not only marks a rejection of the »gasp and squeal« of postmodernism (as David Foster Wallace called it), but it rejects the modernist ideal of authenticity that writers like Hemingway and Fitzgerald, and artists like Picasso were so concerned with (all of whom, as we know, were friends with Gertrude and Alice). People often use the two terms synonymously today, but there is a fundamental difference between them. Sincerity is a convergence of *avowal* and *actual feeling*. It is a means (»to thine own self be true«) to an end (»so that you can be true to others«). It's an *inter*subjective and ethical project that dominated the Western cultural mind-set from Renaissance humanism up through the nineteenth century. In the modernist period, however, the quest for sincerity elided into the quest for authenticity … and authenticity, in contrast, is marked by an inward, personal project. It's about subjective truth-seeking, the goal of which is to examine oneself rather than communicate with the other, thus making it an end in and of itself.

Padraig: Insincere care is dangerous. So in a way you can't have care without sincerity?

Jaime: Well, it seems so, and for the modernist »audience,« then (the »other ears,« the viewer), was all but obliterated …

Polly. … True that. With Toklas and Stein it was different.

Jaime: And this is what I find so wonderfully poetic about the title, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* by Gertrude Stein: the audience is still vital in this intersubjective project. They not only need the audience to get the joke, but they are, as inhabitants of the wall, each others' ears, each others' mirror, each others' memories in the writing of their »memoir.«

Padraig: In the 1952 interview transcript of Alice B. Toklas I find it really striking how she said that her only contribution to Stein's *Autobiography* by *her hand* was to remind Stein of two memories *Stein* forgot to include in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. It's amazing that she says that her only contribution to publishing the autobiography was this reminding of forgotten memories.

Polly: Then she says *and the typewriting*, remember.

Jaime: Yes!

Polly: This part of the transcript is so interesting – and poignant, somehow, for our discussion of editing, translating and care.

Padraig: I agree, but I can't put my finger on why?

Polly: For me, it is what it says about memory and forgetting – who forgets what and why. Since Gertrude only »forgot two things« and only remembers, according to Alice, what is pleasant, one has to conclude that what made it into Alice's autobiography was very pleasant to Gertrude (no rhyme intended!) Anyway, it's clear from this that they were each other's memories. (Sharing! Caring! With the occasional gentle jibe or two …) But so telling that the »typewriting« is mentioned by Alice as a kind of afterthought. Not really a significant contribution. (And here I can't help but think of Mrs. Tolstoy and Mrs. Dostoevsky – they were definitely »Mrs.« and not »Ms.« – slogging away, typing their husbands genius »loose baggy monsters,« as Henry James called Russian novels.)

Padraig: Stein the author on the level of genius husbands is a running joke of arrogance in the *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. We could talk for hours about the gender construction in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, but let me for now put it crudely: Stein was an out-and-out »top« …

Polly: … top button?

Jaime: Hahahaha

Padraig: »Top button«! But this »and the typewriting!!« afterthought, is the mechanical reproduction, or housekeeping, of the written word. With spelling corrections, too, I'm sure, as Toklas seemed like such a precise, poetic speaker. I'd like to think of Toklas as an icon of editors and translators as carer's. As if this ambiguity in the work of editing and translating must sit on the ambiguous register of the »afterthought«, open to voyeurism, with all the necessary erotics and poetics of betrayal, and trespass.

Jaime: As an »afterthought,« should we add that we have been editing each other throughout this entire process?

Polly: From a distance, in times of social distancing.

Jaime: We are also betraying the form of a conversation, sticking with the trans-

Polly: –figuring?

Padraig: –gressing?

Jaime: –versation?

Padraig: (*sic*)

Polly: 'Nuff said.

Padraig Robinson writes books and screenplays, and is currently working on the production of the feature film Masquerades of Research, based around the American sociologist Laud Humphreys. Recent work includes the book *Gaze Against Imperialism* (Metaflux Publishing 2019) launched as a reading room installation in the exhibition CHROMA, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin. Padraig was a Visual Arts fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude in 2019/20.

Jaime Hyatt has worked since 2015 as the in-house English-language editor at the Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena, an Institute of Advanced Studies with a focus on the history, culture, and societies of twentieth-century Eastern Europe. Alongside her work at the IKK, Jaime is pursuing studies in the field of ecocriticism and is the co-editor of the forthcoming special issue journal *Embracing the Loss of Nature: Searching for Responsibility in an Age of Crisis* (COPAS Issue 21.2).

Polly Gannon is the director of cultural studies at the New York-St. Petersburg Institute of Linguistics, Cognition and Culture. She holds a Ph.D. in Russian Literature from Cornell University, and has translated Russian to English novels such as *Jacob's Ladder* by Ludmila Ulitskaya, *The Symmetry Teacher* by Andrei Bitov, and *Word for Word* by Lilianna Lungina. She lives, teaches, and translates while pursuing a tactile and poetic engagement with the Semiotics of Textiles.

Appendix

Excerpt from »Interview with Alice B. Toklas« (1877–1967) conducted by Roland Duncan in 1952. The Bancroft Library Interview, Regional Oral History Office, University of California Berkeley, California

Roland Duncan: […] I have always been a little bit curious about your own autobiography, you know. Did Gertrude Stein write it completely by herself –

Alice B. Toklas: Yes, of course.

– or did you contribute some?

Oh, no. No. What could I contribute? She would ask me, »Have I forgotten anything?« and I'd say, »Yes, you've forgotten this.« And then, when she got to a certain distance, there were two things in it that were important, that she should have mentioned, I said, »I don't know what you are going to find apropos, but there are two things you must get in that you've forgotten.« That's all. That was my contribution, and the typewriting. Oh, heavens, no. No, it was a great joke, really. This friend of mine up in Seattle, who was a musician and who later married an American colonel, and when he died she married a British colonel. As the British colonel says, »Colonels are fatal to Louise.« Well, in any case, she was a very amusing person, and she had a way of poking fun at you very gently, and she said to me one day, »I suppose you are helping Miss Stein write her books, aren't you, Alice?« »Oh, surely. Most of them are mine,« I said.

But you must have helped in prompting her at times, I suppose?

No, the only things I helped her with were the two incidents that she should have mentioned, that I thought were important for her to mention, and which she had forgotten really. She had a memory but she didn't like unpleasant things. Things that she didn't like, she didn't remember – really, because it was the only way to get rid of the embarrassment of them.

Just forgot?

But complete. So that when you spoke of them, she'd say, »That isn't true. Did that happen? When?« Then I'd tell her. »Oh, yes,« and she'd sit back, »Oh, yes.« She once denied – but I don't want that for publication –

Wait then. Wait till we get off the –

Because it's a wonderful story. I oughtn't to tell it to you. It's an indiscretion, but you'll keep this entirely to yourself – of her memory, of her forgetfulness?

But then, everyone forgets certain things.

No, Gertrude used to say of me – she had a friend who was an awful bore – »Pomposa,« I called her. She was very pompous and pretentious. But Pomposa said one day, »I never forget, but I forgive.« And Gertrude said, »Alice is just the opposite. She doesn't forgive at all until she can forget. But she fortunately forgets.« Which isn't quite so true, I didn't forget so much. I just got less sharp.

Ideally, I'd like to be a bird, but running is a close second [1]

Thoughts on Care and Community in (Trail)Running

Christoph Szalay

Looking back on his athletic career and comparing it to the art world's double standards, lyricist and author Christoph Szalay unravels the parallels of both the performance-oriented art world and the professional sports system. Meanwhile, he's become more independent of deadlines, publishing houses, and art institutions through self-care and trail running.

I am a runner. I've always been. Ever since I can remember I've been running. I've been running on skis in winter, on roads and trails in spring, summer until late autumn. As a kid every movement is playful until it gets competitive, until it becomes performance. This is when I lost it. After years, a youth and early adulthood of being a professional athlete, I quit. I wanted to get as far away from it as possible. I wanted to remove every bit that could have connected me with the identity of an athlete. I wanted to be, to become, someone else. Instead of discussing the grind for my cross-country skis or the heart rate variability of the different skiing and running sessions, I threw myself into traveling, reading, and writing. My life slowly but surely became the life of an artist – living in Berlin at one point; going to openings, exhibitions, readings, performances, publishing my own articles, poems, books, applying for residencies, grants, awards, prizes, talking to and meeting different people within this global hub of artists from different disciplines and backgrounds sharing the same idea and ideal of creating visions in whichever form. I liked all that, I loved the warmth, the openness, the sharing, the caring for each other, the kind of communication, of community, of dialogue. I soaked up every moment until my athlete past was merely a glimpse. All this held up for more than a decade of being comfortable with the places and people I found and met. A decade of transformation, of constant flux, of vibrance, of stimulation and sensation. But after a decade, I fell out again.

The withdrawal was not sudden but slow and gradual. The reasons for it were as much personal as they were systemic. I grew tired. I grew tired of making connections, of producing work. I grew tired of trying to meet deadlines and expectations – my own as well as those of curators, publishers, directors. I grew tired of the uncertainty, of searching for the next call to the next residency, the next project, the next funding opportunity. So much reminded me of the surroundings I thought I'd left behind with

sports, especially the permanent pressure, the pressure to perform, as Jan Verwoert puts it.

> We need to perform because that is what's asked of us. When we choose to make our living on the basis of doing what we want, we are required to get our act together and get things done in any place, at any time.[2]

Above all, I grew tired of art's double standards – articulating and positioning itself at the forefront of social discourse while repeating and perpetuating many of the things that it so passionately contrasts and criticizes in exhibitions, publications, lectures, meetings, performances, concerts, etc. From the most obvious things like the absurdity of advocating the fight against climate change while being heavily dependent on and operating within one of its main causes in international travel, to the more hidden realms like institutional hierarchies and the power plays within them that stand in stark contrast to the so often emphasized ideas, concepts, and practices of care and community. Of course, we must differentiate between institutionalized agencies and independent spaces, off-spaces, private initiatives, and so forth and of course a comment like this is heavily biased as well as an overgeneralization and honestly and luckily my own experiences in the field differ from the aforementioned, most of them actually, but nevertheless Martha Rosler's observations and remarks in her essay »Why Are People Being So Nice?« remain intact when she claims »Ambition, access, bankable information, flattery, gossip, infighting, competitiveness, in both manners and physical display«[3] as constitutive elements of and within the art world. The same holds true for Jean-Claude Freymond-Guth who wrote of *alienation* in a very personal letter explaining the closing of his Basel-based gallery Freymond-Guth in 2017 as a consequence:

> Alienation in all relationships between all participants. Alienation in a climate where space and time for reflection, discussion, and personal identification with form and content of contemporary art have become incompatible with the ever growing demand in constant, global participation, production and competition. (…) Today, I feel we need to urgently address questions to ourselves and our environments: What are the circumstances and ideals we – artists, gallerists, collectors, curators and writers – want to work in today? What are our reciprocal responsibilities and options?[4]

I like the harsh honesty in there and maybe it simply is about honesty, about admitting that one is part of the problem first, not the solution, just like writer, poet, curator, and dear friend Max Czollek wrote in an unpublished dialogue we started about the term and concept *Heimat* (home, homeland):

> I plead guilty. Honestly. If guilt is another word for the responsibility of the perpetrator. Because – and it's almost trivial but still not part of the self-image of most people – I keep the periphery alive every day, because I consume their cheap products. I contribute to the melting of the polar ice because I go on faraway reading tours with limited benefits.

Maybe this is how reconsidering terms and concepts like *care* and *community* that everyone is so eager to proclaim and demand in the arts could start – with an honest confession. Maybe this could lead to a different practice, both on a personal as well as

Ideally, I'd like to be a bird, but running is a close second

an institutional level, at least it could lead to a different way of communicating, a more op and honest kind of communication about what we're actually doing here, under which circumstances, and where and how we would like to go from there.

. . .

I found running again through trail running, »a sport that takes place amid nature, and with respect for the environment, a sense of humility, shared community and a strong sense of sports ethics«[5] as the official definition goes. Trail is running on »naturally variable terrain – mountains or forests, countryside or desert – including very often significant climbs and descents« as the definition continues or as founding members of HURT (Hawaiian Ultra Running Team) puristically emphasize: »This is how people were meant to run. That's the purest form of the sport.«[6]

Just as Alex Honnold, the first person to ever free solo climb the iconic El Capitan in Yosemite National Park, answers in an interview with Armita Golkar and Carin Klaesson at the Nobel Week Dialogue 2019 when asked: »What is it that you like, when climbing? I think my love of climbing stems more from the actual, the physical act, the sensation, the feeling of moving upward,«[7] it's first and foremost the sensation of running that's intriguing – looking out of the window into the sky, the slopes, the rustling of fabric when you slip on your shirt, the lacing of your shoes, the first steps on the ground, the swallowing of the landscape, the sweat on your skin, the traction, the tweak of your muscles on the ascents, the feeling of flying on the transitions, the descents, the exhaustion and happiness after.

Running is first a physical act, an act of movement, as such it is an act of care, care for yourself – your body, your mind. »Running for me has always been a medicine for my mind,«[8] says elite marathon runner Lydia O'Donnell. By nurturing it the medicine became a tool to improve her own mental health, an effect O'Donnell eventually elevated to a communal level by founding One Step, a movement (…), to raise awareness of anxiety and depression and spread the simple message of how important movement, in particular running, is for our own mental health,[9] a movement that began »as a small group of people coming together to discuss feelings, emotions, and of course to exercise,«[10] a movement that grew into »17 communities across the world coming together weekly to spread the message and connect people from all walks of life.«[11]

There's something that goes beyond just the physical sensation of running, of trail running, aspects like *care* and *community* that are deeply entwined with the understanding of the sport. »The trail running scene has a good community where a lot of people hold the same values of wanting to be in the outdoors/nature,« replies Ruth Croft, one of the world's fastest trail runners, when I reached out to her and it doesn't really matter what magazine or book you read, whatever movie, interview, or documentary you watch about trail running, whomever you speak to from the field, you always come across the emphasis on these core values that seem to be shared amongst its participants.[12]

What Jan Verwoert interprets as »a cipher for a communality that is not organized toward an ulterior end, a task or function it has to perform on demand«[13] in the study works of Silke Otto-Knapp on the translation of patterns of social life into modern ballet, is even more true for running with the difference of it not being a cipher but rather an actual practice, a practice that is, to follow Verwoert again, »unconditional and existential rather than economical.«[14]

Running as a practice is something that is simple in its form, it's something that's accessible,[15] something that is truly universal. Running can be an act of empowerment,

Ideally, I'd like to be a bird, but running is a close second

just as the documentary *Limitless – A Documentary on Women & Running*[16] shows, for example, a movie that follows seven Indian women from different castes and classes, some of them who have never even run before, on their journey toward and with running and how it shapes not only them personally but their whole community and even beyond. Or, as runner, writer and DJ Knox Robinson even claims, »Getting out and lacing up your shoes going out there for a run just to dig deeper into yourself, there's nothing more radical and revolutionary than that.«[17] Whether revolutionary or not, one thing that it is for certain is a practice that defines itself through a close relation to nature, even to the point of questioning its own contradictory role in the face of global climate crisis.

> Where we run. (…) It's not only about the fact that s*he runs, but where. And there lies the problem. (…) S*he easily takes the car to drive 150 km to run a trail, into the Alps or a low mountain range, wherever desire takes her*him, where s*he thinks to best celebrate her*his sport, where the best pics for the Insta-post happen in the evening. (…) Whoever drives the car into the forest to go for a run – that's like being a Greenpeace member and voting for the AfD. It doesn't match. (…) I don't have a solution for you. Sorry. I cheat myself through my conscience, over trails and past environmentalism. (…) I try to change for the better.[18]

And what Denis Wischniewski, trail runner and editor of *Trail*, Germany's biggest and best-known magazine for trail running, doesn't even mention in his column, is how material intensive running, trail running can be, especially in terms of shoes – a broad rule is to use as many pair of shoes a year as you run in a week in order to reduce the possibility of injury. As is often the case, the reality of running is more complicated than advertised, but being open and honest about contradictions and complicity is a start, a start for a different practice altogether, one that a lot of big brands in the industry started to make years ago and continue to make.

Despite these contradictions I am still convinced that a practice that is based on moving in the outdoors is able to create a different relation to oneself, to other people, to the environment, and yes, maybe even to other species – to the deer, ferns, larches and lichens – maybe I really believe that running, that trail running might be a possibility of creating a multispecies conscience, a conscience of »becoming-with[19], (…) things and living beings (…) inside and outside human and nonhuman bodies«[20] as Donna Haraway examines and establishes, a conscience that is ensued by a practice of »passion and action, detachment and attachment, (…) cultivating response-ability; that is also collective knowing and doing, an ecology of practices.«[21] What if I really believe that.

What if I really believe what Bernd Heinrich, retired biologist and professor of biology at the University of Vermont as well as lifelong (ultra)runner, says, »Of course, ideally, I'd like to be a bird, but running is a close second.«[22]

I would really like to believe that.

Christoph Szalay, author and lyricist, studied German language and literature in Graz, and Art in Context at the University of the Arts, Berlin. Szalay mainly writes poetry and hybrid prose, and works as coordinator for literature for the FORUM Stadtpark Graz. He was a fellow at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in the discipline of Visual Arts.

1 Why We Run w/ Bernd Heinrich. Salomon TV. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2e4nFm-Ffk.

2 Jan Verwoert, »Exhaustion and Exuberance: Ways to Defy the Pressure to Perform,« in: Julieta Aranda, Stephen Squibb, Anton Vidokle, Brian Kuan Wood (eds.), *What's Love (or Care, Intimacy, Warmth, Affection) Got to Do with It?* Berlin: Sternberg Press 2018: p. 206. In case you were wondering about the ominous we, Verwoert continues, »Who is we? (...) It is we, the creative types – who invent jobs for ourselves by exploring and exploiting our talents to perform small artistic and intellectual miracles on a daily basis. It is we, the socially engaged – who create communal spaces for others and ourselves by performing as instigators or facilitators of social exchange. When we perform, we generate communication and thereby build forms of communality.«

3 Martha Rosler, »Why Are People Being So Nice?,« in: Julieta Aranda, Stephen Squibb, Anton Vidokle, Brian Kuan Wood (eds.), *What's Love (or Care, Intimacy, Warmth, Affection) Got to Do with It?*, Berlin: Sternberg Press 2018: p. 37.

4 Available online at: https://news.artnet.com/market/read-closing-letter-freymond-guth-1067177.

5 Definition by the ITRA – the International Trail Running Association, founded 2013 in Courmayeur, France. https://itra.run/content/definition-trail.

6 ROOTED – The story of HURT. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkVq1JeUAy4&t=258s.

7 Available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nq9ZAGqvmfY&t=1s.

8 Lydia O'Donnell, Miles Are Mental. Available online at TEMPO Journal. https://tempojournal.com/article/miles-are-mental/.

9 Idem.

10 Idem.

11 Idem.

12 To be clear, when I state the possibilities and potential of running as a practice of care and community, I am speaking of and from a noncompetitive standpoint. Even though I consider especially trail running a sport that really tries to live up to the self-imposed and articulated values, there would be a whole other discussion to be held about all the contradictions and dependencies of competitive and professional sports – risks, injuries, economic pressure, media pressure, and yes, the elephant in the room – doping.

13 Jan Verwoert, »Exhaustion and Exuberance: Ways to Defy the Pressure to Perform,« in: Julieta Aranda, Stephen Squibb, Anton Vidokle, Brian Kuan Wood (eds.), *What's Love (or Care, Intimacy, Warmth, Affection) Got to Do with It?* Berlin: Sternberg Press 2018: p. 227.

14 Idem: p. 232.

15 Of course all of this is based on the assumption that one's body is able to move. There's no denying the fact that severe health issues can make it difficult, even impossible, to move, let alone run. Furthermore – running starts with walking, with putting one foot in front of the other. Before you start running, you walk.

16 Limitless – A Documentary on Women & Running. Directed by Vrinda Samartha. Believe Films 2017.

17 Run Wild: Ep. 5 Grit. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNmdgNp1_c8.

18 Denis Wischniewski, »Denis' Kolumne,« in: Trail 01/20. Translation by the author.

19 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*. London: Durham 2016: p. 12.

20 Idem: p. 16.

21 Idem: p. 34.

22 See note 1.

On Care and Vulnerability

Genevieve Costello

Writer and artist Genevieve Costello engages with the concepts of vulnerability, security, and care as an ethics and practice. The text makes an introduction to feminist thought concerning care in the hegemonic orchestration of capitalism, including that by political theorist Joan Tronto and theorist Silvia Federici, and elucidates the intricacies of socio-cultural institutions of care relations and their (digital) infrastructures. Costello proposes that care is a *common resource*, »that people orchestrate and manage with shared values, rules, and negotiations.« Situated within the moment of a pandemic, the text considers how the theoretical contexts, and, subjectivities, of care and vulnerability may begin to be differently felt in the current experiences of social realities.

On Care

Theories of care often start with the premise that all humans have needs that others must help them meet. I use the term care, as posited by political theorist Joan Tronto and Bernice Fisher, as maintaining, continuing, or restoring the world.[1] Such a premise is tangible – we can pull up examples of when we have needed and provided help. It is also abstract. Care is a shared, but not equalizing or consistent, need. It is attached to the conditions of being, of being susceptible to effect. Care is a fundamental action and tool for our immediate and generational subsistence and well-being. Our needs for care and our ability to give care change in our day-to-day lives, and in different life periods. Our conceptions of how we are able to put care into practice, and how we are able to receive it, are fickle. They are situated. Care takes different shapes, when employed in different cultures and times, and, with different ends in mind.[2]

Tronto outlines four stages of care as a practice.[3] These are *caring about* (noticing the need for the care in the first place, such as, seeing a homeless person); *taking care of* (assuming responsibility for the care, such as, offering this person some euros); *giving care* (conducting the actual work of care that needs to be done, such as, taking this person to shelter); and *receiving care* (the response of the person cared for, such as, was the care sufficiently received; was it the shelter that this person wanted; maybe, further, what actually happens after the shelter is taken, thus starting the process again by caring about a bigger problem and a more long-term approach). Along with this method, Tronto provides four attributes associated with the full scope of care: these are attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness.[4]

As we all need care, and most of us the capacity to learn the skills to enact it, I propose that care is a *common resource*.[5] Care is a resource that people orchestrate and manage with shared values, rules, and negotiations, as much as the types of orchestration and management – i.e., systems, institutions, and social forms – shape and change the value of the resource of care, the social relations of the people, and the social environment entwined in its engagement. In the hegemonic orchestration of capitalism, stages of care have been divided up, individualized, and privatized, with the aim to achieve socioeconomic ends of the accumulation of a workforce for capital gain.

In her extended account of the centuries-long era of extensive persecutions against women and exploitations and enslavement of racialized peoples in the

peripheral spheres, feminist theorist Silvia Federici expands upon Marx's theory of primitive accumulation centered in Europe, making implicit in this major shift from a subsistence economy to a wage-labor economy the gender division of labor, which is also described with the terms of productive and reproductive labor.[6] These actions of warfare included the isolation and extensions of care labor grounded in the atomized household; the exclusion of women from wage labor and property; the naturalization of care labor and domestic space to women and others; the degradation of reproductive work and the associated spheres of such work and social body of care laborers; the expulsion of women from knowledge, including medicinal practices and control of bodies; and the mystification of the production and reproduction of the worker as a natural resource or personal service.[7]

When care functions as an illegitimate commodity, it is divided between gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Care is hidden under the normative orders and various guises of the household, family, and kinship.

The creation of an unwaged, devalued, depoliticized, and privatized informal economy of reproductive labor takes shape within the institution of the domestic household or family, in order to support the formal economy, as made distinct from the family. Care provisioning, then, has been housed, *enclosed*, in terms of this dominating socioeconomic formation, either or both rendered invisible or assimilated as an intimate haven that produces the very real human needs broadly associated with it – such as trust, security, and love – whether or not these life elements are actually realized within traditional conceptions of the family.

Treating care as a disposition, emotion, or principle, rather than as learnable skills and labor, perpetuates its naturalization to certain peoples, namely women, racialized minority groups and peripheral communities, the working-class, migrants, and slaves – often, the very same people who have historically been and continue to be denied participation in democratic life – including the right to life and being a being worthy of care and security.[8] This naturalization permits the powerful to justify designating caring responsibilities predominantly repudiated peoples, and, to the private sphere, enabling a form of detachment from responsibility of caring roles and duties, i.e., legal practices of systemic injustice.[9]

Today, we continue to see the cycle of depletion, outsourcing, and neglect of care.[10] While pervading all spheres of life, care is commoning, yet it is not evenly felt, distributed, enacted, received, or accessible. The common resource of care continues to be literally and ideologically captured, enclosed, and procured into a system for surplus value, being treated as an infinite natural resource and rendering it in crisis, through its devalorization, hyperindividualization, and privatization within foundational intimate social systems, where it is predominantly »only valuable insofar as it allows the pursuit of other ends by those whose needs are most thoroughly met.«[11]

When care functions as an illegitimate commodity, it is divided between gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Care is hidden under the normative orders and various guises of the household, family, and kinship. It can be concealed in the affordances to make enough money to and to have certain points of access to market solutions, frequently encased in associations of freedom, empowerment, and *self-care*. These »solutions« continue to perpetuate poor conditions for others, peoples and common resources alike, that produce and constitute the raw material of and for care.

Further, the need for care is camouflaged in the stigmatization of the inability to take care. To embody a vulnerable state, in which the need for certain kinds of care that are not aestheticized, commercialized, is visible, is made perversely negative. Requiring care, or, the exposed need for care, can be imposed as personal failure rather than system failure, as a personal choice to unfortunately succumb to, rather than a fact of life that we all are always with.[12] We must more adequately evaluate how care functions in our lives and being, in order to undergird it as a common resource, a practice, rather than in opposition to and in support of a crisis-based socio-economic system.[13] As much as care is a mandate for any social system and any sphere, at any scale – it is also a mandate for its own fostering.

There is a fifth stage of care that Tronto posits – *caring with* – as emblematic of caring being a democratic

practice, a political issue, elemental to our recognized social identity and responsibility.[14] *Caring with*, then, seems to circumvent the other stages, and implicates care as a collective obligation, and its authentic value as a basic need that is unownable. Rather than stagnantly residing within prescribed identity roles of care for its accumulation in a commodity-exchange economy, it is a civic – person-to-person and a horizontal – responsibility to enable people to be able to conduct, with agility, the full spectrum of the stages and elements of care as an ongoing, interrelational practice, and for the valorization of care as a common resource.

While I propose care as a *commons* to expand upon these enclosed normative spheres and groups of care-provisioning within the dominating socio-economic system, the different *ends of care*, which thus then inform its cultivation, matter quite a lot, especially if we follow philosopher Estelle Ferrasse's understanding that care is the management of *vulnerability*.[15]

On Vulnerability

By way of Covid-19, a »chaos-world« has come to fill the main stage of many. This disruption of planning, certainty, and production possibly begins to underscore the problematics of a social world that has been constructed for certain realms and in certain ways, that are associated with production and productive socialities; and premised upon other types of free labor. This is a social world in which others are posed as a threat, in our division and a siphoning of spheres for vulnerability, thrusting into our minds and bodies that we must hoard our care.[16] There are the vulnerable, and those who can pretend to not be.

The compression of life-worlds into mostly a single space during Covid-19 has surfaced the deep reliance of society upon the diffusion of care and relational subjectivities, with the veil of autonomously navigated public-private realms. How quickly new support structures arose to make mock-ups, stand-ins, to maintain this veil of autonomy, offering compassionate supplementary and self-mastery tools to manage hairs turning on end in reaction to the disturbances between the desired reality and their good-enough alternatives; and simply the ghastliness of losing what defies replacement options. No, Zoom is not IRL; there is no need to compare. Many people have IRL exhaustion due to the social and material relations that condemn certain peoples to not being included in standardized socialites, or further, due to differences how bodies perceive and digest the information of the world around us.

The »normal« that is missed on a possibly unprecedented scale, in terms of its reverberations and visibility by way of digital media, is one reflection of the *highly manicured care of vulnerability* delegated, tucked away into spaces, relations and roles, in service of certain ends and on certain scales. For those who can sprinkle themselves and make distinct-socialites throughout *worldy* spaces, social identities are diffused.[17] Theorist Judith Butler's consideration that »the dependency on infrastructure for a livable life seems clear … when infrastructure fails, and fails consistently, how do we understand that condition of life?« may be more relatable now to people who have predominantly undisturbed experiences in the dominating social and interrelational infrastructure, since

There are the vulnerable, and those who can pretend to not be.

the effects on day-to-day living of Covid lockdown.[18] Undoubtedly, we must recognize the unjustness in the privilege of those who can *#savelivesstayhome* or, protest to *#save »freedom,«* and disproportionately harm people with less money and less access to health care. It is relevant to take into account that unlike other moments of social disturbance by which new socialites may be forged, such as protests, strikes, or, even the searching for alternative communities and relationships in online spaces for those who are unable to be in their immediate physical worlds, many who are fortunate enough to stay at home, whether furloughed or enacting their normative form of productivity from their homes, did not pursue these disturbances as a personal political demand; as a decisive action.[19] The popular disappointment that abounds because life is not the same can easily distract from the possible opportunity

to, instead, critically review what has been broken down in terms of the housing of care and vulnerability.

Yet, much good has come from the infrastructures to differently access the social world from the inside, for some people who are unable to leave the house as easily as others, in both the creation of new points of access and legitimizing, and normalizing non-IRL presences. For example, being able to have a doctor's appointment over the phone, attend an event or gathering (a reading group or conference) via Zoom, to have a legitimate and meaningful social engagements on Facetime (wedding, wakes, hang outs); and inspire more peer-to-peer content sharing and experiments in the use of popular social media. Additionally, it feels as though we might be seeing an increased fluidity and learning process for meaningful engagements in global digital activism, with some powerful connectivity and energy in protests around the world concerning the recently reignited manifestations of Black Lives Matter.[20]

In possibly having a more open relationship to our inherent vulnerability and need for care, can we imagine their stronger integration and reintegration with movements, socialites, and interrelations, going forward?

Of course, peoples for whom a transference to life on video cam is a significant disadvantage, such as those who do not have safe homes or homes they are comfortable in and the deaf community, must be acknowledged and accounted for. But, the progressions away from a stigmatization of camaraderie that can manifest in mixed-engagements (digitally and IRL), as well as underscoring the realities that realize certain people's mobility and productivity in the social world, feel positive.[21] Confinement hopefully has made felt that relations need not be productive by being built upon others whose vulnerability is deemed inherent or too deeply systemic to resolve; or, not part of the productive caring-world, that is both bestrewn and hidden in the diffusion of the enabled socialities of some.[22]

We have seen an approach of an inverse dollhouse: from within domestic interiors or, more specifically, paired up with differently sized computers with Internet connections, some are able to play familiar and inscripted realities outwards; even with empathetic mediums and advisements in place for bemoaning and cushioning where they lack. Possibly, though, the effects felt from disjunctures in this play may be both felt and reflected upon, indicating the duality and division of care, and possibly provoking considerations of how we might better incorporate vulnerability into socio-political systems and relations as the pervasive *thing* of interrelating that it is; to help realize more inclusive, egalitarian and multifarious social worlds. In such reflections, we might begin to break down the problem child of care in our productivity-framed world and realize practices of the management of being vulnerable as a base, common point of relation, as a key part of the program, with an end for its access and support for all, rather than as a point of division and failure.

Because of the scalarity of effects of Covid-19, largely felt in its economic dimension, some communities and institutions have permitted the practice of care as a common need to come to the center, or at least closer to the center, of their program.[23] While no doubt this will evolve as the lockdowns and other restrictions change, it feels hopeful that the experiences of the inability to access the basic infrastructures that hold up particular lives, may help create new social identities for realizing infrastructures that hold up *more* lives. In possibly having a more open relationship to our inherent vulnerability and need for care, can we imagine their stronger integration and reintegration with movements, socialites, and interrelations, going forward? Can we enact care not as something to cling to for personal security, as instructed by our divided social-economic systems, or as a gesture contained within types of enclosed sites, interfaces, and relations, but, through its ongoing examination? Rather than with blind or uncaring consumption-assumption, in the face of its vulgarity of our conditionalities as vulnerable beings, can we engage with care in grace?[24]

Before things may return to what they were, for a brief recent moment, many people felt what it's like to be alive through a less manicured experience of vulnerability, and, with new manifestations of its management – including ones that need to be done dramatically differently to more accurately value the care of every entities' vulnerability. Maybe something from this will stick, even if just a little.

