

WOR(ꞵ)DS FOR THE FUTURE

Republishing Tool Kit for an Imaginary Atlas

Words have the power to shape reality. Wor(l)ds for the Future is a set of map making tools to re-imagine and collect wor(l)ds, and to re-publish an ever-changing atlas. We invite you to delve into the materials and traverse the texts in any way you desire: by cutting and pasting the printed matter, or by unravelling the texts online. The choice is yours. You can reconstruct images and reinterpret words to create Wor(l)ds for the Future.

This project is a republication of *Words for the Future* (2018), a multivoiced series of ten booklets. In the 2020 version, XPUB (Experimental Publishing) students from the Piet Zwart institute reinterpret the original material through methods such as annotating and prototyping in Python (a coding language we used to analyse text as texture). The ten booklets were cross-examined and mapped in order to find interconnections and links.

We approached this project through the perspective of cartography. Alfred Korzybski wrote: "The map is not the territory". In other words, the description of the thing is not the thing itself. The model is not reality. Cartography always entails a selection and transformation of properties of a complex reality that affect the way maps – partial views of reality – are deciphered and received. With this notion in mind, we created a mapping to highlight our individual explorations and interpretations using a language of symbols created to represent our understanding of the original material of Words for the Future.

A map could relate to something that no longer exists. It could also relate to something that does not yet exist. Maps could be seen as fictions therefore, as spaces for the imaginary.

Join us to un-map and re-map an infinite amount of potential constellations of tomorrow, and to navigate speculative wor(l)ds which holds the capacity to bleed into the very fabric of our shared grounds.

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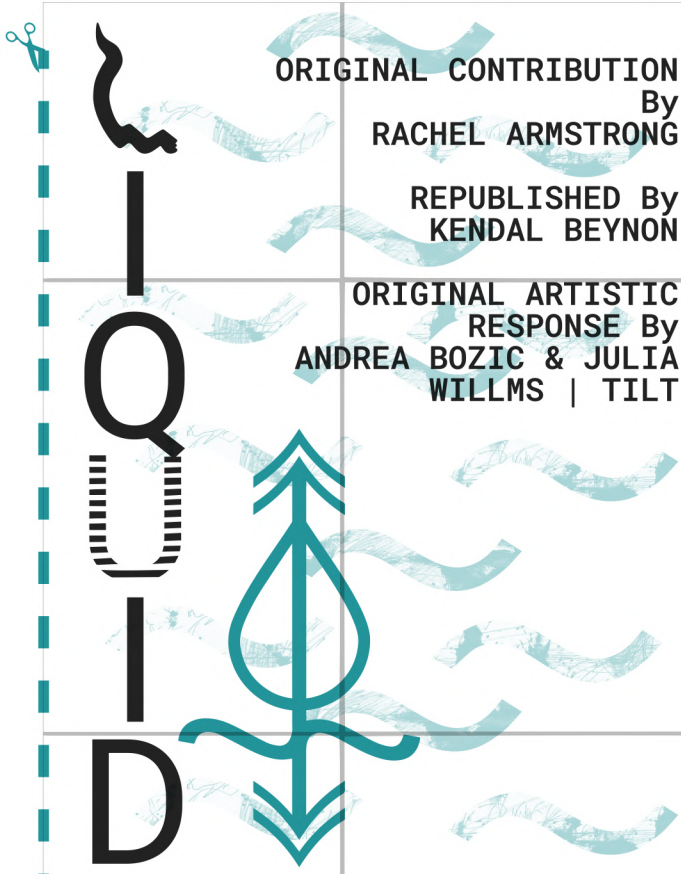
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MY RECLAIMED WORD FOR THE 21ST CENTURY IS LIQUID – SPECIFICALLY IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHARACTER OF LIFE – AND AS A COUNTERPOINT TO THE MACHINE METAPHOR: THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND SCIENTIFIC IDEA THAT THE WHOLE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING IN IT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AS MECHANISMS, COMPOSED OF THE SUM OF FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS, WHICH ARE HIERARCHICALLY ORGANISED TO PERFORM WORK IN A LOGICAL AND PREDICTABLE WAY.

Dualism
Rene Descartes' Treatise of Man, described conceptual models of humans that were made up of fundamental elements – a non-thinking body and a thinking soul – which could exist independently from one another. He extracted the rational soul from the body in order to remove any element of mentality. In this way, the geometrical nature of bodies could be more exactly described by a new physics that reduced all natural change to the local motion of material particles. The body, denuded of the soul and mind, became known as the Animal Machine (or Bête Machine). Yet Descartes neglected to characterise the nature of the soul in more than its barest details. He considered it a mysterious substance where 'the animal spirits' R flowed from the pineal gland (the principle seat of the soul) through a network of vessels (neurons) like air. However, Descartes never developed a final theory about the relationship between the body and the soul. This brilliantly simple act of dualism created the foundations of modernity, providing the framework for scientific developments and technological advancements during the Enlightenment. The 'beauty' of a machine is that it represents a framework for thinking and simultaneously embodies a technical system. It therefore shaped a worldview that considered matter as inert – without innate energy – and required animation through external agencies if it was to act. So, to animate a machine, energy, process, or spirit, is needed. Objects must reconnect with flow if they are to be lively – they need a relationship with liquids – and we have denied them the full range of these abilities.

Flux
The pre-Socrates philosopher Heraclitus first expressed the idea of reality being in constant movement in his adage Panta Rhei: "everything flows, nothing stays." Finally, over the course of the 20th century it was increasingly understood again that the world is situated within a condition of flux. Thinkers and innovators have responded to the liquid qualities of the world through significant shifts in our ways of thinking. For example, Ludwig von Bertalanffy's notion of general systems theory informed the field of cybernetics – the scientific study of control and communication in the animal and the

machine. Alfred North Whitehead's focus on process placed dynamic events at the core of living phenomena, and Timothy Morton's search for designing with metabolism – to generate 'straightforward' environmental images 1 – aims to bypass translation P of processual events through modes of representation. In this realm of constant change, the machine metaphor describes reality incompletely. As much as liquids have been conjured into our language in an attempt to find a better metaphorical framework to characterise 'life', progress has been rhetorical, as liquids themselves are not imagined or readily applied as technologies. Fluids may power machines, lubricate them, or be consumed by them. However, the behaviour of liquids is so rich and complex, that the toolsets we possess to manipulate them do not offer sufficient precision to rival mechanical potency. How can we think through liquids in ways that not only describe our present reality, but also conjure into existence an occult performativity of the material realm that acts upon the present as well as helps to imagine and shape the future?

Ever-changing
Conventionally, the extraordinary properties of liquids have provoked a sense of erasure, featurelessness monstrosity – in the sense they exceed our capacity to rationalise and control them by applying our modern perspectives. Liquid bodies continually rise, undulate, entangle, fall, and exist within watery landscapes. They are often so entangled with their surroundings that it is almost impossible to see them; for neither our natural senses, nor concepts, fully convey their ever-changing nature. Defying classical conventions of organization and behaviour, liquid matter is fundamentally lively. It also simultaneously permeates and is infiltrated by its surroundings. Claude Lévi-Strauss regards the sea as uninspiring, while Roland Barthes views the ocean as a non-signifying field that bears no message. Yet, Michel Serres embraces the details of liquid bodies, specifically the subversive "nautical murmur" of the sea, which he regards as a symptom of its disturbing, pervasive vitality: "It [the sea] is at the boundaries of physics, and physics is bathed in it, it lies under the cuttings of all phenomena, a Proteus taking on any shape, the matter and flesh of manifestations. The noise – intermittence and turbulence – quarrel and racket – this sea noise is the originating rumour and murmuring, the original hate." 2

Liquid bodies are anything but banal; they are subversive, resisting control, atomization, and, ultimately, mechanization. Their fundamental unpredictability and unruly multi-potentiality evades our tendency to control and subordinate it to human desire – even when industrial apparatuses are used. Indeed, we are required to continually negotiate our terms of engagement with such liquid bodies and find ourselves ill equipped to quell their monstrous transformations, or impose order upon their undifferentiated expanses. Although these rebellious characteristics are palpable, to go beyond metaphorical rhetoric requires their material nature to be 'named.' For example, they may be recognised as fields, like 'badlands,' as reported by fishermen, where it is difficult to navigate the water. Another example are interfaces: where oil meets water and lifelike patterns emerge, which are reminiscent of jellyfish or worms. In this way, an actual dialogue may begin that embraces the complexity and character of the liquid realm.

In an age of instability, where matter is at the edge of chaos, liquids persistently respond to uncertain terrains by exhibiting dynamic patterns and structures. Think of a whirlpool or tornado where repetitions of processes within a site confer persistence upon a structure, rather than being obedient to the absolute position or configuration of atoms. The operative agents of this realm are 'paradoxical' objects 3 that are made up of the constant flow of matter and energy. These structures can occur at many different scales and become increasingly complex with time. They do not only act independently but can also collaborate, linking together like hurricanes, to form massively distributed hubs of activity across the surface of the planet. Such hyper-structures not only form weather fronts, but also manifest as soils and forests, which

exist in many niches and at multiple scales through the metabolic activity of a web of beings. Collectively, they contribute to the active forces of nature.0

Liquid life
The notion of liquid life draws attention to alternative pathways that are self-organizing and self-sustaining. Liquids that 'act' through their own agency may open up opportunities to work with the natural realm in new ways, by thinking along, with, and through liquids – both as a metaphor and as a technology. In this way ideas can be tested, refined, and developed towards particular dreams, challenges, and futures. Such expanded perspectives also engage with alternative power and identity relationships that move towards inclusive, horizontal interrelations, which are consistent with an ecological era by distributing agency through continuous media, rather than the discrete atoms and packets of 'information' that characterise mechanistic frameworks. This continuity is therefore not bounded like objects, but is expanded through immanent spaces.

An example is in the work of Viktor Schauberger who regarded water as an organism. He invented apparatuses for enlivening slow flowing and polluted water by inducing turbulence M that made water livelier. The new energy provided by the vortices in these bodies of water could also be used to perform useful work, like transporting lumber. At the same time, rivers and streams were revitalised by these technologies. Such approaches dilute, decentre, and reduce the environmental impact of a particular kind of human presence in the construction of industrial processes. It also critically proposes notions of society that embrace all humans and even includes species that have become so intrinsic to our biology they are integral to our being. For example, bacterial commensals (bacterial microbiome), symbionts (pets), and even 'living' fossils (mitochondrial bodies, viral and bacterial gene sequences in 'junk' DNA) are fundamental to our existence; their diffusion within our flesh conferring us with unique character. As members of our 'fluid' communities, E their rights and (potential) responsibilities are emphasised, as are notions of agency and modes of conversation. Such considerations invite alternative ideas about personhood with the potential extension to chimpanzees, dolphins, machines, land, rivers, and even planet Earth. These recognitions may also extend to building coalitions for (environmental) peace and include plants (ancient trees), insects (bees and other pollinators), soil organisms (mycorrhiza), and other creatures upon which our immediate existence depends. Of course, such notions, which are woven throughout the cycles of life and death, could potentially extend indefinitely to embrace every being on the planet. However, from a 'lived' perspective, community members are bestowed relevance through anthropological ethical concerns and values, which are played out in the construction of social groupings that are at the heart of ecological change. An 'ecological' ethics however is necessary, so that the intimate connections A between fluid bodies and their habitats can be sorted, ordered, and valued according to the requirements and character of particular places and their communities. Yet, these groupings may no longer be recognizable according to current conventions of naming and classification – in other words, an ecological shifting of our value frameworks will inevitably produce monsters – namely, uncategorisable beings.

Direct encounter between liquid bodies
Although existing life forms may already be read as liquid bodies, they are inevitably still framed within the conventions of the Animal Machine, which invokes discourses of efficiency, geometric perfection, hierarchies, and determinism. To circumvent these biases, an apparatus for provoking direct encounters U with liquid bodies is needed to produce a unique semiotic portrait of liquid life that corresponds with the dynamics of the living realm. This may be explored through poetics or graphical notations, – yet all forms of representation of liquid bodies are problematic as they are incomplete – enabling the liquid realm to 'speak' in its own terms is preferable.

An apparatus that I have been working with since 2009, the Bütschli System, arises spontaneously from intersecting liquid fields – olive oil and strong (3M) alkali. This uniquely varied, yet predictable chemical recipe, produces lifelike bodies that spontaneously move, show sensitivity to their surroundings and respond to each other.⁴ The strange, yet somewhat familiar images, symbols and behaviours that arise from the Bütschli system may be read as recognisable bodies and behaviours that arise from the tensions between interacting material fields at the edge of chaos. Yet they can be engaged and shaped by physical and chemical languages. For example, adjusting external factors that alter surface tension can induce specific movements like clustering; while changing internal factors such as adding salt solutions to the mixture, enables droplets to make sculptural formations. How these outputs are read or interpreted is established through juxtapositions against multiple disciplines such as prose poetry, science, and design notations.

A human-scale example of this kind of experiment was held as a performance called "Temptations of the Nonlinear Ladder"⁵, which was performed at the Palais de Tokyo in April 2016 for the Do Disturb Festival. An environment was constructed using a black mirror with a reflective metal disc suspended above it which generated multiple interfaces between ground, water, and air. Circus artists explored these spaces, improvising connections between them while using their bodies as liquid apparatuses. The audience was invited to gaze into the reflective surfaces that episodically appeared through the performance space and – as if they were telling the future – bestow meaning on the images they observed. In this way, the radical human bodies were transfigured at interfaces where they acquired imminent meaning – becoming a language of flux.

Similarly, Bütschli droplets also begin to reveal a world through a liquid perspective, conjuring new words, concepts, and relationships into existence. Such notations may enable us to inhabit spaces more ecologically, understanding how we may engage the infrastructures and fabrics that enable life rather than building mechanical objects for living in. Our apparatuses for inhabitation may acquire increasingly lifelike characteristics that extend the realm of the home and city into the ecosphere, where internal and external spaces are engaged in meaningful and mutual conversation. For example, a house may be able to recycle its water and metabolically transform waste substances into useful products. This is a pursuit of the "Living Architecture"⁶ project and is envisioned as a next-generation selectively programmable bioreactor that is capable of extracting valuable resources from sunlight, wastewater, and air and then generates oxygen, proteins, and biomass. "Living Architecture" uses the standard principles of both photo-bioreactor and microbial fuel cell technologies, which are adapted to work together synergistically to clean wastewater, generate oxygen, provide electrical power, and generate useable biomass (fertilizer). The outputs of these systems are then metabolically 'programmed' by the synthetic bioreactor to generate useful organic compounds like sugars, oils and alcohols⁷.

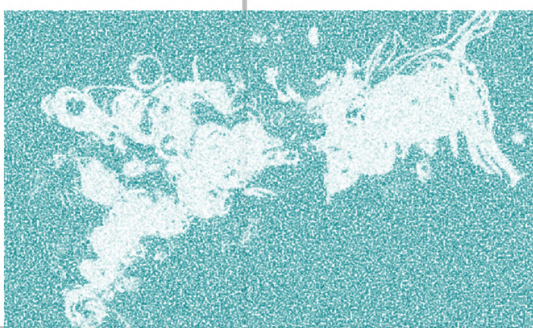


IMAGE by Simone Ferracina

"When life is considered through a liquid lens, it is no longer a deterministic, object-oriented machine but soft, protean, and integrated within a paradoxical, planetary-scale material condition that is unevenly distributed spatially but temporally continuous."

"Liquid life arises from out of a soup, smog, a scab, fire – where the incandescent heavens rain molten rock and alkali meets oil – a choreography of primordial metabolic flames. Amidst the reducing atmosphere of choking toxic gases, its coming-into-being draws momentarily into focus and recedes again. The unfathomable darkness of the Hadean epoch is reincarnated here. It is drenched in thick gas clouds, unweathered dusts, and pungent vapours, which obfuscate the light. The insulating blanket of gaseous poisons protects the land against the cruel stare of ultraviolet rays and ionizing space radiation, which spite the Earth's surface. Out of these volatile caustic bodies, a succession of chemical ghosts haunts the heavy atmosphere. Here, imaginary figures, like those that appear in a fevered condition, split faint light around. They wander among the auras of turbulent interfaces and thickening densities of matter, scum and crust. Over the course of half a billion years, sudden ectoplasms spew in successive acts over the darkened theatre of the planet. Charged skies, enlivened by the ionic electricity of fluids and periodically lit with photon cuts, strike blows into the ground to begin the process of chemical evolution. Dancing under ionic winds electric storms scratch at the Earth and charged tendrils of matter stand on their end. Vulgar in its becoming, the blubber slobbers on biomass with carbohydrate teeth, drooling enzymes that digest nothing but its own bite. Energetically incontinent, it acquires a cold metabolism and a watery heart. Expanding and contacting, it starts to pump universal solvent through its liquid eyes, lensing errant light into its dark thoughts. Mindless, yet finely tuned to its context, it wriggles upon time's compost, chewing and chewing with its boneless jaws on nothing but the agents of death. In its structural disobedience, the misshapen mass steadily grows more organized and reluctant to succumb to decay. Patterning the air, its fingers extend like claws, obstructing its passage between the poles of oblivion. Caressing itself in gratuitous acts of procreation, the daub offers contempt for the forces of disorder, and crawls steadily towards being."

GLOSSARY

Animal machine or **Bête machine**, is a philosophical notion from Descartes which implied the fundamental difference between animals and humans (cf. L'homme Machine). Now this theory is strongly challenged.

Componentization is the process of atomizing (breaking down) resources into separate reusable packages that can be easily recombined. Componentization is the most important feature of (open) knowledge development as well as the one that is, at present, least advanced.

Ecopoiesis is the artificial creation of a sustainable ecosystem on a lifeless planet.

Ectoplasm is a supernatural viscous substance that supposedly exudes from the body of a medium during a spiritualistic trance and forms the material for the manifestation of spirits.

Hyperbody is a living system that exceeds conventional boundaries and definitions of existence. For example, a slime mould in its plasmodial form that looks like a membranous slug is a hyperbody; it is formed by the merging of many individual cells to form a single, coordinated giant cell.

Hypercomplexity is an organizational condition that is founded on the principles of complexity from which new levels of order arise from interactions between components, but that exceeds a classical understanding of complex systems through their scale, heterogeneity, distribution and capacity to transform their surroundings.

Hyperobjects are entities of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions that they cannot be perceived in their entirety and defeat traditional ideas about the discreteness and certainty associated with individual bodies.

Katabatic flows are wind currents.

Microbial Fuel Cell is a metabolically powered apparatus that under anaerobic conditions, converts organic matter into electricity, fresh water and oxygen.

Photobioreactor is a system that uses the ability of micro-organisms to convert light and carbon dioxide into biomass, like sugars, alcohol and cellulose.

Scrying is reading the future against the present by using unstable images produced by reflective surfaces.

BIO

Rachel Armstrong (UK) innovates and designs new materials that poses properties of living systems, that can be manipulated to form what she calls 'living architecture'. Her research prompts a re-evaluation of how we think about our homes and cities and raises questions about sustainable development of built environment. Working in the emerging field of synthetic biology, Armstrong is at the forefront of hybrid scientific practices that seek to combine different sets of knowledge. Her pioneering work is focussed on re-opening space to the unknown, the invisible, and the unexplainable – as a way to re-engage with the present and re-enchant reality. Armstrong is Professor of Experimental Architecture at the School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape at Newcastle University. She is a Rising Waters II Fellow with the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation (April-May 2016), TWOTY futurist 2015, Fellow of the British Interplanetary Society, and a 2010 Senior TED Fellow.

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"Living Architecture LIAR – transform our habitats from inert spaces into programmable sites." Living Architecture. 2016. Accessed September 16, 2017. <http://livingarchitecture-h2020.eu/>.

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Serres, Michael. Genesis. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1996.

FOOTNOTES

Morton, Timothy. Hyperobjects: philosophy and ecology after the end of the world. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

Serres, Michael. Genesis. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1996. 14.

Also termed 'dissipative structures' by Ilya Prigogine

Armstrong, Rachel. Vibrant Architecture. Matter as a CoDesigner of Living Structures. De Gruyter Open, 2015.

A collaboration between Rachel Armstrong, Professor of Experimental Architecture, Newcastle University, Rolf Hughes, Professor of Artistic Research, Stockholm University of the Arts, Olle Sandberg, Director, Cirkör LAB and circus artists Methinee Wongtrakoon (contortionist) and Alexander Dam (acrobat), with technical rigging by Joel Jedström

The Living Architecture project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement no. 686585. It is made possible by a collaboration of experts from the universities of Newcastle, UK; the West of England (UWE Bristol); Trento, Italy; the Spanish National Research Council in Madrid; LIQUIFER Systems Group, Vienna, Austria; and Explora, Venice, Italy, that began in April 2016 and runs to April 2019.

"Living Architecture LIAR – transform our habitats from inert spaces into programmable sites." Living Architecture. 2016. Accessed September 16, 2017. <http://livingarchitecture-h2020.eu/>.



A LIQUID MANIFESTO

OUTPUT AS INPUT

TEXT AS IMAGE

LIVING TEXT

INFORMATION CIRCULATION

Liquid **bodies** discuss a **mode** of **existence** that is constantly changing - not as the cumulative outcomes of 'error' - but as a highly choreographed and continuous **spectrum stream** of events that arise from the physical interactions of **matter**. They internalize other bodies as manifolds within their **substance** and assert their **identity** through their environmental **contexts**. Such entanglements invoke marginal relations between multiple agencies and exceed the classical **logic** of **objects**. They are inseparable from their **context** and offer ways of thinking and experimenting with the conventions of making and being embodied.

Liquid **life** exceeds **rhetoric**. Its concepts can be embodied and experimentally tested using a trans-disciplinary **approach**, which draws upon a range of conceptual lenses and techniques to involve the liquid **realm** with its own '**voice**'. From these perspectives liquid **technologies** emerge that are capable of generating new kinds of **artefacts**, like Bütschli **droplets**, which are liquid chemical assemblages capable of surprisingly lifelike **behaviours**. These agents exceed **rhetoric**, as they possess their own **agency**, semiotics, and choreographic **impulses**, which allow us to value and engage in discourse with them on their **terms**. The difficulty and slippages in meaning and volition between participating **bodies** creates the possibility of an evolving poly-vocal **dialectics**.

Liquid **life** is immortal. Arising from our unique planetary conditions, its **ingredients** are continually re-incorporated into active metabolic **webs** through cycles of **life** and **death**. Most deceased liquid **matter** lies quiescent, patiently waiting for its reanimation through the persistent **metabolisms** within our **soils**.

Liquid **bodies** are pluri-potent. They are capable of many acts of **transformation**. They de-simplify the **matter** of being a **body** through their visceral entanglements. While the Bête Machine depends on an abstracted **understanding** of **anatomy** founded upon generalizations and ideals, liquid bodies resist these **tropes**.

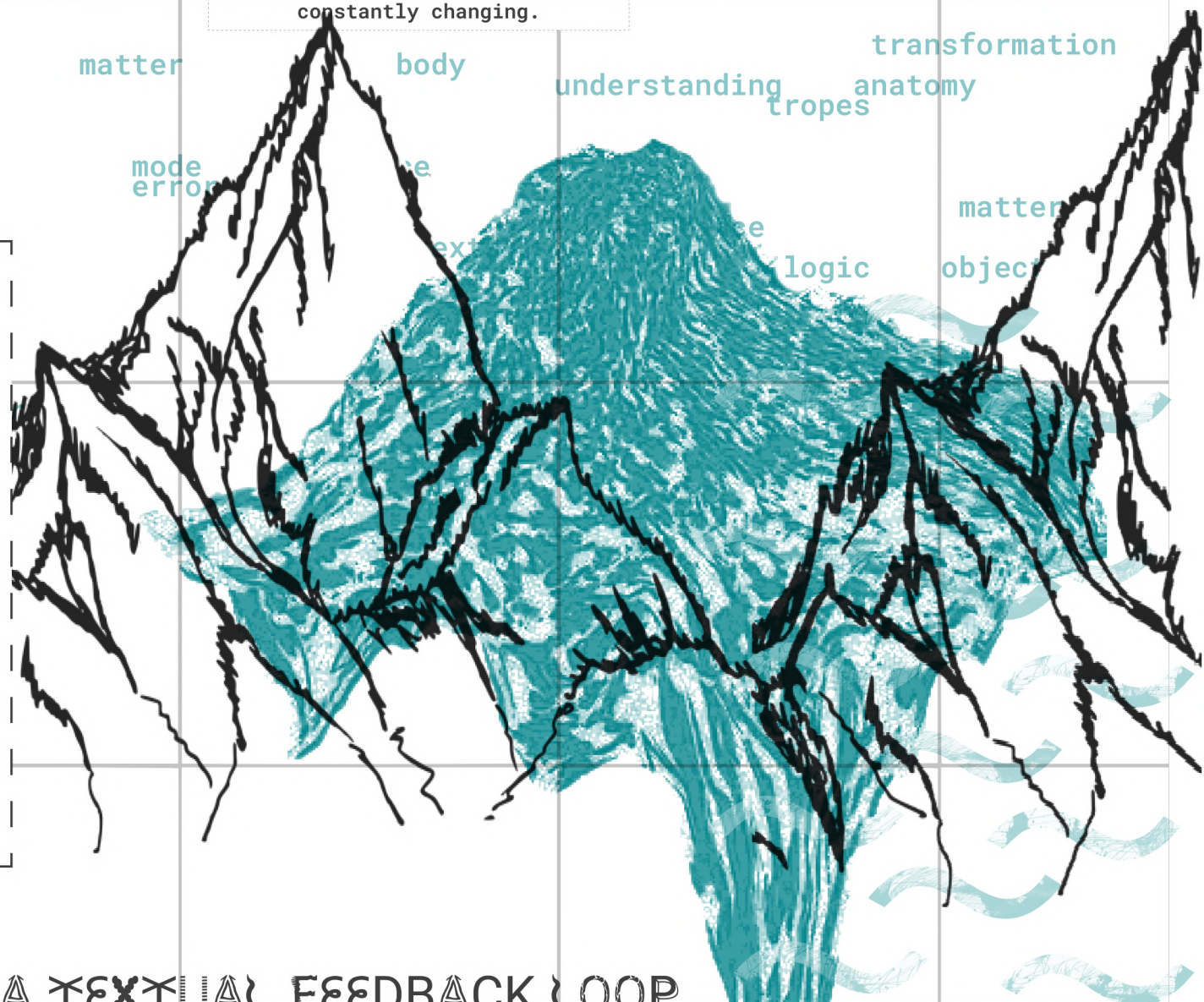
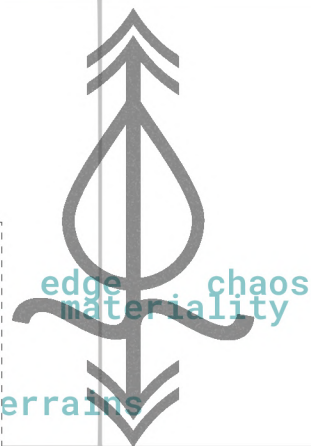
Liquid **bodies** are political **agents**. They re-define the boundaries and conditions for **existence** in the **context** of dynamic, unruly environments. They propose alternative **modes** of living that are radically transformed, monstrous, coherent, raw - and selectively permeated by their nurturing **media**.

Liquid are **non-bodies**. They are without formal boundaries and are constantly changing.

KEY IDEAS

- flow
- hyperobjects
- materiality
- flux
- agency
- collaboration
- boundlessness
- self-sustaining
- feedback loops
- circulation
- multiplicity
- organic
- controlled chaos
- natural systems
- unpredictability
- monstrous
- layers
- transformation
- adaptive
- sublime
- growth

FLOWING INTO A TEXTUAL FEEDBACK LOOP



A REIMAGINATION OF LIQUID MANIFESTO

Liquid life realm concepts hypercomplexity terrain liquid things by-products worldview living things life worldviews by-products disobe-
 diobedient bodies substances skirmishes life phantasmagoria liquid life kind hyperbody
 dalliances phenomena twists turns exchanges manoeuvres substance contexts encounters
 manoeuvres alleys digressions ciphers body processes flows ambiguities states
 substance method technology set materials beings changes Liquid Earth s crust Metabolic refers
 processes contexts encounters coherence coherence five states of matter
 beings changes flows ambiguities states of matter kind hyperbody
 points transformation systems Liquid life forms energy principle ecopoiesis process living events flows whirlwinds dust clouds
 kind hyperbody atmosphere environments soil physics Earth s crust Metabolic refers
 chemical outcomes fields matter edges on liquid matter quiescent
 collide vector infection expression material matter quiescent
 principle ecopoiesis process living events flows whirlwinds dust clouds
 life forms energy gradients density palimpsest flows whirlwinds dust clouds
 expressions matter terrains Liquid life forms energy ingredients webs cycles life death liquid matter quiescent
 quiescent reanimation metabolisms soils technic matter quiescent
 life concepts approach range lenses technic matter quiescent
 voice perspectives technologies kinds cartography Bütschli droplets chemical assemblages behaviours
 agents rhetoric agency semiotics impulses value discourse terms
 discourse terms difficulty slippages meaning volition bodies possibility
 bodies possibility dialectics Liquid life provokes notion consciousness thinking sea
 notion consciousness thinking sea possibilities tactical palette
 towards equilibrium moments tactic palette energy fields alliances
 food sources waste materials energy fields alliances
 decisions coordinating centre brain Liquid non-bodies boundaries bodies
 boundaries bodies structures logic laws behaviour expressions material systems frames
 expressions material systems frames reference trysts tactics rise life
 Aspects existence stray realms auras quantum physics ectoplasms realms measurement engagement trysts tactics rise life
 rise life capacity self-repair Liquid bodies acts transformation matter body
 transformation matter body entanglements Bête Machine understanding anatomy generalizations ideals
 understanding anatomy generalizations ideals bodies stream events
 Liquid mode existence outcomes error spectrum identity contexts
 interactions matter bodies manifolds substance identity
 contexts entanglements relations agencies logic objects context ways thinking

This symbol represents a perpetual state of flux between information and ideas.
 The output becomes input that flows in self-sustaining circularities, creating a series of dynamic feedback loops.



Tense

Info Simon(e) van Saarloos is a writer and philosopher, living in Amsterdam and New York City. Simon(e) writes the "e" in her name between parentheses because she questions gender norms and doubts anything that appears 'as given' or self-evident. Also, what's between parentheses might be more meaningful than what is said to be meaningful. She is the author of three books (columns, essay, fiction) Ik deug/deug niet, [To Be Good or Not Be Good], Het monogame drama [The monogamy Drama] and De vrouw die [The Woman Who]. She also writes theatre and poetry, and performs on stage as a lecturer, activist and interviewer. In the last Dutch general elections Simon(e) was a candidate for the political party led by Sylvana Simons. She is currently writing a book on the trial against Geert Wilders.

Song You want me to give you a testimony about my life

Line And how good he's been to me

Line I don't know what to tell you about him

Line I love him so much with all my heart and my soul

Line With every bone in my body I love him so much

Line Because he's done so much for me

Line Every morning

Line Every day of my life

Line I won't always be crying tears

Line In the middle of the night, and I won't always have to wake up

Line By myself wondering how I'm gonna get through the day

Line I won't always have to think about what I'm gonna do

Line And how I'm gonna, how I'm gonna make it

Line How I'm gonna get there, because he...

Line He's gonna be there for me

Line (...)

Line It feels so good to be free

Line To be accepted for who you are and loved no matter what

Song

Footnote 1

Title Tense

Info Original contribution Simon(e) van Saarloos

Info Interpretation Martin Foucaut

About

Section

Section Words That Do Not Kill

Paragraph For someone growing up non-religious, this intro on Kanye West's new album, *The Life of Pablo*, made me understand something I never had before. The song starts in such a sensuous way, that I truly thought the singer was giving me an account of her longing for 'him', a fleshy him, a human him, a flawed but trustworthy male. Instead, she was expressing her love and trust in God. This only becomes clear at the end of her pledge, in the last two sentences: "Oh Lord thank you, You are the joy of my life." Interestingly enough, it was only then that I was able to enjoy this spoken song called "Low Lights." As when I still thought the singer was displaying her love for a human him (not Him), I considered the lyrics overtly romantic, overtly dependent. This of course says a lot about my own beliefs about love (just as much as it says about what we are conditioned to expect and recognize as love in music, movies, and other popular expressions).

Footnote 2 As soon as I realized it was about her love for God, I was totally drawn in, immersed by the intensity of her submission to Him.

Footnote 3 And suddenly I understood that it was her strong language that displayed, inhabited, shaped, constructed, and created her love and trust for him. Her language wasn't just a true account of her worship, the language generated and endorsed the love. The love existed because of her saying it out loud.

Section

Section Surrender

Paragraph For me, growing up secular and without spiritual rituals, it seemed impossible to start believing in a higher power that can be named as 'Lord'. Theoretically, I may want to submit to one idea or force, but it is exactly this longing to surrender that seems to suspend the possibility of actually belief. Wanting to submit isn't the same as submission itself - it is the incapacity of submitting to submission. Being able to view submission, as something one can do, is exactly what withholds submission. However, when I heard this singer in "Low Lights," I suddenly realized I could do that, I could express a message in a convinced, rhetorical, and descriptive manner, without necessarily believing the content of this message.

Paragraph I love language. I love language so much that I can sound very convincing saying just about anything. I could express submission, whether or not I believe that I am truly feeling submission. In this convinced language, by expressing surrender I would experience surrender because the language of worship and submission is not descriptive but performative. Words create. Words do not just describe, they are gestures confirming and producing realities.

Footnote 4 As love is an abstraction, and not, for example, a chair one can point to, stating 'I love him so much' is the love.

Paragraph My understanding of "Low Lights" comes from this trickle-down scheme: 1) Being unable to hear a person expressing Person-To-God Love (PTGL). 2) Rejecting Girl-To-Boy Love (GTBL), but expecting and thereby accepting GTBL's existence. 3) Realizing that GTBL is actually PTGL; thus by acknowledging GTBL, becoming able to acknowledge PTGL.

Paragraph It wasn't just this trickle down love-scheme that allowed me to gain some understanding of the depth of expressing worship. It was the singer's voice too. Her voice sounds so joyous and rich, it actually reminded me of having sex, of my lover telling me I scream 'like a wounded animal'. Because my lover draws this image, allowing my screams of joy to leave the bedroom through a metaphor, the sounds I make became something totally new in my own ears. My lover illuminated my responsive sounds through a metaphor, joyfully describing my joy. I had forgotten to hear my own sounds, they belonged to having sex, but until then, they had no identity or noticed existence outside of that moment. The same happened when she described my cunt. She described its shapes and

Section Experience

Paragraph noticed how her descriptions made my experience different. For the first time I consciously experienced the thickness of my inner lips, the swolleness of my clit. Her words had set these parts of my cunt 'aside'; her words placed them outside of my body and allowed me to have a fuller experience of my body. For me, the words she used are more than a description working as an intensifier. Her noticing evoked noticing. The unquestioned way she described my body made my body feel - totally, fully - as she had described it. I have never experienced myself as one thing true or full, but due to her confident description I could feel myself fully being her description: thick, swollen, screaming.