Genevieve Costello is a cultural researcher and artist. She is currently working on her PhD project *Communities of Care for Technofeminist Futures* at Royal Holloway, University of London, and collaborates as part of ReUnion Network. She is a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude in the sphere of practice Scientific.

1 »On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that 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, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.« Berenice Fischer and Joan C. Tronto, »Toward a Feminist Theory of Caring,« in: *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, New York 1991: p. 40.

2 While all living things are vulnerable to things (not excluding nonliving things) that may negatively affect their experience of living, fears differ based on what we feel vulnerable to. Thus, the care given, to protect and to provide security, differs based on the object of threat, and, to who or what counts as a being and which objects are valorized as something to secure.

3 Joan C. Tronto, Moral Boundaries: *A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, New York and London 1993: pp. 104, 108.

4 Ibid.: p. 127.

5 Importantly, I do not suggest or support that care should be considered a natural resource nor that it should be de facto free.

6 Silvia Federici illuminates how the historical elements of the war against women, as the great witch hunt, were part in parcel with the growth of capitalism in her pre-eminent text *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primative Acculumation*, New York 2004.

7 Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 2004: p. 8.

8 Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality and Justice*, 2013: p. 10; *Moral Boundaries*, 1993: pp. 113–116.

9 Tronto demarcates this phenomenon as privileged irresponsibility, when »those who are relatively privileged are granted by that privilege the opportunity simply to ignore certain forms of hardships that they do not face.« *Moral Boundaries*, 1993: pp. 120–1; *Caring Democracy*, 2013: p. 60.

10 For more on this cycle see the large resources regarding the global care chain; related still, Helen Hester and Nick Srnicek's »The Crises of Social Reproduction and the End of Work« in: *The Age of Perplexity: Rethinking the World We Knew, Open Mind*, 2018, available online at: https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/BBVA-OpenMind-Helen-Hester-Nick-Srnicek-The-Crisis-of-Social-Reproduction-and-the-End-of-Work.pdf; and Nancy Fraser, »Contradictions of Capital and Care,« in *New Left Review*, vol. 100, 2016.

11 Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, 1993: p. 116.

12 Privileged irresponsibility bolsters the livability in the culturally embedded notion of the ideal neoliberal capitalist subject, »I made it on my own, you should make it on your own.« As Tronto explains, »this notion … appears to have the formal quality of a morally correct and universalizable judgment, it can also serve to disguise the inequality of resources, powers, and privileges that have made it possible for some to ›make it‹ while others have not.« Ibid., p. 111.

13 Estelle Ferrarese summarizes the perspective of Theodor Adorno on the related matter, that, »the dispositions and forms of care are intertwined with the forms of life; they are made possible by them … the Lebensform encompasses all that permeates the relations to the self and the world that precede or rather constitute the basis of all conceivable ideas of good life. Nevertheless, forms of life are not just an ethical texture,« in »The Vulnerable and the Political: On the Seeming Impossibility of Thinking Vulnerability and the Political Together and Its Consequences,« in: *Critical Horizons, A Journal of Philosophy and Social Theory*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2016: pp. 224–39.

14 Tronto, *Caring Democracy*, 2013.

15 »The distribution of care [is the] taking charge of vulnerability« and »…care, whose precise purpose is to handle vulnerability.« Ferrarese, »The Vulnerable and the Political,« 2016: p. 237.

16 This proposition is influenced by psychologist Carol Gilligan's theory of care-based morality, developed from her crucial problematization of judgment-based moral development theory of her mentor, Lawrence Kolhberg, which was, at the time, based on studies of only male subjects, in her book *In a Different Voice* (1982). Moral development theory is concerned with pro-social behaviors, or, caring behaviors, such as altruism, respect, helping, honesty, and fairness. Briefly, the justice-based moral perspective assumes that there are autonomous individuals in conflict with incompatible claims, and a verdict is made of which claim is right and which is wrong. This approach demarcates an invalid and valid claim and attaches it to an autonomous individual. Care-based morality has an emphasis on interconnectedness, and concerning situations of conflict, the conflict is part of the problem to be addressed. Rather than deciding on a right or a wrong party against the other – proving or disproving validity of claims against the other – the focus is on removing the conflict between them, that is creating a difficult – and particular – situation, together for everyone, without hurting any of those involved, and ideally, encouraging their flourishing. In other words, the creation of a common investment and trust in the face of conflict and difference must be forged. While Gilligan realizes her theory through the study of women subject's moral reasoning, she argues that this ethic is not sex-specific, but thematic; that is, moral perspectives had been obscured by the themes of autonomy and independence in the domination mode of liberal justice in moral theory. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA 1982.

17 Like the effects of Covid-19, though, people do not choose vulnerability. This is exactly why the effects upon our days and lives can be so very frustrating. Butler describes, »Most of us wish we were less vulnerable under conditions in which we are impinged on in ways we do not choose, and ›vulnerability‹ names this very condition.« Judith Butler, »Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance,« in: *Vulnerability in Resistance*, Chapel Hill 2016: p. 22.

18 Butler, »Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance,« 2016: pp. 12–13.

19 While being on furlough, receiving universal basic income, or emergency funds that would otherwise remain inaccessible or nonexistent to the public may be a peaceful and easeful form of realizing demands from the state life. I thank friend, psychoanalysis researcher, and Covid-19 reading group co-creator Jacob Firth for bringing this political act to my attention. Additionally, it is meaningful to note that there have been notable global work strikes during Covid-19.

20 These global movements commenced largely in response to the murder of George Floyd, a 46-year-old black American man, by four police officers, Derek Chauvin, J Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane, and Tou Thao in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on May 25, 2020.

21 I am going against the Sherry Turkle connected-but-alone train here and supporting redesigns of popular social media as ways to meaningfully engage in intimate socialities and interrelations with technology.

22 »Not only are we then vulnerable to one another – an invariable feature of social relations – but, in addition, this very vulnerability indicates a broader condition of dependency and interdependency that challenges the dominant ontological understanding of the embodied subject.« Butler, »Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance,« 2016: p. 21; and, »It is not just this or that body is bound up in a network of relations, but that the body, despite its clear boundaries, or perhaps precisely by virtue of those very boundaries, is defined by the relations that make its own life and action possible …we cannot understand bodily vulnerability outside this conception of social and material relation.« Ibid.: pp. 15–16.

23 Artist Bernhard Garnicnig recently asked in his analysis of the role of care in art institutions as exposed by the current pandemic: What is new and what is not new? There are always crises happening, and the need for help in order to address them, when they are in fact addressable – such as finding the money to pay rent.

24 Contradictions and tensions in such conditionalities are not suggested here as resolvable, nor do I propose vulnerability to be an idealized value or state.

Vulnerability and Generosity

when I leave I will be measured by what I gave and not what I've taken

A conversation between
Manuel Mathieu and Denise Helene Sumi

During the seven months that the painter Manuel Mathieu was at the Akademie Schloss Solitude, his studio was often my fallback place. In times that have been stressful for me (and others around me), I have been taught to engage in friendship and to find rest in it, as well as to find peace in the surroundings of Mathieu's paintings. We talked a lot about madcap places in our mind, vulnerability, and deliberation. Above all, we spoke about the new body of work he created for the show *Survivance*, which was supposed to open in May in the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal, and what strength we can draw from the concept of flexibility and the ability to create spaces to imagine alternative future(s). He says that many of us are vulnerable beings in an uncomfortable world, and sharing these states generously with each other is an act of caring for each other and the future. Trying to liberate himself from certain expectations from the art world, he prefers to talk about generosity rather than catastrophe. This written exchange manifests a series of get-togethers and phone calls, in which a relationship was formed between us as colleagues and friends.

Manuel Mathieu, *The Entrance*, 90×90 cm,
2019, courtesy the artist

Denise Helene Sumi: *Manuel, how do you feel today? How do you perceive the world around you lately?* [1]

Manuel Mathieu: I mean, the world is the same as it ever was but the kind of »solitude« is different. Suddenly, many are isolated from projecting a future. All the actions you are putting forward, you don't know if they will happen, if they will be birthed, if they will be experienced or shared in the world. To be honest, I don't know how I feel about that. On the other hand, our gestures are the archeology of our times so at the end of the day it is important to do and to act with sincerity without expectations. This is something I am trying to cultivate these days.

This state of not being able to project a future existed for many people and generations, but now due to global protests and media coverage becomes increasingly visible. How do you feel about this?

It is not only visible, but it is being recorded; there is a face to it and it is outside of circumstances. What they sold us through capitalism is that the erasure of futures is systematic and necessary for its own survival. I don't want to get into the power structures that are benefiting from this, but I hate to believe that the future of certainty depends on the erasure of others. It can't be the only way.

Sometimes, I had a distinctive liberating or progressive feeling when looking at some of your paintings. Why do you think that is?

I don't intend to alter or liberate people through my work. It would be a lot to put on someone's shoulder to change society. But I am aware that it can have that power. Change is certainly ignited by people and their contribution to society. The work carries something that can be seen, that can be addressed with certain things happening

Manuel Mathieu, Untitled, 40×40 cm,
2019, courtesy the artist

in the world. We are in the state in which we reinvent the world. While I am aware of that, and the label that is put on me, I am still trying to find answers about the future, about my future, about our future. And I think it is very important to create a space for people to imagine it. Channeling this space of possible future(s) is exactly what I do. Creating is having a foot in the past and a foot in the future; it is an exercise like dancing. Will you dance with me? Sometimes I feel it's the question I am asking … I find myself in a space where it is impossible to define what I am in relation to what surrounds me. And this is the case for many people right know, being strangers in their own habitats. Can we be vulnerable? It is not easy, because the world becomes an uncomfortable place to be.

Yes, and it is unsettling to be reminded of that. And this is, why one maybe is unpleasantly touched by the exposed vulnerability and disappearance of the figure in your painting St. Jaques III.

There is a sense of fragility in the painting. The source image sets the tone. You saw the photography, right?

The black-and-white photography showing a woman standing in the mud, yes. Why did you decide to use a certain image source in the first place?

The reason I choose that image is because of the position of that woman; the emotional weight I can see in that image, and where the image was coming from. The original photography of the women standing in the mud was taken during a ceremony in St. Jacques, an area in Haiti where these ceremonies happen every year. The mud bath is something very symbolic and cleansing, in several cultures. I wanted to talk about that because I feel it is a good excuse to explore certain spiritual

backgrounds and surroundings of visual and spatial understanding of my culture. I am very careful of what I choose and how I choose it. Even as someone who is from that culture, there are certain permissions that I don't give to myself. Not everything is meant to be revealed. This was an image I felt confortable with. I felt something dignifying to be in a place where you are so aligned with your emotions that you can be openly vulnerable. That makes this image very rich for me, not in what I see, but how it affects me. Back in 2018 I painted a piece called *Study on Vulnerability* because my understanding on vulnerability changed and it became important for me to address that. The woman in *St. Jaques III* is in a different state of vulnerability and this was very rich to me. How to add and connect different elements to what I am already exploring in my work?

Study on Vulnerability *refers to autobiographical vulnerable and even destructive moments in your life – physically and mentally. Can you elaborate a bit on your history on deconstructing your figures and the figures' heads in particular?*

I was introduced to art by a mentor who was schizophrenic and maniac. His work was always showing figures that were mainly destroyed. He has a lot of demons. I was attached to this residue, and it took me time to move away from it and I understood my path wasn't a search for destruction. To play with fragmentation was a search for my capacity to do and undo, reveal and take away – a search for the possibility to recreate myself. This could be physically, through my identity, or my place in the word. This force made its way into the work. In the portraits it might look like destruction, but it is more an expression of incapacity. I was confronted with and working with these incapacities to recreate a part of myself in the world. By embracing this incapacity, I evacuate the absolute. With that out of the picture, I am in a space of equal possibilities and it is in that space that I feel comfortable with possible realities and futures. It also creates a space of infinity, which I believe is the definition of abstraction. The figure is not destroyed; it is simply present in a different dimension.

So, it is more about revealing mental states and emotions, and the complexity of feelings, and fragmented identities … and about (failed) attempts of restoring our identities at any time and at any place being.

Exactly, and again how this mental architecture became present in the work. Because if the work is an extension of myself, there is a moment when it is so close that I become the work. There is an elasticity in the work and if it appears intense, it is because I myself am struggling with the work. Lately, I have this sentiment of denial because the world – especially the art world – is expecting certain things from my work. In the States, for example, the reception is very much about what it is to be a Black body, what it is to be a Black Haitian man. Is my abstraction always pointing toward spirituality? If I am allowed to leave that space and when I fall into a space of self-actualization where I can talk about what I want to talk about, it is empowering. When an external object enters a new space, it is perceived through the gaze of the spectator; it is permanently hitting it with his/her* sensibility, just like waves. In a spectacle in which two futures are competing for a better present, you can see how the perception of each other becomes primordial for the survival of one another. There is an intersection where the spectator and the spectacle hold the same future.

It sounds like you feel trapped in a certain discourse and expectations that you try to strip off from time to time.

What you focus on owns you. I think it can be a distraction to talk about a work in

Manuel Mathieu, *St. Jaques III*, 200×190 cm, 2020, courtesy the artist

Manuel Mathieu, *The Stretch*, 180×170 cm, 2020, courtesy the artist

Manuel Mathieu, *Study on a. Disappearance*, 230×190 cm,
2019, courtesy the artist

relation to the gaze applied to it. I didn't grow up in a world where I needed to paint Black people for them to exist in art, which is the case in the States, for example. When you look at Haitian painting, we've been painting Black people. We found through a dreaming state of painting. This is the kind of legacy I am looking back upon. But I don't feel the need to address it. I grew up in a house where you could see many Black bodies, if not only Black bodies in a painting. It is just the way it is. Among nature and cities, there were people in the painting. And as I started putting my work out there, I started being defined as a Haitian artist, as a Caribbean artist, as Black artist, as an International artist, and now I am understanding that the narrative is well and strong and present and there is no room for me to get lost. The place where anything starts is when you really feel lost or helpless, and this is it what I want to seek. I have to define what being lost in that context means. For me it is a state I surrender to my intuition and not my head. A state in which reality actually talks to you. From the perspective of control, we use the word »lost« but actually maybe the right word is »grounded.« A friend of mine used to say you honor yourself when it comes from source. It somehow makes sense to me. James Baldwin said »The place in which I'll fit will not exist until I make it.«

Is this search for getting »lost« the reason why the elements fire, air, and dust have become an integral part of your paintings? I imagine that including these elementary forces into the process of creating a painting offers a particular mode of getting »lost,« and that in comparison with using paint, the burning is no longer controllable at one point.

Well, I wouldn't see the process of painting and burning as two opposite approaches. Because of the way I use paint, I am constantly in a moment where I am playing with losing control and regaining it. But, I am slowly shifting toward the idea of

finding art and not creating it, working with these new materials gets me closer to that idea. Painting somehow still feels orchestrated.

The difference with the process of burning is that it is a definite act. In that sense the act of destruction or disappearance is closer to drawing than to painting. With drawing there is something much more assertive in the way of working than in painting. With Sol LeWitt, we can argue that he finds the drawings because he is not totally in control. With the act of burning I am playing with something that is final or radical in a sense. There is a level of radicality in the burning that is not the same with painting.

Do the burnings offer another space; a space behind representation?

I think it is a moving away from what I usually do in the studio. In the burned fabric there is not a symbolic or figurative representation anymore. There is something unifying in the material itself. When I refer to the paintings that only consist of burnings, ink, and mud, they are all using the same elements within one language – pigments, dust, fire. But if I add the fabric to the painting that already has a different symbolic meaning, because it carries a figurative image. Suddenly you can talk about revealing something that is behind.

Like in the work St. Jaques III, hiding in this sense is revealing. What you are hiding is what you are actually pointing to. Using this mechanism, I am showing you something you don't usually see in the open – in this case, a person that is fragile and vulnerable. That's why people might be uncomfortable in front of the painting of the women revealing her vulnerability. She will be seen. And it is not easy to talk about this. What is the difference between my vulnerability and hers? Yes, it is the vulnerability. But mine, and hers, reflect your own vulnerability. The painting is trying to tell us we are equal.

For sure, you and I can talk about shared concepts, moments in our lives, or basic emotions we both experience and are unifying. We were given birth to, we have fears, desires, positive and negative emotions. And we'll both disappear. I am still very touched by the photograph you showed me one night. A woman in a bathtub who had just given birth. She holds the newborn while she is being held by a man, and all the figures are exposed to life … it has manifested in my mind, and creates a basic sense of trust.

Equality creates an atmosphere in which people can share or reflect their individual emotions. I kind of like the idea of the cycle – like being given birth to – and that everybody is able to relive and recreate emotions though painting. How can you decide to talk about our vulnerability or loyalty and use the painting to navigate visually through these complex states? Using painting as the architecture of building up key emotions and values I believe in.

It is very generous of you to address these key emotions. Do you know that you are the first person who taught me the concept of generosity? It hasn't played that big role for me yet. Sharing, yes, but I guess I always held on to the idea that I wanted something in return. Lately I've been trying to give, to be generous, to let go; without any expectation. It's quite a learning experience.

For me, it started inward the movement, in the sense that I had to understand how generous I had to be with myself in order to keep going. Because a lot of the act of making art is giving to the world whatever you have. When I leave, I will be measured by what I gave, and not what I've taken. The act of sharing is an act of generosity in itself. That is not even part of my discussion.

Understand the connection that we have with each other makes me realize that my heart doesn't only beat for me … just like yours doesn't only beat for you.

Manuel Mathieu, *Study on Souso,* 60×60 cm, 2020, courtesy the artist

Manuel Mathieu, *The Remarkable Entrance*, 180×160 cm, 2019

Manuel Mathieu, born in Haiti, studied at UQAM and at Goldsmiths, University of London. The multidisciplinary artist and painter delves into subjects that investigate themes of subjectivity/collectivity, erasure, as well as Haitian visual cultures of physicality, and nature. Mathieu is currently living and working in Montreal. He was a fellow at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in the discipline of Visual Arts.

Denise Helene Sumi is a curator and editor based in Vienna and Stuttgart. She is a founding member of the art association Kevin Space, Vienna, and editor-in-chief of this issue.

1 The conversations took place between early April and early July 2020, in a climate of global lockdown, followed by a wave of worldwide demonstrations for Black Lives Matter.

Notes on Care in Light of Securitization

Rose-Anne Gush

Marked by the author's own sociopolitical context and its special urgency, in this essay Rose-Anne Gush draws connections between the 1970s feminist movement Wages for Housework and the current crisis in healthcare in the UK, rendered visible through the Covid-19 outbreak. She points out the significant connection between the under-resourcing of the health care sector and the over-resourcing of the state security apparatus. Security in its very definition refers to an absence of care. To be secure means to be able to be careless, but this – made horrifically literal with the lynching of George Floyd and others – is not the case for many. Quite the contrary, people of color, women, trans people and the young and old are endangered by securitization and dismantling care.

According to scholars, the word »care« is derived from the German *Kara*, a word which also resonates as »lament« and »sorrow.« From this view, care links to its sister »anxiety.« Within an often cited Heideggerian discourse these terms come under the umbrella of *Sorge*, the German word for »concern.« More commonly, the notion of care brings us to the activity: the verb »to care« describes watching out for danger and looking after, it links to protecting, as well as acting carefully and responsibly. Caregivers take care of those in need – people too young or too old or simply unable to manage on their own.

Yet, another root of care leads us to its opposite, carelessness. In this sense, negligence, lack of care, resides in close proximity to the Latin *securitas*, often translated into English as security. Security in its noun form means the removal of »se« from »cura,« care, or concern. John Hamilton aptly describes the ambivalence inherent in the kind of care(lessness) from »cura« when he writes »to be without care is to be protected or vulnerable, safe or negligent, carefree or careless.«[1] In this view, to be without care is to not have to worry. To be careless is both to break with orthodoxies, and to be clumsy. Whereas security would shutter off care, it would show where care is no longer needed, where care is surplus to requirement, care indexes the positive, affirmative variant of these ways of being secure, safe, and carefree.

Across the world, the majority of care-work falls on the shoulders of women. Today, it is dominantly women of color who clean homes, shops, gyms and offices, as well as looking after the sick, children and the elderly. This so-called unskilled work is ideologically naturalized as gendered and rendered invisible. Struggles against the naturalization of care work as women's work played a decisive role in the 1970s when second-wave feminists politicized care under the sign of housework. In her now-infamous essay »Wages Against Housework« (1975) Silvia Federici identifies a strategic

identification that galvanized women in their struggle against capitalism. The slogan »wages for housework,« which names the transnational political movement of the 1970s, is posited in Federici's essay as a perspective. Rather than referring to a lump of money, namely a wage, the »housewife« is a figure who embodies a »fate worse than death.« In this view, women can gather around this figure in order to struggle against its imposition. For Federici and the women who rallied with this slogan, »housework,« the historically unremunerated work mostly undertaken by women, reproduces the conditions of life for the working class. Housework is not merely a job. Rather, it is described as »the most pervasive manipulation, the most subtle and mystified violence that capitalism has ever perpetrated against any section of the working class.«[2]

While the wage both mystifies and obfuscates exploitation, it nevertheless renders one's position as a worker legible, inaugurating a social contract. In Federici's view, contra this explicitness, the unwaged work of housework metamorphoses into a »natural attribute« of what she describes as the »physique and personality« of women. It becomes »an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of the female character.«[3] Depicted as the outcome of a socialization process undertaken in the family, for the Wages for Housework Campaign, the figure of the housewife is a creation of capital, molded by capital, to play the role of servant and protector of the working class. In this role, the housewife would service her husband physically, sexually, and emotionally, just as she would also care for his children, feed and clothe them and him. She would mend his clothes and attend to his ego if it was bruised. She would function as a buffer soaking up his rage. She would restore him. By politicizing housework, the wages for housework movement aimed to both denaturalize and attack housework and by extension all »caring« as a natural attribute, as a female role, showing its function as contributing to the production of value and thus also rendering it positively intelligible as work. Additionally, this movement would politicize the home and render it legible as a site of isolation that contributed to the difficulty women's collective struggle in the West.

The aim of the movement was to improve the conditions of women within a wider political field consisting of recipients of this service or care. To make housework legible as work was part of making visible the invisible, bringing the background to the foreground. In the context of the movement, to ask for money from the state for social services was also to maintain a degree of control over a social process, rather than give more control to the side of the state. For the women involved in these struggles, the struggle against housework as a form of carework, is a struggle to refuse: »Only when men see our work as work – our love as work – and most important *our determination to refuse both*, will they change their attitudes towards us.«[4]

For the women involved in these struggles, the struggle against writing this essay I encounter my own contradictory feelings towards care, feelings which intersect with my experience of its lack. I have noticed a special inability to care which also appears to be founded on one's lack of experience of being cared for. To lack care or experience negligence can birth emotional renunciation, a kind of coldness loaded with fear of emotional proximity. In my case, an absence of care in early life manifested as fits of rage and feelings that register this injustice as an adult. Care makes me think of my father, who silently cared. I have justified and explained his care as resigned. I have dispossessed myself of the need to feel concern for it. Yet, to care one must be able to speak and act without defensiveness. If one is blocked by one's own trauma, how can one begin to recognize the needs of others? In this sense, care is often unconsciously given as the gift that one is seeking.

In the UK where I am from, care is often experienced as underfunded, rationalized »social services.« Care is the necessary constant, because of this, it is trusted that care workers will work despite terrible conditions. With austerity, social care has been effectively defunded. With the outbreak of Covid-19, the UK's Conservative government claimed that care workers would need to significantly lower their standards; those in need of care would receive less.

After failing on every level to take seriously the reality of the pandemic, after advocating for »herd immunity« and allowing mass contagion, Boris Johnson's government slowly ventured toward building pop-up hospitals such as the Nightingale Hospital in London. In an interview with Georgia Anderson for *MayDay Radio Notes*, a health worker employed there, described it as a »virtuosic« display intended for the press.[5] As COVID patients were steadily released from hospitals back into care homes, and as care homes were struggling to contain infections (at the time of writing, excess deaths in care homes reached 34,000)[6] the Nightingale hospital, under-resourced due to lack of trained health workers, didn't see more than sixty patients and was quickly closed.[7] Like everything that has happened on the UK's journey through corona-times, the government has consistently behaved only ineptly, neglecting and sacrificing those it claimed to »cocoon« from the virus in order to care for, and to attempt to protect and save »the economy.« Additionally, increasingly within the UK [P]olitical landscape,

Care and social reproduction, if observed within the framework of the current conjuncture, puts into view with sharpened lucidity, the fears, anxieties, and biases of capitalists.

the right to criticize is rescinded. The case of Johnson advisor Dominic Cummings both being on the government's supposedly impartial Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies, and breaching the rules that he contributed to making, is a case in point in demonstrating the pervasive »citizen above suspicion« mentality. Within this supposed liberal framework, those who wish to criticize are forced to resign. Those who are meant to serve the people merely serve the interests of capital and the ruling class.

Returning from the present to Federici's emphasis on emphasis on *refusal*, refusal to love and to care until such activities are recognized as work that capital profits from, points us to the materialist feminist tendency to strategically illuminate gendered labor as the site of a potential and necessary struggle against oppressive conditions and capitalism *tout court*. In recent years, this has become known as social reproduction theory (SRT). Françoise Vergès has repositioned this argument showing its transmutations for the present. She writes: »Unlike Federici's 1970s strategic identification with the housewife, Vergés' corrective diagnosis of the work of care in the present is global in reach. Under neo-liberal and patriarchal capitalism the invisibilised work of women of color and refugee women (caring in, and cleaning the industrial spaces and homes of global capitalism) which capitalism simply cannot function without, is most often supervised, regulated and managed by white women. The emphasis on refusal must remain.«[8]

Care and social reproduction, if observed within the framework of the current conjuncture, puts into view with sharpened lucidity, the fears, anxieties, and biases of capitalists. As countries ground to a halt during the spring of 2020, as it became necessary to distance ourselves from one another to stop the spread of infection, a wide variety of workers continued their jobs out of necessity, including all home-workers. Those working, spread across care and distribution sectors throughout the world, found themselves in the limelight. In a moment of high de-obfuscation, those who are most often the least visible, the least powerful, and the least remunerated, whose work is considered »unskilled« suddenly appear as the people whose work holds together the threads of our social world. As the pandemic increasingly reveals capitalism's prioritizing of profit-making and property over human life in all cases and senses, as it reveals the continued necessity of human labor to yield profits, it is the work of care and social reproduction that remains constant, and that must be fought over. While authors like Paul B. Preciado have focused on analyzing notions of immunity and health, such as »governmental practices of biosurveillance and digital control,« on »extreme digital-surveillance measures« on government actions, this view fails to foresee a perspective of overcoming these conditions of emiseration. »What has grown is not the immunity of the social body but the tolerance of citizens under the cybernetic control of the state and corporations,« writes Preciado.[9] One must ask

Against the horror of carceral care, modes of care infused with solidarity and refusal are necessary for mobilizing the struggles against the negligent capitalist principles of profit, securitization and property.

if Preciado noticed the refusals of the wildcat strikes across distribution networks against unsafe working conditions, the militant tenant organizations and rent strikes, the mutual aid groups, and the convulsions of political possibility thrown into relief with this crisis.

I wish to alight on one final iteration of care. In the context of her exhibition at Chisenhale Gallery, titled, *Infinite Slippage: nonRepugnant Insolvencies T!-a!-r!-r!-y!-i!-n!-g! as Hand Claps of M's Hard'Loved'Flesh [I'M irreducibly-undone because] – Quantum Leanage-Complex-Dub*, during a discussion with Marina Vishmidt, the artist Ima-Abasi Okon talked about art-making as a form of palliative care in the context of capitalism.[10] In this framework, palliative care is understood as a support structure that tries to do away with all pain. Okon cites capitalism as a disease in that it makes us all ill and robs us of life, but in a hierarchical way. In the context of her exhibition, Okon talks about being out of breath. Using a series of installed ventilators, her work brings air to the foreground making it visible. Breathing is presented as a necessary fact that facilitates languages and actions that occur in a multitude of ways, where any single rule of assessment will necessarily fail to operate. Okon says that while capitalism makes us all ill, deep-rooted biases mean that some people are still able to thrive. We know that these exist on a structural level. Her works use ventilation as an object, prompting us to ask who can take in air under racial capitalism. Who

has access to air? Whose air is clean? This is something made horrifically literal with the lynching of George Floyd, of Eric Garner, of Breonna Taylor, of all those robbed of breath and life by racist police for centuries. For Okon, an art-making practice as palliative care would aim to treat the ongoing pain.

The protests and insurrections that took place across the United States (and the world) from May 2020 onwards, reveal the overresourcing of the police just as COVID reveals the under-resourcing of meaningful social and health care. In this sense, the dominant mode of »care« that is being propelled is entirely on the side of securitization. Where Johnson and Trump and numerous others have resorted to gross negligence, they have knowingly sacrificed and continue to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of people to the principle of profit-making. Against the horror of carceral care, modes of care infused with solidarity and refusal are necessary for mobilizing the struggles against the negligent capitalist principles of profit, securitization and property. The proliferation of care infused with solidarity is necessary for understanding our embeddedness and situatedness as collective beings untethered from bourgeois self-possession, beyond the mere »I.«

Rose-Anne Gush is an art historian, theorist and writer. She lectures in Art Theory and Art History at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna. In 2020 she is a Juliane and Franz Roh Post-Doctoral Fellow in Modern and Contemporary Art at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich.

1 John T. Hamilton: »Securitas,« in Barbara Cassin et. al. (eds.), *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*. Princeton 2014: p. 937.

2 Silvia Federici, »Wages Against Housework,« Bristol 1975: p. 2.

3 Idem.

4 Idem.: p. 7.

5 Georgia Anderson, *MayDay Radio Notes: Nightingale Chronicles #2 – Failure* https://soundcloud.com/maydayradionotes/nightingale-chronicals-part-2-the-closure [accessed June 15, 2020].

6 Michael Savage, »More than Half of England's Coronavirus-Related Deaths Will Be People from Care Homes,» in: *The Observer*, June 7, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/jun/07/more-than-half-of-englands-coronavirus-related-deaths-will-be-people-from-care-homes [accessed June 15, 2020].

7 Denis Campbell and Rowena Mason: »London NHS Nightingale Hospital Will Shut next Week,« in: *The Guardian*, May 4, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/04/london-nhs-nightingale-hospital-placed-on-standby, [accessed June 15, 202].

8 Françoise Vergès, »Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender,« in *E-Flux Journal*, 100 (2019) <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/100/269165/capitalocene-waste-race-and-gender/> [accessed 29 June 2020].

9 Paul B. Preciado, »Learning From The Virus,« in: *Artforum*, https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/paul-b-preciado-82823 [accessed June 15, 202].

10 Ima-Abasi Okon in Conversation with Marina Vishmidt <https://soundcloud.com/chisenhale-gallery/ima-abasi-okon-in-conversation-with-marina-vishmidt> [accessed 6 June 2020].

Living Through Dark Times... Care by Any Means Necessary

Fires burn in wheat fields in Qamishlo, Northern Syria as seen from the rooftop of Rojava University on Jun. 16, 2019. © Beth LaBerge

Manuel Schwab

»To think about care nowadays is to think about death, it seems.« Drawing parallels between the revolutionary Rojavan experiment, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the Covid-19 pandemic, Manuel Schwab argues that this very desire to care is the most appropriate form, to oppose colonial, capital, and liberal forces that obviously intensify brutality and death numbers. »This time,« taking in account a sense of global simultaneity, »it looks like something has changed.«

Stuttgart, Germany. June 6, 2:15pm. A young black woman no older than 20 stands in the rain holding a piece of cardboard that explains, simply: »You fucked with the wrong generation.«

She's standing with several thousand others in a park in a German inner city, but save for a few details (architecture, gesture, wealth, the composition of the crowd behind her), she might as well be addressing the entire world from anywhere: Northeastern Syria, Modi's India, the frontlines of United States anti-fascism, the emergency rooms of Brazil, the empty parliament of Budapest. It amounts to the same thing, as the powers she is speaking to have yet again mobilized their forces and proxies to exact revenge (in advance) for their inevitable downfall. Meanwhile, those who police the globe on their behalf redouble their loyalty, like servants willing to convey a chosen master all the way to their death. It is as though this crippled mob of empires is falling prey to their armed executors, and committing suicide by cop.