Image This image may contain: a cunt

Section Tense

Paragraph This, however, does not mean that I feel defined. I can confidently say that her descriptions are relative as no genitals are average and all adjectives that she finds truth in are a matter of perception. It is not like her description became 'facts about my cunt.' It is not the exact truth of her words, but our joint submission to her expression that shaped the totality of my experience. If her description had any other goal than lovingly celebrating my body and its sounds, her words would have had a different effect. If she had meant to scale my genitals and sounds, comparing them, rating them, her metaphor would have felt reducing. The metaphor wouldn't allow me to experience full oneness, the metaphor would reduce me to being my inner lips, just because her description was meant value determining. In that case we'd encounter the moment when words and metaphors turn into definitions, locking a reality down in order either to compare, classify, appraise.

Section Tense

Paragraph Why am I describing this intimate body/language experience? Because I was surprised by the thorough, alive, and bodily experience of words. I'm a lover of words, but I'm very much aimed at language's shortcomings. One of the difficulties of language I have recently been involved with, is the gap between an event and the moment this event is described. Anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli calls this gap 'tense'. Even now, just by recalling her theory on tense in her book *Economies of Abandonment*, I'm sort of finalizing her theory, presenting it as something done and seizable, instead of as the continuous thinking she is trying to surface. Language kills continuation. When we describe something, we deny the continuity of that which we describe. When we describe something or someone, that something or someone still exists beyond and without our description. The description itself however is seen as the carrier of some kind of truth. The description is taken serious. The description allows us to look at something, rather than living with it.

Image This image may contain: an event

Paragraph The dilemma that tense puts forward has been bugging me: how can I use words without killing what I'd like to draw attention to? How can we display continuous time while using language? Language itself is constantly drawing from the past. You do not have to be a scholar in linguistics to understand that every single word needs a memory - not a sentimental or deeply felt one per se - but in order to use a word we need to at least remember its meaning, remember that it has a meaning, remember that a word has a certain length and shape - that certain letters are part of the word while others are not. I felt I was experiencing continuousness of language when I was having sex and feeling my cunt and hearing my screams as my lover had described it. The descriptions became

Paragraph The in-between time defined as tense, creates a certain superiority of the person speaking, especially as the person speaking starts to claim a moment in time and space. While language kills what is being described, it enlivens the speaker. Questioning tense is a feminist practise, as feminism is concerned with power relations and the inequalities and precarities it produces. Feminism maps and redistributes who holds space, time, and livability. Questioning tense means one is focused on the livingness, the aliveness of what is described. It means that the continuous (well-)being of what is described has priority. This demands the courage to let difficulty appear and remain, instead of crediting oneself (or the speaker) with making the described understandable, captured, or seizable.

Paragraph Continuity is a feminist practise, as it asks for constantly paying attention. A noticing and attention not only aimed at what you already know or what feels close to you, but also of that which escapes your attention because of your positionality. This continuous noticing is necessary to re-direct and prevent an unequal distribution of attention. For example, the quotidian has often been seen as less important, than explicit political and public events. While feminist speakers often want to give an account of the more 'forgotten' narratives - realizing the status quo rests on benefiting a few dominant narratives - using language to create proximity can just as well trap what is described. What is described can sometimes even be more easily celebrated and embraced, because it appears dead and can be embraced as something standing still, a non-continuous world. Therefore, this feminist practise, or releasing tense, needs to be a

Paragraph Queer because the embrace of what's described cannot be a straight one, it is a messy sort of embrace in which it is unclear what embraces what: does the language embrace the listener, does the listener embrace the description, does the event described embrace the continuous language that is trying to linguistically engage the event? It's an amorphous embrace with few coordinates. It's an embrace of which it is unsure whether it is an embrace. It is moving, taking form, forming. Looking at it does not exist, it demands noticing with. The noticing and the performative effect of this noticing happens simultaneously and inseparable. There is neither an end to the change nor to the noticing. Noticing change is not meant to formulate strategy, or to expect an outcome. The queer part about this is that change is valued in itself; the change is a goal in itself.

Section Superiority of Arrival

Paragraph Traditionally, there is the assumption that any act that appears queer and rebellious will disappear when a person matures. Age gives transitional possibilities. Ageing is a hopeful thing for those unwilling to accept present conditions. Underlining age, gaining years as the passing of time, and expecting evolution when ageing, reveals a linear conception of growth: when you get older, you will 'move past' things. It is very difficult to do without this notion of progress, to imagine a life without progress seems almost impossible, let alone: "to imagine justice without progress," as anthropologist Anna Tsing so beautifully questions in her book *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On The Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Often, when we speak about progress, progress is not only seen as a way to 'improve' life; celebrating progress is often used to debunk what was before. We see this with children displaying 'queer behaviour', that parents think they will get over it and say, 'it is just a

to include the notion of 'arriving'. The expectations that we will later 'arrive' at a certain insight, we arrive at a better place in our lives, closer to something real, an arrival at 'home'. We tend to forget that what we understand as real is and only is the present. When we feel 'unheimisch' or 'unreal', this is the real unreal feeling of the present.

 This image may contain: one person, arriving

By inserting the word 'arrive' here, I also come to think of 'superiority', similar to the superiority of the speaker or writer claiming and deadering the continuity of the described. Columbus 'discovered' the Americas, meaning all the life that was there before Columbus arrived, was not considered meaningful or even living at all. It was no life. It only became life as he recognized it. Or so the history narrative we are accustomed to, latently (but bluntly) assumed. When one arrives, one remembers the journey, but one does not acknowledge what was there before arrival or during the journey. Whenever there is a place to arrive, the place must have – in some way or another – existed all along. Those who arrive – whether at an insight, a conclusion, at happiness, or at mature behaviour – neglect the existence of that which already there. This goes hand in hand with a certain feeling of superiority, as it is one's own arrival that's central, not the ongoing existence that one comes to recognize. The efforts of the journey get the most attention. The common, inspirational motto 'It's all about the journey' forgets that the person journeying demands an awaiting point of departure and arrival, unless one would state, 'all is journey'. When we think about progress, similar feelings of superiority come into play. Often, when someone poses, like Anna Tsing, that it might be possible and at least interesting to try and imagine a world without progress, this has historically been countered with a positivist belief in science. Especially medical science sounds very convincing. It's a doctor's duty to improve and possibly prolong (and thus progress?) life.

I have experienced a short lifetime in a wheelchair. On a cold day in March, I woke up, then ten years old, and my hip was hurting so much that I couldn't walk. Before that, I did sports everyday. Since that morning, I could only move in a wheelchair or walk short spans using crutches. I'm grateful that this sudden injury slowly disappeared after two years. Doctors used prednisone medications on me, the physical therapist tried different exercises, and my parents were wealthy enough to rent a better wheelchair than the free chair you are given by Thuiszorg. All of these factors helped me get better. But I was only helped to get through this. Why did I not learn to live with this injury? Even signs of progress, such as mataging the wheelchair better, were seen as a sign of decline at the same time, as it meant I was getting better at something which was not considered 'good' or healthy. Living in a world made to be unsuitable for wheelchair users or other non-conformative bodies, I'm utterly happy that the pain in my hip went away. The point is, I have lived two years in my life in which I was getting through a situation. I was living through life, while not actually living life, living with. Is this why I remember nearly nothing of that time? Because I arrived at the other side – being able to walk again, lucky and 'healthy' – and upon my arrival I could forget that all worlds and all sides that are always already out there, even if you are not experiencing and enduring them.

Being With Instead of Getting Through

In retrospect, this way of living may have mirrored rather unhappy. I listened to Marilyn Manson to express this unhappiness, not to fuel it. I dressed in black and painted my room black. I collected fake skulls and bracelets with studs to feel surrounded. People wanted to make me feel better, but they especially told me that I would feel better. It would get better, I was told, because I would grow older and find my way. People trusted I would find my way maybe especially because I was a white kid from a reasonable wealthy and educated family. All would be fine as the society I grew up in, had space for people like me (white, wealthy, educated). I am fine. But maybe it would have been good if someone told me I was already fine. Not to build my self-confidence (though no harm in that), but to acknowledge the world as a continuous place, instead of believing that one will 'arrive' in the world. We cannot arrive in the world, as worlds are constantly arriving. We need continuous language. There is no platform waiting for you to get on board, there is no 'way of being' or mode awaiting your growth.

What can we give to a future that is not awaiting our arrival? The future needs a language that does not identify the future as a separate era. It needs a language in which the deadening force of words – tense – is countered with presence, continuous life. We need a language that is not old, nor presents itself too enthusiastically as 'new', thus becoming commercial-like, claiming and promising 'newness' in order to legitimize its existence. What does language need? It needs faith. It needs speakers (and listeners) who believe in its performativity, who recognize the effects of language, understanding that the expression (of an event, an experience) actually changes the event, the experience. It needs speakers who believe in plurality and constant noticing. This way, the performativity of words will not create a chain of sameness and definitions will not stall life into comprehensible situations that can be compared and strategically used for progress.

I listen to "Low Lights" nearly every day, when running in the same park and making the same laps. I only run when I feel healthy, but when I don't run, I don't feel healthy. That too is a lapse. The running is by no means making me healthy. There isn't one assignable cause for how I feel. When I run, it is not like I'm trying to get through. It is the actual running, the moving, that excites me. I pass people whom I have passed for years and I always see new people. Some may see me. I don't hate the hill halfway through my 6K run, I'm with the hill, not getting over it or through it. My heart beat rises and I hear the singer's worship, her expression of love and thereby the existence of love. I suddenly realize that, of course, talking to or about or with God is a way to eternalize the conversation. A feminist queer language may well be that: God-language. A God-language without the need for one grand Lord listening and speaking, but an eternal effort from all, allowing everything to be alive – amorphous and

1.

Pablo West, K. 2016. Low Lights. The Life of

My expectation that her worship was meant for another human, might not only say something about my secular upbringing but may also reveal that I'm listening with white ears – taking in consideration that my white, secular Dutch background probably limits my interpretation of Kanye West's music.

I'm here using 'Him' to refer to God, as the singer does. Let's acknowledge that some also refer to god as She ('I met god, she's black') or without using gender binary terms. Islamic scholar Amina Wadud refers to Allah as 'Trans'. I am also speaking about heterosexual love here, because "Low Light" refers to girl-boy love. This fits well with my argument, as my initial hesitation with the text – finding it overly romantic – certainly has to do with encountering a surplus of straight love in songs, movies, commercials. As I state in footnote 1, I might be ignoring specifics about black love by considering this girl-boy love 'straight'. Scholars like Saidiya Hartman and Alexis Pauline Gumbs would argue that 'black' and 'queer' are interchangeable, as black people are never gender conformative in a world ruled by white norms.

Think about the way the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte defended the racist figure Black Pete (Zwarte Piet). He stated: "Black Pete is Black, the word itself says it, nothing I can change about that," pretending the nature of the figure itself creates the description 'Black Pete', while not acknowledging that naming something 'black' makes it black, while reproducing the possibility of using 'black' as a description and pretending it is a description only.

Anna Lowenhaupt. The mushroom at the end of the world: on the possibility of life in capitalist ruins. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.

A home care organization in the Netherlands.

abstract

In the contribution TENSE, Simon(e) van Saarloos expresses their desire to promote continuous language, notably by avoiding description.

In my interpretation, I affect users' reading experience by implementing disruptive elements called 'meta- descriptions into the text.

The term 'meta' defines metadata about an HTML document and usually remains invisible to the reader(s). Meta description any content to find a hierarrs are commonly used to specify character sets such as page description, keywords, or the author(s) of the document, which allochy and an organization within a Web page. By making them visible to the reader, I wish to exacerbate van Saarloos' statement: "What is described can sometimes even be more easily celebrated and embraced, because it appears dead".

Martin Foucault

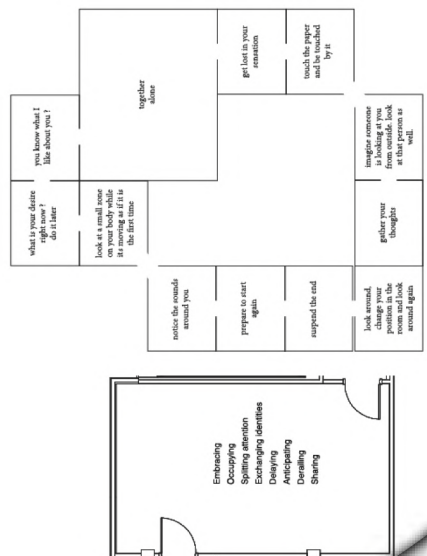
Tense

introduction **author** Eilit Marom **artists** (Paris), **artists** Elpidia Orfanidou **artists** (Berlin/Athens), **artists** Adina Secretan **artists** (Lausanne) and **artists** Simone Truong **artists** (Zürich) are five creators that conceived, choreographed and performed the performance (To) Come and See together. The project was initiated in 2014 when Simone Truong proposed a research about the notion of eroticism. She wanted to open up the discourse in a larger context with other accomplices. What began as a curiosity became a journey of multiple gatherings, researches and performances all over the world. Along the way, the widely varied experiences and encounters made the project develop and grow organically into a triptych. Since September 2017 the work also includes (To) Keep in Touch - a workshop on touch with local residents, and (To) Give a Hand - a durational performative experience with the workshop participants. **introduction**

quote « while reading touch the paper with your eyes » **quote**

section **subtile** Hello **subtile**

paragraph We are Anna, Adina, Eilit, Elpidia and Simone and we invite you to play. The space you are in right now is your playground, you can claim it as an ecosystem where tenderness, intimacy and even fear can appear. The instructions written here offer you ways to operate in it. Use the game board map to create your own path. Remember one door needs to be opened before we can go to the next, but the path to open each door is unknown, it has to be worked-through in real-time. There is a secret « toolbox » on the side at your disposal made of verbs. You can apply them to each room and behaviors written on the map while following it, and discover the constant path. Listen, so serendipity could appear by itself, observing the coincidences, together and alone. Everything matters. There is no goal or climax. Everything keeps TENSE because it's ongoing. Everything keeps unfolding, surfing the waves of desire. It is like an endless kiss. **paragraph**



info Reinterpretation **info** **artists** Martin Foucaut **artists**

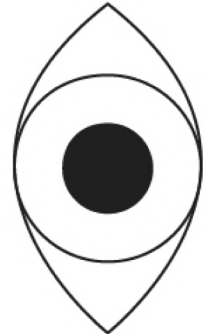
info Original artistic response **info** **artists** Eilit Marom **artists** Anna Massoni **artists** Elpidia Orfanidou **artists** Adina Secretan **artists** Simone Truong **artists**

about

paragraph I enter the labyrinth, Of the vibrating facts in front of my body. I sing their surface; The textures of each are my nests for the night. I am happy to sense you around; And then I can taste time. Faithfully. **paragraph**



look through here



image

quote « has the light changed ? » **quote** **section**

section

paragraph (To) Come and See is not merely a performance. Rather, it is an experience where one is allowed to surrender, let go of aim and control and feel vulnerability and fear whilst feeling protected by genuine tenderness and sensuality. The practice explores the idea of an erotic dramaturgy, which claims to stay open and therefore turns sensuality into a liberating experience, free of the idea of a goal. Between proximity and distance, disappearing and presence, a sensual landscape, joyful and uncanny, emerges. Along the way, the widely varied experiences and encounters made the project develop and grow organically: one and half years after the premier of (To) Come and See, the work has been extended to a triptych including (To) Keep in Touch, a series of workshops about touch, and (To) Give a Hand, a durational performance about desire with the participants from the workshops. **paragraph**

section

section

credits Concept, Choreography, Performance / Simone Truong, Eilit Marom, Anna Massoni, Elpidia Orfanidou, Adina Secretan **credits**

credits Light, Stage / Roger **credits**

credits Studer - Mask / Dana Hesse, Katharina Kroll **credits**

credits Dramaturgy / Igor Dobricic **credits**

credits Outside eye / Jessica Huber **credits**

credits Production management / Anke Hoffmann **credits**

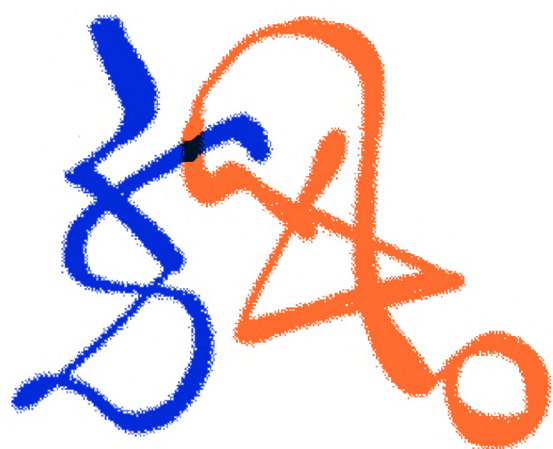
credits Assistance / Samira Bösch. **credits**

credits Production / association Overseas **credits**

credits Coproduction / Gessnerallee Zürich, Les Rencontres Chorégraphiques Internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis, Théâtre Sévelin 36 Lausanne Picture / Flurin Bertschinger **credits**

section

ATATA MEANS RECIPROCAL AWARENESS. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIVING NATURE: PLANTS, TERRITORY, ANIMALS AND CULTURES.



Original Contribution by Natalia Chaves López¹

I The purpose of the following text is to present and preserve the concept of ATATA: it is a composition of two ideograms (fig.1) of the Mhuysqa dead language. ATATA can be defined as 'I give myself, you give yourself,' where giving is an act of receiving, and what you do to others is also affecting yourself. This exercise of reciprocity is a very important vibration of life; nobody can live without others, this includes all living creatures with whom we share the Earth. As a Colombian student of ancient history, I have experienced this concept many years of learning the wholesome ways of living of the indigenous people of both Colombia and Mexico.

It was during my PhD research that I experienced and looked further into the Mhuysqa Mayan legacy. It was then that I realized the devastating reality that is currently affecting the quality of food. There is a systematic problem caused by the 'green revolution' and the radical changes to the local ways of cultivation to the use of inputs made sold by big global corporations which are creating dependency as well as poisoning the seeds, the soil, the water and therefore our own bodies. Meanwhile, as a response to this, an 'undercurrent' is developing everywhere – people are living and cultivating according to new past principles of global corporations, recovering solidarity, hope, life, food, and bio-diversifying forms of being.

I have based my writings on the perspective of 'Heart as Epistemology.' What I mean is that heart and brain come together in my proposal of bringing to light my feelings and how to keep living and how to make collective decisions on territory (fig.2). The intention of this essay is to find ourselves and others' heart to heart. In fact, the heart is the place where you keep dreams, hope, joy, and pain, according to the Mayan culture. You need to have all these clear to know what is the kind of living knowledge you want to go over. The Mhuysqa worldview, the human heart is named 'puyky', an onomatopoeia of the heartbeat, that is said to be connected to the beating of the cosmos itself, representing the frequency where one can find answers on the path of protecting life. The questions this essay aims to answer are: How to feel-think the future of food, water, a perspective of reciprocity? Why is ATATA a fruitful principle for the future survival of the human kind?

Mhuysqas are an ancient indigenous culture who live in the Cundinamarca and Boyacá regions of Colombia. They lost their language in the eighteenth century, which consisted of compact ideograms and hieroglyphics

representing complex ideas of their understanding of nature. The Mhuysqas speak Spanish and during the colonial period the banning of their language, they kept some of their ancestral ways of living. I have studied their language, named Mhuysqhubun, and I propose here to bring back to life the 'dead' word ATATA, which is not forgotten. ATATA is a palindrome unity made of two ideograms and hieroglyphics of the moon calendar: Ata and Ta.

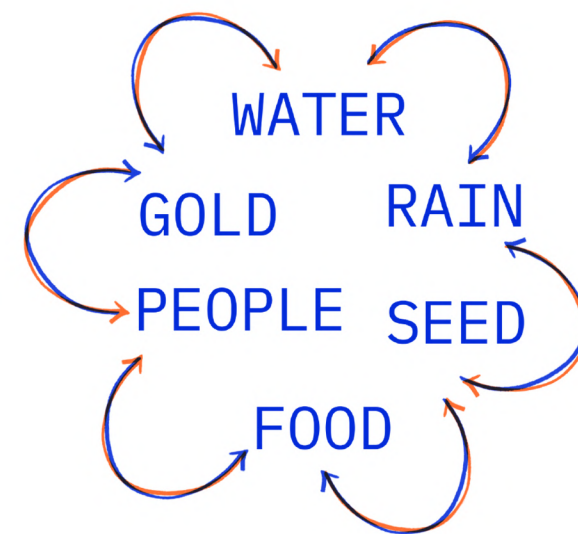
Mariana Escribano, a linguist who writes about the Mhuysqa language and worldview, explains that Ata refers to the number 1, which in cosmogony is relative to the beginning of time. The eighteenth-century grammar of the priest Jose Domingo Duquesne, we can translate the ideogram as follows: "the goods of something else." This means common goods exist. It also refers to the primordial pond, which links it to water as well. Ta, the second sound of the unity, is the number 6 and represents a new beginning that is showing the comprehension of time. The priest Duquesne wrote that Ta means "tillage, harvest." The Ta ideogram also means the bearing of fruits, the giving of yourself freely, agriculture labor, and this perspective the act of giving is an act of receiving; it also implies the responsibility of taking care of what you are receiving.

One of the most important acts of Mhuysqa culture was the offering of some holy lagoons. The main offering happened at the Guatavita lagoon. This lagoon held the gold, offered by the Mhuysqas to the Spanish conquerors who heard it and tried to dry the lagoon up. The leader of the town of Guatavita, covered in gold, would be introduced on a raft, adorned with more gold and emeralds. The raft would be then given to the lagoon followed by the leader who would introduce himself to the water as an offering of the gold that was covering him to receive a purification bath. This astonishing ritual of ATATA was done as a reminder of gratitude to water, one of the most important living beings. Reciprocity of the few sacred female entities living in the water, representing the lagoon itself, would hold the abundance of Mhuysqa people. One of the ways water supplied life to the people was rain, which provided corn to feed everybody. In order to understand this reciprocal interaction/cycle of humans-lagoons-rain-corn I refer to the Tzeltal Mayan people, who live in the Highlands of Chiapas in the Lacandona jungle of Mexico, who keep alive very ancient knowledge and have the belief that corn spirit is living in the mountains and lakes. It is given to the humans as result of offerings asking for maintenance of people. ATATA can be related to the Mayan Tzeltal concept of 'Ich' el ta muk' translated as "respect, recognition of all living things of nature." The corn cycle is Tzeltal life itself and requires a permanent compromise, the way they explain this is referring to corn as a double being. Seen from one side as a baby and from the other as a woman supporting her family. When someone wastes corn, they can hear it crying – even a single seed is left on the soil as a piece of tortilla lies on the kitchen floor. When seen from the woman supporting her family, it appears as the harvest when the corn cobs have smaller corn sticks. These are signals that it is the mother of the plant; they do not eat it; they prefer to hang it up in the house as a gesture of keeping abundance present in the home and community. This double reciprocal relation of corn demanding care on one hand and at the same time protecting its own people, is a meaningful trait of understanding the power of this spirit.

In Tenejapa, a Tzeltal town, they traditionally make an offering in an important lagoon named 'Ts' ajalsul' to show 'ich' el ta muk'. The ceremony authorities deposit a traditional handmade dress to the female being that is living in the water and is representing the lagoon itself who provides corn, and she happens to be also the mother of red corn. Red corn is now hard to find in the Highlands of Chiapas, it represents the strongest spirits and connection to ancestors and woman's blood. Some families are aware of the high value of these other varieties of corn, and diversity becomes a challenge for these communities.

These cultures that live in a reciprocal cycle of the land they inhabit, we have arrived to a latent and urgent

conflicts surrounding food. In the 1950s, Mexican and United States politicians started an alliance to increase productivity of the most consumed cereals: wheat, corn, and rice. Even the pioneers of this project said so, this was not to fight off hunger, there was an inequality in the availability of food. That inequality is still growing. The 'green revolution' began as a movement of engineers – George Harrar, Edwin J. Wellhausen, the Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman E. Borlaug. They worked together in Sonora, Mexico, at the Office of Special Studies which later was called the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) financed mainly by the Rockefeller Foundation. They developed a biochemical technological package of pest control that started affecting natural interdependence of agricultural cycles and achieving full biocontrol of the process. Most of these substances were created during the Second World War as biological weapons to kill populations, such as the Japanese, and starvations of spraying of fulminate herbicides. When the war was over, they needed to sell the products, these herbicides were killing the traditional locally adapted seeds; they worked in two steps: First they collected a bank of germplasm to study the varieties of corn in Mexico, second they chose and separated only two varieties of the approximately 64 types adapted to the chemicals mentioned, producing a dependency on the seed which could not grow without pesticides. Then, as a major commitment of the governments and credits of funding, publicized this alleged progress as a need of peasants. They could then sell these 'packages' to the farmers, who only realized their negative effects of spoiling their soil with water, nitrates, phosphates, and other toxic elements that produced soil erosion and broke the biological equilibrium. Nowadays 'technological packages' in Mexico include hybrid seeds of white and yellow corn, chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pest controllers. All of them come with a negative impact on health – proved this year in the United States in the court case of Dewayne Johnson vs. Monsanto regarding Roundup Ready, a pesticide that contains glyphosate. When a community loses their traditional seeds highly adapted to their territories and the work of the generations, a new hybrid, the damage is difficult to undo. They want to go back to the organic ones they will need years of adaptation, recovering the soil again that will consequently provoke a low production. An unbearable loss of peasants in the nineties, genetic engineers modified the hybrid seeds and created new ones mixing animal and bacteria genes such as bacterium thuringiensis, the cereal creating the BT transgenic corn, also dependent on agrochemicals as well as not fertile, which meant that peasants needed to buy them anew each year. As a result of this process, today in Mexico there are sequences of transgenic contamination of 90.4% of the whole production of tortillas which are consumed every meal. There is a lot of money invested in the creation of food that is low in nutrients and high in private patents owned by big corporations like Bayer (owner of Monsanto), Pioneer-Dupont, Syngenta, DOW Agrosciences, and others. This has created a scenario where the keepers of ancestral seeds started to be treated as criminals and the pollination of their harvest of transgenic plants.



The ancient cultural cycle of corn is now a dependent one. On one hand there is a biopolitical issue of the 'green revolution' where traditional practices of working the land were replaced by new technologies and cooperate business agreements. On the other hand, there is an issue of who has the capacity and power

deciding who lives, therefore also who dies. Michel Foucault refers to a kind of authority that is “endangering life,” hiding the evidence being responsible for the dead.⁷ According to this, foundations of corporations named are contaminating corn doing so guilty an act “endangering life.” a result such violent acts natural goods, a huge crisis has manifested itself the indigenous territories. Peasants are poverty part consequence the global competition, which has lowered the prices some food. The only possible way keeping producers the market is having more land where bigger quantities food can be produced. This leads to land concentration; a few actors having control important areas. Additionally, due to bad harvest the value their products is so low farming is unprofitable the peasants, who lose their lands to these economical disasters. that isn't the state Chiapas, which is a large producer corn, is also importing the same cereal South Africa. This type transgenic imported grain can be found the governmental rural stores Diconsa, competing thus endangering local varieties peasant production. this losing cycle, farmers are first pushed debt then the streets, forced to start working others the lands that used to be theirs; a result the systematic process impoverishment. All this is creating a downturn, wherein the indigenous young people are looking other options to live. Thus some them are migrating legally illegally to the United States other Mexican territories trying to find a job touristic places. One elder man Tenejapa said an interview, “Sometimes it looks the heart young people is a stone, it seems nothing is important them nothing is touching them anymore. They walk knowing where they are going, robots.”⁸ However, the middle such multilateral complexity some them are keeping the seeds, water, lands, wisdom, memory, alive.

III

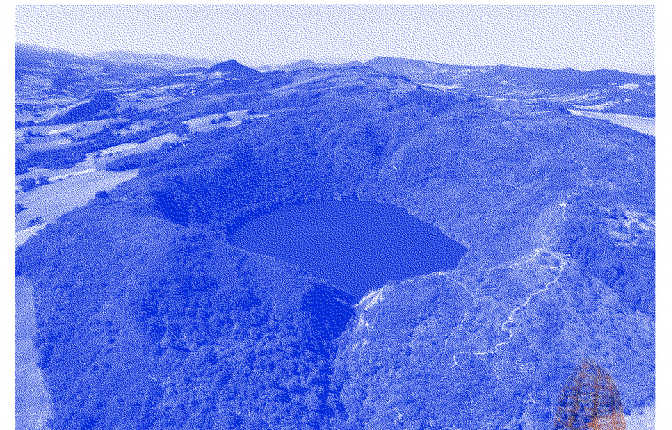
I feel-think offerings getting water food are a reminder us to be grateful what we have received previous generations take care this common goods. Reciprocity might be something as wonderful the kind work indigenous cultures do when they are preparing their meticulous ephemeral artistic compositions offering the water. They spend a lot time their hearts they know life ends when water is not flowing, this offering is the effort. When indigenous people are keeping corn, they are

cultivating the plant great respect an attention that goes ‘just growing it.’ They also sit around a fire the kitchen to reproduce face to face the teachings the meanings, the varieties the ways harvesting healing corn; all the wisdom is given this warm community-oriented touch. Learning to listen to the elders keeping touch people who still know natural ways to cultivate as well carry ancient seeds memories, are ways to remember. to resurge these practices today we need to act as well. We need to disseminate organic seeds the knowledge to take care them, appropriating available technologies to recover natural balance living (decontaminated) soils water.

This is a time creative collective praxis to protect life common goods; humanity is living a serious historical process. Something people every country could do is to finding community solidarity the act conserving the biodiversity food. example, we can get touch the seed collectives which are taking a significant labor keeping germplasm banks to conserve seeds low temperature environments, more importantly, growing the seeds the soil renewing each cycle. We could also be responsible least one seed survival, our rural soils we should research cultural production systems 'milpa' to associate the plants – this case corn beans others – to have abundant various harvests. the urban areas walls, roofs, pots are great hosts to plants; also schools parks. Reinforcing local exchange producers conscient consumers is also important. organizing time sustainable, organic, abundance sharing it children we are offering to the Earth humanity life, autonomy, richness. this way we make the noble effort to keep alive the rainbow seeds (varieties food) to give the future much colors flavors we have received earth our previous generations.

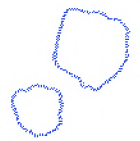
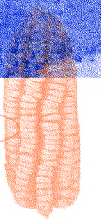
That is why taking myself serious is an act reciprocity, which means (inter) acting the power my heart is necessary my work my way living I am affecting others, known unknown. native people say it is the heart we can be aware the consequences our acts the territory we live ignoring other lands people. This is related developing fair economics politics that reduces inequality. It is important to highlight dealing the urgent problem ecocide means dealing the collateral disaster genocide – provoked that ecocide. Addressing such issues will demand we recognize, respect, embrace our cultural differences,

belief systems, traditions, languages ending any cultural supremacy dominance that requires the oppression starvation others. Reciprocity is a relationship living nature: plants, territory, animals, cultures to which we have a lot to re-appropriate learn, feeding ourselves is a process where awareness, memory, re-learning are needed (fig.6). The construction a good way living named *Lekil kuxlejal* (full, dignified fair life) Tzeltal language is not only a product harmonic relations nature society, we can only get there a collective transformation process where both concepts reciprocity ATATA *ich'el ta muk* are present both a local and/or global scale, political intimate acts public transnational reciprocal agreements.



Reinterpreted by Camilo García A.

Guatavita, Col.



Footnotes

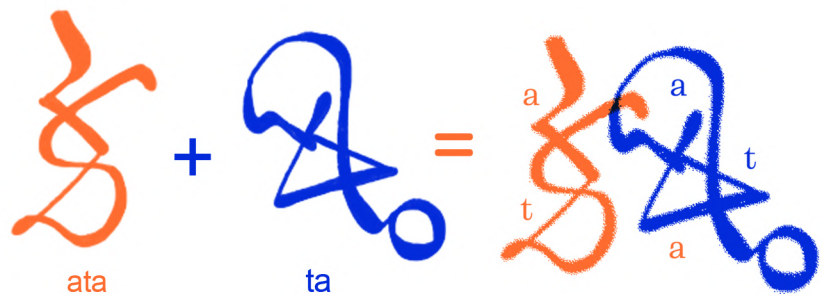
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“This is a time for creative collective praxis to protect life and common goods”

NO BODY CAN LIVE WITHOUT OTHERS

While mapping your wor(l)d for the future have in mind this:

How would it be to grow a wor(l)d for the future?

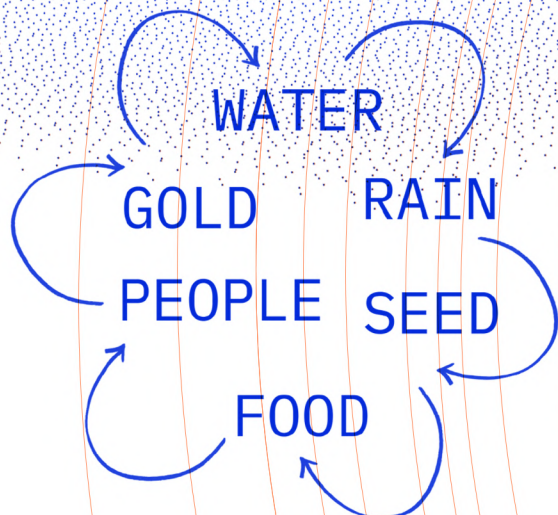


(give) ata: primordial pond (water)
 (recive) ta: tillage (harvest)

What's the common ground?

I give myself and you give yourself

RATHER THAN BORDERS, WE NEED CONNECTORS, LINKS, BONDS, HINGES ...