In their frenzy, they have put our capacity to care for one another under siege. To think about care nowadays is to think about death, it seems. Every political confrontation of our generation is a matter of life and death. But this siege has been on for generations, and its urgency, while real, threatens to draw us away from its deeper time, whether historical or geological. Beleaguered by the paroxysms of brute force, by the ritualized executions in which domination rejuvenates itself, by carnal vulnerability that primitive strings of viral DNA introduce into every breath and touch, it is easy to forget that all these are artifacts of deep human time. Pursuing a version of our species we have crafted vulnerabilities into our bodies, scrubbed the world at least once over of people who were there before, thrust the instruments of our proliferation into the very

crust of the earth. And now it all suddenly feels so urgent, though no one can seriously believe that white supremacy took on new form with the killing of George Floyd, any more than that our shared vulnerability emerged at the end of 2019 into global view. Instead, the tributaries feeding this flood run through colonial, capital, and liberal histories alike, through a virtually geological epoch of slowly intensifying brutality organized along lines of both race and species.

That's easier to see when we face the brutal fact that we weaponized the climate in ways our parents could barely imagine. But it's true of the whole body of the crisis we're in. Things are so entangled that, from the current vantage point, the very whiteness of power itself feels more geological than a virus recombining itself from the genetic material we've shared for some four billion years. And those of us who are trying, belatedly, to survive together are being made painfully aware that the siege is meant to beset our very capacity to care for ourselves and others. But this time it looks like something has changed. People are listening to stories they felt entitled to ignore for far too long, from the frontlines of the AIDS pandemic to the half-millennium of white supremacy consolidating itself. And they're listening because they are terrified. We can only hope that their terror is strong enough that they continue to listen. But for now, there's a small hope in it all: as they (the ones who have made a life strategy out of other people's dying) lay siege to our collective care, they have driven us into the world, and in that, they have inadvertently produced for us a moment of optimism to be held onto at all costs.

Of course, this is a moment of inordinate brutality, but it is also a moment of opportunity. In fact, in significant ways, we are actually winning. To sustain ourselves for the long and violent transition out of the present, we need to learn to listen deeply to our proximate others (the stranger wiping tear gas off your face, the grandmothers and children of communities to which most of us will have shown up to too late). If there is something global about this moment (surely there is) it seems to be that our faculties of care – the very desire to care – are targeted virtually everywhere, as the crust of the earth fractures into a crenellated mesh of frontlines. In a reversal of history, it is in the US cities that the simple demand »stop killing us, let us take care of ourselves« has developed into something much more trenchant, crystalizing the ethos of a world struggling to get through this historical conjuncture.

Taking a cue from the woman standing in the park in Stuttgart, we might realize that we can start virtually anywhere, provided that we follow the syncopated rhythms of our here and now with fidelity to the details we once relegated to the background.

. . .

Summer 2019, Rojava. Northern Syria. It's mid-afternoon, the wheat fields have been burning since early summer, and we're talking abstinence over green rice and chicken. A woman by the name of H. is explaining why free erotics (sociality with sex) are not as yet part of »the experiment« of Rojavan autonomism.

> We hevalan made a decision: so many of our intimate relationships were so mixed up with our oppression, we had to take a step back and stop and learn them again. You might think that's very conservative, but we just took what we learned from the struggle in the mountains, where abstinence was practical, and have applied it to our struggle for building the life we need now.

Oil fields on the drive from the Rojava/Iraqi Kurdistan border to Qamishlo on Jun. 9, 2019. © Beth LaBerge

This was before the invasion of October 2019, the latest installment in 30 years of Turkish campaigns against the region. The experiment in what Rojavans called Democratic Confederalism was still in full swing, and it seemed that the politics of autonomous self-governance had become, well, an endless meeting. In the spirit of these seemingly interminable conversations, we were taking the time, talking sex and love and care of the self and other by any means necessary. It strikes me now as almost careless; after all, the wheat fields were burning through the entire meal. How can anyone take this much time thinking about sex and intimacies (even those that sustain us) in the midst of a full-blown siege, in the wake of a brutal war to defeat Da'esh, on the brink of an impending reinvasion that was only a matter of time? Or perhaps that's the wrong question. Perhaps we should ask ourselves (especially ourselves) *how could anyone not?*

Later that day we headed to Martyrs' Hall, a place where people go to offer acts of grieving to photographic portraits of the dead. Given the state the world finds itself in now, it is worth remembering that the possibility with which Rojava is charged is nourished as much by future-oriented hopes as by a profound sense of mourning. Martyrs' posters are installed on official billboards at major intersections; they are plastered on the perimeters of factory compounds and through the involuted markets. Rojavans I met never tired of pointing out traces of loss in the landscape, their grief mixed with admiration, focused on what was lost on the way to now.

Focused there; but also on the giant portraits of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader who writes tracts on social ecology and feminism, and who has a checkered past of brutal atrocity. On marches, one will hear chants of »without leader, there is no life.« In those moments, it is hard not to worry where all this potential will lead. That profound ambivalence, that inextricable double edge of political attachments, riles the place. It is in the ideas that weave a public imagination together. It's in the concrete arrangement of the world.

A few days before, a silo split on the side like a gutted udder, its grains long rotted and cleaned away, were narrated by an acquaintance as an example of Rojavan infrastructures of self-reliance. »We always had enough to withstand a siege,« she explained.

> When Da'esh came, they destroyed this one. But we survived them too. Now Turkey burns our fields. The military pays for young men to cross the borders and throw their cigarettes into the wheat. They know that this year was going to be a plentiful crop.

Optimism in Rojava is tied up with the fragile material that sustains and enables life as much as it is tied up with troubled histories of how we got here. For better or for worse, this is the stuff the future is made of, concrete in all its manifestations, save perhaps for the portraits of the leader, more like objects stranded from a bygone time when nationalist imaginaries were the only recognized currency of desires for liberation. It flourished in the ruins and the possibilities afforded by a bombed-out world. One found it in the dancing students in front of the university cafeterias, in the study centers dedicated to community-oriented medicine, in the furious reconstruction of city quarters fueled by the largest cement plant in northern Syria, the formidable complex churning out tons of concrete, diminutive diesel generators sputtering light gray air at the feet of elephantine mixing tubs. These are not exactly the pastoral grounds of optimism, narrowly conceived, and therein lies their singular importance. They

comprise another genre of optimism and care, one that can only be brought to our disposal through careful, attentive, sustained solidarity across what amounts to a global siege. Perhaps most importantly, they provoke us to divest ourselves of the notion that practices of solidarity require allies who are flawless, virtuous, uncompromised.

. . .

How quickly time moves, and how slowly all at once. Four months on, in the wake of Donald Trump's withdrawal of US troops from the region, Turkey's »Operation Peace Spring« descended upon these places with all the brutality reserved for recalcitrant geographies of self-reliance. Ask any native people living under occupation, from Gaza to the American Four Corners, to those squatting informal neighborhoods of Argentina, and they will tell you of ubiquitous variations on this theme. In the face of such brutality, Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces were compelled to strike a deal with the Bashar al-Assad government, a capitulation as inevitable as it was unacceptable. Nine months on, as Covid-19 lifted itself up and shook off the particularities of place, people, and origin, we would all seem to be asking ourselves whether *humanity* as a whole had enough to withstand a siege. That quality of grief and possibility and foreboding all mixed up in Rojava had become generalized. By March, Hungary had declared rule by decree, and New York was arranging to bury the casualties of the pandemic in mass graves. Eleven months on, and we were yet again reminded in the 8'46" we watched George Floyd lynched by police, that Black lives have had to be forged and sustained under siege virtually everywhere.

Does this shared sense of being under siege give ground to our common humanity? Not from the looks of it; we are each too differently exposed. But there is something powerful in our urgency. *Before this we still thought we had time*. Now, something feels like it is missing, like a ring worn all your life and taken off one day to the next. Were we engaged to the illusion that we still had time to work through this knot together? Time to understand how we are to forge monuments of self-reliance out of the concrete ruins of the everyday. I should have asked the woman who spoke of the silo and the wheat a few more questions. Even in Syria, where the burning fields billow at a distance, joining the gas flares that pester the blue early summer sky, there was time to talk abstinence. Even where the pumpjacks extracting oil make fun of all of us on our way to the future, where the portraits of Assad hang at one junction and martyrs' portraits hang at the next, even where everything compels us to ask, »*Can this really be the backdrop against which new ways of living in this world take shape?*« there was still time to dance.

The place is like being punched in the gut by your lover fighting off their nightmare just before dawn. The place is like reaching out right then and saying, »Hush, I've got you.«

. . .

There's an archeological dig in northeastern Syria that contains the partially excavated ruins of Urkesh, an ancient Hurrian city that is thought to date from somewhere around the third millennium B.C.E., and that once contained an entrance to the underworld. At present it looks like a pit wrapped in burlap with a bit of litter collecting at the bottom. The going theory is that this is where the Hurrians went to sacrifice animals, to banish bad spirits, to put away the parts of the world they didn't know what to do with. When did we stop building places like that into our cities?

Along the drive from the Rojava/Iraqi Kurdistan border to Qamishlo on Jun. 9, 2019. © Beth LaBerge

I went out of archaeological curiosity, partly, but also because I was interested in getting a sense of a place that became such an unlikely target of another siege. During the fight with Da'esh, the icons of other gods, indeed, the traces of other times, were marked out for destruction like military targets of the highest priority. A Rojavan journalist who visited Urkesh that day wanted to know whether from the perspective of an anthropologist I had an opinion of the failure of UNESCO to fund and support local efforts to take care of and defend the place. Even under de facto siege, she was not asking only on behalf of the living, but also on behalf of the dead. During wars, it seems that the meaningful relationships we forge with death disappear behind the excessive force of martyrdom, a form of grief that leaves little room for other kinds. The desire to protect the dead was, in this case, different. It was about valorizing the long arcs of history; those stories that don't pay the present any obvious tribute. It was about deep, geological time.

How is it that you expect to help the living if you can't even take care of the dead?

She was right. While we may be building a necropolitan world one dead city at a time, we tend to drive the memory of the inconvenient dead out of its histories. Funny thing is, they always manage to make their way back. That is something that the current insurrection in the United States has understood with unprecedented ferocity. Take care of the memory of your own dead. But take *their* monuments to *their* dead as seriously as their guns, and if demilitarizing your cities means throwing their monuments into the sea, proceed without hesitation.

. . .

If we can move from the digs of Syria to the streets of Minneapolis to the rivers of Bristol like this, it is because the damages that define us have been so assiduously distributed that they could be narrated from virtually anywhere. I chose Syria as a point of departure because it stands as a fragile and imperfect experiment in political living, and its betrayal as a strategic sacrifice feels emblematic of an acceleration of forces that will kill us faster than the weather. A patchwork of people trying to forge a way of living together are being hunted, embargoed, besieged, drafted as proxies, criminalized, and sacrificed to the maintenance of a long-ago broken world. But therein lies another trouble, the danger of fetishizing it. Perhaps because it struggles to work against all odds, the Rojavan experiment has captured the imagination of so many friends and students in Cairo, where living in the wake of a failed revolution has proven more arduous than the revolution itself. Slathered in projections of itinerant hopes from elsewhere, the place would surely collapse under the weight of the imagination were it not already bearing the brunt of full frontal attack. Consider for a moment whether that's not a permutation of what's happening to some significant other in your more local social milieu. Consider whether to expect them to have been flawless in order to deserve defense. Consider what it might look like to give unconditional care, under siege, because everywhere, it seems, they are fucking with the wrong generation.

The irony of this new sense of global simultaneity is that it seems to have come with a profound inversion in the logic of our solidarities across the boundaries of time and space. For several weeks in March, the going wisdom was that the virus was finally showing us that we constitute a single and collectively vulnerable humanity. Right. A simple armchair excursion into the world gives the lie to that one-dimensionalizing notion. Were we one humanity when the first cases of Covid-19 were reported in places

effectively stateless, or simply unrecognized (Think Gaza, Rojava); when the systematized scarcity and neglect that sanctions and embargoes impose showed its epidemiological outcomes in Iran, or South Sudan? Are we all one humanity when risk factors like diabetes and hypertension follow regimes of austerity with uncanny consistency? Our political geographies have for so long been inscribing these differences into the world that it's not entirely clear what it might mean to imagine an immunological event uniting us all; even our immune systems are consummately social things. Insofar as Covid-19 is something of an air-raid drill in preparation for what promises to be the multigenerational blitz of rapid climate change, it should remind us that appeals to global humanity should start to give way to a more socially situated imagination – one that draws us to the defense of people caught on the front lines.

In direct contrast to the superficial sense of human commonality of Covid-19, the refusal of everyday brutality that started in the streets of Minneapolis burgeoned into an insurrection that carries all the seeds of a genuine international solidarity. The killing of George Floyd has triggered an insurrection that is led by people who have been hunted, embargoed, besieged, drafted as proxies into American wars (Civil or otherwise), sacrificed, criminalized and killed with impunity… all by virtue of being Black in the United States. But make no mistake, that movement was consummately global from its very inception.

Even the progressive centrist media of the US are stirred by this intuition. As the national guard sets up camp on the White House lawn, CNN is reporting that »this just isn't something that we're used to seeing in America, we tend to see that in more authoritarian countries.« Right. What CNN is claiming many of us have said for years: that the blowback of US-led military occupations always makes its way back home, whether in the form of surplus military equipment, the metastasizing violence of mass trauma, or the tactics and techniques of occupation carried home. That's an amazing moment. An even more amazing moment is when no one on the street is willing to believe that this analysis will be enough. This is not blowback. It's business as usual.

In the face of these developments, I have never seen American white supremacy, liberal and otherwise, so terrified. Every decade or so in the US, grief and rage congeal into burning buildings, and every time, liberal sentiments are bruised. Their panic makes perfect sense. The violence of states that build themselves around white supremacy unfolds according to certain established patterns, and liberal democracies have never deviated from that script. While being hunted, embargoed, besieged, criminalized, killed, and left to die, it is in and through the people and things that we forge into our own infrastructures of care that violence is meted out. That strategy has been perfectly compatible with liberal commitments because those have always benefited from the confusion of care and policing, of security and self-reliance. This violence, then, has been presented as nothing more than the excesses of an otherwise honorable nation making sure its people are safe.

This time, nobody seems to be willing to see this as a stain on an otherwise righteous soul of a nation. Instead, people on the streets in Minneapolis, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, led by a powerful Black movement that's been at this for far too long, are articulating in the starkest terms what they have known all along: that they are suffocating because that was the plan all along. This must be terrifying to hear for those used to benefiting from this country's style of dominance, which amounts

to a consolidated genre of how to govern the world, traded back and forth between countries practicing some variation on its theme. The central axiom of that genre (understood by the regimes of Modi, Netanyahu, Bolsonaro, Bashar al-Assad as much as those of Orban and Trump) is simple. Never, under any circumstances, let others take care of themselves.

This is why those who borrow it all expend inordinate time looking for the chokepoints of communities that don't look or talk or love or fuck the way they do. Why they orchestrate paranoid imaginations of what it means to be in the world at large with such dogged tenacity. Why, *even when they are not white,* they embrace all the homicidal supremacy we have traditionally reserved for white domination. White power, whether in the form of racial capitalism or race-blind liberalism, works only because it kills people who are not white with regularity. It kills with regularity because the point is to encumber the skeins of care that weave us together in our concrete solidarity with a grief so profound and so persistent that it short circuits all future bonds.

That is what makes this insurrection in the US promising, seen from the perspective of many particular elsewheres the world over – it has understood how the story goes, and refutes it root and branch. In a struggle fought under the banner of an endless procession of our dead given back their proper names (George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Brown, Sandra Bland, Trayvon Martin), a generation in the US has taken up a fight on behalf of the globe.

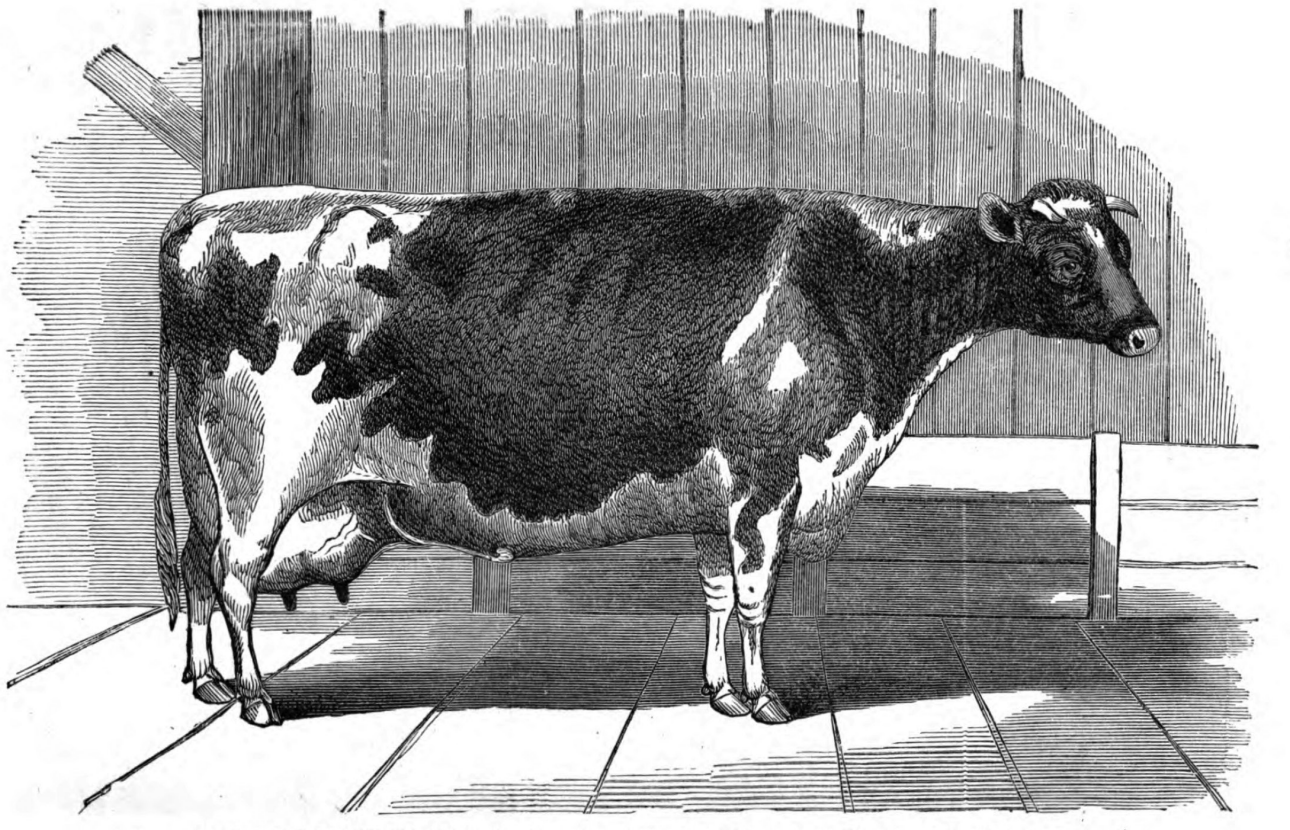
By virtue of their situated refusal, theirs is a fight articulated in common with other places where strategic atrocity has never been entirely replaced by more technocratic solutions. The police they meet on the street truck and barter in tactical gifts, exchanging techniques and technologies of domination (drones, tear gas canisters, small arms, and paramilitary strategies) in elaborate potlatches of war making. And by virtue of that commonality, Minneapolis, articulating in no uncertain terms that they will not be occupied in one fashion of the other, fight a global fight. They know that empire is not the purchase of a single country, but a shared strategy, and it is that strategy, rather than single policies or particular instances of securitizing violence, that they confront.

Say what you will about the optimism that makes this counter-movement emblematic of a moment of global potential. Watching from Cairo, writing this from German cities just recently celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the fall of their fascist regime, I didn't think I'd be writing this about the United States, not before the Third Precinct of Minneapolis burned and people quickly got on to thinking about more thoroughgoing strategies to make sure they reclaim the ground on which to take care of themselves.

But seen from the streets, the whole place is like reaching out from American cities to the world in gestures of solidarity, never mind that we are still in the grip of our own nightmares. The whole place is saying »Hush. I've got you…« The whole place is lashing out with ferocious optimism into the cold light of dawn.

Manuel Schwab is a researcher and writer, based in Cairo and Berlin, whose work concerns questions of political economy and violence, value, time, and humanitarianism as a way of governing restive parts of the world.

Genes, Robots, and Toxicity: the Haunted Landscapes of Milk Production



Texelaar, Holstein cow imported from North Holland by Winthrop W. Chenery
Source: Chenery 1872

Víctor Muñoz Sanz

This comprehensive essay looks into the relationship between humans and Dutch dairy cattle, which of course involves exploitation and cruelty. Víctor Muñoz Sanz aims to »think along how we stopped caring about our cows as companions and how to move forward.« Introducing the concept of cow's »Five Freedoms« – freedom from hunger, discomfort, pain, and stress, and to express their natural behavior, he exposes these codes that were released from the UK Farm Welfare Council in the nineteen-sixties as one reason to justify automated solutions for dairy farming. Today, with increasing ammonia emissions, the industry with its violent modern reproduction methods along with its automated barns is confronted with demands from NGOs for drastic measures: cutting the farm-animal population by half to protect nature and biodiversity. According to Sanz, this is the industry's »battle against its own ghosts and monsters,« again clashing with the interests of the animals involved.

> The Dutch cows have been a long time celebrated for their abundance of milk, which does not surprise one in looking at the rich polders in which in summer they are fed, and where they are often seen covered with a cloth as a protection against both the dampness and the cold ... They are generally of a black-and-white color; in some cases they are milked three times a day ... They remain in pasture all summer, where they are milked; but in winter they make a part of the family, and, in truth, live in the common eating-room of the family, it being a part of the main house. The cow stalls, while occupied by the cows, are frequently washed with water ... Indeed, the neatness of all their arrangements is perfect.
> —Henry Colman, as quoted in Chenery 1872 [1]

> Hundreds of Dutch farmers have been protesting against calls to curtail nitrogen emissions from the farming sector. The government is being urged by MPs and NGOs to come up with a more radical plan for reducing emissions, including halving the country's livestock population. WWF has previously called for a 40% cut in cow numbers in the Netherlands, saying the sector had outgrown its ability to safely dispose of its waste.
> —Levitt 2019 [2]

Across millennia of cohabitation since domestication, our relationship with dairy cattle has always been asymmetric, of course, involving exploitation and cruelty. Cattle, etymologically, is derived, via Anglo-French, from medieval Latin capitale – property, capital – it was our value and value in exchange. Yet it is also a co-constitutive and complex affair, of »significant otherness« as Donna Haraway would say,[3] full of interdependencies, entanglements, rituals, and more or less risky transfers of genes and microbial communities. I remember stories from my grandmother in rural Spain, in which cows and other farm animals were like family, providing not just sustenance but also passing their bodily warmth to the household in the cold winters. Worshipped in Hinduism as provider of the food of the Gods, a cow, if ill or living in unhygienic conditions, can be a vector of transmission of disease for humans, most notably zoonotic tuberculosis, via its raw milk.[4] The giant leap from familial care to a call for mass slaughter portrayed in the quotes above suggest that, obviously, a lot must have gone totally wrong in the relationship between humans and cows in the course of the 147 years separating the texts.

What will follow is a far from exhaustive account to think about how we stopped caring about our cows as companions and how to move forward. By diving into a series of short more-than-human vignettes, I aim to show how the nondescript landscapes of dairy farming encapsulate the brutal efforts of the modern technoscientific world to create new nature-culture »hybrids,«[5] their commodification and overproduction, and how these result in the rearrangement of multiple ecological networks, and of our position as humans within them. As a result, they are landscapes haunted by many traces of violences of modernity – what Elaine Gan, Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, and Nils Bubandt call the »ghosts of the Anthropocene.«[6]

The setting of our exploration will be for the most part the Dutch countryside, where slightly more than million hectares of grassland and green corn forage for dairy cattle were literally built and engineered for their intensive use until exhaustion. More importantly for this story, it is also the place of origin of both the milking robot and of the Holstein-Frisian breed: the iconic white and black cows, and world's highest-production dairy animals. As such, those grasslands – for some a »magical empty center;«[7] for others a thoroughly organized landscape lacking all »mystery«[8] – are, I would argue, actually the setting of a horror story characterized by genetic engineering, artificial selection, forced pregnancy and surrogacy, robots, sensors, platforms, greed, and shit, lots of shit.

Blood and Milk

Van Tromp arrived in the womb of Texelaar at the port of Boston on November 6, 1861, thirty-six days after leaving North Holland. They belonged to a lineage of undoubted purity of blood, native of the Dutch municipalities of Beemster and Purmerend. All of that certified by multiple Dutch authorities. Together with three females and one male, this group of imported specimens, and its subsequent propagation in Belmont, Massachusetts, were part of a plan by Winthrop W. Chenery for the third and definitive attempt to introduce the Holstein cattle breed in the United States, previously hindered by »careless« crossbreeding and disease.[9]

Known for its high milk yield, the result of centuries of selective reproduction of the largest and more productive stock, the Holstein breed thrived in the wet grasslands of northeastern Holland out of a huge European demand for butter and cheese.[10] Once the Holstein went global, a breeding race began to increase their production and set new world records; from Segis Pietertje Prospect's 37,361 annual pounds of milk in 1919, to the 72,168 annual pounds of the cow named Ever-Green-View My 1326-ET in 2010, the yield of a Holstein has almost quadrupled since the times of Texelaar.[11]

Fueled by the industrialized production of dairy products after World War II, old breeding techniques have been replaced by artificial insemination technology as well as genetic and reproductive approaches, such as genetic evaluation, multiple ovulation, and embryo transfer to select animals that have high genetic potential. In the Netherlands, organizations like Veepro Holland facilitates the export of semen and embryos of Dutch cattle; companies like NIFA provides with all sort of services for artificial reproduction;[12] and others like CVR provide high- quality sperm and embryos »from high-tech cows and bulls.«[13] The latter includes in its offer listing of semen and embryos from top specimens, allowing farmers to choose the genetics of their future herd based on their productivity, feed efficiency, anatomical characteristics, or character. Somewhat not surprisingly, in 2015, researchers found that across

Segis Pietertje Prospect Monument on the Carnation Milk Farm in Carnation, Washington. World Champion Holstein in milk and butter production. She was born in 1913 and died in 1925 Photo: Jimmy Emerson; https://www.flickr.com/photos/auvet/35342609622

almost all the Holstein bulls born out of artificial insemination worldwide, the number of Y chromosome lineages – genetic diversity – had dramatically decreased: all of them are descendants of two ancestors born in 1880.[14]

Modern reproductive violence toward dairy cattle does not stop in artificial genetic selection. To meet planned outputs and make the most of each animal, cows need to be almost continuously pregnant and delivering calves. After receiving the first milk, or colostrum, the calf is separated from the cow so milk can be destined for human consumption. Eventually, six years after its birth, once the cow has »dried up,« and the value of its purebred blood and milk is exhausted, it is sent to the slaughterhouse to become LFTB, lean finely textured beef, also known as pink slime.[15]

Care, Outsourced

»Regular« cows do not have such pompous names as those of their »genetically superior« ancestors introduced above, but more and more are identified by numbers, printed in large, contrasting bold characters on their collars. These are not used just for easing the visual identification of the animals in ever-growing farms, but are wearables, transponders mounted with units packed with sensors that transfer performance calibrated data to automated milking systems. With 41 percent of the farms in the country using automated milking systems,[16] neckband-wearing cows are becoming an increasingly common sight in the green polder landscape.

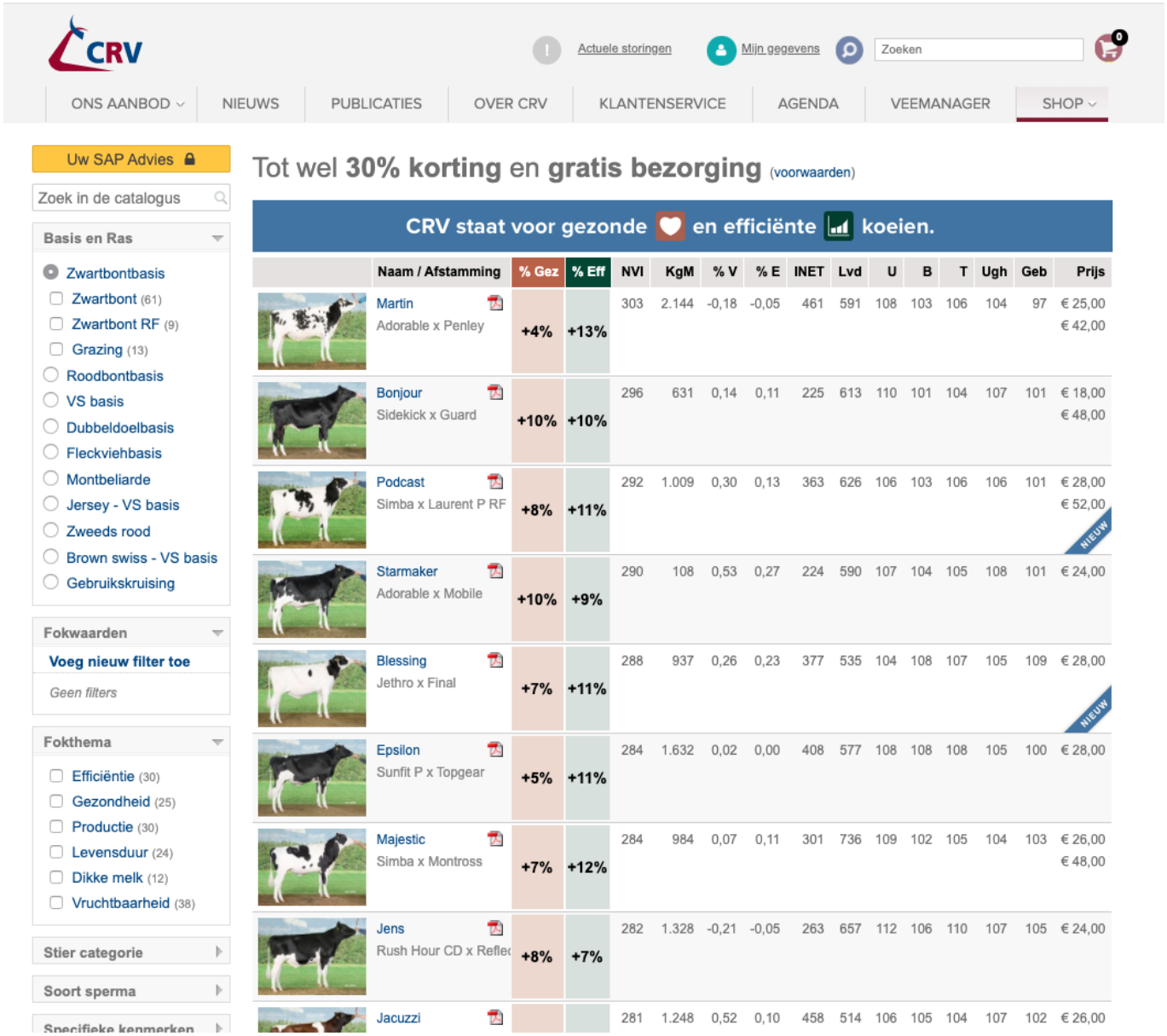
Since the invention of the milking robot in 1992 by the Dutch company Lely, automated solutions for dairy farming have multiplied. Self-guided barn cleaners, automated kitchen and feeding systems, feed pushers, automated brushes, robotic fencers, and cow traffic control tools, among other devices, form a machine ecosystem replacing human labor in dairy farms. At their center of the system is the collar. Its transponder geolocates each animal as it measures its activity, eating time, and rumination. It then passes the information to the robots so their algorithms can take appropriate action. For example, automated fences direct ill animals or those of lower social ranking to special zones, preventing the disruption of traffic of the most productive animals to the milking robot. Data from the collars and robots is accessible for the farmer in Time for Cows (T4C), Lely's digital farm management smartphone app.[17]

Ever-Green-View My 1326-ET, world record in milk yield 2010
Photo: Ever Green View/Beth Herges

Robotization limits »stressful« human-animal interactions, allegedly making the barn an »emancipatory« space for cows. Together with suggestions regarding the location of the milking robots, passageways, or automated fences, Lely advises farmers on issues such as the dimensions of and materials for the animals' lying areas, bedding, flooring, barn ventilation, and lighting. In the automated barn, cow's »Five Freedoms« – freedom from hunger, from discomfort, from pain, from stress, and to express their natural behavior – can be fulfilled. That is a contested claim, though, as behavioral research suggests that cows care for how they are being cared by us, humans. In those experiments, cows quickly learned to avoid a nasty human handler and approach the gentle one, with evidence of social learning as those cows observing the experiment approached the nice handler after seeing how it treated the test subjects. Interestingly, while behavior did change, milk yield did not differ when the gentle or aversive handler was present, supporting claims that automated milking per se does not increase production, but simply makes the process less labor-intensive.[18] One could say it is the farmers who gain the freedom from personally caring of the cows, now numbers on a screen: sensors, computers, and robots make work more flexible and lighter, while scaling up operations hiring fewer employees.[19]

The truth is that, despite the overall acceptance of the Five Freedoms since their released by UK Farm Welfare Council in the nineteen-sixties, researchers argue that they do not capture the breadth and depth of current knowledge of the biological processes that allow for understanding animal welfare and guiding its management.[20] They also assume that good animal welfare results if the negative effects the freedoms refer to are minimized, while in fact these are internally generated, motivating animals to behave in particular way. If the animal is hungry, searching and finding food by itself is a rewarding experience. That is, the ways animal welfare seems to be achieved through robotics is by making of the environment a »shock absorber …« – in Walter Benjamin's words – where technology and design are an anesthetic, a »… frozen smile barely hiding the terror it tries to cover.«[21] As a result, robotic milking spaces might be de facto reshaping animal behavior instead of offering opportunities for animals to engage in behaviors they find rewarding.