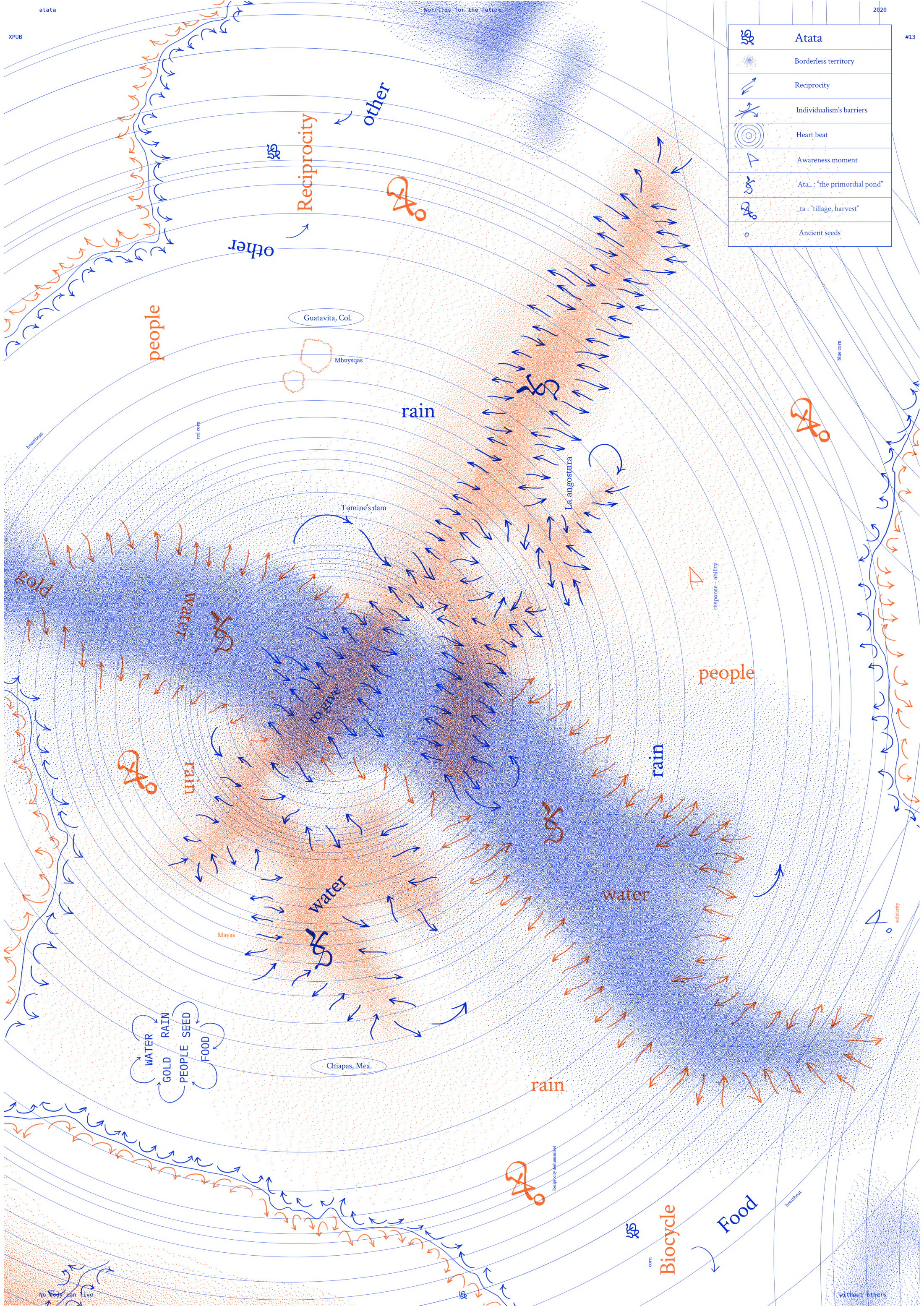


how to avoid individuality borders?

is there space for real diversity?

how is my brain communicating with my heart beat?

	Atata
	Borderless territory
	Reciprocity
	Individualism's barriers
	Heart beat
	Awareness moment
	Ata: "the primordial pond"
	_ta: "tillage, harvest"
	Ancient seeds



gold

people

Guatavita, Col.

Mhuysqas

rain

Tomine's dam

La angostura

water

people

rain

rain

water

water

Mayas

Chiapas, Mex.

rain



Biocycle

Food

corn

No body can live

without others

Punctuation is not merely linguistic, but imaginistic and political. It creates conflict and misunderstanding. From its presence in Philosophical texts to Trump tweets punctuation alters words. You're invited to alter the punctuation in this text by filling in the blank brackets "()" and see for yourself how it affects your understanding and perception.

! / ?

Original Contribution by Nina Power

Part 1: ()

"The entire thrust of the LTI The Language of the Third Reich was towards visualisation, and if this process of visualizing could be achieved with recourse to Germanic traditions, by means of a runic sign, then so much the better. And as a jagged character the rune of life was related to the SS symbol, and as an ideological symbol also related to the spokes of the wheel of the sun, the swastika ... position: the question mark – the most important of all punctuation marks. A position in direct opposition to National Socialist intransigence and self-confidence ... From time to time it is possible to detect, both amongst individuals and groups, a characteristic preference for one particular punctuation mark. Academics love the semicolon; their hankering after logic demands a division which is more emphatic than a comma, but not quite as absolute a demarcation as a full stop. the sceptic declares that it is impossible to overuse the question mark." – 'Punctuation' from The Language of the Third Reich. Klemperer, Victor. Language of the Third Reich: LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii. Translated by Martin Brady. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

In the era of , we have forgotten about the politics of punctuation. Which mark or sign holds sway over us in the age of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, emails, and text messages () If we take the tweets of as some kind of symptomatic indicator, we can see quite well that it is the exclamation mark – () – that dominates. A quick look at his tweets from the last 48 hour period shows that almost all of them end with a single declarative sentence or word followed by a '()': 'Big trade imbalance ()', 'No more ()', 'They've gone CRAZY ()', 'Happy National Anthem Day ()', 'BILLY GRAHAM ()', 'IF YOU DON'T HAVE STEEL, YOU DON'T HAVE A COUNTRY ()', (we shall leave the matter of all caps for another time), '\$800 Billion Trade Deficit-have no choice ()', 'Jobless claims at a 49 year low ()' and so on ... you get the picture. exclamation mark is the equivalent of a boss slamming his fist down on the table, an abusive partner shouting at a tentative query, an exasperated shock jock arguing with an imaginary opponent. It is the exclamation mark as the final word, which would not be so frightening if final word was not also backed up by , the US army, the , court and prison system, vast swathes of the US media and electorate, and multiple people around him too afraid to say 'no.' This is the exclamation mark as apocalypse, not the '()' of , , , , or ironic puncture. This is the exclamation of doom.

The Sturm and Drang needed an unusually large number of exclamation marks, suggests , and, though you might suspect the LTI (Lingua Tertii Imperii – the language of the Third Reich as calls it) would adore the exclamation mark, "given its fundamentally rhetorical nature and constant appeal to the emotions," in actual fact "they are not at all conspicuous" in Nazi writings. Klemperer, Victor. Language of the Third Reich: LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii. Translated by Martin Brady. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Why did the Nazis not need the exclamation mark () states, "t is as if [the LTI] turns everything into a command or proclamation as a matter of course and therefore has no need of a special punctuation mark to highlight the fact – where after all are the sober utterances against which the proclamation would need to stand out ()" Klemperer, Victor. Language of the Third Reich: LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii. Translated by Martin Brady. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

This point alone should herald a terrible . "Sober utterances" – from rational debate, to well-researched news, to public and open discussion – when these go, the exclamation marks will go too, because there will be no opposition* left to be falsely outraged against. There will be no critical press, no free thought, no social antagonism, because anyone who stands against the dominant discourse will disappear, and



Donald Trump

U.S flag

Part 2: ()

Are we today in need of more question mark() 🤔 describes, as above, the question mark as being “in direct opposition to National Socialist intransigence and self-confidence.”⁵ Klemperer, Victor. *Language of the Third Reich: LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii*. 74. The question mark is itself a question, a kind of collapsed exclamation mark. A question mark can be an act of aggression or interruption: ‘oh really()’ But it can also function as a kind of pause, a break in the horrible flow, the babble, the endless lies. The question mark is the person who says ‘hang on, what is being said here()’, ‘what is happening()’, ‘is this okay()’ It is the question of the body that stands against the crowd, head bowed, frightened, but compelled by an inner question of their own – ‘is this the right thing, what they are saying()’ It is the feeling and the admission that one doesn’t know, and the intuition that there might not be a simple answer to the situation. We are surrounded by people who want to give us their 🗣️, who tell us how things work, what we should think, how we should be, how we should behave. There are too few Socratic beings, and far too many 👍, 🤔, 🙄, 😬, confidence 🤔. We want to be nice, but we end up getting played. Anyone who claims to have ‘the full picture’ is someone who wants an image of the world to dominate👑 you so you shut up or give them something they want. They are not your friends.

How to understand the question mark as a symbol, then, of trust() There must be room for exploration, of a mutual, tentative openness.👉 A place where it is possible to say ‘I don’t know’ and not feel 🤔 or 🙄, or 😬, or 🤔. The internet is so often a place where people are shunned and shamed for asking questions, as if ignorance wasn’t a condition for knowledge, and as if we never wanted anyone to go beyond the things everybody already understands. Sometimes ‘🤔’ is in fact the greatest kind of 🗣️, and sometimes it is the most noble political strategy.👉 Philosophy and psychoanalysis tells us that, in any case, we in fact know less than we think we do know. Knowledge and understanding are not transparent processes: we bury and forget, we lose the ability to ask questions of ourselves, and we when we think we understand ourselves this is when we dismiss others. We want to think that we are solely good, that we have the ‘right position,’ and that the others are wrong. But if we give up on our inner question mark, we become rigid, like the exclamation mark of condemnation. We forget that other people think differently👑 and that not everyone must think the same thing. We forget about friendship, flexibility, and forgiveness.

If we do not give ourselves enough time to think about the politics* of punctuation, we run the risk of being swept away on a 🗣️ of someone else’s desire.👉 We become passive 🗣️ and stooges. We become victims of the malign desires of others to silence us, to put us down, to make us terrified and confused. Punctuation is not merely linguistic, but imagistic and political👉 through and through. The () and the () are signs among other signs, but their relation and their power course through us when we are least aware of it. When we are face to face, we can use our expressions, our 🗣️ as a whole, to dramatize these marks, with a raised eyebrow, a 🗣️, a shrug – a complex combination of the two marks can appear in and about us. But we are apart much of the time, and we must rely on markers that do not capture our collective understanding. We must be in a mode of play with the words and the punctuation we use, to keep a certain openness, a certain 😬: not the cruelty of online life or the declarations👑 of the 🗣️, but the delicate 😬 that includes the recognition that jokes are always 🗣️, and that we live permanently on the edge of 🗣️, but that we must be able to play if we are able to understand our 🗣️, and, at the same time, the possibility of living together differently.👑

reinterpreted by Clara Gradel

Links to other wor(l)ds:

- 👉 Otherness
- 👉 Practical vision
- 👉 Hope
- 👉 Eco-Swaraj
- 👉 Tense
- 👉 Atata
- 👉 Liquid
- 👉 Otherness



The Language of the Third Reich by Victor Klemperer

INTERPRETATION

In the essay undecidability becomes the key to understand conflicts in contemporary culture. It shows how our imagination and vision are challenged by overflowing external inputs. The author, Silvia Bottiroll, mainly highlights the unexpected statements of artwork, which tend to have imaginary and unknown aspects in circumstances of production, performance, and appreciation. Performative art and curation are especially mentioned as good instances of the birth of the undecidability, since they embrace unpredictable moments when participants add new values on the work, not on purposes.

Upon Silvia's essay, I responded, weaving the open and romantic context of Undecidability with immaterial labour. In the essay the imaginations and multiplicities are dealt with as crucial keys for being undecidable. But then I contemplated whether these actually encompass intangible activities.

Artists think, read, discuss, organise their ideas and plans. In order to do so they need some personal rituals into emotions...In my artistic response I spread my own narratives about how the notion is entangled with such intangible labours. The response is expressed with the 'and...and...and' logic, which she explained as a key logic of how the Undecidability works. Another undecidable moment when imaginaries are amplified is when artists make immaterial efforts.. Maybe that's why the value of art can't be easily estimated.

Original text by Silvia Bottirolli

Original artist response by Jozef Wouters

Reinterpreted by Nami Kim (XPUB, Piet Zwart Institute)

UNDECIDABILITY

Silvia Bottioli, Phd, is a contemporary performing arts curator and researcher. Her particular interests are in the dynamics of collaboration and collective creation, in the political and ethical values of performance, in the societal implication of artistic creation, spectatorship, and in the issues of curating and rethinking the art institutions. Bottioli has worked as a producer for the theatre company Societas Raffaello Sanzio and has supervised diverse critical, curatorial, and educative projects - rethinking possible modalities for knowledge production and sharing in the fields of performing arts and collaborating with a.o. DAS Theatre in Amsterdam, The School of Visual Theatre in Jerusalem, Homo Novus Festival in Riga, Gent University, Aleppo in Brussels. From 2012 to 2016 she was the artistic director of Santarcangelo Festival. Currently, she leads the Curating Performance Art master at IUAV University of Venice.

MULTIPLYING THE VISIBLE

The word undecidable appears in Six Memos for the Next Millennium written by Italo Calvino in 1985 for his Charles Eliot Norton poetry lectures at Harvard University. In the last months of his life Calvino worked feverishly on these lectures, but died in the process. In the five memos he left behind, he did not only open up on values for a future millennium to come but also seemed to envision future as a darkness that withholds many forms of visibility within.

Calvino's fourth memo, Visibility, revolves around the capacity of literature to generate images **and** to create a kind of "mental cinema" where fantasies can flow continuously. Calvino focuses on the imagination as: "The repertory of what is potential; what is hypothetical; what does not exist **and** has never existed; and perhaps will never exist but might have existed." The main concern that he brings forth lies within the relation between contemporary culture **and** imagination: the risk to definitely lose, in the overproduction of images, the power of bringing visions into focus with our eyes shut **and** in fact of "thinking in terms of images."

In the last pages of the lecture, he proposes a shift from understanding the fantastic world of the artist, not as indefinable, but as undecidable. With this word, Calvino means to define the coexistence **and** the relation, within any literary work, between three different dimensions. The first dimension is the artist's imagination – a world of potentialities that no work will succeed in realizing. The second is the reality as we experience it by living. Finally, the third is the world of the actual work, made by the layers of signs that accumulate in it. Compared to the first two worlds it is "also infinite, but more easily controlled, less refractory to formulation." He calls the link between these three worlds "the undecidable, the paradox of an infinite whole that contains other infinite wholes."

For Calvino, artistic operations involve, by the means of the infinity of linguistic possibilities, the infinity of the artist's imagination, **and** the infinity of contingencies. Therefore, "[the] attempts to escape the vortex of multiplicity are useless." In his fifth memo, he subsequently focuses on multiplicity as a way for literature to comprehend the complex nature of the world that for the author is a whole of wholes, where the acts of watching **and** knowing also intervene in the observed reality **and** alter it. Calvino is particularly fascinated by literary works that are

built upon a combinatory logic or that are readable as different narratives. The lecture revolves around some novels that contain multiple worlds **and** make space for the readers' imaginations. The common source to all these experiments seems to rely in the understanding of the contemporary novel "as an encyclopedia, as a method of knowledge, and, above all, as a network of connections between the events, the people, **and** the things of the world."

Therefore, let's think visibility **and** multiplicity together, as: a multiplication of visibilities. They are traits specific to artistic production **and** define a context for the undecidable, or rather for undecidability, as the quality of being undecidable. Calvino seems to suggest that literature can be particularly productive of futures, if it makes itself visible **and** multiple. Which is to say, if it doesn't give up on involving radically different realities into its operation modes **and** doesn't fade out from the scene of the 'real' world. We might stretch this line of thought a bit further **and** propose that art's potentiality is that of multiplying the visible as an actual counterstrategy to the proliferation of images that surrounds us. A strategy that is capable of producing different conditions of visibility. Embracing what we are capable to see but also think **and** imagine, to fantasise **and** conceptualise; **and** bringing into existence different configurations of public spaces, collective subjectivities, **and** social gatherings.

ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL WORLDS

In fact, undecidability is a specific force at work that consciously articulates, redefines, or alters the complex system of links, bounds, **and** resonances between different potential and actual worlds. In this sense, undecidability is a quality specific to some artworks within which the three worlds that Calvino describes meet and yet remain untouched, autonomous, recognizable.

An artwork can indeed create a magnetic field where different actual worlds coexist **and**, by living next to each other yet not sharing a common horizon, generate a potential world. Then 'potential' does not mean 'possible.' In fact, something is possible when it contains **and** under certain terms performs the possibility of its actualisation, a world is potential when it can maintain its potentiality **and** never actualize itself into one actual form. In particular, the potentiality generated by undecidable artworks is grounded in a logic of addition and contradiction that is specific of art. A logic of '**and... and... and...**' as opposite to the logic of 'either... or...' that seems to rule reality.

Artworks are places where contradictory realities can coexist without withdrawing or cancelling each other out. They can be sites of existence **and** of experience where images let go of their representational nature and just exist as such. None of the images of an artwork are being more or less real than the others, no matter whether they come as pieces of reality or as products of individual or collective fantasies. It is the art(work) as such that creates a ground where all the images that come into visibility share the same gradient of reality, no matter whether they harmoniously coexist or are radically conflicting.

If every work builds up complete systems that are offered to its visitors or spectators to enter into – if the invitation of art is often that of losing the contact with known worlds in order to

practices its undecidability. Here, spectators are invited to enter the work's fictional world carrying with themselves the so-called real world **and** all their other fictional worlds; a space is created where all these worlds are equally welcomed. The artwork may then be navigated either by only choosing one layer of reality, or by continuously stepping from one world to another – different dimensions are made available without any form of hierarchy or predicted relations. Such dynamics seems to occur in performative works in particular, as the contemporaneity of production, consumption, **and** experience that is typical of performance intensifies the possibility of undecidable links between different realities. Moreover, in the live arts the curatorial context is normally visible as well **and** provides one more layer to the work by framing or mediating it.

AZDORA

A good example of an undecidable artwork is Markus Öhrn's Azdora, a long-term project that was initiated and coproduced by Santarcangelo Festival in 2015. As the festival artistic director at that time I had the chance to follow and support the project. In particular, what struck him was the figure of the 'azdora,' a dialect word that means the 'holder' of the house and of the family – the woman who is in charge of the domestic life **and** of the labours of care. This figure is at the same time powerful, subordinate, **and** even repressed: through her devotion, she is sacrificed to the family and to the care of the relationships that keep it together. Interested in investigating this feminine figure **and** the possibility that it suggests of a matriarchal societal structure, the artist made a call for 'azdoras' to work together with him on the creation of a series of rituals **and** later on a concert. Both the rituals **and** the concert revolve around the possibility of emancipation **and** the exploration of the wild, even destructive side of the figure of the Azdora. Twenty-eight women committed to a long-term project together with Markus Öhrn **and** dived into his imagery **and** artistic world made of diverse ingredients among which were the tattoo culture, the cult of bodybuilding, and the noise music practice. At the same time, the 'azdoras' were asked to bring in their own ingredients; imageries, concerns, **and** desires. Together with the artist and the female musician ?Alos **and** with the mediation of the festival, they embarked into the adventure of entering a place that did not exist yet.

Creating a new set of rules and behaviours for themselves **and** for the spectators who would eventually join their rituals, attend their noise concert, or bump into their interventions in the public space during the festival period.

Similar to other artistic projects that one could trace back to the practice of undecidability, Azdora mingles different realities and fantastic worlds **and** also activates a participatory dynamic, yet preserving "the grey artistic work of participatory art." In other words, it creates and protects a space of indeterminacy. In fact, Azdora is at the same time a performative picture, an artistic fantasy, a community theatre work, an emancipatory process, an ongoing workshop, a social ritual, **and** a concert. If the coexistence of different media already implies different angles, durations, discourses, **and** forms of spectatorship, the performance itself keeps an undecidable bound between its real **and** fictional ontologies. The performative work of Azdora is then intrinsically 'political' according to Rancière's definition of 'metapolitics': a destabilising action that produces a conflict vis à vis what is thinkable **and** speakable. Azdora allows different interpretations **and** produces conflicting discourses, yet remaining untouched. This does not necessarily mean complete though as, on the contrary, it is generating a multiplicity of different gazes that are all legitimate **and** complete but yet do not exhaust the work. This is what makes the performance itself unfulfilled **and** thus incomplete **and** open.

A MULTIPLICITY OF GAZES

An undecidable artwork is, in other words, a site where different **and** even contradictory individual experiences unfold and coexist, with no hierarchical structure **and** no orchestration. It is a site where spectators' gazes are not composed into a common horizon but are let free to wildly engage with all the realities involved, connecting or not connecting them, **and** in the end to experience part of the complex 'whole of wholes' that is the artwork (while being aware or unaware of the existence of other wholes **and** of other gazes).

What is peculiar to this kind of artworks then, **and** what within them can produce an understanding of the place of art of its politics today, is that they generate a multiplicity of gazes **and** of forms of spectatorship that also coexist one next to the other without mediating between their own positions points of view. The multiplicity of gazes produced **and** gathered by undecidable artworks does not compose itself into a community, as there is no 'common' present. Rather, it generates a radical collectivity based on multiplicity **and** on conflicting positions that are not called to any form of negotiation, but just to a cohabitation of the space of the work. Spectators **and** their views and imaginations are acknowledged as equal parts of a collective body that exist next to each other. They don't fuse in one common thought **and** don't see or reflect one common image, yet effect each other by their sheer presence and existence, operating as a prism that multiplies the reality it reflects. A circulation over which no one – not even the artist – exercises a full control. The place of the author is then challenged responsibility is shared with the audience not as a participant, but rather as an unknowable undecidable collective body that receives, reverberates, **and** twists it.

Multiple forms of public spaces **and** collective subjectivities thus arise and start inhabiting a productive time that goes much beyond the artwork itself **and** is still loaded by the specific geography of infinities that it has produced. The kind of collective body that undecidability produces could of course be seen as an image of a possible or future societal structure, but it is rather an enigmatic subject: it is not there to actualize itself but to keep being a sheer, glimmering potentiality. Indeed, as a practice of undecidability, art produces a collectivity, a future time, an elsewhere, but does not claim any agency over them. It rather operates in a regime of prefiguration, which is to say it does not tend towards a pre-existing, visible image. On the contrary, it proceeds in the darkness in order to produce different forms of visibility within it.

Undecidability could then be detached from art **and** applied to curation, instituting processes or even to politics at large: the unfolding of its resonances **and** consequences already opens this possibility and even beckons it. Nevertheless, acknowledging it as specific to art, and thus as a means without ends, seems to better protect the inner nature **and** the intact potentiality of a quality that does not make itself available for any use **and** does not serve any agenda, but stays autonomous operates by creating its own conditions all over again.

Ultimately, a political dimension does spring from an art that practices its undecidability **and** from its encounter with a multiplicity of gazes. Preserving it is possible also by curating the relation between the artworks **and** their spectators and by setting the conditions for an intensity that can last in time reverberate much wider **and** much longer than in the actual shared space **and** time of the performance. Through the combination of the encounter between undecidable art, multiplicity of gazes, **and** a curatorial dimension a condition of existence is produced that is intrinsically **and** utterly political.

If you say the word undecided I see someone walking around, restless, searching. But if you say the word undecidability I see someone who is standing still.

Someone standing next to something in doubt.

(...)

It seems to be a choice, an ability: the ability to linger, to remain undecidable. It makes me think of a balancing act, a thing that is not yet in its final position, has not fallen and, maybe never will – forever tilting in a situation that is deliberately undecidable.

(...)

In fact undecidability needs to be a choice in order to become a value, an ability, an attitude.

(...)

Undecidability can be found by looking for weakness in one's own work, standing next to it, pointing to its vulnerability. People say this is my weakness: I stand next to my work and talk about it. It might be true.

But that is the weakness I am looking for. Together with an audience, I want to look at the work in a state of doubt. I need to stand next to it, looking at it and looking with it, doubting it and doubting with it. This position of doubt, often literally on the right hand side of the work, is the state I want to be in.

(...)

In a letter written to his patrons, Michelangelo complains that the Vatican is forcing him to provide a wooden scale model of his design for Saint-Peters Cathedral. There was a fear he would die without completing the project and his vision would be lost without a precise scale model. In his letter Michelangelo writes that he prefers clay because it can be remodeled easier while wood finalizes the design too much and leaves no space for doubt.

(...)

Now I have to think of a chair we placed on a playground in a social housing neighbourhood in Brussels. I did a project there called [i] All Problems Can Never Be Solved[i] which began as a fictional architecture office called 'Bureau des Architectes', that was working in and with the neighbourhood for six months. During that project someone asked us for more places in the neighborhood playground for the parents to sit to watch their children. So we placed a chair that doesn't decide where one should sit.



Jozef Wouters has been active as a scenographer and artist since 2007. Wouters often departs from questions and ideas that gradually take shape inside and outside the boundaries of making. Strategic spaces thereby enter into dialogues with social processes and the power of the imagination; sometimes functional, sometimes committed or absurd, but always with a focus on the things that preoccupy him as an artist and as a person. Wouters' own work often relates to a specific location, such as *All problems can never be solved* (2012) for the Cité Modèle in Laeken and the *Zoological Institute for Recently Extinct Species* (2013) for the Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels, and his *Decoratelier* performance *INFINI 1-15* (2016) for the main auditorium at the Brussels City Theatre.

Hope by Gurur Ertem

I began thinking about hope on January 11th 2016, when a group of scholars representing Academics for Peace held a press conference to read the petition, "We Will Not be a Party to this Crime." The statement expressed academics' worries about Turkish government's security operations against the youth movement of the armed Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in the southeastern cities of Turkey. They were concerned about the devastating impact the military involvement had on the region's civilian population.¹ The petition also called for the resumption of peace negotiations with the PKK. In reaction, the President of the Turkish State deemed these academics "pseudo-intellectuals," "traitors," and "terrorist-aides."² On January 13, 2016, an extreme nationalist/convicted criminal threatened the academics in a message posted on his website: "We will spill your blood in streams, and we will take a shower in your blood."³

As I'm composing this text, I read that the indictment against the Academics for Peace has become official. The signatories face charges of seven and a half years imprisonment under Article 7 (2) of the Turkish Anti-Terror Act for "propaganda for terrorism." This afternoon, the moment I stepped into the building where my office is, I overheard an exchange between two men who I think are shop owners downstairs:

Article 7 (2) of Turkey's Anti-Terrorism Law: prohibits "making propaganda for a terrorist organisation". Is a vague and overly-broad article with no explicit requirement for propaganda to advocate violent criminal methods. It has been used repeatedly to prosecute the expression of non-violent opinions.

Political Freedom: 5/7 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-eu-ropes-make-it/turkeys-presidential-dictatorship/>

"I was at dinner with Sedat Peker."

"I wish you sent him my greetings."

I guess at first she is contextualizing her thoughts

*Quite hard to understand without the Turkish political background understanding
→ sad but true*

Sedat Peker: is a convicted Turkish criminal leader. He is also known for his political views that are based on Pan-Turkism. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sedat_Peker

Pan-Turkism is a movement which emerged during the 1880s among Turkic intellectuals of the Russian region of Shirvan (now central Azerbaijan) and the Ottoman Empire (modern day Turkey), with its aim being the cultural and political unification of all Turkic peoples. Pan-Turkism is often perceived as a new form of Turkish imperial ambition. Some view the Young Turk leaders who saw pan-Turkist ideology as a way to reclaim the prestige of the Ottoman Empire as racist and chauvinistic.

Deem: consider

Pseudo-intellectuals: fake-intellectuals

Depict: describe

Sedat Peker is the name of the nationalist mafia boss who had threatened the academics. I thought about the current Istanbul Biennial organized around the theme "A Good Neighbor." It is a pity that local issues such as living with neighbors who want to "take a shower in your blood" were missing from there.

I began taking hope seriously on July 16, 2016, the night of the "coup attempt" against President Erdoğan. The public still doesn't know what exactly happened on that night. Perhaps, hope was one of the least appropriate words to depict the mood of the day in a context where "shit had hit the fan." (I'm sorry I lack more elegant terms to describe that night and what followed).⁴ Perhaps, it was because, as the visionary writer John Berger once wrote: "hope is something that occurs in very dark moments. It is like a flame in the darkness; it isn't like a confidence and a promise."

Origin of the word 'Hope'. Maybe we can find some analogies in all the words' origins. Which of them come from primitive needs like ATATA??

*Hope as something which is always growing/emerging from a terrified/bad moment? More than an illusion or plan to make?
→ Yes! Like Pandora could finally find the hope at the very bottom of her chaotic box
→ cool image*

*shit had hit the fan: horrible disaster
→ ahahah thanks finally I got it!*

On November 4th, 2016, Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, the co-chairs of the HDP (The People's Democratic Party),⁵ were imprisoned. Five days later, the world woke up to the results of the US Presidential election, which was not surprising at all for us mortals located somewhere near the Middle East. I began to compile obsessively a bibliography on hope⁶ - a "Hope Syllabus" of sorts - as a response to the numerous 'Trump Syllabi' that started circulating online among academic circles.⁷ So, why "hope," and why now? How can we release hope from Pandora's jar? How can we even begin talking about hope when progressive mobilizations are crushed by sheer force before they find the opportunity to grow into fully-fledged social movements? What resources and visions can hope offer where an economic logic has become the overarching trope to measure happiness and success? How could hope guide us when access to arms is as easy as popcorn? Can hope find the ground to take root and flourish in times of market fundamentalism? What could hope mean when governments and their media extensions are spreading lies, deceptions, and jet-black propaganda? Can hope beat the growing cynicism aggravated by distrust in politics? In brief, are there any reasons to be hopeful despite the evidence? I don't expect anyone to be able to answer these questions. I definitely can't. I can only offer preliminary remarks and suggest some modest beginnings to rekindle hope by reflecting on some readings I've assigned myself as part of the "Hope Syllabus" I've been compiling for an ongoing project

I tentatively titled as "A Sociology of Hope." I am thankful that Words for the Future gives me the opportunity to pin down in some form my many scattered, contradictory, and whirling thoughts on hope.

According to Wiki, From 2013 to 2015, the HDP participated in peace negotiations between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The ruling AKP accuses the HDP of having direct links with the PKK.

« Which was not surprising at all for us mortals located somewhere near the Middle East. » Why?? Are there any surprising results of election?

→ I would say, because it's not a big surprise ending up with bad leaders/politics, is it?

→ Probably due to the incessant uprising of right-wing or populists parties? Or in general, relating to a wide-spreading politics that put economics behind earth-care? Tracing and redefining borders while not being concerned about climate change?

sheer: pure

aggravate: worsen

rekindle: recall, reawaken

In what follows, in dialogue with Giorgio Agamben's work, I argue that if we are true contemporaries, our task is to see in the dark and make hope accessible again. Then, I briefly review Chantal Mouffe's ideas on radical democracy to discuss how the image of a "democracy to come" is connected with the notion of hope as an engagement with the world instead of a cynical withdrawal from it regardless of expectations about final results or outcomes. I conclude by reflecting on how critical social thought and the arts could contribute to new social imaginaries by paying attention to "islands of hope" in the life worlds of our contemporaries.

Hope as a way to engage people to build a "democracy to come" - without expectations for the result. It's an ongoing process.

Do islands of hope mean, subjective thinking about hope?

→ A subjective thinking and also act-making. Regarding our future; in which we use hope as a light to help us move inside.

→ I think, it's just a metaphoric word! For saying a small part of the world in plenty of darkness

→ Yeess

Nowadays, for me, there are a lack of terms to actually define overrated/cliché words such as hope...

→ Agree! The actual situation is too unpredictable

Chantal Mouffe Radical Democracy <https://www.e-ir.info/2013/02/26/radical-democracy-in-contemporary-times/>

The Contemporaneity of "Hope"

In the essay "What is the Contemporary?" Agamben describes contemporaneity not as an epochal marker but as a particular relationship with one's time. It is defined by an experience of profound dissonance. This dissonance plays out at different levels in his argument. First, it entails seeing the darkness in the present without being blinded by its lights while at the same time perceiving in this darkness a light that strives but can not yet reach us. Nobody can deny that we're going through some dark times; it's become all we perceive and talk about lately. Hope—as an idea, verb, action, or attitude—rings out of tune with the reality of the present. But, if we follow Agamben's reasoning, the perception of darkness and hopelessness would not suffice to qualify us as "true contemporaries." What we need, then, is to find ways of seeing in the dark⁸.

Second level of dissonance Agamben evokes is related to history and memory. The non-coincidence with one's time does not mean the contemporary is nostalgic or utopian; she is aware of her entanglement in a particular time yet seeks to bring a certain historical sensibility to it. Echoing Walter Benjamin's conception of time as heterogeneous, Agamben argues that being contemporary means putting to work a particular relationship among different times: citing, recycling, making relevant again moments from the past, revitalizing that which is declared as lost to history.

Find the ways in the darkness through history!

→ yes, by remembering and being aware of the past

→ The past is part of the present.

In which point of the human development have we started "asking" for more than is needed? How do we define the progress?

The continuous improvement of human knowledge? Also when, in order to supply while being fed by population's ever-changing needs, did we start destroy the world?

I totally agree with this philosophy of contemporaneity.

Only in the case of climate change, we don't have a past example to cite, recycle or to make relevant. It's all about the present and future considerations.

Agamben's observations about historicity are especially relevant regarding hope. As many other writers and thinkers have noted, hopelessness and its cognates such as despair and cynicism are very much linked to amnesia. As Henry Giroux argues in *The Violence of Organized Forgetting*, under the conditions of neoliberalism, militarization, securitization, and the colonization of life worlds by the economic logic, forms of historical, political, and moral forgetting are not only willfully practiced but also celebrated⁹. Mainstream media media's approach to the news and violence as entertainment exploits our "negativity bias"¹⁰ and makes us lose track of hopeful moments and promising social movements. Memory has become particularly threatening because it offers the potential to recover the promise of lost legacies of resistance. The essayist and activist Rebecca Solnit underscores the strong relation between hope and remembrance. As she writes in *Hope in the Dark*, a full engagement with the world requires seeing not only the rise of extreme inequality and political and ecological disasters; but also remembering victories such as Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and Edward Snowden¹¹. To Solnit's list of positives I would add the post-Gezi HDP "victory" in the June 7, 2015 elections in Turkey and the Bernie Sanders campaign in the US. Without the memory of these achievements we can indeed only despair.

willfully: on purpose

Mainstream media > as mechanisms of forgetting. Yes, but on purpose or by accident?

→ difficult to state it, but I would say sometimes on purpose, in order to have the same (bad) results, as the case of the presidential results for example. What's your position?

→ Yes, not every time, but on purpose sometimes. Like, the news talks a lot about a rocket launch (only the fact, without its context) of N.Korea before election, so that the constituents hesitate a political change

→ Yes, and also the media doesn't tend to talk much about what went wrong in the past with political decisions if that doesn't work for a specific group of politics, I mean, they don't act as a tool for remembrance, they usually avoid past facts. I would say they work as a mechanism of forgetting. In fact, accumulating non-important news quickly is for me another process of forgetting, isn't it?

→ Yes yes, I got what you say

→ True, the structure of news itself has that characteristic. We can say, « that's the reason why we need a hyperlink! »

→ What do you mean?

→ I think, if we have some kind of system to see the relationship with other incidents (maybe through the hyperlink), we can easily find the hope!

→ True!