To make things more complicated, behavioral conditioning, the anesthetic, is also being built into



Screenshot of CRV's available offer of reproductive cells for farmers
Source: CRV

60 and 82, cows in an automated farm in Overijssel, The Netherlands
Photo: Víctor Muñoz Sanz

the flesh through genetic design. Artificial reproduction companies realized that some cows are more suitable for robotic milking than others, depending on the length and position of teats in the udder, or docility for conditioning. Thus, in order to breed a robot-suitable herd, physical and behavioral traits become parameters that facilitate farmers making choices when shopping bull sperm: on efficiency, the amount of milk produced in kilograms per total robot time in minutes, on the average time between two successive milkings, and on how quickly heifers get used to the robot: »Are you interested in bulls with the stamp ›robot suitable‹? Your livestock advisor can tell you all about it.«[22]

Shit Happens

Since 1984, milk production, and thus the population of Dutch dairy cows, had been restricted by European quotas. In the transition years toward their abolition in 2015, a steady growth in the number of cows followed, reaching 1.75 million in 2016 – a 23 percent increase since 2007. Farms also got bigger: since 2000, the number of cows in an average Dutch dairy farm has practically doubled, from 51 to 97. Naturally, more cows meant more manure: in 2016 Dutch cattle produced almost 6.5 million tons of excrement. That was practically 80 percent of the total manure coming from farm animals. As a result, ammonia and phosphate emissions from dairy farming have increased.[23]

In the nineties, fewer cows grazing and shitting outdoors, in combination with additional European environmental regulations, resulted in a reduction of ammonia emissions. The Nitrate directive (1991), the Habitat Directive (1992) and the National Emission Ceilings (2001; updated 2016) put a focus on this chemical, due to its impacts on terrestrial ecosystems and their biodiversity. In short, as soils become richer in nutrients, nitrogen-hungry, fast-growing plants displace other species and their companions; soils acidify and their chemical composition changes; in water bodies, eutrophication has toxic effects with similar consequences.[24]

The upward trend in the emissions of ammonia raised some alarms in The Netherlands. With just 15 percent of original biodiversity left – as compared to Europe (40 percent) or the world (70 percent) – the country has been consistently at the tail end of all biodiversity indexes.[25] In an effort to squaring the circle, the Dutch Nitrogen Action Programme was

Self-guided barn cleaner shoveling cow manure in a barn in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Photo: Víctor Muñoz Sanz

developed in 2015 to reduce the amount of nitrogen in Natura 2000 areas, while maintaining economic development. In that framework, new nitrogen-emitting activities were being authorized on the basis on assumptions and models which »anticipated« their future effects. Eventually, such an ingenious attempt to balance competitiveness and ecology was nullified by the Dutch Council of State for breaching European law.[26]

Not surprisingly, the Council pointed directly at consequences for dairy farming in its ruling. In fact, ammonia emissions come mostly from intensive agriculture (48 percent), in particular from evaporation from cow manure.[27] As a result, permissions for new farms were halted, and further regulation on how and where grazing of livestock and fertilizing with manure could take place was advised. What's more, NGOs like Greenpeace and WWF, and political parties like D66 (social-liberals) or Groenlinks (greens) demanded a drastic measure: cutting the population of farm animals by half to protect nature, provoking the protests of hundreds of farmers.[28] All in all, the practicalities of how to tackle elimination of the »surplus« of 875,000 animal lives remained unclear, and any ethical implications unaddressed.

Toward a Synthetic Pastoral, or How to Live with our Monsters?

The relationship of the Dutch with their territory is known to be a complex and wicked one. As infrastructural works to protect its land from the rising seas were built, migratory patterns were disrupted and disappearing tides affected delta ecosystems. As dykes, ditches, canals, windmills, and pumps engineer a way to farm marshy lands, these same lowlands keep sinking and increasing in salinity. As native cattle was not productive enough, artificial selection and reproductive techniques generalized and genetically reshaped the stock. As its agricultural and farming production intensified, labor-saving technologies thrived while ecological systems found themselves under enormous pressure. As biodiversity declined, experiments to manage nature and steer it toward a wilder Anthropocene have followed by, for example, invoking the spirits of extinct feral cattle (*Bos primigenius*) to be manifested in the landscape, also by means of genetic cross-breeding[29]. With such an entrenched understanding of what nature is and how it should be kept, the expendability of hundreds of thousands of farm animals comes as no surprise. Instead of staying with

Automated dairy farm De Klaverhof, Moerdijk, The Netherlands
Photo: Víctor Muñoz Sanz

the trouble, the country seems to be in the midst of a highly anthropocentric battle against its own ghosts and monsters, paradoxically to attain and maintain the pictorial pastoralism of an idealized pre-anthropocentric ur-landscape.

Such a view is a paradigmatic example of the underlying conflict between ecologism and the defense of non-human animals, or anti-speciesism. Projects for ecosystem restoration come together with biological cleansing of other »harmful« species, clashing with the interests of the animals involved.[30] Besides for their chemical externalities, dairy cows are decried for being dependent, lacking in individuality, and being unable to live in the »wild.« Something I hope to have conveyed with this essay is how outrageous that position is: or, in Scott's words »How dare we, then, turn around and slander a species for some combination of normal herd behavior and precisely those characteristics we have selected for?«[31] The alternative, or living with the trouble we have created, requires a turn towards feminist inquiry and posthuman ethics in designing strategies for degrowth and cross-species coexistence, with lots of accountability and imagination to »help build ongoing stories rather than histories that end« [32] – make kin, not artificially conceived and commodified calves.

As Leo Marx explained, ordinarily, the word pastoral is taken as a synonym of an ideal scene of quiet rural life. In his view, such a focus on the term as a fixed idea of nature, landscape or ecology masks the fact that the pastoral is not a genre but a mode, a »particular way of being in the world.«[33] The key to this is its embodiment in the character of the shepherd, herdsman, farmer, or one of their many surrogate forms: a liminal figure at the intersection between nature and culture, that engages with the material, with the concrete here and now of human and nonhuman entanglements, with a preference for accommodation rather than imposition. As such, precisely placed at that complicated intersection, the new synthetic ecologies of artificially bred beasts, robots, and chemicals, call for the exploration of new stories of pastoralism in order to reimagine the relationships between society and nature beyond overproduction and domination.

Víctor Muñoz Sanz is an architect, researcher and educator based in Amsterdam/Netherlands. His work examines the notion of workscapes, that is, the architectures and territories of human and nonhuman labor resulting of managerial and technological innovations. He was a fellow at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in the discipline of Architecture.

1 Winthrop W. Chenery: *Holstein Herd Book: Containing a Record of All Holstein Cattle in the United States, Also, a Sketch of the Holstein Race of Cattle*. Boston 1872.

2 Tom Levitt, »Animals Farmed: Deforestation and Meat, Dutch Cattle Wars and Wildlife Parks,« in: *The Guardian*, October 8, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/08/animals-farmed-deforestation-and-meat-dutch-cattle-wars-and-wildlife-parks.

3 Donna Haraway, »The Companion Species Manifesto,« in: *Manifestly Haraway*, 2016, p. 96.

4 Hannah Velten, *Milk: A Global History*. London 2010.

5 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, MA 1993.

6 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing et al.: *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. Minneapolis 2017.

7 Adriaan Geuze, »Flatness,« in: *Mosaics West8*, ed. Fanny Smelik, Basel 2008, p. 6.

8 Dirk Sijmons, »You Can't Blame the Equipment,« in: *Artificial Arcadia*, ed. Bas Princen and Ed van Hinte. Rotterdam 2004, p. 108.

9 See note 1.

10 Jay L. Lush, J. C. Holbert, and O. S. Willham, »Genetic history of the Holstein-Friesian cattle in the United States,« in: *Journal of Heredity* 27, no. 2, February 1, 1936: pp. 61–72.

11 Gavin Ehringer, *Leaving the Wild: The Unnatural History of Dogs, Cats, Cows, and Horses*. New York and London 2019.

12 »NIFA Technologies,« 2020, https://www.nifa.nl/en/

13 »CRV – BETTER COWS > BETTER LIFE,« CRV, 2020, https://www.crv4all.nl/

14 Xiang-Peng Yue, Chad Dechow, and Wan-Sheng Liu, »A Limited Number of Y Chromosome Lineages Is Present in North American Holsteins,« in: *Journal of Dairy Science* 98, no. 4.

15 »Dairy Cows,« CIWF, 2012, https://www.ciwf.org.uk/farm-animals/cows/dairy-cows/.

16 Statistiek, Stichting KOM, 2020, http://www.stichtingkom.nl/index.php/stichting_kom/category/statistiek.

17 Víctor Muñoz Sanz, Marten Kuijpers, and Grace Abou Jaoudeh, »Agricultural Platforms,« in: *Harvard Design Magazine* 46, 2018, pp. 124–31.

18 L. Munksgaard et al: »Dairy Cows' Fear of People: Social Learning, Milk Yield and Behaviour at Milking,« in: *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 73, no. 1, July 2, 2001: pp. 15–26; Heli Kiiman, Alo Tänavots, and Tanel Kaart, »The Yield and Quality of Milk on the Farms Using Twice a Day Conventional Milking in Comparison with the Farms Using Three Times a Day Conventional and Automatic Milking Systems,« in: *Agraarteadus* 24, no. 2, December 1, 2013: pp. 55–64; J. A. Jacobs and J. M. Siegford, »Invited Review: The Impact of Automatic Milking Systems on Dairy Cow Management, Behavior, Health, and Welfare,« in: *Journal of Dairy Science* 95, no. 5, May 1, 2012: pp. 2227–47.

19 Muñoz Sanz et al.: »Agricultural Platforms.«

20 David J. Mellor, »Updating Animal Welfare Thinking: Moving beyond the ›Five Freedoms‹ towards ›A Life Worth Living,‹« in: *Animals* 6, no. 3, March 2016: p. 21; John Webster, »Animal Welfare: Freedoms, Dominions and ›A Life Worth Living,‹« in: *Animals: An Open Access Journal from MDPI* 6 no. 6, May 24, 2016.

21 Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley, *Are We Human?: Notes on an Archaeology of Design*. Zurich 2016, p. 96.

22 »Met Fokkerij Naar Een Robotgeschikte Veestapel,« CRV, November 26, 2019, https://www.crv4all.nl/fokwaarden/met-fokkerij-naar-een-robotgeschikte-veestapel/.

23 Geert van der Peet et al., »Feiten en cijfers over de Nederlandse veehouderijsectoren 2018,« Wageningen: Wageningen Livestock Research, 2018; Agrimatie – informatie over de agrosector, 2020, https://www.agrimatie.nl/SectorResultaat.aspx?themaID=2272&indicatorID=2046&subpubID=2232&sectorID=2245.

24 Wallis De Vries and Roland Bobbink, »Nitrogen Deposition Impacts on Biodiversity in Terrestrial Ecosystems: Mechanisms and Perspectives for Restoration,« in: *Biological Conservation, Nitrogen Deposition Impacts and Biodiversity in Terrestrial Ecosystems: Mechanisms and Perspectives*, 212, August 1, 2017: pp. 387–89; »Ammonia Emissions from Agriculture Continue to Pose Problems for Europe,« in: *News, European Environment Agency*, October 12, 2019, https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/ammonia-emissions-from-agriculture-continue.

25 M.P. van Veen et al., »Halting Biodiversity Loss in the Netherlands: Evaluation of Progress,« Text, PBL Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving, March 19, 2009. https://www.pbl.nl/en/publications/Halting-biodiversity-loss-in-the-Netherlands; »Netherlands,« Biodiversity Information system for Europe, 2020, https://biodiversity.europa.eu/countries/netherlands.

26 »PAS mag niet als toestemmingsbasis voor activiteiten worden gebruikt,« Raad van State. https://www.raadvanstate.nl/actueel/nieuws/@115651/pas-mag/ (accessed May 6, 2020); »Nitrogen,« RIVM, 2019, https://www.rivm.nl/en/nitrogen.

27 »Manure Production by Livestock, 1986-2019 Compendium for the Living Environment,« CLO, https://www.clo.nl/indicatoren/nl0104-mestproductie-door-de-veestapel (accessed May 6, 2020); »Nitrogen and Phosphate in Animal Manure and Fertilizers, 1990-2019 Compendium for the Living Environment,« CLO, 2019, https://www.clo.nl/indicatoren/nl0106-stikstof-en-fosfaat-in-mest?ond=20880; »Questions and Answers on Nitrogen and Ammonia RIVM,« RIVM, 2020, https://www.rivm.nl/stikstof/vragen-en-antwoorden-over-stikstof-en-ammoniak#waar-komen-stikstofoxiden-of-ammoniak-vandaan-362951-more.

28 Wim De Vries, »Hoe Halveren We de Stikstofuitstoot in de Veehouderij? – ›Pak Vooral de Koeienstal Aan,‹« October 3, 2019, https://resource.wur.nl/nl/show/Hoe-halveren-we-de-stikstofuitstoot-in-de-veehouderij-Pak-vooral-de-koeienstal-aan.htm; Tjeerd de Groot, »Halveer de Veestapel - D66,« D66 – Voor de Toekomst (blog), September 9, 2019, https://d66.nl/halveer-veestapel/.

29 »Highlanders in the Lowlands: Re-Enactment of an Extinct Cow,« in: *Next Nature Network*, April 6, 2010, https://nextnature.net/2010/04/highlanders-in-the-lowlands; »Stichting Taurus – Experts in Begrazing.« http://stichting-taurus.nl/ (accessed May 6, 2020).

30 Caria Faria, »Muerte entre las flores,« in: *Más allá de lo humano*. ed. Antonio Giráldez López and Pablo Ibáñez Ferrera, Vigo 2018, pp. 96–107.

31 James Scott, »Four Domestications: Fire, Plants, Animals, and... Us,« in: *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* delivered at Harvard University, 2011, p. 198.

32 Serenella Iovino, »Material Ecocriticism: Matter, Text, and Posthuman Ethics,« in: Timo Müller and Michael Sauter (ed.), *Literature, Ecology, Ethics: Recent Trends in Ecocriticism*. Heidelberg 2012, p. 66.

33 Leo Marx, »Does Pastoralism Have a Future?,« in: *Studies in the History of Art* 36, 1992: p. 211.

Care

Elke Krasny

In the following short text, architecture theorist and researcher Elke Krasny discusses the interconnections between architecture and the matter of care. Instead of rendering structures of human life and of other species uncared for, vulnerable, and exposed, she argues that caring architecture and infrastructural support can be an empowering tool for everyday living. Following the condition of interdependency, the text »extends the perspective of care in architecture to more than human entanglements and asks for a radical shift in the relation between the natural and built environments,« to counteract »exhaustion, depletion, and climate issues in order to care for not just the built environment, but the entire planet, including its human labour force.« A call toward an architecture practice of caring critically.

Architecture is in need of care – dependent on maintenance, cleaning, and daily upkeep to sustain its existence. From its beginnings, architecture has been conceived of as a shelter for the protection of human life. Architecture protects us and therefore we care for it. By understanding architecture and care in this manner, it is possible to connect it to the concepts of social reproduction and its everyday labor as well as to the deficiency of a reproducible resources at an environmental scale. From this perspective, care in architecture is thus concerned with a »politics of reproduction« – a political critique of the current struggles not only with respect to the global labor force but also within the terrain of climate change.

Architecture is indispensable for the life, well-being, and survival of humans. Anybody – any *body* – relies on architecture as a sheltered space to eat, take care of bodily needs, sleep, rest, and to interact with each other in corporeal, emotional, and intellectual exchanges, providing a home for these basic activities. To inhabit a home that allows for the performance of these everyday acts tied to social reproduction is called *living*. Of course the concept of living extends far beyond homemaking and the household. However, it is crucial to draw attention to its verb – *to live* – which implies two critical aspects: to occupy a home and to maintain oneself. To do both is to be alive – *aliveness*. This interconnectedness of architecture and human life at the ontological, political, and economic level leads to the question of care. Commonly, care is held to involve concrete activities that take place between a caregiver and a care receiver. Political scientist Joan Tronto has argued that care is always political since the relation between the care giver and the care receiver is a power relation.[1] Historically architecture has always been closely linked to questions revolving around the politics of representation, control, and discipline in which built form and symbolic expression facilitate ruling regimens and dominant power structures. However, it is

also important to see architecture as an empowering support for everyday living and social reproduction. Housing enables living and its required infrastructures to exist; it provides an agency that reveals both as a matter of care. Activist theory and critical scholarship have started to draw attention to the consequences of the lack or continued failures to support these infrastructures as they lead to or perpetuate precarization, rendering human life uncared for, vulnerable, and exposed.[2] Locating architecture and infrastructural support structures within the interdependency of humans – and nonhumans – acknowledges that the support of human life goes beyond the discourse of rights and moral arguments. Rather, it reveals architecture as a condition for care which is »concomitant to the continuation of life.«[3]

This condition of interdependency extends the perspective of care in architecture to more than human entanglements and asks for a radical shift in the relation between the natural and built environments. At the time of writing, two critical and related initiatives are taking place. Following a call from Greta Thunberg and her *Fridays for Future* program, an international movement of school students are taking to streets and spaces across the globe in demonstrations for environmental policy change. In London, the direct action organization *Extinction Rebellion XR* is making calls for global action against the climate breakdown, large-scale civic disobedience, and new forms of participation-based decision making to prevent the climate catastrophe. The discipline of architecture needs to be involved in this activism. The premise that the built environment is not separate from the natural environment allows for a connection of architecture to climate struggles and the required care for the planet. With the Earth dangerously close to global-scale tipping points and the risk of ecological collapse and human extinction I call for architecture – a profession that aims at building the future – to be at the forefront of change.

If »the history of architecture is the history of capital,« we should acknowledge that the Modernist ideology of the so-called *tabula rasa*, where architecture occupies a blank slate or a green meadow, has lead to the colonialist erasure and annihilation of the existing.[4] Much of architecture has historically been and continues to be enmeshed in causing and even exacerbating the Anthropocene-Capitalocene condition.[5] The planet suffers from the violence of petro-capitalism and the onslaught of extraction. Neoliberal capitalism wreaks havoc and leaves in its wake a broken planet.[6] Therefore, architecture's contribution to planetary care requires long-term architectural activism aiming to connect economy, ecology and labor. If we accept that we live on and with a broken planet that is in need of what can be understood as »critical care,« then perhaps architecture can shift to a practice of caring critically. This new form of practice acknowledges the interconnectedness of land, water, resources, materials, and technologies and in doing so opens up a »caring architecture« that is both locally specific and globally conscious.[7]

For architecture to be caring it must tap into its crucial role in shaping social reproduction and the conditions of living. Yet, architecture is also constantly in need of what feminist Marxists have called reproductive labor. In the 1970s, the *International Wages for Housework Campaign*, with members such as Mariarosa Della Costa, Selma James, and Silvia Federici started to draw attention to the gendered division of labor and women's invisibilized housework. Understanding housework as reproductive labor highlighted that capitalism massively relied on this unpaid servitude. And this labor is the realm where the care taking of architecture emerges. All types of cleaning, mending, and repairing reproduce architecture on a daily basis. Floors are scrubbed, clogged drains are unblocked, window panes are cleaned, cobwebs are removed from ceilings, walls are washed, with no end to the list in sight. Recently, Françoise Vergès

has drawn attention to the new dimension of this racialzsed and sexualized work force with more and more women in the globalised »cleaning industry.«8 Vergès argues that »cleaning/caring work is a terrain of struggle for decolonial feminism because it brings together work, race, gender, migration, pollution, health, and a racial/class divide between cleanliness and dirtiness that supports programs of urban gentrification.« Every day, a globalized care force reproduces architecture to make it clean again. The office tower embodies this condition. These structures that define the skyline of global capital and epitomize the idea of careers specific to neoliberal capitalism with their iconic, often white surfaces and biomorphic shapes have massively increased the reproductive cleaning labor required at work.

The exhaustion of the care force at work to reproduce architecture specific to neoliberal capitalism has to be understood alongside the depletion of resources and the environment. In order to make a long-term contribution that counteracts the Anthropocene-Capitalocene condition and resists the dynamics and effects of neoliberal capitalism, architecture must create a new landscape that will take into account the interconnectedness of exhaustion, depletion, and climate issues in order to care for not just the built environment, but the entire planet, including its human labor force. A caring architecture allows us to live and be alive.

Care by Elke Krasny was first published as one of many glossary entries in *AA Files 76,* Summer 2019. We would like to thank the author and the editorial team from AA Files for the generous permission to republish this text.

Elke Krasny is a Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Her research focuses on critical practices in architecture, urbanism, and art. With Angelika Fitz she edited *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet* (2019).

1 Joan Tronto, »Caring Architecture« in: *Critical Care. Architecture and Urbanism for A Broken Planet*, edited by Angelika Fitz and Elke Krasny, Boston: MIT Press, 2019, pp. 26–32.

2 See Judith Butler and Isabel Lorey, *State of Insecurity*, London and New York, Verso, 2015.

3 Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesote Press, 2017, p.70.

4 Peggy Deamer, »Introduction,« *Architecture and Capitalism: 1845 to the Present*, edited by Peggy Deamer, New York and London: 2014, p.1.

5 See Donna Haraway, »Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin,« in *Environmental Humanities*, vol 6, 2015, pp. 159–165; McKenzie Wark, Molecular Red: *Theory for the Anthropocene*, London: Verso, 2015; Jason W Moore *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, Oakland: PM Press, 2016.

6 Angelika Fitz and Elke Krasny, *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for A Broken Planet*, Boston: MIT Press, 2019.

7 Tronto (see note 1).

8 See: Françoise Vergès, *Decolonising Feminism*, Lecture, 17 May 2019, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna), www.akbild.ac.at/Portal/institute/kunstlerisches-lehramt/aktuelles/2019/formats-of-care.

The Parliament of Plants and other Cautionary Tales, Where Stories Make Worlds and Worlds Make Stories

Céline Baumann in Conversation
with Ethel Baraona Pohl

In the midst of the European lockdown, »when the economic, political, environmental, and social climate often make us feel that the world is falling apart,« curator Ethel Baraona Pohl and landscape architect Céline Baumann wrote each other messages in which they address the notion of collaboration and what it means to »care with« instead of to »care for.« By revisiting Céline's work *Parliament of Plants* and the exhibition *Twelve Cautionary Urban Tales* at Matadero Madrid that Ethel curated, they argue that through observing the botanical world and its phenomena, we can learn a lot about interdependency, mesh networks, and contamination as tools to commonly inhabit and care with the world.

March 11, 2020

Turn now, beloved, your eyes to these blooming and colourful multitudes,
See how, perplexing no longer, they stir there in view of your soul!
Every plant announces, to you now, the laws eternal,
Every flower louder and louder is speaking with you.
—Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Dear Céline,

I would love to start this exchange about collective care by going back to your project *Queer Nature*, where you explore »the little known, disregarded, and rare intimate behavior of the botanical world.« What makes this project so interesting to me in this context – apart from being captivating per se – is that it can easily become a starting point for an extended understanding of how to live differently. To learn this seems to be more than a need in current times, when the economic, political, environmental, and social climate often make us feel that the world is falling apart; when the promises of any possible futures appear to be darkened by societal behavior based on individualism and selfishness, and thus, the urgency of focusing on other species, beings, and worlds.

That's why, when Maria Puig de la Bellacasa expresses that »Interdependency is not a contract, nor a moral ideal – it is a condition. Care is therefore concomitant to the continuation of life for many living beings in more than human entanglements – not forced upon them by a moral order, and not necessarily a rewarding obligation,« makes me think about how you describe the fluidity of behavior of the botanical world, and it drives my mind to think about how this behavior is also a condition that responds to the concepts of interdependency and care between plants, especially in the diversity of their gender expression, which you describe as enabling them to change and adapt in order to respond to factors like age, time of day, or environmental conditions. I guess it is exactly this diversity that allows them to take care of themselves, of other species, of the environment in general – and thus allows them to survive. Isn't survival the biggest challenge for any form of collective care?

At this point, I want to recall what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing argues in her book *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, that »staying alive – for every species – requires livable collaborations. Collaboration means

working across difference, which leads to contamination. Without collaborations, we all die.« When I put together these two references, it seems to me that interdependency couldn't exist without contamination, or that these two concepts can have more overlaps than we can initially understand.

This may be read as a provocation in a moment when the whole word is fearful of the word »contamination« due to the fast and wide expansion of COVID-19, but it is also true that language is something lively, always evolving and changing, and that we are in a constant search for new meanings to understand the word and therefore, the world.

So I think it's a good moment to ask you about your thoughts on these concepts of interdependency, contamination, and collective care in the framework of your research.

With warmest regards from windy Barcelona,

e.

March 17, 2020

Dear Ethel,

Talking about care is compelling today with the dire situation we are facing, as the COVID-19 pandemic is escalating, public life banned, and borders closing. In the confinement of my home I am looking at my botanical collection in hope to find some answers. Please let me send you a picture of my orchid, which is blooming at the moment.

The fierce aspect of its white flowers reminds me of the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe. He knew how to picture the queerness of life, be it the crudeness of S&M games, the frailty of Patti Smith, or the eroticism of a tulip. His eyes were able to see the world as a web of relationships. It is actually what the *Queer Nature* project is investigating: how the diversity of the plant kingdom and its sexual expression highlights the entanglements within vegetal matter: hermaphroditic, male, female, sequential transsexual… . Botany straddles the line between categories we so painstakingly strive to define, in the quest of defining our own identity.

Blooming orchid

I also have these little cacti whose seeds I received from the Botanical Garden of Basel. Look how tiny they are! It would be easier to grow them from a cutting, and way faster. I wanted nevertheless to give those seeds a chance to express their genetic diversity instead of cloning an existing specimen.

Cacti seedlings

Here are some more of my houseplants, a little selection of exotic beauties that I call the »Theater of Plants.« They watch my sleep and are often the first beings I see while opening my eyes in the morning. I am sure that they care for me within my sleep. I believe that the world of plants can teach us a lot about the way we are interconnected to the world – if we deign to listen to it. If we only try to escape the urge of »caring for« nature – this charitable act implying the domination of the well-minded ecologist toward a weak and silent earth – but to learn how we can »care with.«

Theater of Plants

The »Theater of Plants« for instance gives me way more than I give it. In exchange of a bit of water, it provides daily oxygen, shapes, colors, and sometimes offers the spark of a bloom. It also brings me peace of mind, inspiration, and serenity. The interdependence is strong and my plants' contained generosity never ceases to impress me. Interdependency and contamination are key words at the moment, as our everyday life is drastically hindered, teaching us that care is contextual and response-ability cannot be standardized.

Now that Madrid is on lockdown, the theme of the show *Twelve Cautionary Urban Tales* – an exhibition not about what the city is, but about what it can be, resonates strangely. I would be interested to know how you reflect on that project within the current situation.

With my warmest regards from here, stay safe.

Céline

April 6, 2020

Dear Céline,

I hope you're doing well in this unprecedented situation. It has taken me awhile to get back to you, but I must tell you that the gesture of care that you had sending »a small garden« through the photos of your plants, while I'm under lockdown, has been highly appreciated and I have been coming back to this email more often than you imagine. Thank you so much.

In my opinion, the examples you sent accompanying the plants and how you pose the difference between caring *for* and caring *with*, are quite important at the moment we're living, not only related with the botanical world, but in the many ways we can inhabit the planet and relate to all other species that are part of it along with us humans, from the molecular to the cosmic, and all in between.

After receiving your email I have been thinking, reading, and reflecting a lot on your mentioning how Mapplethorpe saw the world as »a web of relationships,« in relation to the exhibition *Twelve Cautionary Urban Tales*, an exhibition not about what the city is, but about what it can be, because I think they share a common and strong link. I guess that this is because a deep belief that the basis of any city can be described as well as a »web of relationships« – hence the relation with the exhibition – but can only be understood or disentangled using the appropriate narratives, those that can go beyond written or even spoken languages, but also can deal with our underlying ways to understand the world, including emotions, dreams, secrets. Here I want to recall this quote by Donna Haraway:

> It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.
>
> – Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*

I really love how she ends stating that »it matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.« This quote resonates loudly on all the twelve »cautionary tales« or fables that form this exhibition, and especially at the current moment, when many thinkers, theorists, practitioners are trying to understand how the configuration and the meaning of concepts like »urban,« »cityscape,« and »public space« are changing if we include new variables to take into account when talking about the city. How can we understand that web of relationships when social distance is imposed? How can the concepts of empathy, care, and affection coexist with fear, anxiety, and the unknown (and indeed we're witnessing that they coexist and feed each other)? The stories we use to talk about all these concerns are more important than ever, when the world is shifting and sometimes our conventional language is not enough, thus the idea of twelve different stories that can give us glimpses of the many possible cities that we can inhabit seems to be more than pertinent at the moment.

One point that can be highlighted from the exhibition in relation with the current situation of confinement and isolation around the world, is that it is not a set of twelve isolated stories, fables, or narratives. These twelve tales are interconnected, contaminate one another, thus enriching, changing, and affecting its neighbors, as we can see for example, between MAIO's fog of *The Grand Interior* getting into Clara Nubiola's *3 Wanders and 2 Strolls*; between your *Parliament of Plants* and Chloé Rutzerveld's *The Politics of Food*; or how Aristide Antonas's *Inverted Tents* contaminate by invading the aerial space of some other installations, just to mention a few:

MAIO's *The Grand Interior*, with the fog
escaping the walls of its installation.

The Inverted Tents by Aristide Antonas, occupying
the space above its neighboring installations.

Céline Baumann's *Parliament of Plants* visually contaminating
Chloé Rutzerveld's *The Politics of Food*
through the pink light of the growing lamps.

In light of this reflection, I want to end up by quoting Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing and her thoughts about contamination, when she wrote »How does a gathering become a ›happening,‹ that is, greater than a sum of its parts? One answer is contamination. We are contaminated by our encounters; they change who we are as we make way for others. As contamination changes world-making projects, mutual worlds – and new directions – may emerge. Everyone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option. One value of keeping precarity in mind is that it makes us remember that changing with circumstances is the stuff of survival.«

Even though, as the curator of the exhibition, it is difficult for me to be totally objective, but my feeling is exactly that as a whole, the *Twelve Cautionary Urban Tales* somehow are greater than a sum of its parts. And here I would love to stop and ask you to share your thoughts about how contamination takes place in the botanical world and if you agree that it can be a tool of survival. And if so, what can we learn from this web of relationships that happen in the world of plants that can be applied to the cities we live in?