Although the media continually hype the "migration crisis" and "post-truth" disguising the fact there is nothing so new about them; it does not report on the acts of resistance taking place every day. Even when the media represent them, they convey these events as though the activists and struggles come out of nowhere. For instance, as Stephen Zunes illuminates, the Arab Uprisings were the culmination of slow yet persistent work of activists¹². Likewise, although it became a social reality larger than the sum of its constituents, the Gezi Uprising was the culmination of earlier local movements such as the Taksim Solidarity, LGBTQ, environmental movements, among numerous others. These examples ascertain that little efforts do add up even if they seem insignificant. We must be willing to come to terms with the fact that we may not see the 'results' of our work in our lifetime. In that sense, being hopeful entails embracing uncertainty, contingency, and a non-linear understanding of history. We can begin to cultivate hope when we separate the process from the outcome. In that regard, hope is similar to the creative process.¹³ In a project-driven world where one's sense of worth depends on "Likes" and constant approval from the outside, focusing on one's actions for their own sake seems to have become passé. But, I contend that if we could focus more on the intrinsic value of our work instead of measurable outcomes, we could find hope and meaning in the journey itself.

The contemporary sense of hope in those terms is to put different visions of hope in a space to talk to each other in some sort of "genealogy" of hope? Hope chatting? I mean, how hope envisions itself could interact with each other through time and context, it actually relates a lot with Atata. Don't you think? in terms of giving and receiving?

→ Agree, like we find a solution (a hope) from the ancient seed

→ Absolutely! And in general, from primitive life and needs, happiness was strictly related to needs fulfillment, rather than to anything additional than we really need, like today.

→ Well, for me Atata means being in relation to others by giving and receiving something. Not as a fact of an economic transaction, but more as a natural flow. So in this case putting together different visions of hope, the ones that went through history and the ones that came to each other in each mind as "islands of hope", will explore different inter-relational ways of hope that would come as solutions, outputs, ideas and so on. Somehow the Atata of hope becomes an awareness of the otherness.

Taksim Solidarity: It voices a yearning for a greener, more liveable and democratic city and country and is adamant about continuing the struggle for the preservation of Gezi Park and Taksim Square and ensuring that those responsible for police violence are held accountable. (<https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/29192>)

If democracy is ideal, what kind of democracy could we design?

In my ideal, I want schools, (free) hospitals, libraries and some sort of democratic media. These are reinventions of existing institutional models.

Camilo, however, suggests a different economic model; a change of daily routines...

What bridges can be built between "islands of hope" /

What are the processes that are used on these "islands of hope?"

Camilo: Collaborative; to collaborate with those who share your same ideas, but also, being open to working with others ideas, projects and beliefs. And that's in other words, accepting and converging with the otherness as well.

→ Yes, but remember C. Mouffe suggests that a good, functioning democracy must have "conflict and disagreement" also.

But in my ideal, less than we currently have.

→ Yes, antithetic forces are necessary...

For me, we need a democratic food market; everyone can get true nutritious information (is the harm of milk and meat true or just a city myth?)

I would like a repair and reuse culture!! NOTE: this might be a good question (what "island of hope" would you make) for the other groups when it comes to relating the different texts to each other.

Memory as a key to Hope. Remembrance > Remembering victories (what went well) in order to manage better through the dark as Agamen says?

→ For Covid situation (teleworking and limited trip...), we can't find a victory in anything! So desperate.

→ It's true, but we do have past pandemic experiences to draw from, of course, in a different context with other difficulties.

Embrace the uncertainty of hope as a result/definition?

→ It echoes the "Otherness" text. Both require the act of being open and patient.

→ Yes, in fact this is a key connection point.

→ Good! Can you say more about this connection?

→ Probably, having in mind that the recognition of the other takes

time, as well as embracing the uncertainty. Becoming aware of the blurred future in terms of hope. The «Otherness» text invites us to approach the world in a openminded manner.

constituents: voter

intrinsic: original, primary

Radical Politics and Social Hope

Over a series works since the mid-1980s, Chantal Mouffe has challenged existing notions of the “political” and called for reviving the idea of “radical democracy.” Drawing on Gramsci’s theorizations of hegemony, Mouffe places conflict and disagreement, rather than consensus and finality, at the center of her analysis. While “politics” for Mouffe refers to the set of practices and institutions through which a society is created and governed, the “political” entails the ineradicable dimension of antagonism in any given social order. We are no longer able to think “politically” due to the uncontested hegemony of liberalism where the dominant tendency is a rationalist and individualist approach that is unable to come to terms with the pluralistic and conflict-ridden nature of the social world. This results in what Mouffe calls “the post-political condition.” The central question of democracy can not be posed unless one takes into consideration this antagonistic dimension. The question is not how to negotiate a compromise among competing interests, nor is it how to reach a rational, fully inclusive consensus. What democracy requires is not overcoming the us/them distinction of antagonism, but drawing this distinction in such a way that is compatible with the recognition of pluralism. In other words, the question is how can we institute a democracy that acknowledges the ineradicable dimension of conflict, yet be able to establish a pluralist public space in which these opposing forces can meet in a nonviolent way. For Mouffe, this entails transforming antagonism to “agonism”¹⁴. It means instituting a situation where opposing political subjects recognize the legitimacy of their opponent, who is now an adversary rather than an enemy, although no rational consensus or a final agreement can be reached.

!!! The central question of democracy can not be posed unless one takes into consideration this antagonistic dimension.!!! (words made bold by Steve)

We should acknowledge the otherness and not judge others. Like in Otherness, Dutch mom doesn't need to judge Piranhas mom who left her child to play with a knife.

→ yes and also in those words having a different sense of conflict, giving them the name of an adversary rather than the enemy is being aware of the differences. And that's the otherness form of consciousness.

→ The otherness, in this case, the adversaries, must be recognized as a fundamental part of the whole democratic system. The purpose shouldn't be only the final agreement, but the clear representation of all needs and thoughts.

ineradicable: unable to be destroyed

come to terms with: to resolve a conflict with, to accept sth painful

Another crucial dimension in Mouffe’s understanding of the political is “hegemony.” Every social order is a hegemonic one established by a series of practices and institutions within a context of contingency. In other words, every order is a temporary and precarious articulation. What is considered at a given moment as ‘natural’ or as ‘common sense’ is the result of sedimented historical practices based on the exclusion of other possibilities that can be reactivated in different times and places when conditions are ripe. That is, every hegemonic order can be challenged by counterhegemonic practices that will attempt to disarticulate the existing order to install another form of hegemony.

Order as a something only temporary.

contingency: possible event

It may not be fair to chop a complex argument into a bite-size portion, but for this essay I take the liberty to summarize Mouffe’s concept of radical democracy as the “impossibility of democracy.” It means that a genuinely pluralistic democracy is something that can never be completely fulfilled (if it is to remain pluralistic at all). That is, if everyone were to agree on a given order it would not be pluralistic in the first place; there wouldn’t be any differences. This would culminate in a static situation that could even bring about a totalitarian society. Nevertheless, although it’s not going to be completely realized, it will always remain as a process that we work towards. Recognizing the contingent nature of any given order also makes it possible not to abandon hope since if there is no final destination, there is no need to despair. Laclau and Mouffe’s ideas about radical democracy as “a project without an end” resonate with the idea of hope: Hope as embracing contingency and uncertainty in our political struggles, without the expectation of specific outcomes or a final destination.

culminate in: end with a particular result

In the wake of the Jörg Haider movement in Austria, a right-wing mobilization against the enlargement of the EU to include its Muslim neighbors, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe addressed the concept of hope and its relation to passions and politics in a more direct manner¹⁵. They argued that it is imperative to give due credit to the importance of symbols—material and immaterial representations that evoke certain meanings and emotions such as a flag, a song, a style of speaking, etc.—in the construction of human subjectivity and political identities. They proposed the term “passion” to refer to an array of affective forces (such as desires, fantasies, dreams, and aspirations) that can not be reduced to economic self-interest or rational pursuits. One of the most critical shortcomings of the political discourse of the Left has been its assumption that human beings are rational creatures and its lack of understanding the role of passions in the neoliberal imaginary, as Laclau and Mouffe argue. It’s astounding how the Left has been putting the rationality of human beings at the center of arguments against, for instance, racism and xenophobia, without considering the role of passions as motivating forces. For instance, as I’m writing this text, the world is “surprised” by yet another election result—the German elections of September 24, 2017, when the radical right wing AfD entered the parliament as the third largest party. I agree with Mouffe that as long as we keep fighting racism, xenophobia, and nationalism on rationalistic and moralistic grounds, the Left will be facing more of such “surprises.” Instead of focusing on specific social and economic conditions

that are at the origin of racist articulations, the Left has been addressing it with a moralistic discourse or with reference to abstract universal principles (i.e. about human rights). Some even use scientific arguments based on evidence to prove that race doesn’t exist; as though people are going to stop being racist once they become aware of this information.

Jörg Haider: leader of The Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)

Europe's far-right vows to push referendum on Turkey's EU accession: <https://www.dw.com/en/europes-far-right-vows-to-push-referendum-on-turkeys-eu-accession/a-6142752>

the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) has harvested more than 20% of the vote by brandishing the spectre of “an invasion” of Turkish migrants who would threaten “the social peace.”, seems FPÖ always has been infriendly <https://voxeurop.eu/en/the-turk-austrias-favorite-whipping-boy/>

At the same time, as Laclau and Mouffe contend, hope is also an ingrained part of any social and political struggle. Nonetheless, it can be mobilized in very different and oppositional ways. When the party system of representative democracy fails to provide vehicles to articulate demands and hopes, there will be other affects that are going to be activated, and hopes will be channeled to “alt-right” movements and religious fundamentalisms, Laclau and Mouffe suggest. However, I argue that it’s not hope what the right-wing mobilizes. Even if it is hope, it is an “anti-social kind of hope” as the historian Ronald Aronson has recently put it¹⁶. I rather think that it is not hope but the human inclination for “illusion” that the right-wing exploits. During the Gezi protests in June 2013, I realized it would be a futile effort to appeal to reason to explain Erdoğan supporters what the protests meant for the participants. It was not a “coup attempt,” or a riot provoked by “foreign spies.” Dialogue is possible if all sides share at least a square millimeter of common ground, but this was far from the case. On June 1, 2013, the Prime Minister and the pro-government media started to circulate a blatant lie, now known as the “Kabataş lie.” Allegedly, a group of topless male Gezi protesters clad in black skinny leather pants attacked a woman in headscarf across the busy Kabataş Port (!) I don’t think even Erdoğan supporters believed it, but what was most troubling is that it did not matter whether it was true or not. The facts were irrelevant: the anti-Gezi camp wanted to believe it. It became imperative for me to revisit the social psychology literature as mere sociological analysis and political interpretations failed to come to terms with the phenomenon. I found out Freud had a concept for it: “illusion.”

Alt-right: The alt-right, an abbreviation of alternative right, is a loosely connected far-right, white nationalist movement based in the United States. (according to Wikipedia)

riot: behave violently in a public place

The right-wing's fear of embracing the outside makes people become blind and disappointed for the future. > But, this fear comes from the illusion (maybe true, maybe not.) > According to Freud, this illusion depends on how we draw it.

Although Freud’s concept of “illusion” is mostly about religion, it’s also a useful concept to understand the power of current political rhetoric. In everyday parlance, we understand illusions as optical distortions or false beliefs. Departing from this view, Freud argues illusions are beliefs we adopt because we want them to be true. For Freud illusions can be either true or false; what matters is not their veracity or congruence with reality but their psychological causes¹⁷. Religious beliefs fulfill the deeply entrenched, urgent wishes of human beings. As inherently fragile, vulnerable creatures people hold on to religious beliefs as an antidote to their helplessness¹⁸. Granted our psychological inclination for seeking a source of power for protection, it’s not surprising that the right-wing discourse stokes feelings of helplessness and fear continuously and strives to infantilize populations, rendering people susceptible to political illusions¹⁹. As the philosopher of psychology David Livingston Smith asserts, the appeal of Trump²⁰ (and other elected demagogues across the world) as well as the denial that he could win the elections come from this same psychological source, namely, Freud’s concept of illusion²¹. We suffer from an illusion when we believe something is the case just because we wish it to be so. In other words, illusions have right-wing and left-wing variants, and one could say the overblown confidence in the hegemony of reason has been the illusion of the Left.

Hegemony and illusion relate for me because hegemony is ideological, meaning that it is invisible. It is an expression of ideology which has been normalised.

Illusion, in religion, in otherness! The author said, “Everyone needed Jesus and if they didn't believe in him, they were deservedly going to eternal torment.”

veracity: accuracy

congruence: balance

infantilize: treat like a child

Critical Social Thought, Art, and Hope

As someone who traverses the social sciences and the arts, I observe both fields are practicing a critical way of thinking that exposes the contingent nature of the way things are, and reveal that nothing is inevitable.²² However, at the same time, by focusing only on the darkness of the times—as it has become common practice lately when, for instance, a public symposium on current issues in the contemporary dance field becomes a collective whining session—I wonder if we may be contributing to the aggravation of cynicism that has become symptomatic of our epoch. Are we, perhaps, equating adopting a hopeless position with being intellectually profound as the anthropologist Michael Taussig once remarked?

If critical social thought is to remain committed to the ethos of not only describing and analyzing the world but also contributing to making it a better place, it could be supplemented with studies that underscore how a better world might be already among us. It would require an empirical sensibility—a documentary and ethnographic approach of sorts—that pay attention to the moments when “islands of hope” are established and the social conditions that make their emergence possible.²³ One could pay attention to the overlooked, quiet, and hopeful developments that may help us to carve spaces where the imagination is not colonized by the neoliberal, nationalist, and militarist siege.

That is, for a non-cynical social and artistic inquiry, one could explore how communities E A make sense of their experiences and come to terms with trauma and defeat. These developments may not necessarily be present in the art world, but could offer insights to it. Sometimes communities, through mobilizing their self-resources, provide more meaningful interpretations T M O and creative coping strategies than the art world’s handling of these issues. It is necessary for us to understand how, despite the direst of circumstances, people can still find meaning and purpose in their lives. It is essential to explore these issues not only in a theoretical manner but through an empirical sensibility: by deploying ethnographic modes of research, paying close attention to the life worlds of our contemporaries to explore their intellectual, practical, imaginative, and affective strategies to make lives livable. Correspondingly, one could focus on the therapeutic and redeeming dimensions L of art as equally crucial to its function as social critique. For this, one could pay more attention to the significant role of poesis - the creative act that affirms our humanity and dignity —²⁴ to rework trauma into symbolic forms.

empirical: practical, not theoretical

One such endeavor I came across is the storytelling movement I observed in Turkey.²⁵ More and more people have taken up storytelling, and more and more national and international organizations are popping up. The first national storytelling conference took place last May at Yildiz University. I was struck when I went there to understand what was going on. People from all scales of the political spectrum were sitting in sort of an “assembly of fairy tales.” It has also struck me that while some journalists, the “truth tellers” are being imprisoned; imprisoned politicians are turning into storytellers, finding solace in giving form to their experiences through poesis. Selahattin Demirtaş, the co-chair of the People’s Democratic Party (HDP), penned three short stories while in prison since last November, which, I think are quite successful from a literary point of view. Alongside other essays and additional short stories, Demirtaş’s prison writings culminated in the recent publication *Seher* (September 2017)²⁶. The choice of the book’s title is also telling: In Turkish “Seher” means the period just before dawn when the night begins to change into day.

endeavor: attempt, effort

In *The Human Condition* the political philosopher Hannah Arendt addresses the question of how storytelling speaks to the struggle to exist as one among many; preserving one’s unique identity P, while at the same time fulfilling one’s obligations as a citizen in a new home country. Much of she wrote after she went to the US in 1941 as a refugee bears the mark of her experience of displacement and loss. And it’s at this time when she offers invaluable insights into the (almost) universal impulse to translate overwhelming personal and social experiences into forms that can be voiced and reworked in the company of others. It was, perhaps, Walter Benjamin who first detected the demise of the art of storytelling as a symptom of the loss of the value of experience. In his 1936 essay “The Storyteller” he reflects on the role of storytelling in community building and the implications of its decline. He observes that with the emergence of newspapers and the journalistic jargon, people stopped listening to stories but began receiving the news. With the news, any event already comes with some explanation. With the news and our timelines, explanation and commentary replaced assimilating, interpreting, understanding. Connections get lost, leading to a kind of amnesia, which leads, in turn, to pessimism and cynicism, because it also makes us lose track of hopeful moments, struggles, and victories. The power of the story is to survive beyond its moment and to connect the dots, redeeming the past. It pays respect and shows responsibility A to different temporalities and publics, that of the past and the future as well as today’s.

demise: end, death

Here, I’m not making a case for going back to narrative forms in performance or a call for storytelling above and beyond any other forms. The emphasis here is more on storytelling as an example of a social act of poesis rather than the product of narrative activity. The critical question for me today is can artists, curators, and social thinkers bring to life the stories that are waiting to be told? Sometimes, instead of focusing on how to increase visitors to our venues, it could be more rewarding to take our imagination to go visiting. I conclude my reflections on hope with a quote from Arundathi Roy:

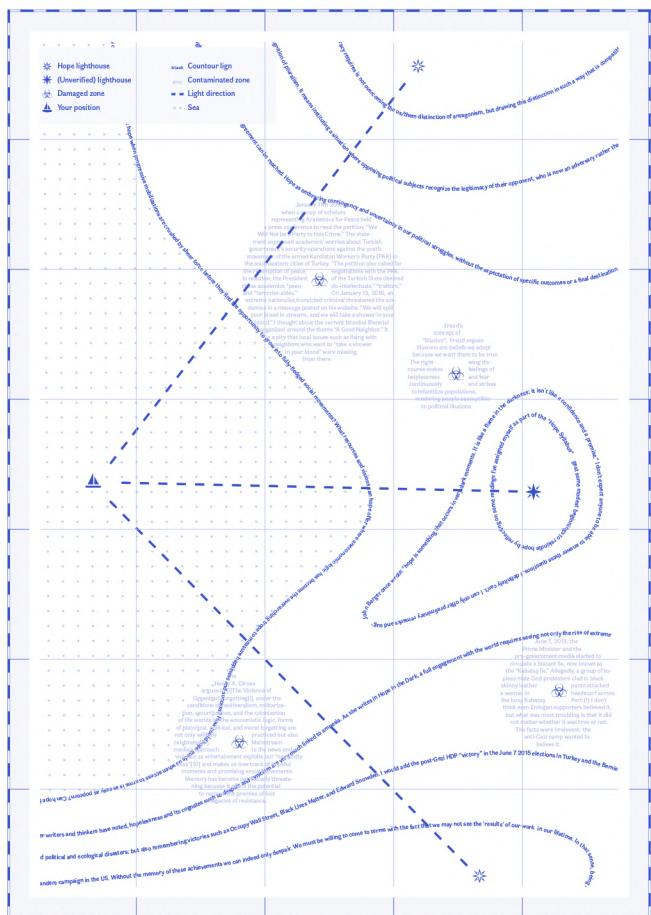
“Writers imagine that they cull stories from the world. I’m beginning to believe vanity makes them think so. That it’s actually the other way around. Stories cull writers from the world. Stories reveal themselves to us. The public narrative, the private narrative—they colonize us. They commission us. They insist on being told.”²⁷

I leave it to you for now to imagine the shapes it could take.