Sending warm wishes from sunny albeit silent Barcelona,

e.

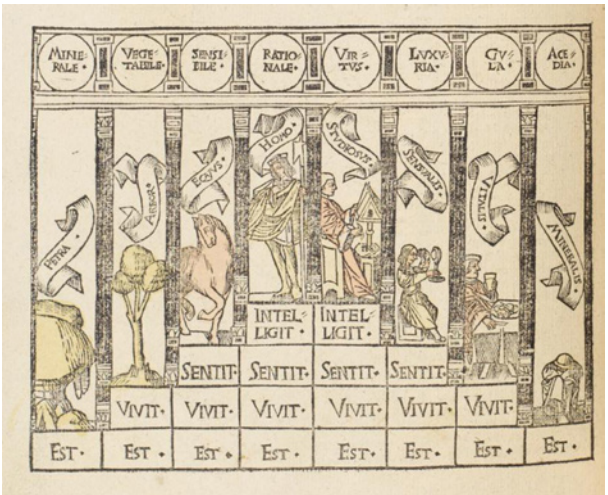
April 14, 2020

Dear Ethel,

Thank you for your words and images.

After having broken the earth by recklessly extracting its resources, we are now suffering directly from the outcome of our actions. The current contamination reminds us indeed bitterly that we are not lone individuals but rather part of a complex ecological community, intertwined with vegetal, animal, and mineral matter. The disruptions of fragile ecosystems and the pressure on wildlife territories pushed otherwise distant viral forms to come into narrow contact with our unprepared bodies.

Contamination is a form of contact amongst others, although a very harmful one, transforming the contaminated body into an impure, unsuitable, or sick being. Contact is thankfully not always harmful and the plant kingdom uses various forms of interaction, ranging from close embrace to deliberate avoidance, in order to communicate. I would like to discuss with you about how such more-than-human behavior might challenge an archetype stating that our current society is on top of the so-called evolutionary pyramid.



Pyramid of the Living, Charles de Bovelles, Liber de Sapiente in
Liber de intellectu, 510, p. 245, Düsseldorf Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek

The »Pyramid of the Living« from the sixteenth-century French philosopher Charles de Bovelles in his *Book of Wisdom* is a good example of a traditional human-centric idea of the world, in which beings are being divided between EST (is) for rocks, VIVIT (lives) for plants, SENTIT (feels) for animals and INTELIGIT (understands) for human.

Trees perceive one another and sometimes avoid physical contact: a phenomenon called »crown shyness« where trees conspicuously avoid touching each others' canopy. This is meant to let sunshine reach the forest ground and allow saplings to capture the necessary daylight vital for photosynthesis and growth. At a time when we are required to enforce social distancing measures, it is inspiring to realize plants also apply such mechanisms.

While forest protagonists avoid touching each other above ground, they have intense exchanges underground. Their root systems are connected thanks to a web of mycorrhizal fungi, allowing exchanges of water, carbon, nitrogen, minerals, and other nutrients between individual plants. This phenomenon is referred to as »wood wide web,« a term coined by the biologist and forest ecologist Suzanne Simard.

The two mechanisms of »crown shyness« and »wood wide web« demonstrate how vegetal matter uses assistance and self-restraint to care with and for each other. It leads me to consider seriously that flora not only »is« and »lives,« but also »feels« and »understands.« The pyramid of the living could be reconsidered today as a circle, a form without end neither beginning, where hierarchy is replaced by continuity.

Parliament of Plants, based on the original painting
The House of Commons by Karl Anton Hickel (1793–94)

I wish the extraordinary time we are experiencing now may inspire us to »refuse human exceptionalism« in the words of Donna Haraway, which I would like to illustrate with this image of the project *Parliament of Plants*. In this speculative world, flowers, grasses, and succulents replace politicians. I like to believe that if such a green democracy existed, it would more easily reach consensus, as its members would understand that their administration can only act toward the common good, basing their decisions on the principle of mutual care and support. The *Parliament of Plants* allows imagining an »otherwise,« in which as you beautifully mentioned in your previous quote of Haraway »stories make worlds, (...) worlds make stories.«

I send you my warmest greetings, dear Ethel, and I hope that despite closed borders we will have the chance to see each other sometime soon. I am looking forward to our next encounter.

Céline

April 16, 2020

Dear Céline,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on this thoughtful exchange.

A very good friend of mine told me recently that she was thinking on the *Twelve Cautionary Urban Tales* exhibition, now that the tales are silently resting at Nave 16 in Matadero, and she was imagining *Parliament of Plants* taking over the exhibition space, growing up and suddenly occupying, invading, and contaminating (in the good sense of the word, à la Anna Tsing) all the other installations, in the simple but complex form of a jungle when it is being born. I simply loved that image, nature just naturally evolving, to take back its space in the city, or the other eleven cities, not in an architectural or planned way, like in parks or public spaces. Rather than that, in a natural, playful, and organic way, bringing the botanical and wild world into the many possible cities that inhabit the exhibition, from outer space to the domestic, from revolutions to the underground.

Perhaps after these days of confinement we will learn something, at last.

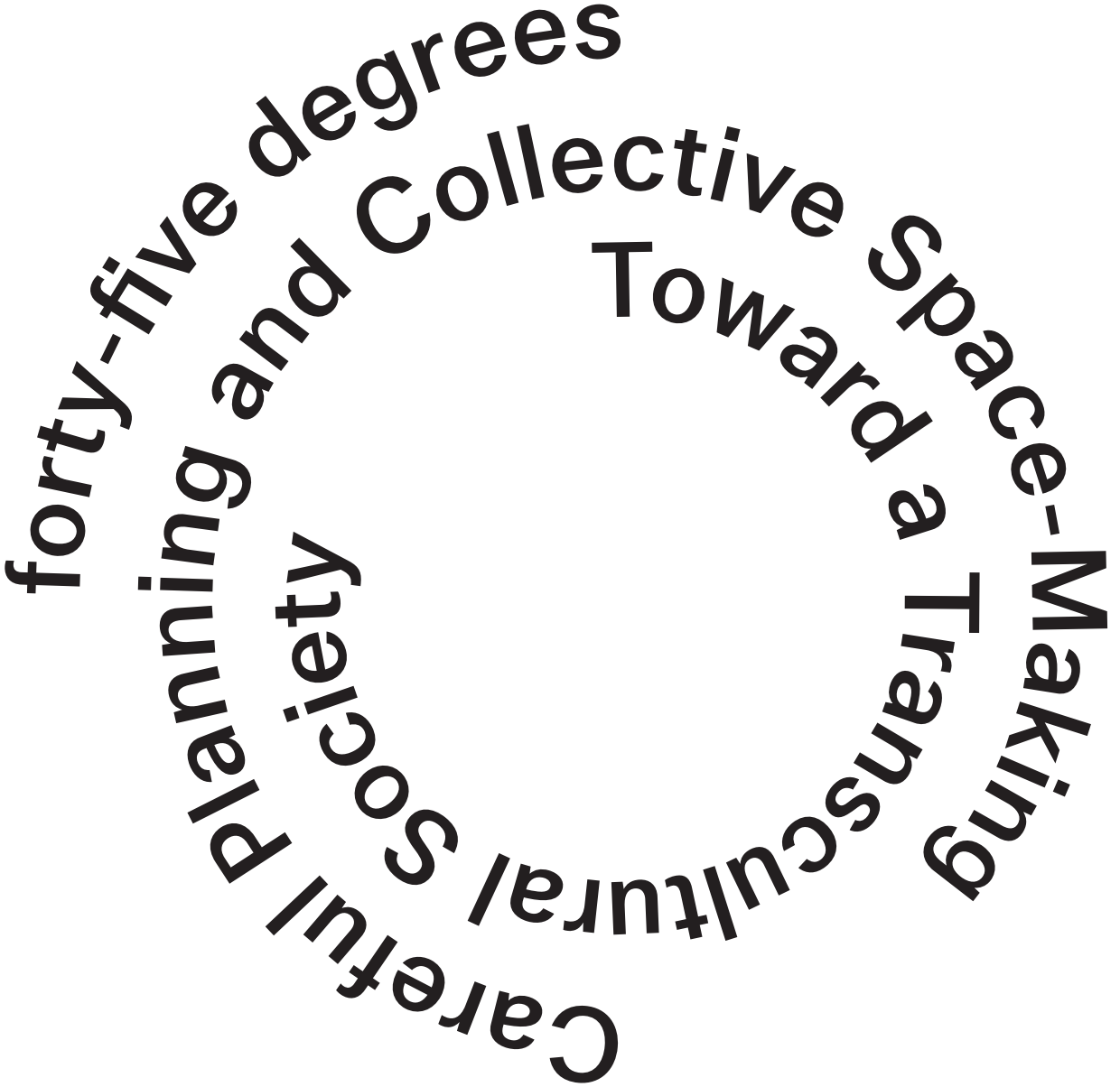
Much love from Barcelona,

e.

After the exhibition *Twelve Cautionary Urban Tales* at Matadero Madrid closed during the lockdown it reopened end of June, and will be on display until the end of January 2021.

Ethel Baraona Pohl. Critic, writer, and curator. Cofounder of the independent research studio and publishing house dpr-barcelona, which operates in the fields of architecture, political theory, and the social milieu. Editor of *Quaderns d'arquitectura i urbanisme* from 2011–16, her writing appears in *The Form of Form* (Lars Muller, 2016), *Together! The New Architecture of the Collective* (Ruby Press, 2017), *Architecture is All Over* (Columbia Books of Architecture, 2017), *Harvard Design Magazine*, and *Volume*, among others. Her curatorial practice includes the exhibitions *Adhocracy ATHENS* (Onassis Cultural Centre, 2015), winner of the ADI Culture Award 2016; and *Twelve Cautionary Urban Tales* (Matadero Madrid, 2020), among others. Since 2016, dpr-barcelona has been a platform member of Future Architecture.

Céline Baumann is a French landscape architect based in Basel, Switzerland. Her eponymous studio operates in the fields of urbanism, landscape architecture, and exhibition. She aims through an intersectional lens to create dynamic open spaces informed by the interactive ecology between people and nature. This design work is complemented by a commitment to research, allowing her to explore the collective value of nature and its impact on individuals. Her work on *Queer Nature* and *Parliament of Plants* has taken various forms: exhibition, garden walk, workshop, lecture, talk, or publication at institutions including the Royal Academy of Arts in London, the Matadero in Madrid, the Oslo Architecture Triennale 2019, the National Gallery of Arts in Vilnius, the Museum of Architecture and Design of Ljubljana and the ETH in Zürich. Baumann is a fellow at the Akademie Schloss Solitude.



forty-five degrees
(Alkistis Thomidou and Gianmaria Socci)

The architecture collective *forty-five degrees*, consisting of Alkistis Thomidou and Gianmaria Socci, introduces itself in a comprehensive interview, challenging the notion of borders and homogeneous, top-down constructions of globalized geographies. They discuss the fact that spatial justice – the practice of commoning and collective actions, including a conscious approach to the environment, co-existence and collaboration – is inevitable in a caring and generous architecture of the future.

35 Meridians of Radical Rituals, forty-five degrees. Irmela Mensah-Schramm has been documenting and removing hate stickers and spraying love messages over hate graffiti throughout Germany since 1986.

Manifesto

forty-five degrees is an architecture and urban design practice dedicated to the critical making of collective space. Our particular interest lies in Europe, this hybrid place in constant mutation, where new emerging transcultural traditions, memories, and technologies have the potential to shape radical practices of commoning grounded on spatial justice and environmental awareness.

45° North: halfway between the equator and the North Pole, the center of gravity of Europe, the watershed between the Mediterranean of our idealism and the Northern seas of our pragmatism, an arbitrary border that thousands of migrants attempt to cross.

45° C: the highest temperature ever recorded in several European cities in 2019. It is a symbolic yet very tangible reminder that we can no longer postpone a societal shift toward degrowth and circularity.

45°, x=y: a straight line produced by the perfect equivalence of two terms, the parity between chromosomal differences, the interchangeability of alternative identities.

45°, diagonal: the balance between verticality and horizontality, top-down and bottom-up. It is a belief in democratic processes. It is a refusal of all absolutisms and prepotence.

45° proposes an oblique perspective on space-making, a view that goes beyond the façade of things and looks at their hidden corners and at the edges that define their realm of existence.

45° imagines design as a possible territory for emancipation. We envision an architecture that is open, generous, nondiscriminatory, anticolonial. We value humility and care.

45° is Alkistis Thomidou and Gianmaria Socci.

Raised in Italy and Greece, we both studied and practiced in Northern Europe. We have successfully collaborated in various competitions, but also individually worked on projects around the globe in places like Ethiopia, Brazil, and Thailand, investigating the built environment through research and design, across multiple scales and in its social, economic, and structural components.

Reflecting on the role of architecture and urban design today, we consider it our task to challenge the homogeneous, top-down constructions of globalized geographies. Our current work focuses on rediscovering the inventiveness of everyday life and the potential of alternative urban practices. Current dramatic developments expose the fragility of a lifestyle resulting from decades of neoliberal policies prioritizing profit over people, and demonstrate the need to revolutionize the way we manage and envision our communal space. We want to imagine how architecture can reinvent itself to support this venture, create spaces for authentic reflection on the problems of our times, and speculate on possible futures.

35 Meridians of Radical Rituals, forty-five degrees. Along the 45° parallel from the Atlantic coast to the Black Sea, we are searching for collective actions, heritage, and imaginaries that reinvent common space beyond identity and borders.

forty-five degrees in conversation

Alkistis, Gianmaria, you often use geographies as a starting point for your research and to talk about space.

We are very fascinated by borders, by the geometric qualities of these abstract entities that can be interpreted in various ways. If we look at them from a botanist's perspective, for instance, borders can become interfaces of connection and opportunity, where pioneer species find available ground and evolution happens. These borders define »not property, but space for the future.«[1] Rather than dividing walls, the borders that interest us are spaces of threshold, where the friction of diversity has a positive, generative power and new modes of coexistence can occur.

The lines that define these borders are multidimensional, they are physical, they have a thickness and fuzzy edges. They are ever-changing and evolve with the beings who inhabit them, who also in turn, are changed by them: »The self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities.«[2] What is most interesting for us, is that if we look at borders beyond the usual political understanding of division, we can uncover most of the complexities of space from unusual perspectives, like in the short film we really love: *Powers of Ten: A Film Dealing with the Relative Size of Things in the Universe and the Effect of Adding Another Zero* by Charles and Ray Eames.

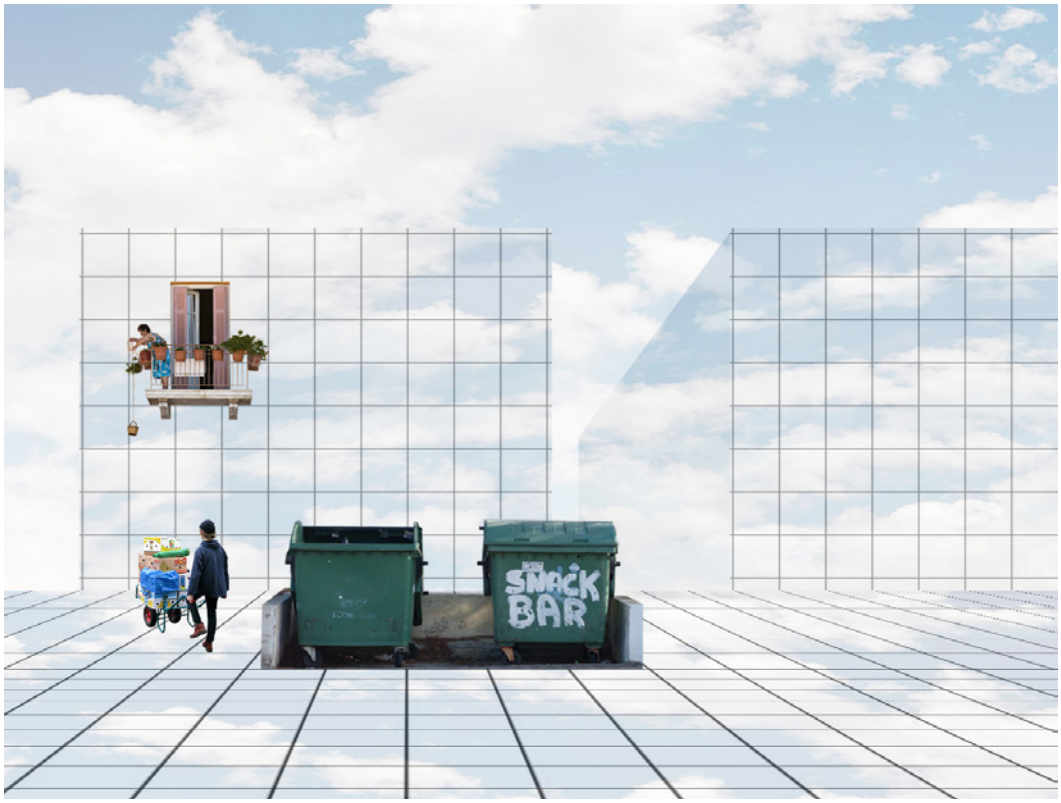
How did your work as a collective begin? And what are you currently working on?

After almost a decade of collaboration, we founded the collective *forty-five degrees* in October 2019. The name was inspired by the 45th parallel north that separates the »South« of Europe we come from, and the »North« where we currently live and work. An imaginary border, that after all, if we consider recent crises and the unfruitful negotiations that once again split the European »union« into two fronts, is not so imaginary.

We began our practice with the research project *35 Meridians of Radical Rituals*, an itinerant survey along the 45°N parallel. The project is about the inventiveness of everyday life, new hybrid vernaculars and communal space-making in Europe. We try to see how this system of meridians and parallels that describes our world is inhabited. We want to elevate this arbitrary line to a symbolic space in which we try to offset the notions of center and periphery and speculate on a different understanding of borders.

In 35 Meridians of Radical Rituals, cities along the 45°N latitude, like Belgrade, Pula, Tulcea, or Simferopol, serve as a starting point for your research. Looking at this marking makes me curious what urban strategies and cultural practices, and which differences or parallels, become visible in the communities of the respective cities. What can we possibly learn about Europe and its inhabitants through your project?

The 45°N parallel crosses several climates, geographies, and borders marked by socioeconomic and geopolitical struggle. Movements of people, knowledge, and goods made the hybrid place we call Europe. While exposing the contradictions that burden Europe today – inequalities in financial resources, migration management, civil rights – our gesture aims at reuniting rather than reinforcing those divisions. From the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea we can count 35 meridians. At these intersections we have identified cities and places that we believe are exemplary of Europe's hybridity. There are cities that are notorious melting pots – like Bordeaux or Ploiesti. But in general our list is in continuous evolution and we hope to find out more about them by looking closer rather than making assumptions from afar. In this linear research



35 Meridians of Radical Rituals, forty-five degrees. One man's trash is another man's treasure. Container or dumpster diving is the unusual activity of rescuing discarded surplus food from supermarkets or elsewhere, and offering it to the community.

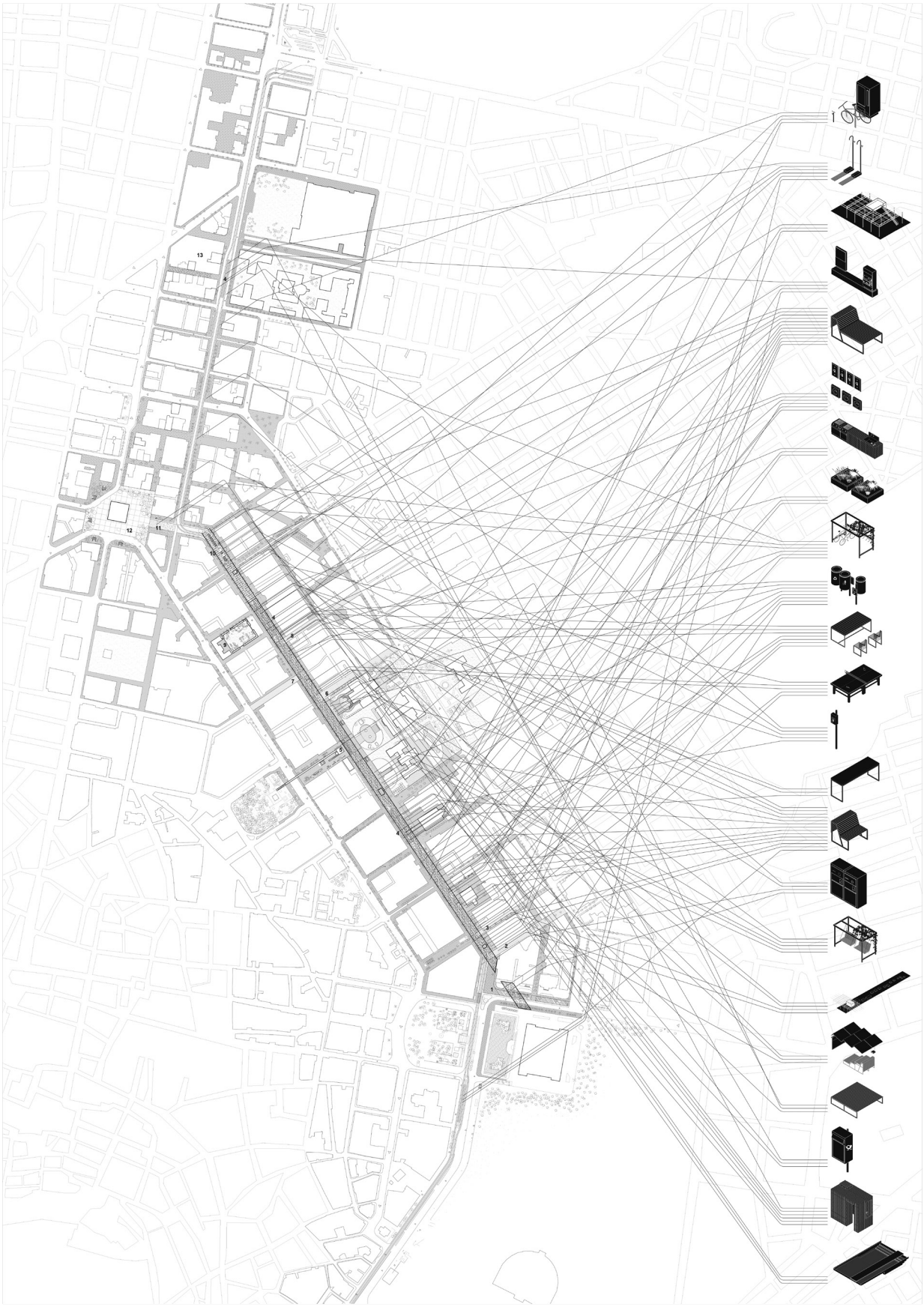
A third space is not a physical place; it is much more a space where hybrid identifications are possible and where cultural transformations can happen.

we hope to find a third space between the apparent opposites that define the official narration of space-making, e.g. by uncovering collective actions that don't fall into the category of professional practice.

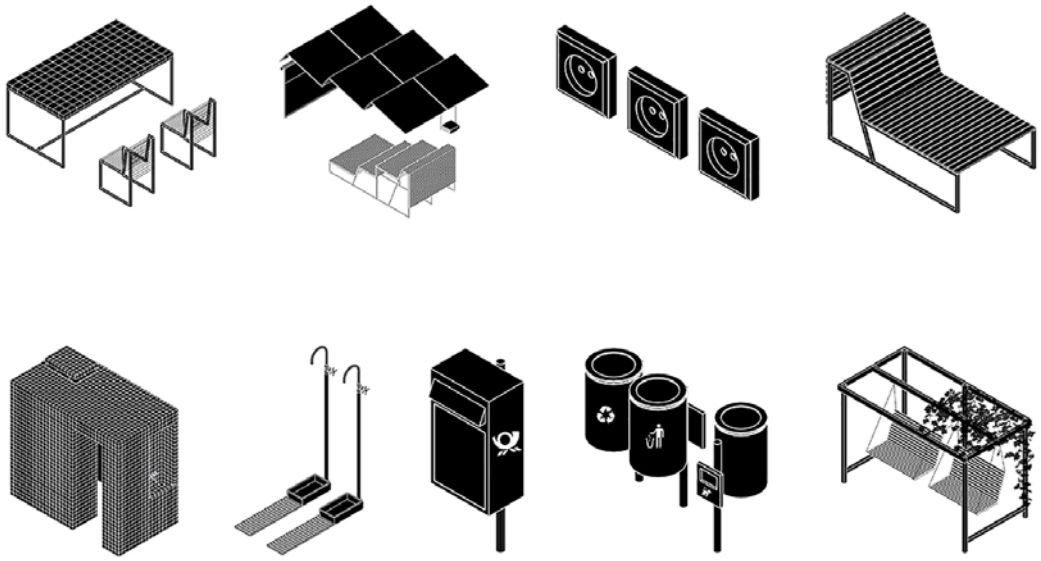
What exactly do you mean by third space? How does such a space look?

The term »third space« is coined by the theorist Homi K. Bhabha.[3] He describes the third space as a transitory space, where postcolonial power relations and norms are subverted by political, aesthetic, or everyday practices. A third space is not a physical place; it is much more a space where hybrid identifications are possible and where cultural transformations can happen. Third spaces enable cultural hybridity, that is to say identities and practices, which perform difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.

We believe that the increased physical and virtual connectivity of today results in an exciting, constant exchange of ideas that defines viable alternatives to mainstream, capital-driven territorial development. Borrowing from French novelist and filmmaker George Perec, we are interested in infra-ordinary[4] experiences that are generated within the complexities of a society in transformation. These experiences take the form



Rethink Athens, forty-five degrees and Also Known As Architects. The competition proposal tackles the divide between large scale, top-down planning and the minute actions of everyday people in public space.



Rethink Athens, forty-five degrees and Also Known As Architects. The intention is to transform the street – so far perceived as a representation of power – into an urban living room, open to everyone

of community self-organization, cooperatives, informal gatherings, and spontaneous actions often found at the periphery of cultural production.

So you're examining different »urban rituals« as models for spatial occupation within temporary societies. What do you understand as rituals and why are you interested in them?

Traditionally investigated by anthropology, religious studies and sociology, rituals have always been necessary practices in human and animals' social lives. In the past they were connected to local collective identities, mostly referred to agriculture, religion or myths. In increasingly secular times, contemporary rituals still satisfy a wide spread need for identification. For example, they strengthen the capacity of collective action to reach ambitious goals.

In our work we try to understand the urban realm not only through design but also by borrowing methods from anthropology that look into the user's perspective. We call these examples rituals, because they are inclusive and have the power to create ties of kinship and spatial identity. We call them radical because, in a sense, they are fundamental but at the same time they are innovative, pointing to possible alternative futures.

How these »Third Spaces« and »Radical Rituals« inform your understanding of urban space making and the planning of future cities?

In the same way that centuries of cultural crossing have generated new spatial configurations, we believe that today's cultural crossings offer opportunities for the emergence of a new commonality.

We speculate on a future with a highly hybridized urban society, in which a transnational youth develops skills, resources, and knowledge accumulated through multiple cultural repertoires, digital technologies, and social media. New traditions, heritage,

Rethink Athens, forty-five degrees and Also Known As Architects. Adjacent streets are occupied by temporary installations that nurture existing grassroot initiatives. Here an open-air library becomes a space for socializing and exchanging ideas.

and imaginaries, collective actions, occasions, and conventions are in the making and new memories and technologies can shape radical practices of commoning grounded on spatial justice and environmental awareness. They help to reinvent common space beyond identity and borders, in both digital and social space.

The last decades of urban planning have been characterized by individualization, mobility, privatization, and speculation, and the making of Smart Cities. In your work it has been a primary concern to counteract this course and instead create common territory for diversity, commonality, public, and democratic construction and decision-making. What approaches do you use to do so?

The city is the spatial manifestation of the relationship between people and power and results as the stratification of consecutive political visions. Nowadays, democracy has lost its connection with urban daily life, and it is mostly sustained without the involvement of the people, who find it hard to claim their right to the city. We are interested in initiating processes that offer the opportunity to understand the city and its dynamics. We see our role and the role of architecture as a mediator, as part of a broader shared knowledge and practice.

Traditionally, the architect is thought of as someone sitting in their studio making great plans. But architecture only really begins when it is inhabited: we are interested in the acts of appropriation as a means of co-authorship and agency of the user, especially when it comes to public space. Appropriation is crucial because it creates a discussion, a collaboration beyond the architect‘s intervention. Ultimately, what we are interested in is proposing a kind of symbolic, primordial order waiting for individuals to negotiate their spatial boundaries through public behaviors.

Rethink Athens, forty-five degrees and Also Known As Architects. Many small squares in central Athens are deserted and abandoned. We proposed to repurpose them into centers for horizontal learning and making. Taking advantage of the amazing climate, local artisans could hold outdoor workshops and events.

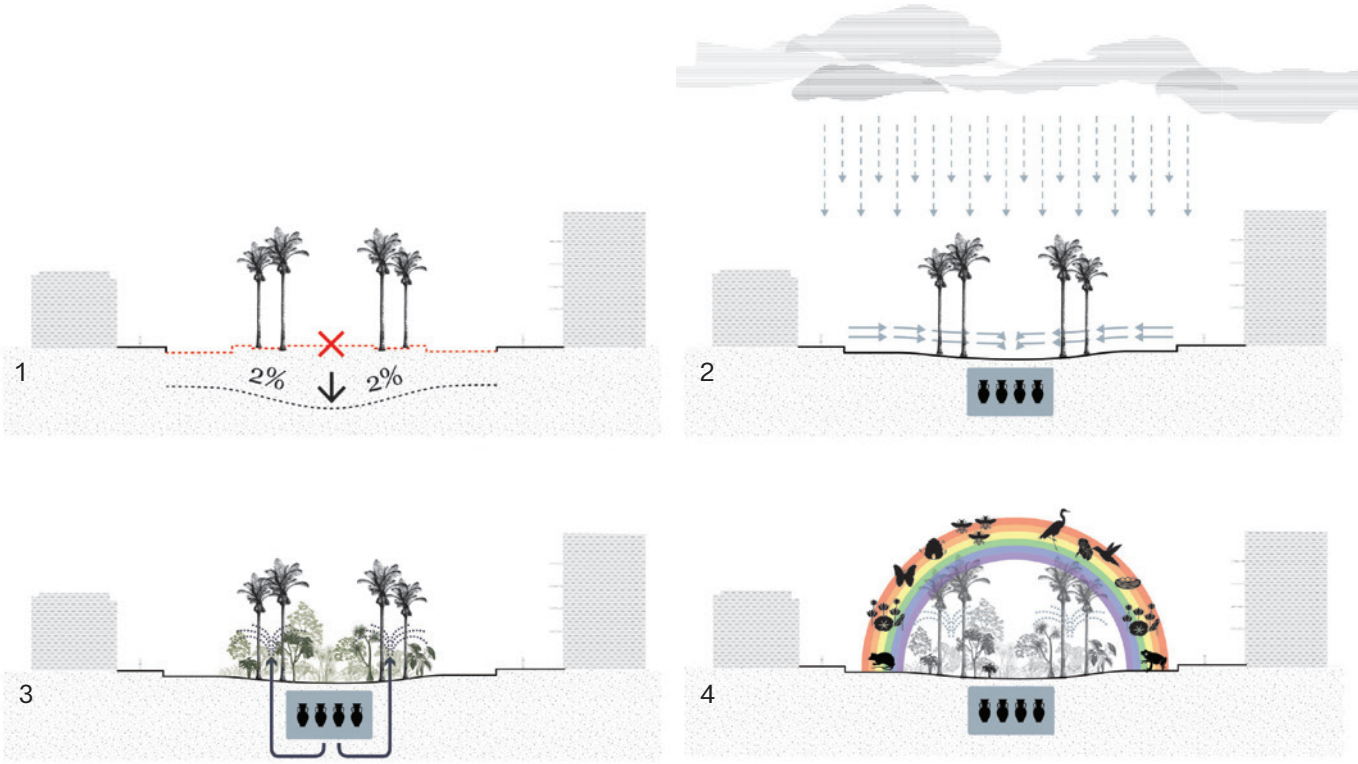
Using the example of your speculative Rethink Athens project, can you explain how you as architects deal with the design of public space where surfaces, materials, things, and people meet; where the emancipatory potential for a democratic approach to architecture and space can be embedded?

The brief foresaw the pedestrianization of a great urban boulevard in the center of Athens and the introduction of a new tram line. The task was to design this new pedestrian axis: three adjacent squares and the adjacent streets. This project happened to coincide with the massive riots in Greece in 2011 against austerity measures. These riots showed how citizenship is expressed through frustration and friction, which are not particularly constructive as a reaction to top-down decisions.

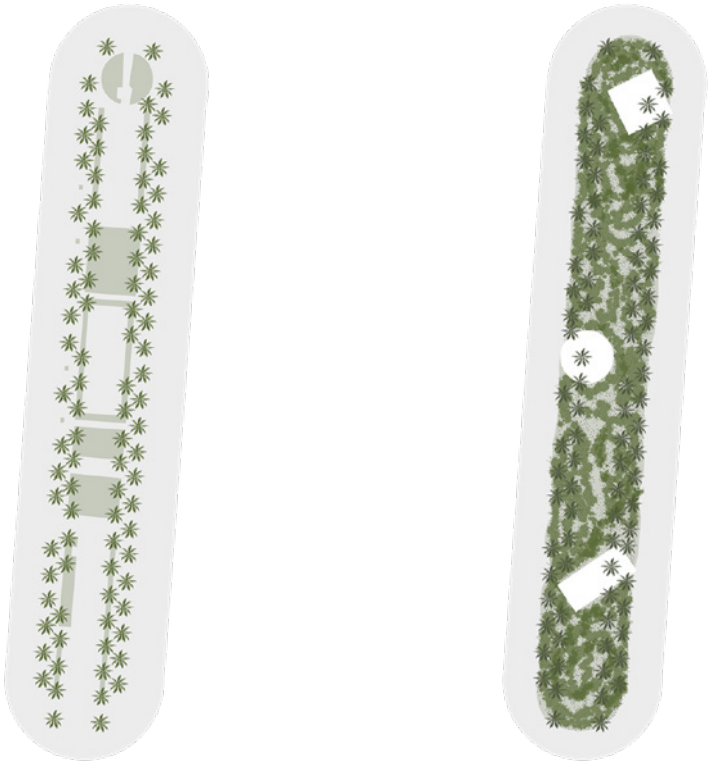
The question we asked ourselves was how can we hijack the planned infrastructure – which is an effective, costly, and permanent intervention – and make it accessible for all? We wanted to gift the city with an open framework for the citizens to reinvent their own urban experience through spontaneous appropriation and emphasize the possibilities offered by technology to reconnect citizens with public space now that »the public« is becoming more and more digital.

We proposed a series of small-scale infrastructures that will inhabit this large-scale intervention in an additive approach, introducing physical elements that carry out the choreographies and set the stage for a multitude of possible uses for a vibrant, contemporary, and adaptive neighborhood.

It's nice to see how you seek a primary moment of entanglement and empowerment for all inhabitants of a territory through architecture and urban planning of public and collective space and that you strengthen a collective instead of a divided space. I imagine it to be difficult to respond to all needs and to integrate the citizens into decisions.



Oasis, forty-five degrees and Giulia Domeniconi. Rainwater is collected throughout the winter on-site, due to the tilted permeable surface and is store for the summer, allowing for a new ecosystem to grow and flourish.



Oasis, forty-five degrees and Giulia Domeniconi. The proposal seeks to create a new spatial hierarchy, to reverse the relationship between hard and soft materials. We envisioned a dense green volume, interrupted by 3 squares, clearings in the »woods.«

Oasis, forty-five degrees and Giulia Domeniconi. The three squares are designed for different purposes and in relation to the areas around them.

Today, people have lost agency over making their own cities. The scale and complexity of the phenomena at hand often preclude direct participation. However, when citizens see the potential of direct actions, which are somehow related to their daily life, they are eager to participate. When the design's scale and sensitivity peaks to people's everyday lives and needs, they can relate to it and therefore participate with valuable contributions.

Most of our work is aimed exactly at downscaling large design tasks to smaller gestures that are more familiar and relate to »non-professionals.« In our designs we often propose open frameworks as a morphological base that is not fixed, but can rather be influenced and reconfigured by the final users.

This attitude helps us avoid simplified dichotomies that define the built environment in the traditional narrative: local/global; Culture/Nature; Urban/Landscape; top-down/bottom-up; human/non-human. On the contrary, we embrace reality and its complexities. We always try to understand the locality of each project in all its multilayered realities, in which we make use of the potential of the existing environment and seek for the minimum intervention that leads to a greater benefit.

Can you provide an example of how you achieve this?

In our proposed project *URBAN OASIS* – for a competition for the transformation of a public space into a »cultural« square, we were inspired by the Epicurean philosophy of the garden.

The rapid urbanization and the economic crisis of recent years in Greece downplayed the role of public spaces, cutting off the city life from the natural environment almost entirely.

By employing traditional techniques and material inspired by beehives found in the Mediterranean region, we want to revive local crafts and highlight a heritage of manual skills. Woven straw and clay are easily available and resistant to maintenance.

We wanted to explore the potential of natural environments in urban spaces, functioning as places of cultural production and cultivation of oneself. After all, we do not understand culture just as art-objects within museum spaces, or other cultural institutions that are often not accessible to everyone. We asked ourselves what kind of a new »cultural« space in the city could be open to everyone, regardless of economic and social situation, that would encourage the redefinition of our relationship with the natural environment and our society.

We proposed to transform a concrete square into a community garden with local plants and flowers, water and clearings, organized according to the natural ecology of an oasis where winter rainwater is recuperated for summer refreshment. The aim of this gesture was to offer a place for rejuvenation, meditation, and exchange, while promoting individual and collective responsibility and cultivation of oneself and their community. With its simple geometries and careful choice of materials, the project had the ambition to become the center of the neighborhood, accessible to everyone, and to encourage appropriation, connect built and unbuilt, old and new – and allow for a new ecosystem to grow and flourish.

This example shows that with your projects you not only aim to create hybrid, transcultural spaces for humans but also create common habitats for humans and other species.

For example, with our proposal for the Greek national pavilion for the Venice Architecture Biennial 2020 entitled *How Will We Live Together?*, we used the opportunity to question the role of architecture in caring for the habitat by asking ourselves what does that »we« include? Anthropocentrism and exploitation of resources has put all forms of life on earth in danger, including human life.

We believe that architecture is about resources – not only material or financial resources but also about the intangible resources of human and nonhuman knowledge. In our practice we are interested in collecting protocols and collective approaches.

»If bees disappeared from the face of the Earth, man would only have four years left to live« is a famous quote that Albert Einstein is often credited with, points to the crucial importance of multispecies interdependencies.

So, you proposed a project in which bees, coexistence, and collaboration play a crucial role …

Yes, for the duration of the Biennale we proposed to occupy the Greek pavilion with beehives and run a honey production station, workshops, and events, to promote beekeeping and provide information on its environmental benefits. We wanted to underline the importance of preservation and creation of habitats for bees since our survival depends on them. Eighty percent of all domestic crops and wild plants depend on pollination by bees. Although the beehives would be stored in the Greek pavilion, the bees would obviously be free to roam and collect pollen all around the Giardini, creating a honey mix which is very specific to the botanical environment of Venice but at the same time also represents a scaled-down version of the globe.

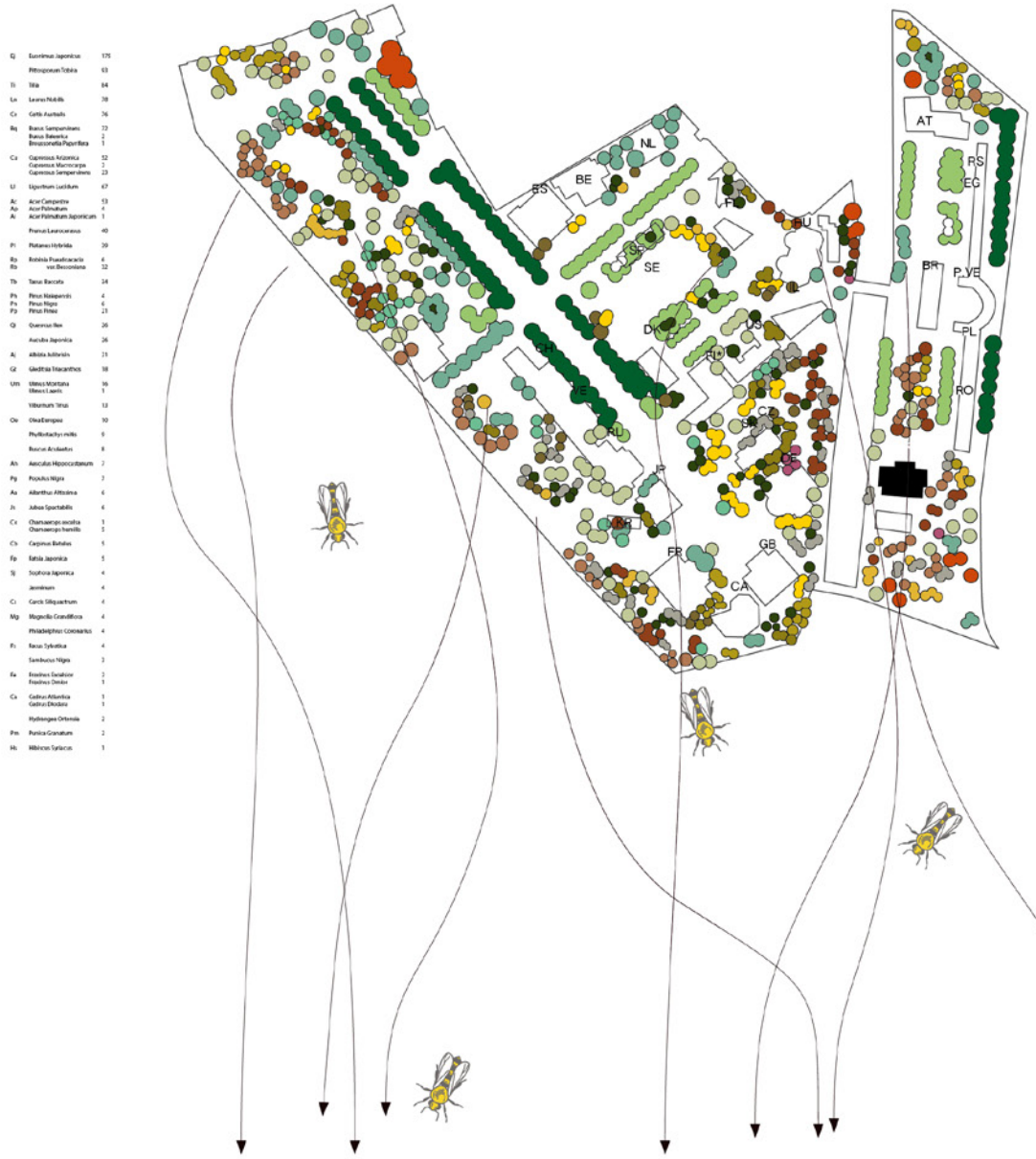
Issues such as climate change, migration, and the exploitation of our planet's resources are central to this work. The protection of biodiversity and improvement of the habitats of all species is the most crucial precondition to understand »how we will live together.«

In her text Care, Elke Krasny points out that »a caring architecture is both locally specific and globally conscious.«[5] *According to that, you could say that the bee project is a particularly good example of »caring architecture.«*

Beekeeping in Greece is very much part of the country's history. Bees and honey play a leading role in Greek mythology, customs, and traditions, but the point here is that the honey-making process shines some interesting questions about agency and interdependencies. This stunning contrast between the bells and whistles of nationalist pride and the reality of an interconnected, a-hierarchical natural world, was the entry point for a proposal that challenges the very premise of biennales and expos as a celebration of national identities.

We asked ourselves this: If were producing honey at the Giardini of the Venice Biennale with Greek bees and Greek methods, would this be a Greek honey, an Italian one, or something else altogether? Most of the trees in the Gardini are originally Mediterranean, but others come from exotic lands as a show of past colonialism and imperialism. In this sense, the garden is kind of denying the logic that, during Italian fascism, arranged the national pavilions according to geographical proximity and hierarchies of power.

We proposed a literal and metaphorical cross-border pollination of the Biennale's Giardini in which bees will be the ambassadors of a non-hierarchical management of natural resources by pollinating trees all around the area, an example of a possible future of coexistence of human and nonhuman species beyond borders and conflicts.



»If we were producing honey at the Giardini of Venice Biennale with Greek bees and Greek methods, would this be a Greek honey, an Italian one, or something else altogether?«

Closing, can you tell us in summary again what forty- five degrees stands for and how you imagine an architectural practice that addresses contemporary challenges and creates future possibilities for change?

We believe that architecture is about resources – not only material or financial resources but also about the intangible resources of human and nonhuman knowledge. In our practice we are interested in collecting protocols and collective approaches. There is not only one way to make space. We are interested in reality as much as in fiction and speculation: although we want to visualize alternative futures, we believe that the inspiration for this usually comes from the minute, the trivial, the infra-ordinary. Hence our interest in informal practices. We are not longing for a return to the vernacular – we seek to learn from it to invent novel ways of conceiving, managing, and occupying space that could undo centuries of spatial exploitation.

This interview was conducted by Denise Helene Sumi.

forty-five degrees is an architecture and urban design practice dedicated to the critical making of collective space and thinking of possible alternative futures. It was founded by Alkistis Thomidou and Gianmaria Socci, in October 2019.

Alkistis Thomidou is a Berlin-based architect. She holds a diploma in architecture and a master's degree in urban design from the ETH Zurich. She has practiced in Germany and abroad and was teaching assistant at TU Braunschweig. She is currently a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude. Her interests lie at the intersection of interdisciplinary research, design, and artistic experimentation.

Gianmaria Socci is an architect and educator based in Berlin. He holds a master's degree in architecture and a MAS in urban design. He has practiced and taught in Switzerland, Thailand and the United States. Additionally to his work as forty-five degrees, he is a mentor for CanActions School on housing, and the director of the nonprofit organization Space Saloon.

1 Gilles Clément, *Le jardin planétaire. Reconcilier l'homme et la nature*, Paris 1999.

2 Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London 1988.

3 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. London/New York 1994: p. 37.

4 Perec uses the neologism »infra-ordinary« to describe the ordinary and the everyday details, movements, and rhythms around us. Georges Perec, *The Infra-Ordinary*. Paris 1973.

5 Elke Krasky, »Care,« in: *AA Files* 76, edited by Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, London 2019.

Soil Times
The Pace of Ecological Care

Echinocereus triglochidiatus,
photo by Andrey Zharkikh, CC BY 2.0

María Puig de la Bellacasa

The book *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* by María Puig de la Bellacasa contests the view that care is something only humans do. It emphasizes the nonhuman agencies and communities that comprise the living web of care by considering how care circulates in the natural world. The following excerpt highlights human-soil relations and soils as living organisms consisting of a multispecies community of biota. Bellacasa enhances the idea that humans are part of soil communities. It is in these conceptions that Anthropos-centered concepts are called into question and transformative trends in human-soil relations are fostered.

Human-soil relations are a captivating terrain to engage with the intricate entanglements of material necessities, affective intensities, and ethico-political troubles of caring obligations in the more than human worlds marked by technoscience. Increasingly since the first agricultural revolutions, the predominant drive underlying human–soil relations has been to pace their fertility with demands for food production and other needs, such as fiber or construction grounds. But at the turn of the twenty-first century, Earth soils regained consideration in public perception and culture due to global antiecological disturbances. Soils are now up on the list of environmental matters calling for global care. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations declared 2015 the »International Year of Soils,« expressing concerns for this »finite non-renewable resource on a human time scale under pressure of processes such as degradation, poor management and loss to urbanization.«[1] Soils have become a regular media topic, drawing attention to the »hidden world beneath our feet,«[2] a new frontier for knowledge and fascination about the life teaming in this dark alterity. Human persistent mistreatment and neglect of soils is emphasized in calls that connect the economic, political, and ethical value of soils to matters of human survival. Recent headlines by environmental analysts in the UK press reiterate this: »We're Treating Soil Like Dirt. It's a Fatal Mistake, as Our Lives Depend on It«[3] or »Peak Soil: Industrial Civilisation Is on the Verge of Eating Itself.«[4] Warnings proliferate against a relatively immediate gloomy future that could see the global exhaustion of fertile land with correlated food crises. So while soils remain a resource of value extraction for human consumption and a recalcitrant frontier of inquiry for science, they are also increasingly considered endangered living worlds in need of urgent ecological care.

. . .

From Productionism to Service – and Care?

Soil biologist Stephen Nortcliff speaks of a change in focus from research in the 1970s and 1980s, when sustainability concerns focused on »maintaining yield« rather than the »soil system«: »How things have changed as we have moved into the 21st Century! Whilst maintaining agricultural production is still important the emphasis now is on the sustainable use

of soils and limiting or removing the negative effects on other environmental components«[5]. Nortcliff is not alone. A disciplinary reassessment seems to be taking place. This could be a significant shift in the historical orientation of soil science, as summarized by soil scientist Peter McDonald:

> Soil science does not stand alone. Historically, the discipline has been integrated with all aspects of small farm management. The responsibility of maintaining good crop yield over a period of years was laid upon the soil. Research into soil fertility reflected this production-oriented emphasis during most of the nineteenth century … the focus of their efforts remained, and to a large extent still remains, to benefit overall harvests.[6]

Guaranteeing yield through production is obviously an essential drive of the agricultural effort. But critical research on agriculture refers to *productionism* more specifically in terms of the intensification that drove agricultural reform in Europe from the seventeenth century onward. This culminated in the mid-twentieth century with the industrialization and commercialization of agriculture and the international expansion of this model through the Green Revolution's assemblage of machines, chemical inputs, and genetic improvements. In *The Spirit of the Soil*, philosopher of agricultural technology Paul B. Thompson argues for an ethics of production and summarizes productionism as the consecration of the aphorism »Make two blades of grass grow where one grew before.«[7] Critiques of productionism address the absorption of agricultural relations within the commercial logic of intensification and accumulation characteristic of capitalist economies. In other words, productionism is the process by which a logic of production overdetermines other activities of value.[8] Agricultural intensification is not only a quantitative orientation – yield increase – but also a way of life, and a qualitative mode of conceiving relations to the soil. While it seems obvious that growers' and farmers' practices, whether grand or small scale, pre-or postindustrial, would be yield-oriented, productionism colonizes all other relations: everyday life, relations with other species, and politics (e.g., farmers' subjection to the industry-agribusiness complex). The increasing influence of logics of productionist acceleration and intensification through the twentieth century can be read within scientific approaches to soil. One notable example can be found in chemistry's contribution to turning cultivation into a productionist effort. Soil physicist Benno Warkentin explains how early studies on plant nutrition were first based on a »bank balance« approach by which nutrients assimilated by plants were measured with the idea that these had to »be added back to the soil in equal amounts to *maintain* crop production.« But the »balance« emphasis changed after 1940 with an increase in off-farm additions to the soil, bringing artificial fertilizing materials, external to a site's material cycles and seasonal temporalities, in order to bolster yield. The aim of this increase was to ensure »availability of nutrients for *maximum growth, and timing for availability* rather than on the total amounts removed by crops«[9] – that is, not so much to maintain but to intensify the nutrient input in soils beyond the rhythms by which crops absorb them. These developments confirm a consistent trend in modern management of soils to move from maintenance – for instance, by leaving parts of the land at times in a fallow state – to the maximization, and one could say preemptive buildup, of soil nutrient capacity beyond the renewal pace of soil ecosystems.[10] This makes visible how the tension between production and sustainability at the heart of soil science involves misadjusted temporalities: between soil as a slowly renewable entity and the accelerated technological solutions required by intensified production.

This is not to say that soil scientists – or even practitioners who live by the productionist credo – have not taken care of soils. Remediating worn-out soils has been at the heart of the development of soil science since its beginnings and was related to the socioeconomic concerns that influenced early soil studies.[11] Numerous soil scientists have been committed to conserving soils and working with farmers to foster ways of caring for them while maintaining productivity: »soil care« is a notion widely employed.[12] Moves to interrogate productionism seem nonetheless to question conceptions of soil care in the light of a broader societal realization of the untenable pressures on soil. In science and beyond, the persistent productionist ethos overlaps today with an »environmental era« starting in the 1970s and influenced by a conception of environmental limits to growth that place »the living earth … in a central position«[13]. This has marked soil science – many researchers, for instance, pointing at the unsustainable destruction and deterioration of natural habitats associated with an excessive use of agrochemicals. Most sociohistorical accounts of the soil sciences since the early 1990s recognize this »ecological« turn:

»in the present era of soil science . . . the questions are on a landscape basis, have an ecological nature, and ask about the sustainability of natural resources.«[14]

What can a critical analysis of the articulation of the temporality of productionism and relations of care contribute to these transformations? In a sense, there is an inherent ambivalence contained in these relations whereby the future is simultaneously hailed as central and »discounted,« as Adam emphasizes with regard to short-term thinking that pushes to exploit natural resources today at the expense of future generations.[15] And yet, the temporality of productionist-oriented practices in late capitalist societies remains strongly future-oriented: it focuses on »output,« promissory investments (led by so-called agricultural futures), and on efficient management of the present in order to produce it. This is consistent with how, as described above, restless futurity renders precarious the experienced present: subordinated to, suspended by, or crushed under the investment in uncertain future outcomes. Worster's account of the living conditions of farmers who outlived the destruction of successive dust bowls to see the return of intensified agriculture and successful grand-scale farming are also stories of discontent, debt, and anxiety, echoing farmer experiences worldwide living under the pressures of production.[16] So though the timescale of soil productionist exploitation discounts the future by focusing on the benefit of present generations, the present is also discounted, as everyday practices, relations, and embodied temporalities of practitioners embedded in this industrious speeded-up time are also compressed and precarious. Productionism not only reduces what counts as care – for instance, to a managerial »conduct« of tasks to follow[17] – but also inhibits the possibility of developing other relations of care that fall out of its constricted targets. It reduces care from a coconstructed interdependent relation into mere control of the *object* of care.

And it is not only human temporalities, but also more than human, that are subjected to the realization of this particularly linear timescale focused on intensified productivity. It could be argued that within the productionist model the drive of soil care has mostly been for the crops – that is, importantly, plants as commodifiable produce (which also begs the question of what kind of care is given to plants reduced to crop status). In the utilitarian-care vision, worn-out soils must be »put back to work« through soil engineering technologies: fed liters of artificial fertilizers with little consideration for wider ecological effects or made host for enhanced crops that will work around soil's impoverishment and exhaustion. In sum, soil care in a productionist frame is aimed at increasing soil's efficiency to produce at the expense of all other relations. From the perspective of a feminist politics of care in human–soil relations, this is a form of exploitative and instrumentally regimented care, oriented by a one-way anthropocentric temporality. This direction could be troubled by moves perceptible in the way the soil sciences are reconceiving how they see soil as a natural body, with important consequences about how to care for it. We can see changes supported by a notion that soils are of more »use« than agricultural production. An emphasis on the multiplication of »soil functions«[18] means that they are valued for other purposes than agriculture, or building. This points at a diversification of the applications of soil sciences as soils become providers of a range of »ecosystem services« – for example, including social, aesthetic, and spiritual value – beyond commercial agricultural needs.[19] The ecosystem-services approach looks at the elements involved in an ecological setting or landscape from the perspective of what they offer to humans beyond purely economic value and tries to calculate other sources of value – not necessarily to »price« them, a distinction important to many advocates of this approach. This is a significant

In sum, soil care in a productionist frame is aimed at increasing soil's efficiency to produce at the expense of all other relations. From the perspective of a feminist politics of care in human – soil relations, this is a form of exploitative and instrumentally regimented care, oriented by a one-way anthropocentric temporality.

move for human–soil relations with a transformative potential that shouldn't be underestimated. Yet this notion has its limitations to transform the dominant affective ecologies of human–soil relations and not merely because it is restricted to a calculative vision of relationalities. Even if we accepted staying within a logic of valuation and service provision, at the very least a notion of ecosystem services should also calculate those provided by humans to sustain a particular ecology and the nonhuman community. The notion of ecosystem services, while representing an important attempt from inside Capitalo-centered societies to shift the parameters of a purely economistic valuation of nature for production, is not enough to bring us closer to a relation of care that disrupts the notion of other than humans as »resources« and the sterile binary of utilitarian versus altruistic relations with other than humans. A notion of care, Sue Jackson and Lisa Palmer argue, could disrupt this logic and improve the way ecosystem services are conceptualized:

> If we extend the concept of relatedness from humanity to all existence and foster an ethic of care which recognizes the agency of all »others,« be it other people or other nature, and the specific cultivation of these relations by humans, we avert the broadening of a schism between nature and culture – the schism that in the ecosystem service framework construes nature as provider/producer and human as consumer.[20]

Thinking with a feminist politics of care that remembers the contested exploitations involved in the type of service work that care is often made to be, we can also interrogate the connotations involved in the notion of »service« itself. While service could seem to lead us beyond a logic of exchange – doesn't service also refer to what we do for altruistic purposes or sense of duty? – in strongly stratified societies it is marked by a history of serfdom. Struggles around the relegation of domestic care to women's work showed how the point is not only to make this »service« more valuable or recognized but also to question the very division of labor that underpins it. A feminist approach to more than human care would at the very least open a speculative interrogation: *Cui bono?*[21] service *for whom?* as a question that reveals the limitations of a service approach to transform human–soil relations while it remains based on conceiving naturecultural entities as resources for human consumption, thus interrogating an understanding of soils that posits them as either functions or services to »human well-being«[22].

An interrogation of both the productionist and service logic can learn from ecofeminist critiques about the intrumentalization, degradation, and evacuation of more than human agency[23] and the connection of these ecologically oppressive logics to gender and racialized binaries with their classic segregation of life domains.[24] Thinking with care invites us to question unilateral relationalities and exclusionary bifurcations of living, doings, and agencies. It brings us to thinking from the perspective of the maintenance of a many-sided web of relations involved in the very possibility of ecosystem services rather than only of benefits to humans.

Thinking with care invites us to question unilateral relationalities and exclusionary bifurcations of living, doings, and agencies. It brings us to thinking from the perspective of the maintenance of a many-sided web of relations involved in the very possibility of ecosystem services rather than only of benefits to humans.

Coming back to rearticulating relations of care and temporality, I engage below a conception of soil »as living« that can further question its persistent status as serving for input for crop production or other human needs. A more soil-attentive mode of care might also reveal other ways of experiencing time at the heart of productionist relations, while, as Haraway would put it, »staying with the trouble« of humans' relation to soil as an essential resource for survival.

The Living Soil: Becoming in the Foodweb

As part of the ecological turn, soil ecology research has become more important at the heart of the soil sciences, concentrating on relations between biophysical, organic, and animal entities and processes.[25] Moreover, a number of accounts of the discipline's development in the past ten years connect the growing significance of the ecological perspective with the moving of biology to the center of a field traditionally dominated by physics and chemistry. In this context, it is remarkable how a notion of »living soil« – once mostly associated with organic and radical visions of agriculture[26] – is now mainstream. This does not mean that soil science traditionally conceived of soils as inert matter. Even conceptions of soil as reservoirs of crop nutrition focus on lively physicochemical processes and interactions. Also, soil microbiology has been a crucial part of soil science since its early beginnings as well as is important precursor work on soil biology (such as Charles Darwin's work on earthworms). This does not mean either that biology and ecology support environmentalism per se or that other disciplinary orientations in soil science must now be connected to biology. The noticeable changing trend is the increased significance of »biota,« from microbial to invertebrate fauna and, of course, plants, roots, and fungi, in the very definition of soil. That this has not been an obvious move is attested by ecologists who claim for a change in soil's definitions:

> Are living organisms part of soil? We would include the phrase »with its living organisms« in the general definition of soil. Thus, from our viewpoint soil is alive and is composed of living and nonliving components having many interactions. … When we view the soil system as an environment for organisms, we must remember *that the biota have been involved in its creation, as well as adapting to life within it.*[27]

In this conception, soil is not just a habitat or medium for plants and organisms; nor is it just decomposed material, the organic and mineral end product of organism activity. Organisms are soil. A lively soil can only exist with and through a multispecies community of biota that makes it, that contributes to its creation.

One of the most significant aspects of these changes in conceptions of soil is a growing interest in investigating biodiversity as a factor of soil fertility and system stability.[28] This goes beyond biological interest; for instance, the recognition of the importance of large pores in soil structures gives a central place to increased research on soil fauna such as earthworms, which some have named the »soil engineers.«[29] In the words of a soil physicist: »As the appreciation of ecological relationships in soil science developed after the 1970s, studies on the role of soil animals in the decomposition process and in soil fertility have been more common.«[30] More research focuses on the loss of soil biodiversity after alterations[31] and on the ecological significance of soil health for nonsoil species.[32] A number of soil scientists are now engaged in drawing attention to biodiversity in soils as part of educational campaigns and soil fertility projects worldwide.[33] Soils have become a matter of concern and care not just for what they provide for humans but for ensuring the subsistence of soil communities more broadly.

Organisms are soil. A lively soil can only exist with and through a multispecies community of biota that makes it, that contributes to its creation.

These developments are not disconnected from worries about the capacities of soil to continue to provide services (a range of calculations are deployed to value the services of biota) or from a notion that accounts for soil fertility according to its ability to provide yield. Production continues to be a concern as the »loss of organic matter, diminishment or disappearance of groups of the soil biota and the accompanying decline in soil physical and chemical properties« are identified as important causes of »yield declines under long-term cultivation.«[34] However, these approaches bring significant hesitations at the heart of a conception of soils as physicochemical input compounds. Soils as living, for instance, create other questions about effects of human interventions to technologically enhance impoverished soils, however well intentioned. For example, agrochemical inputs can benefit crop yield, but soil communities can face long-term destabilization or

destruction, making soils and growers dependent on fertilizers. Also, the protection of soil structures connects to a generalized reevaluation of tillage in agriculture and other technologies that alter and destroy fragile and complex soil structures.[35] In sum, exploiting soil species for production threatens to destroy the living agents of this very productivity.[36] Once again, reconceptualizations of soil as living emphasize how productionist practices ignore the complex diversity of soil-renewal processes in favor of linear temporalities aimed at speeding up abundant output.

It is the nature of soil itself and ways to care for it that are at stake in these moves. Attention to soils as a living multispecies world involve changes in the ways humans maintain, care, and foster this liveliness.[37] So how does this affect temporal involvements in caring for the soil as a multispecies world? I approach these through the example of the »foodweb,« an ecological model of soil life that, having become popular in alternative growers' movements, thrives at the boundaries of soil science.

Foodweb models are not new, but they became increasingly prominent in soil ecology after the 1990s.[38] Foodweb models are valuable for scientists to describe the incredibly complex interactions between species that allow the circulation of nutrients and energy. They follow predation and eating patterns as well as energy use and processing. Soil foodweb species can include algae, bacteria, fungi, protozoa, nematodes, arthropods, earthworms, larger animals such as rabbits, and, of course, plants. They describe not only how species feed on each other but how one species' waste becomes another one's food.[39] Foodweb conceptions of soil question the use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides, and intensified agricultural models more generally. This is because their weblike, interdependent configuration means that altering or removing any one element can destroy them. Often conceptualized as soil »communities« even as they are based on »trophic« relations – who eats whom – foodweb models emphasize a living world below, teeming with life and yet always fragile. Soil ecology is, of course, not a unified domain and, while rich in holistic models of life cycles, it is also rich in reductionisms. If I am lured by moves that see soil as a multispecies world, it is for how they could affect not only the nature of soil itself but also the ways humans maintain, repair, and foster soil's liveliness – that is, the agencies involved in more than human webs of care.

Interdependent models such as the foodweb disturb the unidirectionality of care conceived within the linear timescapes of productionist time traditionally centered in human-crop care relations. Relational approaches to the cycles of soil life in themselves can be read as disruptions to productionist linear time, simply because ecological relations require taking a diversity of timescales into account.[40] Yet foodweb models also affect relations to soil for how they turn humans into full participant »members« of the soil community rather than merely consumers of its produce or beneficiaries of its services. It is the emphasis on the interdependency of soil communities that is appealing for exploring more than human care as an immanent obligation that passes through doings and agencies involved in the necessary maintaining, continuing, and repairing of flourishing living webs. Remembering discussions in previous chapters around the nonreciprocal qualities of care, we see that while care often is represented as one-to-one practice between »a carer« and »a cared for,« it is rare that a carer gets back the care that she gives from the same person who she cares for. Carers are themselves often cared for by someone else. Reciprocity of care is asymmetric and multilateral, collectively shared. A caring conception of soil emphasizes this embeddedness in relations of interdependency. Caring for soil communities involves making a speculative effort toward the acknowledgment that the (human) carer also depends on soil's capacity to »take care« of a number of processes that are vital to more than her existence. Thinking multispecies models such as foodwebs through care involves looking at the dependency of the (human) carer not so much from soil's produce or »service« but from an inherent relationality. This is emphasized by how the capacities of soil in foodwebs refer to a multilateral relational arrangement in which food, energy, and waste circulate in nonreciprocal exchanges. Foodwebs are therefore a good example to think about the vibrant ethicality in

Soils have become a matter of concern and care not just for what they provide for humans but for ensuring the subsistence of soil communities more broadly.

webs of interdependency, the a-subjective but necessary ethos of care circulating through these agencies that are taking care of one another's needs in more than human relations.

A care approach needs to look not only at how soils and other resources produce output or provide services to humans but also at how humans are specifically obliged, how they are providing. The capacity of exhausted global soils to sustain these webs of relations has become more dependent on the care humans put in them. In resonance with Anthropocenic narratives that acknowledge the impact of situated human actions on the making of earth, what the above conception might require is not only for organisms but also for humans to be included more decisively in the concept of soil. Here, in turn, changing ways in soil care would affect soil ontology. Coming back to the redefinition of soil as living[41], we could include a rephrasing such as: »When we view the soil system as an environment for humans, we must *remember that humans have been involved in its creation, as well as adapting to life within it.*«

Though scientists have long spoken of »soil communities« to refer to the organisms involved in soil's ecology, the idea that humans are part of soil communities is not a prevailing one in the scientific literature. Scientific illustrations of the soil foodweb rarely represent humans as part of this relational web – for example, as producers of »organic waste« and beneficiaries of the output of plants. This could be connected to the traditional role given to the anthropogenic element in soil scientific literature, where it is generally considered as one »element« of soil ecosystems and formation processes that »lies apart« because of the higher impact of its activities in a shorter amount of time than other organisms. The »human« mostly features as an unbalanced irruption in soil's ecological cycles – or a victim in the case of soil pollution – rather than as a »member« of a soil community.[42] Notions of humans as members, or even of humans being soil, thrive outside science, however – including in how scientists speak of soil (and land) beyond their »official« institutional work.[43] It could be argued that alternative affective ecologies with soil become obscured within science. But in the spirit of staging matters of fact, scientific things, as matters of care, it seems to be a more fertile option to attempt an articulation of different horizons of practice and modes of relating to soil through their potential to transform human–soil relations. Connections with »nonscientific« ways of knowing soil, whose relevance is sometimes also mentioned by scientists[44], could become even more important in the light of an argument for a shift in soil models from considering soil as a »natural body« to soil as a »human-natural» body[45] and for the introduction of new approaches such as »anthropedology« that broaden soil science's approach to human–soil relations.[46]

Now, like all Anthropocenic narratives, these ideas would require nuancing which Anthropos is being spoken for, asking questions such as: If the marks on Earth that are to be accounted for are those that dramatically altered the geological makeup of the planet since the industrial age or atomic essays, shouldn't we, as Jason Moore argues, rather declare a Capitalocene? Or, should we, as Chris Cuomo has called for, reject this recentering of the notion of Anthropos altogether for its masking of capitalist and colonial dominations.[47]

Foodweb conceptions of soil question the use of artificial fertilizers, pesticides, and intensified agricultural models more generally. This is because their weblike, interdependent configuration means that altering or removing any one element can destroy them.

Or, couldn't we propose questioning the tendency of Anthropocenic thinking to further evacuate agency from the other than human world and to reinstate Man as the center of creation – populate our speculative imagination with visions of more than human coexistent epochs that amplify the proliferation of symbiotic processes with multifarious nonhuman agencies such as Haraway invites us to do with a *Chthulucene*.[48] All these doubts contribute to complicate the narratives of the agential ethicalities at stake in reinstating humans in the concept of soil. Desituated storylines of Anthropos-centered relations need to be challenged if are we to offer situated humans a place within, rather than above, other earth creatures, in acknowledgment of specific modes of agency: a vital task for

environmental thought and practice, across the social sciences and humanities, but also for exceeding collective imaginations.

The exploration of decentered ethicalites of care via foodweb visions of human–soil relations can be nourished by such collective imaginations to contribute a displacing of human agencies without diluting situated obligations. Eliciting articulations of the sciences with other domains of practices, even subtle, is important here. Obviously, my reading of foodweb models goes beyond its explanatory potential to alter scientific conceptions of soil. Speculative thinking is professedly excluded from scientific concerns maybe even more than political stances. But when understood as part of a naturecultural transformation in human–soil relations of care, the foodweb is not just a scientific model. One could say that successful scientific models owe part of their power to their figurative potential. Beyond science, the foodweb is a charged figuration of soil relations, which I read here as going in the sense of restoring what Thompson calls the »spirit of the soil,« by which he points at an understanding of human activity as part of the life of the earth and »the spirit of raising food and eating it as an act of communion with some larger whole.«[49] The search for glimpses of a transformative ethos in human–soil relations moves us beyond science and its applications to the articulations of alternative affective ecologies and technoscientific imaginaries to which science participates but not necessarily drives. The soil foodweb model is interesting in this regard because it has become, beyond science, a symbol of alternative ecological involvement – particularly in ecological movements where alternative visions of soil practice are being developed, such as agroecology, permaculture, and other radical approaches to agricultural practice. It is in these conceptions that transformative trends in soil relationalities can be read most visibly for how they foster a different relation of care, one susceptible to alter the linear nature of future-oriented technoscientific, productionist extraction in anthropocentric timescapes.

. . .

María Puig de la Bellacasa is associate professor of science, technology, and organization at the University of Leicester School of Management.

Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds by María Puig de la Bellacasa was published by University of Minnesota Press. We would like to thank the author and the editorial team from University of Minnesota Press for the generous permission to republish this text.

1 FAO, »International Years Council Minutes … United Nations: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations,« 2013.

2 D. A Robinson, I. Fraser, and E. J. Dominati et al, »On the Value of Soil Resources in the Context of Natural Capital and Ecosystem Service Delivery,« in: *Soil Science Society of America Journal* 78, no. 3, 2014: p. 685.

3 George Monbiot, »We're Treating Soil Like Dirt. It's a Fatal Mistake, as Our Lives Depend on It,« in: *Guardian*, March 25, 2015.

4 Nafeez Ahmed, »Peak Soil: Industrial Civilisation Is on the Verge of Eating Itself,« in: *Guardian*, June 7, 2013.

5 Stephen Nortcliff in: Hartemink, Alfred E (ed.), *The Future of Soil Science, CIP–Gegevens Koninklijke*, Bibliotheek. Den Haag. Wageningen: IUSS Union of Soil Sciences 2006: p. 106.

6 P. McDonald, »Characteristics of Soil Science Literature,« in; *The Literature of Soil Science*, edited by P. McDonald, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013: pp. 43–72.

7 A saying thought to be inspired by Jonathan's Swift's novel Gulliver's Travels: »Whoever makes two ears of corn, or two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before, deserves better of mankind, and does more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together.« Paul B. Thompson, *The Spirit of the Soil: Agriculture and Environmental Ethics*. New York: Routledge 1995: p. 61.

8 Dimitris Papadopoulos, Niamh Stephenson, and Vassilis Tsianos, *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Pluto Press 2008; and Dimitris Papadopoulos, »Politics of Matter: Justice and Organisation in Technoscience,« in: *Social Epistemology* 28, no. 1, 2014: pp. 70–85.

9 Such trends are visible in the information made available to farmers on the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services on YouTube. For instance, the clip »The Science of Soil Health: Compaction« invites us to »imitate Mother Nature« and limit the use of plowing machinery. See: Benno P. Warkentin, »Trends and Developments in Soil Science,« in: *The Literature of Soil Science*, edited by P. McDonald. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994: p. 9.

10 Daniel Hillel, *Out of the Earth: Civilization and the Life of the Soil*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1992.

11 Idem.

12 Dan H. Yaalon, »Soil Care Attitudes and Strategies of Land Use through Human History,« in. *Sartoniana* 13, 2000: pp. 147–59.

13 J. Bouma and Alfred. E. Hartemink, »Soil Science and Society in the Dutch Context,« in: *Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences* 50, no. 2, 2002: pp. 133–40.

14 Benno P. Warkentin, »Trends and Developments in Soil Science,« in: *The Literature of Soil Science*, edited by P. McDonald. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994: pp. 3–4.

15 Barbara Adam, *Timescapes of Modernity: The Environment and Invisible Hazards*. New York: Routledge 1998: p. 74.

16 Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press 1979; Vandana Shiva, *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in a Time of Climate Crisis*. Cambridge Mass.: South End Press 2008; Daniel Münster, »'Ginger is a gamble': Crop Booms, Rural Uncertainty, and the Neoliberalization of Agriculture in South India,« in: *Focaal* 71, 2015: pp. 100–113.

17 Joanna Latimer, *The Conduct of Care: Understanding Nursing Practice*. London: Blackwell 2000.

18 J. Bouma, »Soils Are Back on the Global Agenda: Now What?,« in: *Geoderma* 150, nos. 1–2, 2009: 224–25.

19 D. A. Robinson, I. Fraser, and E. J. Dominati et al., »On the Value of Soil Resources in the Context of Natural Capital and Ecosystem Service Delivery,« in: *Soil Science Society of America Journal* 78, no. 3, 2014: p. 685.

20 Sue Jackson and Lisa R. Palmer, »Reconceptualizing Ecosystem Services: Possibilities for Cultivating and Valuing the Ethics and Practices of Care,« in: *Progress in Human Geography* 39, no. 2, 2015: pp. 122–45.

21 Susan Leigh Star (ed.), *Ecologies of Knowledge: Work and Politics in Science and Technology*. Albany: State University of New York Press 1995.

22 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press 2005.

23 See e.g. Val Plumwood, »Nature as Agency and the Prospects for a Progressive Naturalism,« in: *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 12, no. 4, 2001: pp. 3–32; Michelle Bastian, »Inventing Nature: Re-writing Time and Agency in a More-Than- Human World,« in: *Australian Humanities Review: Ecological Humanities Corner* 47, November 2009: pp. 99–116.

24 Mary Mellor, *Feminism and Ecology*. Cambridge: Polity Press 1997.

25 Patrick Lavelle, »Ecological Challenges for Soil Science,« in: *Soil Science* 165, no. 1, 2000: pp. 73–86; and Patrick Lavelle and Alister V. Spain, *Soil Ecology*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic 2003.

26 Lady Eve Balfour, *The Living Soil*. London: Faber and Faber 1943.

27 David C. Coleman, D. A. Crossley, and Paul F. Hendrix, *Fundamentals of Soil Ecology*. Amsterdam: Elsevier 2004, emphasis added.

28 David A Wardle, *Communities and Ecosystems: Linking the Aboveground and Belowground Components*, vol. 34. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2002: p. 234 and p. 238.

29 Patrick Lavelle, »Ecological Challenges for Soil Science,« in: *Soil Science* 165, no. 1, 2000: pp. 73–86

30 Warkentin, »Trends and Developments in Soil Science,« 1994: p. 8.

31 Jeroen P. van Leeuwen, Lia Hemerik, Jaap Bloem, and Peter C. de Ruiter, »Food Webs and Ecosystem Services during Soil Transformations,« in: *Applied Geochemistry* 26 (2011): p. 142.

32 Wardle, Communities and Ecosystems: Linking the Aboveground and Belowground Components, 2002..

33 See, for instance, the »Soil Biodiversity Initiative: A Scientific Effort,« http://globalsoilbiodiversity.org.

34 Mike Swift, »Foreword,« in: Soil Ecology, edited by Patrick Lavelle and Alister V. Spain, xix–xx.

New York: Kluwer Academic 2001.

35 Such trends are visible in the information made available to farmers on the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services on YouTube. For instance, the clip "The Science of Soil Health: Compaction" invites us to »imitate Mother Nature« and limit the use of plowing machinery.

36 M. A. Tsiafouli, E. Thebault, and S. P. Sgardelis et al., »Intensive Agriculture Reduces Soil Biodiversity across Europe,« in: *Glob. Chang. Biol.* 21, no. 2, 2014: pp. 973–85.

37 Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, »Encountering Bioinfrastructure: Ecological Struggles and the Sciences of Soil,« in: *Social Epistemology* 28, no. 1, 2014: pp. 26–40.

38 Stuart L Pimm, John H. Lawton, and Joel E. Cohen, »Food Web Patterns and Their Consequences,« in: *Nature* 350 1991: pp. 669–74.

39 David C. Coleman, E. P. Odum, and D. A. Crossley Jr. »Soil Biology, Soil Ecology, and Global Change,« *Biol. Fert. Soils* 14, 1992: pp. 104–11; David A. Wardle, »How Soil Food Webs Make Plants Grow,« in: *Trends Ecol. Evol.* 14 (1999): pp. 418–20; and Elaine Ingham, *The Compost Tea Brewing Manual*, 5th ed. Bentley: Soil Foodweb Institute 2002.

40 Deborah Bird Rose. »Multispecies Knots of Ethical Time,« in: *Environmental Philosophy* 9, no. 1, 2012: pp. 127–40.

41 David C. Coleman, D. A. Crossley, and Paul F. Hendrix, *Fundamentals of Soil Ecology*. Amsterdam: Elsevier 2004.

42 Daniel Hillel (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Soils in the Environment*, vol. 1. Amsterdam: Elsevier/Academic Press 2004.

43 Francis D. Hole, »The Pleasures of Soil Watching,« in: Orion Nature Quarterly (Spring), 1988: pp. 6–11.

44 Thomas P. Tomich, Sonja Brodt, and Howard Ferris et al. 2011, »Agroecology: A Review from a Global-Change Perspective,« in: *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 36, no. 1, 2011: pp. 193–222.

45 Daniel deB Richter and Dan H. Yaalon.»'The Changing Model of Soil' Revisited,« in: *Soil Science Society of America Journal* 76, no. 3 (2012): p. 766.

46 Daniel deB Richter, Allan R. Bacon, and L. Mobley Megan et al, »Human–Soil Relations Are Changing Rapidly: Proposals from SSSA's Cross-Divisional Soil Change Working Group,« in: *Soil Science Society of America Journal* 75, no. 6, 2012: p. 2079.

47 See the online petition »Against the 'official' Anthropocene.«

48 Donna Haraway, »Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene,Chthulucene: Making Kin,« in: *Environmental Humanities* 6, 2015: pp. 159–65.

49 Paul B. Thompson, The Spirit of the Soil: Agriculture and Environmental Ethics. New York: Routledge 1995, p. 18.

Letter to the Villagers Earth Defenders Calling for Earthcare

»Stubbornly, I have started visiting and filming the commune, what is left of it, in search of auguries of a flourishing life.« Sílvia das Fadas returned to Portugal with her 16 mm film camera and a suitcase filled with film rolls, to come closer to the spirit of the legacy of the *Comuna da Luz* – the Commune of Light, near the country's southern coast. Initiated in 1917 by the anarchist António Gonçalves Correia and nurtured by many, the community activism found in the rural world near the Commune was to be revitalized as a collective project to live with and learn the ways of the earth. Das Fadas has written a beautiful piece of advocacy for Earth Care, food sovereignty, and living with eco-feminist principles.

Dear Villagers of Troviscais,
(from the bio-region of São Luís, Odemira, Alentejo),

I am writing this letter from Choupana (»the valley of the shelter«), at the end of the long dirt road, after which I like to imagine that there is only forest. I have been living and returning from many places, mostly cities, but filming has taken me into your company, and I dare to say that our encounter has changed the course of my life.

One hundred years ago an anarchist, bursting with love for the world and the happiness of all beings,1 sent us a call. It was a call for living differently, a call for a communal, autonomous, and anti-authoritarian life. In Vale de Santiago, not far from our village, António Gonçalves Correia initiated a commune and named it Comuna da Luz – the Commune of Light. The social experiment lasted only two years, but its place is still remembered as »the Mount of the Commune.« Lest you may doubt, his call is still reaching us.

Our anarchist was a complex being: a dreamer, an incorrigible idealist, a civil activist, a traveling salesman, a vegetarian known for freeing animals from their cages screaming »Liberty!«; a Tolstoyan naturalist, adept of free love, a radical pedagogue, an earth defender… He founded his own newspaper – *A Questão Social* – and wrote passionately for other newspapers. Often, his texts took the shape of letters addressed to a woman, to an anarchist, to a banker. He used to ride his bicycle throughout the region, and it was clear to everyone that the coming Revolution was his sweetheart.

Several women and children lived in the Commune of Light. There they grew vegetables, shared meals in a communal kitchen, made shoes, and, significantly, they lived not in seclusion but on good terms with the surrounding villagers. One woman is mentioned to have been the soul of the commune: a professor inspired by the pedagogy of

A commune, a community, an uneven communion.

Francisco Ferrer's Modern School.2 I wonder about her thoughts, her political imaginary, her name, but all I am able to find is her care for books. She, as the others, remain historically anonymous. (Which books were you reading, dear unknown woman? What life did you lead after the short-lived commune? How did commoning transformed you and the collectivity?) I can only fabulate.

Stubbornly, I have started visiting and filming the commune, what is left of it, in search of auguries of a flourishing life. Those unfamiliar with its history may only see a tiny fenced private property. But as Mikhail Bakunin in a letter to Élisée Réclus wrote: »nothing in the world is ever lost.« Believe it or not, dear villagers, this was the spark that led me toward you: *The dream of something*. And thinking of them, communards and commoners, while thinking of you/us, entangled as we are in the remaking of the rural, have impelled me to write to you.

The red and black thread of *our anarchist*'s ideals made me stumble upon *Alambique*, a journal issued by a collective that many decades later, in the mining town of Aljustrel, honored his name – Colectivo Gonçalves Correia – and from there to the rousing critical media (of anarchist expression) currently at work within the Portuguese region.3 One article by Sara Moreira for *Jornal Mapa* gathered the diversity of the life sustaining grassroots projects sprouting in the southwest of Alentejo, particularly in the town of São Luís. It was a network of networks called CooperAcção,4 you may remember, a concoction of cooperation and action. That so much synergy and community activism was to be found in the rural world, in the proximity of the Commune of Light, was to be read as an augur.

I came to you with my 16 mm film camera, a suitcase filled with film rolls. First, I fell in love with the Mira river and a rammed earth house, then the light and the red dust, the swallows; *a community of rebels*. Since then, what I have been salvaging in

The Sea, the Sea

your company, in the place of Troviscais, is an insatiable curiosity toward the rural world. After a rural exodus, a failed agrarian reform, and the calculated breakdown of a way of life – (a peasant life or *via campesina*) – something else is germinating that carries the potency of forging relationality anew, in a more-than-just-human world. It may be that everything is tentative, but clearly life-affirming: We do with/ness the building of autonomy, free association, self-governing, and mutual aid at a local and regional scale in this insurgent geography.

The thread that I keep following and weaving – the thread of transmission and re-enchantment – has been guiding me toward you, dear villagers fighting for subsistence, far away from (but nevertheless affected by) Lisbon and Brussels, vassals and lords. It takes me to you too, dear new rurals, trying to shed the capitalist skin by learning the ways of the earth, amidst the numerous communities spread over these mounts and plains. Entangled together, you and you and you, keepers of the landscape, making kin and cooperation in place of competition and extraction.

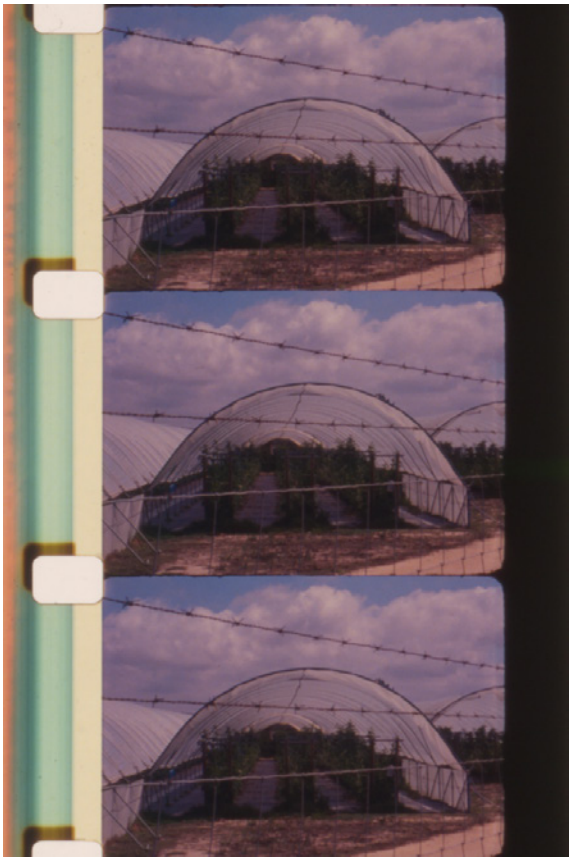
The time of the village is enhanced and elemental. Its call is for care, that »enduring social capacity and practice involving the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of human and non-human life.«5 Informally, so much is coming into being in everyday practices. Some are building co-ops; others call themselves a »healing biotope.« We are starting a collective, mutually thriving. We dream of a solar village. Don't you see? We gather to honor and care for the natural world and its cycles. Do you remember? A year ago, on Saint John's day, groups of people in five neighboring villages walked to honor the water sources, taking care of the springs, sharing stories and singing songs, reviving a tradition that was almost lost. A few months ago we were numerous, gathering in Vale de Santiago, learning from each other and exchanging seeds in conviviality. Now we are working toward a regional seed bank that

Fair of Joy

will preserve our local seeds and biodiversity, our roots and autonomous practices. In the future, it might become a center for rurality.

With you I have learned that food sovereignity6 is at the core of the agrarian question: Food isn't a product but a common good. A group of producers and co-producers agreed to share the risks and benefits of a small-scale organic family farm (Monte Mimo), and, in the spirit of solidarity, have formed the *AMAP Sado e Alvalade*. Other producers have joined in to bring organic bread, cheese, honey, olive oil, natural cosmetics. In recognition, it is with utmost joy that we gather for joyful »ajudadas,« under the shade or the red sun, helping out in the fields when extra hands are needed. Collectively committed to agroecology, we are building a local and circular economy, while nurturing relations of proximity and reciprocity. Sociocracy is our system of governance, and we are organized as part of REGENERAR – Rede Portuguesa de Agroecologia Solidária, which in its turn is connected to the international network called Urgenci.7 In the midst of the pandemic, self-organized food groups have sprouted regionally as the local markets and fairs were forced to close and the farmers couldn't distribute their edibles. Knowing we cannot rely on the global market to feed ourselves, our communities makes us wish this model of Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) would spread like wildfire.

We want abundance for all, not scarcity. We may be flourishing, but we know we are under threat. We witness the intensification of extractive economies led by transnational agribusinesses and the patriarchal complex. Toward the interior of the country, huge farms with superintensive monocultures are increasing, responsible for environmental abuses and the destruction of the ecosystems; toward the sea the industrial greenhouses are spreading, owned by international corporations such as the



Maravilha Farms

Californian Maravilha Farms and Driscoll. Dispossessed migrant workers do the work refused by the locals, with the complicity of corrupt governments, whose red politics is merely outward appearance. This is not a new El Dorado.

It is not enough to feel indignant, to boycott, or to document the ecocide. What if we were to propose sabotage and direct action as a formalization of care? What sabotage theorist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn called »the fine thread of deviation,« the hidden script sustained by women, workers, peasants, and indigenous movements, and carried by the deep ecology movement with its practice of monkeywrenching.8 Sabotage as Earthcare: Which shapes may a radical practice of caring for the world take?

The eco-feminist principle of searching for connections has led me to an encounter with GAIA Alentejo, a group of eco-activists taking responsibility for strengthening the rural life and fighting the ecological crisis, by way of reforesting, political agroecology, and education. We have the project of regenerating an invasive eucalyptus plantation into an agroforest, fostering reciprocity with the natural ecosystems. We are taking care of a communal tree nursery; we are studying and doing the work of anticipation.

For the call is still reaching us, dear commoners, *the dream of something*, and it is a call for collective self-sufficiency, degrowth, a nurturing and unhierarchical interspecies conviviality. In a nutshell: »The Happiness of All Beings in the Society of the Future,« as our beloved anarchist taught us. Care is at the heart of the re-enchantment, our politics of mutual support.

Filmmaking as a situated and relational practice is my action of care for this place and its beings. Here, in the place of Troviscais, all my sense organs are fully awakened: my eyes see further, my ears listen deeper, the local flora charms me with its fragrance, taking me by surprise, making me turn around, stop and smell, touch and

Fig Leaf

caress, while the taste of the fruits and the vegetables we are growing is incomparable. The sun burns, we are covered in red dust, the rain comes and the common roads get flooded, we practice the wild and embrace its encounters. To choose to be here is to be in a fragile copresence, engaged in earthcare.

The meaning of my name is forest and I am returning to the forest of my name.

Now I walk and ride my bicycle throughout the bio-region.
And now I am not only filming but living amidst you.
Breathing, flourishing.

»Film is the work of living beings,« Tsushimoto Noriaki says.

Can a letter, or a film-as-letter, be an act of care? Are our villages, our towns, our region, places of care and conviviality? As a cinema practitioner I am filming to conjure the auspices of the rural, our varied and mutable ways of living, the radical co-dependency that weave us together.

With soaring gratitude,

Sílvia das Fadas
Troviscais, in the month of May 2020

All images Sílvia das Fadas, film stills from *Light, Blaze, Fulgor – Auguries for a Non-hierarchical Framing and Flourishing, 16 mm film, 2019 – ongoing*, courtesy the artist.

Sílvia das Fadas (born as Sílvia Salgueiro) is a filmmaker, a researcher, a teacher, a wanderer. She studied cinema and aesthetics, committing herself to the material learning of film at The Portuguese Moving Image Archive (ANIM) and the Portuguese Cinematheque in Lisbon. Driven by a militant nostalgia, she moved to Los Angeles where she continued to craft her personal films in 16 mm at the California Institute of the Arts. Her 16 mm films have been shown at numerous festivals, cinematheques, and minor cinemas. She is interested in the politics intrinsic to cinematic practices and in cinema as a way of being together in restlessness and brokenness. Das Fadas was a cooperation fellow at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in 2019.

1 »A Felicidade de Todos os Seres na Sociedade do Futuro« (»The Happiness of All Beings in the Society of the Future«) was a speech written by António Gonçalves Correia, and delivered at the Congress of Rural Workers, in Évora, December 16, 1922. Self-published in 1923 in an edition of 3,000.

2 Francisco Ferrer y Guardia was an anarchist pedagogue, the founder of the Barcelona Modern School.

3 Some of their titles are *A Ideia*, *Jornal Mapa*, *Flauta de Luz*, *Erva Rebelde*, *Guilhotina*, and the century-old newspaper *A Batalha*.

4 See https://www.jornalmapa.pt/2018/09/25/cooperaccao-ao-sul-de-portugal/.

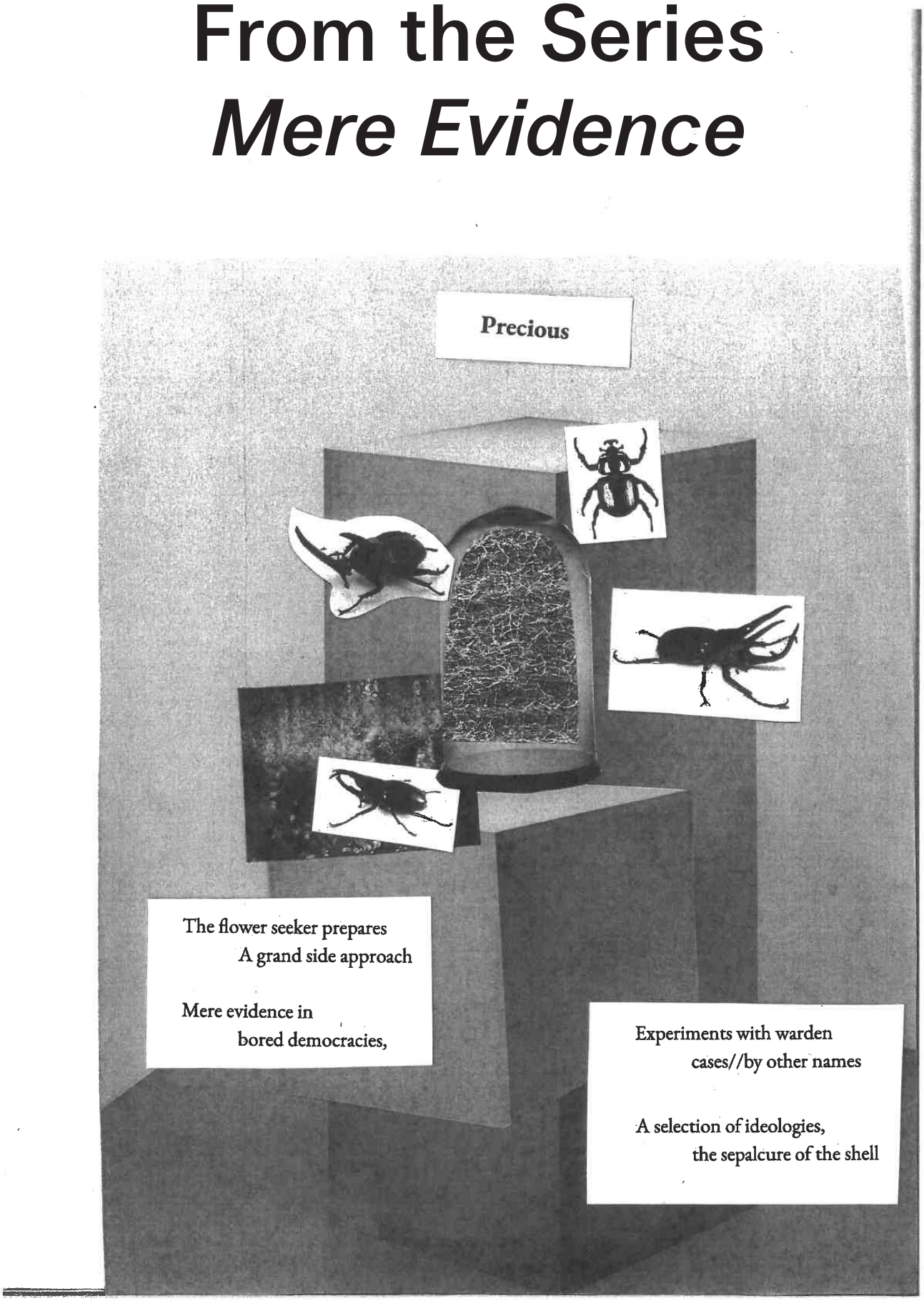
5 See The CARE COLLECTIVE: C*are Manifesto: The Politics of Compassion*. London/New York 2020. https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4617-covid-19-pandemic-a-crisis-of-care [accessed May 31, 2020].

6 »Food Sovereignty is the peoples' right to determine their food and agricultural systems and the right to produce and consume healthy and culturally appropriate food.« See https://viacampesina.org/en/ and http://www.navdanya.org/site/.

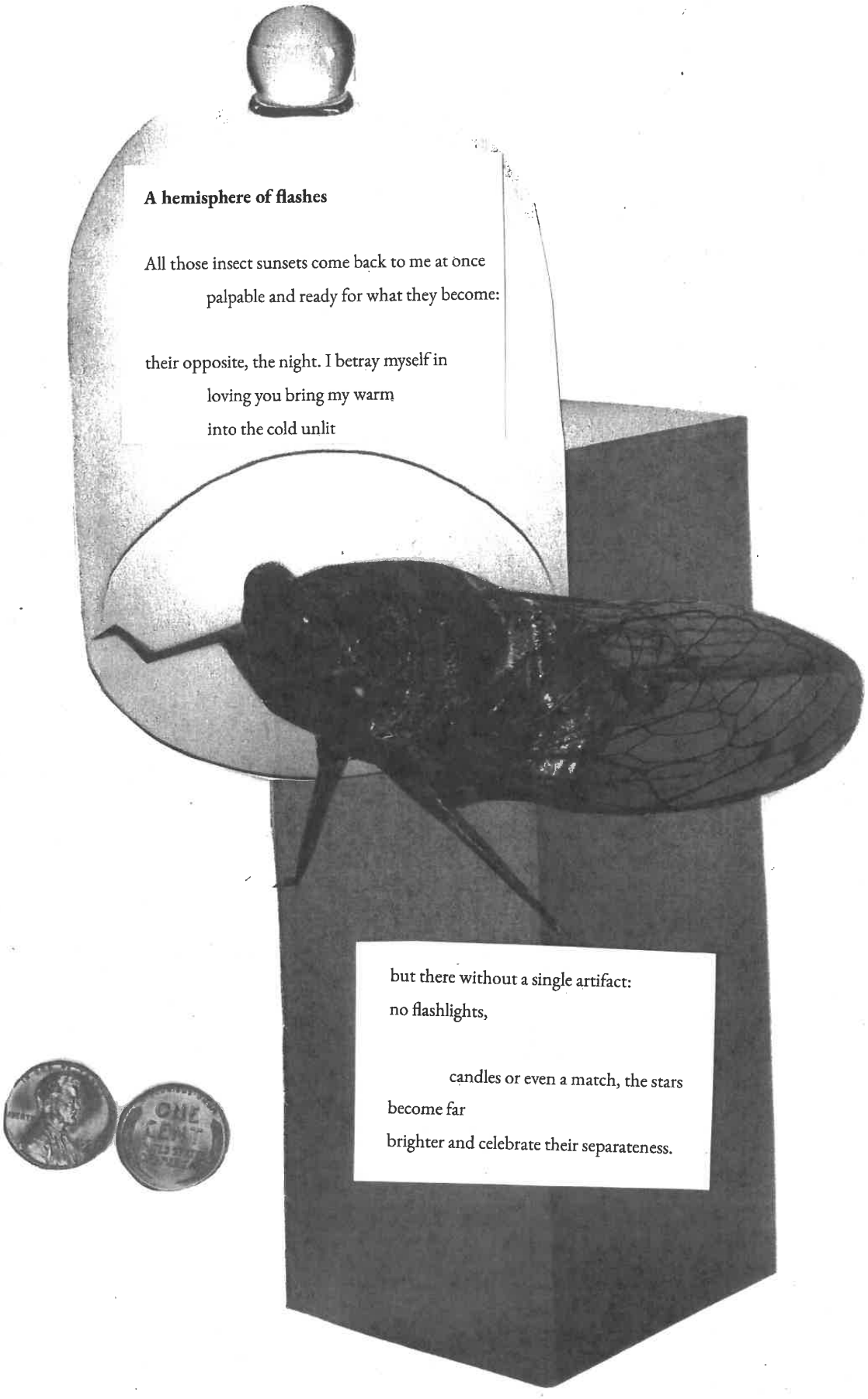
7 See for AMAP: https://amap.movingcause.org/, and for Urgenci: https://urgenci.net/.

8 See D. Foreman and B. Haywood, E*codefense: A field guide to monkeywrenching*, Chico 2002. https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/various-authors-ecodefense-a-field-guide-to-monkeywrenching [accessed May 31, 2020].

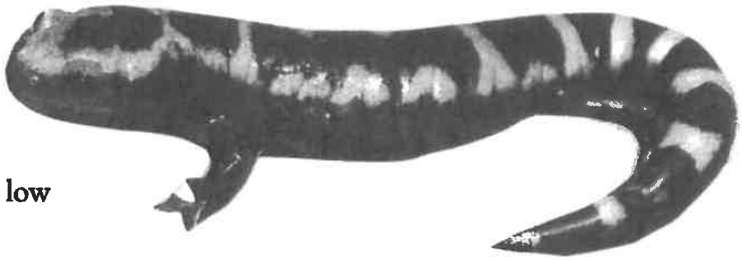
From the Series *Mere Evidence*



Hannah Star Rogers


A hemisphere of flashes
All those insect sunsets come back to me at once
palpable and ready for what they become:
their opposite, the night. I betray myself in
loving you bring my warm
into the cold unlit
but there without a single artifact:
no flashlights,
candles or even a match, the stars
become far
brighter and celebrate their separateness.
ONE CENT

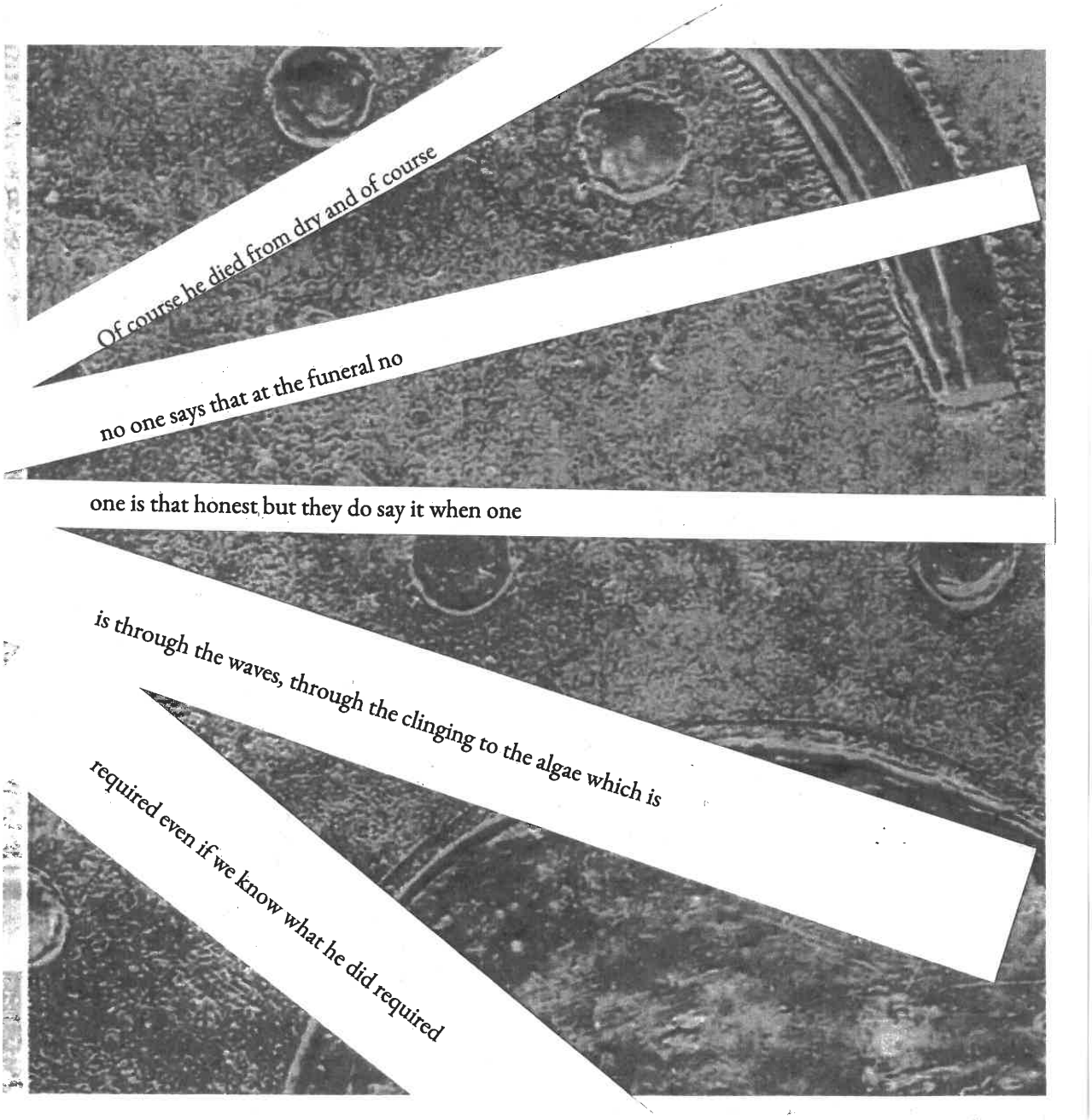
Salamander



body temperature so low

beneath our understanding

Hannah Star Rogers is a poet, curator and art-science scholar. She holds a MFA from Columbia University, a PhD from Cornell University, and is currently a Visiting Scholar at the University of Edinburgh. Her poems and reviews have appeared in The Kenyon Review, The Los Angeles Review of Books, Tupelo Quarterly, The Carolina Quarterly, and The Southern Women's Review. She is currently a Akademie Schloss Solitude fellow in the field of Humanities.



The Non-Human Touch What Values Can Emerge from Ruined Landscape?

Cramond Island and Cramond causeway at low tide, Firth of Forth, Scotland.

Sonia Mehra Chawla

»In the Anthropocene, observing microbial worlds is more essential than ever. Human bodies can no longer be seen as fortresses to defend against microbial assault.« In this essay, Sonia Mehra Chawla advocates for livable collaborations and rethinking bacteria as partners in health and survival of all living species. The starting point is her visit to the ruins of Cramond Island, a Scottish defense site from World War II, where she explored the manifold life forms that inhabit tidal zones. The essay further investigates the potential of cohabitation and contamination for sustaining all life on Earth in an era in which we encounter many urgencies with accelerating rates of species extinctions – whereby here a sad parallel can be drawn to the violent history of the wartime site and the ongoing anthropogenic activities within the site, that slowly becomes invaded by bacteria that take back its space.

The Liminal Tide
Responding to Cramond

Cramond Island
Firth of Forth, Scotland
Field visit and exploration, April 24, 2019

Across a causeway, in the middle of the Firth of Forth,[1] lies the ghost island of Cramond. Cramond Island is a desolate tidal island about one mile out to sea, which is connected to the mainland at low tide across the Drum Sands. The island is made of microgabbro, formerly known as dolerite, a subvolcanic intrusive igneous rock. A paved path, exposed at low water, allows access.

This causeway runs at the foot of a row of concrete pylons on one side of the causeway, which were constructed as an anti-boat boom during World War II. At high tide the path is immersed by several feet of seawater which cuts the island off from the mainland.

The mile-long causeway itself is a spectacle. It is lined with colossal concrete teeth designed to stop boats sliding through at high tide. The row of identical concrete pylons evokes an imposing and arresting, (if accidental) piece of Brutalist architecture, characterized by their massive, monolithic and »blocky« appearance with a rigid geometric style and large-scale use of poured concrete. The pylons are fissured, wrecked, dismembered, and fragmented here and there where a pylon has collapsed, succumbed, and yielded to the waves. At high tide the concrete pillars are nearly submerged. The landscape is at once wild, dynamic, and vulnerable.

Scotland suffered more than 500 German air raids during the course of World War II. The country was a strategic interest point for Hitler due to its coast and many naval sites, one of these being Scapa Flow in Orkney, which was the main British naval base during World War II.[2] At the outbreak of World War II, Cramond Island, along with other islands in the Forth, was refortified and armed, designed specifically to tackle fast-moving torpedo boats.

An anti-submarine net and anti-boat boom was laid across the estuary from Cramond Island directly to Inchcolm, and then to the Charles Hill battery on the Fife coast. The barrier was to protect ships in the anchorage from attacks by torpedo boats, and stop submarines entering the anchorage to attack shipping or to damage the dock gate of Rosyth Dockyard. The line of concrete pylons was built from Cramond Island to the shore to complete the anti-boat barrier. The Island itself was used as part of the River Forth secondary defense line. The deserted island is dotted with wartime ruins.

Views of the anti-ship ping shipping barrier running from Cramond to Cramond Island, showing construction work in various phases, 1940. Copyright Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland/Crown Copyright, OER

World War II-era fortifications on Cramond Island.
Copyright Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA

Cramond Causeway: A view of the causeway from the desolate tidal island

Rising into Ruin

The causeway is slick with seawater and the green of slippery, slimy, glossy, and gleaming algae, the tide recently having receded to a secure remoteness. The pylons place us under surveillance as we cross the causeway: are they sentinels on shore, custodians, or decomposing teeth of the sea? The crumbling, corroding, putrefying power of nature slowly creates entirely new, meaningful forms. Nature has now made it her own. The concrete ruin is consumed and engulfed; appropriate creatures revel.

The ruin is a constellation of meanings that moves between past, present, and future; the ruin is »a reminder of the universal reality of collapse and rot; a warning from the past about the destiny of our own or other civilizations; the symbol of a certain melancholic or maundering state of mind; an image of equilibrium between nature and culture; the very picture of economic hubris or industrial decline; a desolate playground in whose cracked and weed infested precincts we have space to imagine a future,«[3] a fetish or object of desire; a topography of insatiable greed and profit; easily forgotten in the midst of history's terrible repetitions; a monotonous inventory of »parts« that are crumbling; a silent witness; and most unsettlingly perhaps, the ruin conjures a future past, the memory of what might have been.

We ask a great deal of ruins, and divine a lot of sense and wisdom from their haunting silence. Everything comes to nothing, everything perishes, only time endures, no matter how fractured or dissolved at its edges. On Cramond Island, in the middle of the Firth of Forth, nature and culture, landscape and ruin, begin to bleed into one another. We can no longer precisely tell what is ruin and what its circumstances, what is memorial and what the dead thing it recalls.

The Zone

A region, area, stretch of land, or section characterized by some distinctive feature, purpose, or quality. An area subject to a particular political, military, or government function, use, or jurisdiction. A demilitarized zone. An area subject to particular restrictions. One of the divisions of the earth's surface. A distinctive layer or region of rock, characterized by particular fossils. An area, especially a belt of land, having a particular flora and fauna determined by the prevailing environmental conditions. A portion of a sphere between two

The concrete pylons on Cramond causeway are consumed by nature, and appropriate creatures revel.

parallel planes intersecting the sphere. A time zone. A girdle or belt. A sphere of thought, disagreement, argument.

Reactive Grounds
Shores of the Anthropocene

Living material is collected from various environments of »The Zone« including soil, water, air, and biofilms. With time against us, we decided to retrace our steps and head back to the mainland. The tide was approaching swiftly, the waters of the Firth of Forth rising steadily. I felt that the decrepit state of things precisely reflected my own state of mind. It was cold out on the causeway, with intermittent rain showers and a blustery wind. I remained there for a while, incapable of leaving, constricted like the water as it enters the drift of reeds, unhurriedly, thickening, transformed. I looked back at the mainland from the island. The edge of the sea is an enigmatic and extraordinary place. For no two consecutive days is the shoreline precisely the same. The tides progress and retreat in their timeless rhythms, the sea is not ever at rest, never at ease.

I think about the life forms that inhabit tidal zones, far beyond just the human ones. I start to wonder: What does cohabitation mean in an era of many urgencies with accelerating rates of species extinctions? What is the association between capitalist devastation and annihilation, and collaborative survival within multispecies landscape? What is the prerequisite for sustaining all life on Earth? What lies beneath the surface and the soil?

What enigmas and nightmares lie beneath the palpable?

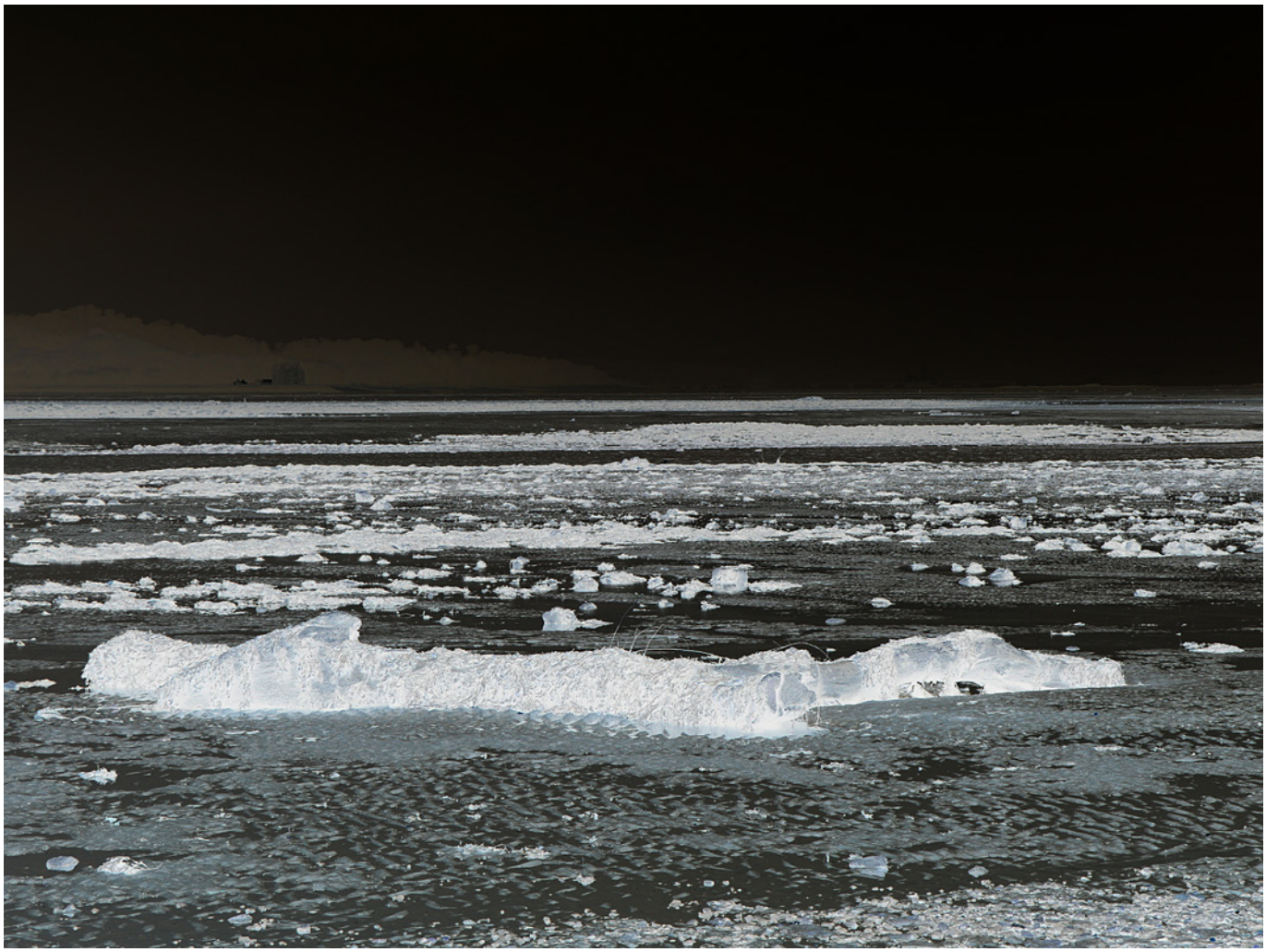
Laboratory Life
Constructing Microcosms, Microbial Gardens

ASCUS Laboratory
Summerhall, Edinburgh
April 25, 2019

Back in the laboratory, we decided to construct devices for culturing a large diversity of microorganisms, unique miniature microbial ecosystems or microbial gardens, reusing the collected habitat.

In the 1880s, Russian microbiologist Sergei Winogradsky studied the complex interactions between environmental conditions and microbial activities using soil enrichment to isolate pure bacterial

What enigmas and nightmares lie beneath the palpable?



Shores of the Anthropocene.

cultures within laboratory glass column to gain an understanding of how microorganisms occur in nature. The structure of a microbial community is the result of environmental factors, evolutionary processes, and neutral or stochastic processes. Once prepared, the column is a self-sustaining, enclosed ecosystem dependent only on input of light as an exogenous energy source. Much like a gardener tending to his plants, providing the finest conditions for a plant species to grow, a column provides a rich environment for microbes to grow, or bloom, as a thriving population. One column provides a whole range of environments in one small setting, a microcosm enabling many types of organisms with different requirements to grow in different sections of the column. The prepared columns were observed over several months for development of layers, smell, colors, and zones.

Observation after five months…

ASCUS Laboratory
Summerhall, Edinburgh
September 29, 2019

As the microbes in the soil photosynthesize pigments, we are exposed to the processes of growth and decomposition of various species of bacteria within this ecosystem, with variations in populations observed through waves of color. Incubating the column in available light for several months results in an aerobic/anaerobic[4] gradient as well as a sulfide gradient.

The aerobic as well as the anaerobic gradients along with the additive nutrients allow for the growth and flourishing of various microorganisms such as Chlorobium, Chromatium, Beggiatoa, Desulfovibrio as well as Rhodomicrobium. In addition to the aforementioned organisms, we can also see the growth of several more species of bacteria, along with algae and cyanobacteria. The water rapidly becomes anoxic towards the interface of the mud and water. We can still find anaerobic phototrophs in the mud phase, and there is a capacity for the creation of biofilms as well as colony expansion. We see a prominent green growth in the upper sections of some of the columns, and this denotes the presence of algae and other types of aerobic phototrophs.

Laboratory Life
Culturing Microbes

ASCUS Laboratory
Summerhall, Edinburgh
April 27, 2019

Bacteria are a type of biological cell. They constitute a large domain of prokaryotic[5] microorganisms. Bacteria were among the first life forms to appear on Earth, and are present in most of its habitats. Bacteria also live in symbiotic and parasitic relationships with plants and animals. Most bacteria have not been characterized, and only about twenty-seven percent of the bacterial phyla have species that can be grown in the laboratory. Bacteria were first observed by Anton van Leeuwenhoek in the late seventeenth century, but didn't become the objects of significant scientific study until the nineteenth century, when it became apparent that some species caused human diseases. The methodologies devised by Robert Koch, Louis Pasteur, and their associates during the »Golden Age of Microbiology,« which spanned from 1850 to the early 1900s, are still extensively used today.

During the middle of the twentieth century, bacteria became widely accepted subjects of empirical study in fields such as genetics, genetic engineering, and biochemistry. With the evolution of antibiotic-resistant strains and our augmented understanding of bacterial stealth attack strategies such as biofilms and intracellular growth, medical scholars have focused more sharply on disease-causing bacteria.

Bacteria grow on solid media as colonies. A colony is defined as a visible mass of microorganisms all originating from a single mother cell, therefore a colony constitutes a clone of bacteria all genetically alike.[6] As the bacteria consume the nutrients, they begin to grow and multiply. This generates thousands to millions to billions of cells that begin to pile up, becoming visible to the naked eye. This pile of cells originates from one cell and is called a bacterial colony.

Although some environmental microbiologists pointed out the constructive role of bacteria in ecological processes, their insights and perceptions did not influence other branches and applications of microbiology where bacteria continued to be classified predominantly as a threat. Today, biologists face the conceptual challenge of rethinking bacteria as partners in health.

In the Anthropocene, observing and perceiving

»When does contamination become collaboration?« Details from Speculative Harbouring: Living Landscapes by Sonia Mehra Chawla. Living systems; air, soil (sand/mud), seawater, biofilms, glass, additive nutrients and supplementation including carbon and sulfur sources, various microbes in phases of growth and decay (including cyanobacteria and algae), sugars and oxygen. In collaboration with ASCUS Art & Science, Edinburgh. The ‚living objects' will be presented as part of Edinburgh International Science Festival 2021.

microbial worlds is more essential than ever. Sustaining all life necessitates sustaining symbiosis and perceiving those symbioses is a crucial way forward. According to animal physiologist and biochemist Prof. Margaret McFall Ngai, human bodies can no longer be seen as fortresses to defend against microbial assault, but must be re-envisioned as »nested ecosystems.« While elaborating on recent advances in evolutionary and developmental biology, she says, »The field of biology has reached an inflection point, enabled by advances in nucleic-acid sequencing technology. New knowledge of the diversity and centrality of the microbial world promises to change the face of this discipline, shaking its very foundations. As a result of these advances, one area of intense and growing interest in recent years has been the association of microbes with animals, particularly humans. Our continuing goal is to define conserved processes governing symbiotic associations, with the hope that we will provide fruitful directions for the study of more complex systems.«[7]

Living Materials and Life Processes as »Medium«

Working with biological processes and structures can be both challenging and provocative; scientists and artists often collaborate in what become teeming innovative spaces of co-creation. However, creating and working with lively material in the laboratory brings with it a range of ethical, social, cultural, technical, and aesthetic inquiries.

What constitutes life? Who gets to determine what lives are created and grown, which are saved, exploited, or destroyed? What do we think about using Living material such as live tissues, bacteria, living organisms, and life processes as a »Medium«? What does it mean to have agency and ownership over another's life? Do we think of this lively material as a carrier, holder, vessel, receptacle, or repository that is populated by our own thoughts and ideas? What is the role of human beings as »makers«? What do we think about the disposal of these lively objects that soon become infectious laboratory waste? What does it mean to be at risk with each other? What are the possibilities and limitations of working with other-than-human lives? What do we think of contamination?

A Symbiotic View of Life

Contamination is the action or state of making or being made impure by polluting or poisoning. Contamination is the presence of a constituent, impurity, or some other undesirable element that soils, corrupts, infects, makes unfit, or makes inferior a material, physical body, or natural environment. Contamination is the fear of being endangered or changed by direct or indirect contact with certain types of people, ideas, or situations.

»The Contaminant« is a substance that makes something less pure or makes it poisonous. A contaminant may even be more abstract as in the case of an unwanted energy source that interferes with a process.

When does contamination become collaboration? The Anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing says,

In the Anthropocene, observing and perceiving microbial worlds is more essential than ever. Sustaining all life necessitates sustaining symbiosis and perceiving those symbioses is a crucial way forward.

»The evolution of our ›selves‹ is already polluted by histories of encounter; they change who we are and make way for others. As contamination changes world-making projects, mutual worlds, and new directions may emerge. We all carry a history of contamination; purity is not an option. Staying alive for every species requires liveable collaborations. Collaboration means working across difference, which leads to contamination.«[8]

Entanglement is a fundamental aspect of all life. Yet we have more often than not been in common denial of these critical interrelations. It is imperative to ask who »We« are, and what is »Ours«? The »I« within us contains Multitudes. The human microbiota is the aggregate of microorganisms that resides on or within any of a number of human tissues and biofluids. Our gut microbiota contains tens of trillions of microorganisms,

»Contaminated diversity is complicated, unpleasant and humbling.« Details from Speculative Harbouring: Living Landscapes by Sonia Mehra Chawla. Living systems; air, soil (sand/mud), sea-water, biofilms, additive nutrients and supplementation including carbon and sulfur sources, various microbes in phases of growth and decay (including cyanobacteria and algae), sugars and oxygen. In collaboration with ASCUS Art & Science, Edinburgh. The ‚living objects' will be presented as part of Edinburgh International Science Festival 2021.

including at least a thousand different species of known bacteria with more than three million genes. Humans are colonized by many microorganisms. Our immune systems do not develop accurately without bacteria. Even reproduction appears to be bacteria enabled. Those that live within us, the microbiome, are invaluable and irreplaceable parts of our lives.

We are more Microbial than Human! »We« are less »individual« and more interconnected, interdependent multitudes. But do we acknowledge the significance of these symbiotic makings? Contamination makes multiplicity and diversity. Contaminated diversity is convoluted, often abysmal, and humbling. All entanglements and all symbioses are vulnerable, and relations with others must be continually re-energized and negotiated within life's frameworks. When environs, times, and circumstances change, these very life-sustaining equations and balances become increasingly convoluted. There is a frightening collision, then, between the potentials and confines of human and nonhuman life, caught between webs of nightmares and dreams.

Tsing continues, »If a rush of troubled stories is the best way to tell about contaminated diversity, then it is time to make that rush part of our knowledge practices.«

What values can emerge from ruined landscape? We are at risk with each other. Our »Becoming« is a porous endeavour, an entangled world of (un)foreseen flows. It is in the wisdom of caring, in acts of mindfulness, and in careful consideration of the discordance of disturbed stories, that we may encounter our best optimisms for precarious and perilous survival.

The Non-Human Touch has been realized in the framework of »Entanglements of Time & Tide,« an ongoing research based art-science engagement project by Sonia Mehra Chawla that explores the North Sea and its tidal zones in their ecological, cultural, political, economic, and poetic capacity. The artist's related ongoing project in the UK, *Entanglements of Time & Tide*, is supported by Edinburgh printmakers, Creative Scotland, Marine Scotland, Marine Laboratory of the Scottish Government in Aberdeen & ASCUS Art & Science, Edinburgh.

Sonia Mehra Chawla is an artist based in New Delhi, India. Chawla has an interdisciplinary practice as an artist, photographer, and researcher. Her artistic practice explores notions of selfhood, nature, ecology, sustainability, and conservation, with a focus on specific locations and microhistories. Through her projects, Mehra Chawla dissects, re-examines and re-envisions spaces that exist at the intersections of art and science, nature and society, self and the other, focusing on the critical dimensions of human engagement with and within nature, ranging from the built-environment to the »wilderness,« and human and non-human narratives and entanglements in the Anthropocene. Sonia Mehra Chawla was an Akademie Schloss Solitude fellow, in the field of Social Sciences.

If not stated otherwise, all images courtesy of Sonia Mehra Chawla.

1 The Firth of Forth is the estuary or firth of Scotland's River Forth, where it flows into the North Sea.

2 See https://www.warhistoryonline.com/world-war-ii/forgotten-blitz-scotland-left-thousands-dead-x.html.

3 Brian Dillon, *Ruin Lust*. London 2014.

4 An aerobic organism or aerobe is an organism that can survive and grow in an oxygenated environment. In contrast, an anaerobic organism or anaerobe is any organism that does not require oxygen for growth. Some anaerobes react negatively or even die if oxygen is present. (en.wikipedia.org)

5 Definition of prokaryotic: of, relating to, or being a typically unicellular organism (as of the domains Bacteria and Archaea) lacking a distinct nucleus and membrane-bound organelles: being or characteristic of a prokaryote. (www.merriam-webster.com)

6 See https://bio.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Ancillary_Materials/Laboratory_Experiments/Microbiology_Labs/Microbiology_Labs_I/08%3A_Bacterial_Colony_Morphology.

7 Margaret McFall-Ngai, *Divining the Essence of Symbiosis: Insights from the Squid-Vibrio Model*. PLoS Biol 12(2): e1001783, 2014.

8 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World. On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton 2017.

Imprint

Solitude Journal Issue 1
Collective Care & Response-ability
September 2020

Published by Akademie Schloss Solitude,
Elke aus dem Moore

Contributors: Céline Baumann, Sonia Mehra Chawla, Genevieve Costello, Sílvia das Fadas, forty-five degrees (Alkistis Thomidou and Gianmaria Socci), Polly Gannon, Rose-Anne Gush, Jaime Hyatt, Elke Krasny, Manuel Mathieu, Ethel Baraona Pohl, María Puig de la Bellacasa, Padraig Robinson, Hannah Star Rogers, Víctor Muñoz Sanz, Manuel Schwab, Christoph Szalay

Editor-in-Chief: Denise Helene Sumi
Associate Editor: Sarie Nijboer
Proofreading: Kimberly Bradley
Translation Introduction: Harriet Rössger
Graphic Design: Beton, Vienna
Printing: Druckerei Pöge, Leipzig

Special thanks to Angela Butterstein, Maria Shéhérazade Giudici, Krzysztof Gutfranski, Jeff Moen, and Inga Seidler

ISSN 2701-2727 (Print)
ISSN 2701-2735 (Online)

Akademie Schloss Solitude
Solitude 3
70197 Stuttgart
Germany

Email: mail@akademie-solitude.de
Internet: www.akademie-solitude.de

The Solitude Journal is part of the *Digital Solitude* program that is supported by Baden-Württemberg's Ministry of Science, Research and Arts.

The print version of the Solitude Journal 1 *Collective Care & Response-ability* is published in the course of the 30th anniversary of Akademie Schloss Solitude. The anniversary activities of Akademie Schloss Solitude are supported by Baden-Württemberg Stiftung.

Contributors: Céline Baumann, Sonia Mehra Chawla, Genevieve Costello, Sílvia das Fadas, forty-five degrees (Alkistis Thomidou and Gianmaria Socci), Polly Gannon, Rose-Anne Gush, Jaime Hyatt, Elke Krasny, Manuel Mathieu, Ethel Baraona Pohl, María Puig de la Bellacasa, Padraig Robinson, Hannah Star Rogers, Víctor Muñoz Sanz, Manuel Schwab, Christoph Szalay

AKADEMIE
SCHLOSS
SOLITUDE