The recovery of humanity helps to approach hope > Like by storytelling (especially as the writer mentions it as art), which is warmer and left us to wonder > Connected to the idea of ATATA, let's refine nature.

« Hope » with annotations from XPUB1 students





You have discovered a small bottle, and inside, there is a treasure map entitled “The Hope Island”. On a small piece of paper that is folded inside is written:

This map, based on the discovery of “The Hope Island” by Gurur Ertem, was drawn after by Euna Lee, Piet Zwart Institut XPUB student. Ertem saw the necessity to find a light to face the current political and social darkness and this map briefly shows her adventure. The visit to this island is highly recommended, but also, Ertem encourages you to search for the undiscovered hope lighthouse and hope island!



Hope star:

This illustrates the destination of this map. Ertem considers it as a solution to overcome the darkness in our present and future life.

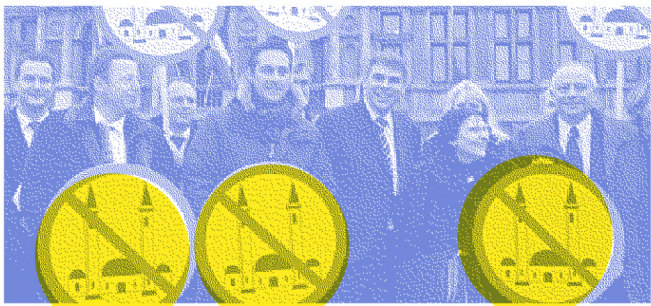


Darkness / Danger zone:

The political and social conflicts, such as Pan-Turkism or the movement against the inclusion of Turkey to the EU, are present as the Darkness.

To invite you to this journey, Euna prepared these printouts; a virtual map and a message. But also, fascinated by “recognition of pluralism”, one of the solutions to approach Hope, she made a website where you can experience this solution. To Ertem’s voice, the XPUB students add their own voices and further, various anonymous *x* (maybe you, your neighbours or a dinosaur) participate in this digital journey.

In parallel, as Ogutu Muraya’s way to brighten the darkness, you are equally invited to go back to Zero and to take time for reflection about hope.



Now, your eyes sparkle with curiosity! You put this map, old binoculars and some dried fish into a bag, and get on a sailing.



fig1. the far-right FPÖ, an anti-Muslim rally in Belgium
(source: article by *Joelle Stolz*, Voxeurop, 6.4.2010)

fig2. A flag of Kurdish workers Party (PKK) with armed Kurdish militants man a barricade, on 18 November 2015
(source: article by *Galip Dalay*, Middle east eye, 4.1.2016)

fig3. arrested Sedat Peker, Turkish criminal leader
(source: *Birgun*, 26.10.2016)

fig4. Taksim Solidarity, We are going to challenge all of our colors for our future, our children.
(source: *Take the square*, 28.5.2017)

fig5. the far-right FPÖ, an anti-Muslim rally in Belgium
(source: article by *Madelyn Gelpi*, Berkeley Public policy journal, 6.5.2016)

fig6. Pandora, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1881

- ☀ Hope lighthouse
- ☀ (Unverified) lighthouse
- ☠ Damaged zone
- ⚓ Your position

- black Countour lign
- grey Contamated zone
- Light direction
- Sea

I can we even begin talking about hope when progressive mobilizations are crushed by sheer force before they find the opportunity to grow into fully-fledged social movements?

ough no rational reasons or a final agreement can be reached. Hope as embracing contingency and uncertainty in our political struggles, without the expectation of specific outcomes or a final destination

ignition of pluralism. It means instituting a situation where opposing political subjects recognize the legitimacy of their opponent, who is now an adversary rather than

racy requires is not overcoming the us/them distinction of antagonism, but drawing this distinction in such a way that is compatib

January 11th 2016, when a group of scholars representing Academics for Peace held a press conference to read the petition, "We Will Not be a Party to this Crime." The statement expressed academics' worries about Turkish government's security operations against the youth movements of the armed Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) in the southeastern cities of Turkey. "The petition also called for the resumption of peace negotiations with the PKK. In reaction, the President of the Turkish State deemed these academics "pseudo-intellectuals," "traitors," and "terrorist-aides." On January 13, 2016, an extreme nationalist/convicted criminal threatened the academics in a message posted on his website: "We will spill your blood in streams, and we will take a shower in your blood." I thought about the current Istanbul Biennial organized around the theme "A Good Neighbor." It is a pity that local issues such as living with neighbors who want to "take a shower in your blood" were missing from there.

Freud's concept of "illusion", Freud argues illusions are beliefs we adopt because we want them to be true. The right-wing discourse stokes feelings of helplessness and fear continuously and strives to infantilize populations, rendering people susceptible to political illusions.

John Berger once wrote: "hope is something that occurs in very dark moments. It is like a flame in the darkness; it isn't like a confidence and a promise." I don't expect anyone to be able to answer these questions, I definitely can't. I can only offer preliminary remarks and suggest some modest beginnings to rekindle hope by reflecting on some readings I've assigned myself as part of the "Hope Syllabus"

June 1, 2013, the Prime Minister and the pro-government media started to circulate a blatant lie, now known as the "Kabataş lie." Allegedly, a group of topless male Gezi protesters clad in black skinny leather pants attacked a woman in headscarf across the busy Kabataş Port (!) I don't think even Erdoğan supporters believed it, but what was most troubling is that it did not matter whether it was true or not. The facts were irrelevant: the anti-Gezi camp wanted to believe it.

Henri A. Giroux argues in "The Violence of Organized Forgetting" under the conditions of neoliberalism, militarization, securitization, and the colonization of life worlds by the economic logic, forms of historical, political, and moral forgetting are not only willfully celebrated, but also practiced to the news and media's approach to violence as entertainment exploits our "negativity bias"[10] and makes us lose track of the painful moments and promising social movements. Memory has become particularly threatening because it offers the potential to recover the promise of lost legacies of resistance.

er writers and thinkers have noted, hopelessness and its cognates such as despair and cynicism are very much linked to amnesia. As she writes in Hope in the Dark, a full engagement with the world requires seeing not only the rise of extreme political and ecological disasters; but also remembering victories such as Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and Edward Snowden. I would add the post-Gezi HDP "victory" in the June 7 2015 elections in Turkey and the Bernie Sanders campaign in the US. Without the memory of these achievements we can indeed only despair. We must be willing to come to terms with the fact that we may not see the 'results' of our work in our lifetime. In that sense, being

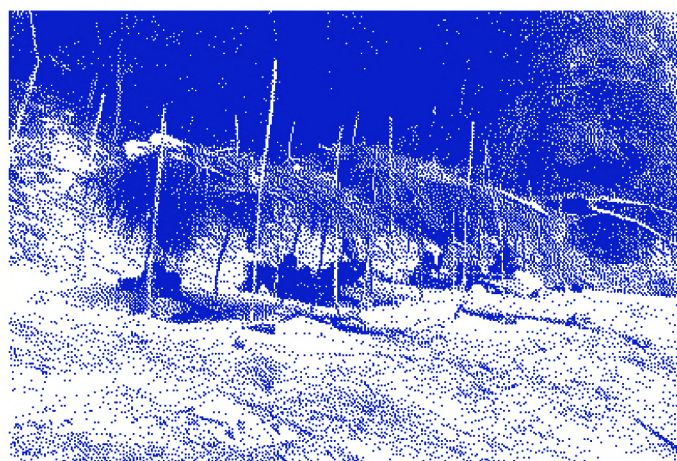


Please, notice: Some of the original references to the people and places along the story have been erased to make space for your individual perspective.

▼ Fig.1 (Background)

Location of Pirahã's Sites on Maici River, Brazil. Extract from Daniel Everett's documentation.

Otherness by [redacted]



▼ Fig.2

Acampamento Pirahã, próximo a Transamazônica. Rio Maici. Foto: Ezequias Hering, 1981

When I was 26, I moved to the [redacted], from [redacted], in order to study the language and culture of a people that were believed to be unrelated to any other people. I flew in a small missionary plane, a bumpy nausea-inducing ride, to meet [redacted] people for the first time. My body was weak; my brain was taut with anxiety and anticipation. The [redacted] are unrelated to any other. They speak a language that many linguists had unsuccessfully attempted to understand. My task would be to understand where little understanding currently existed. This encounter with these 'others' so unlike myself, was to be the defining experience for the rest of my life.

One of the greatest challenges of our species is alterity, 'otherness.' All cultures for reasons easy enough to understand fear other cultures. War and conflict have defined humans for nearly two million years. When we encounter others unlike ourselves, we frequently become uncomfortable, suspicious. A new neighbor from another country. A friend of our child who has a different color. Someone whose gender is not a simple binary classification. This is an old problem. Jesus himself fell under suspicion for befriending a woman thought to be a prostitute, Mary Magdalene. She was unlike the religious people of Jesus's day. An 'other.'

Those unlike ourselves may eat different food, be unintelligible to us when speaking to those more like themselves, build different-looking homes, or, in the view of some who most fears otherness, simply live 'wrongly.' To some, others are not only suspect, but their differences are morally unacceptable. When I first entered the [redacted] as a [redacted], this was my belief. Everyone needed [redacted], and if they didn't believe in him, they were deservedly going to eternal torment. In my encounter with the [redacted], though I was uneasy, I realize now, ironically, that I was actually the dangerous one, the one who came with insufficient respect, with an ego-centric and ethno-centric view of my own 'rightness.' How fortunate for me that this gentle people disabused me of so many of my silly beliefs. Though this years-long encounter with the Pirahã was to improve

▼ Otherness = Alterity

The "other of two". It is also increasingly being used in media to express something other than "sameness", or something outside of tradition or convention.

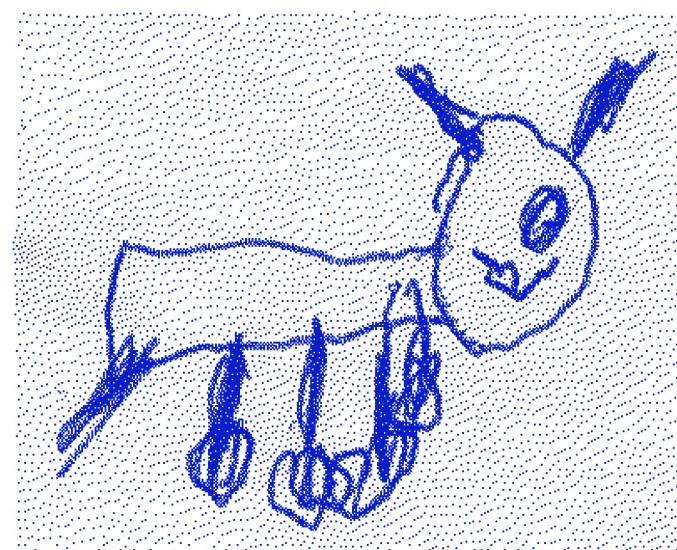
my life globally, it certainly didn't seem that way at first.

During my first day among the [redacted] I was taken by a young man to a fire by his hut. He pointed at a large rodent on the fire with its tongue still hanging out and a small pool of blood at the edge of the fire. The hair was burning off of the fresh kill. The young man uttered a then-unintelligible phrase: *Gí obáa?áí kohoáipi giisai?* Later I learned that this meant, "Do you know how to eat this?" And I also learned that if you don't want any offered food, you can simply say, "No, I don't know how to eat it." No one loses face. It is an easy, polite structure that allows you to avoid foods you don't want. Many other cultures, Western cultures for example, don't tend to be this polite. We often simply offer people things to eat and get offended if they refuse. Unlike among the [redacted], there is a more portent pressure in some Western cultures for a guest to eat whatever the host offers.

For almost all of us, we experience the world first through our mother. All that we touch, taste, hear, smell, see, and eventually come to know and understand begins with her and is mediated by her. As we develop of course we notice others close to our mother - our father, siblings, and others. But until our first experiences as individuals begin outside the home, our values, language, and ways of thinking all result from interactions with our mother and the select small group she is part of. These early apperceptions shape our subsequent lives. They lead not only to an individual sense of identity but also to a conception of what a 'normal identity' is. This is all very comfortable. We learn early on that new behavior and new information entail effort. Why listen to dissonant jazz when the steady 4/4 beat of country or rock is familiar? Why eat haggis instead of pot roast? Comfort food is just food that requires no gaining of acquired tastes. Why learn another language? Why make friends of a different color, a different sexual orientation, or a different nationality? Why should a professor make friends with a cowboy? These efforts go against the biological preference for expending as little energy as possible and maintenance of the status quo. The work of learning about otherness is worthwhile, but this is not always obvious initially.

When I first encountered the [redacted], I learned the language by pointing and giving the name in English. I would pick up a stick and say, "stick." The [redacted], most of them anyway, would give me the translation in their language. Then I might let the stick drop to the ground and say, "the stick falls to the ground" or, "I throw the stick away" or, "two sticks drop to the ground," and so on. I would transcribe the responses and say them back at least three times to the speaker, making sure I had them right. I was able to follow their translations and also write down their comments. But the occasional speaker would ignore my request and instead say something that turned out to be even more interesting. *Zaooí Zaohoaí saha?ai ?apaitíiso?aba?áigio hiahohaáti*, which means: "Do not talk with a crooked head. Talk with a straight head." The [redacted] wanted me to talk like a person, not like a bizarre foreigner. Like an American tourist in France, the Pirahã could not understand why I couldn't speak their language. Then one day a missionary plane had brought us some supplies in the jungle. Among those was lettuce. I was so excited to have greens. The [redacted] eat no greens and think of them as worm food. I was cheerfully eating lettuce from a bowl when a

my life globally, it certainly didn't seem that way at first.



▼ Fig.3

Drawing of [redacted] made by a Pirahã woman.

Linguists recognized long ago that the first rule of language is that 'we talk like who we talk with'. And other behavioral scientists have realized that 'we eat like who we eat with', 'we create like who we think with', and 'we think like who we think with'. Our earliest associations teach us not only how to think, create, talk, and eat, but to evaluate normal or correct thinking, talking, eating, and creating based on our narrow range of experiences. The crucial differences between others and our in-group are values, language, social roles, and knowledge structures. All else emerges from these, or so I have claimed in my own writings. Each builds on the others as we learn them in the context of familiarity, a society of intimates (i.e. our family or our village). This leads to a conceptualization of our own identity. For example, I know in some way that I am Dan. Yet no one, not even ourselves, fully understands what it means to be ourselves. The construction of our identity through the familiar leads us to think of what is not us, not our family, not our norm. Inevitably, as our experience expands we meet others that do not fit neatly into our expectations. These are 'the others.'

In 1990, [redacted] accompanied me to several [redacted] villages in order to conduct a pilot study of language learning among [redacted]. We set up cameras on a hut, in full view, with the permission of its occupants, and started filming. We both were in the film, talking to the adults about their beliefs and children's behavior. After we were done filming, we noticed something that we had not seen before, because it was happening behind us. A toddler, perhaps a year and half old, was playing with a sharp kitchen knife with a 30cm blade. He was swinging it nonchalantly, almost stabbing himself in his face, legs, and midsection; occasionally swinging it close to his mother's face and back. We initially assumed that the mother didn't see her toddler's dangerous toy. But then, as she was talking to another woman, the camera recorded the baby dropping the knife and starting to cry. Barely glancing backwards at her child, the mother casually leaned over, picked the knife up off the ground and handed it back to the baby, who returned gleefully to his quasi-stabbing of himself. This was a confrontation of values for Peter and myself, underscoring the otherness divide between the [redacted] and us. Wasn't the [redacted] mother concerned about her child's welfare? She was indeed. But to the [redacted] a cut or non-life-threatening injury is the price that occasionally must be paid in order to learn the skills necessary to survive in the jungle. Would a Dutch mother give her child a sharp knife as a toy, believing that any piercing of the child's flesh would be compensated for by its contribution to the child's development? Could she even respect this other (m)otherness - the otherness at the root of our lives?



▼ Fig.4

Daniel Everett's first annotations on Pirahã's spoken language, July 1995

When I first encountered the [redacted], I learned the language by pointing and giving the name in English. I would pick up a stick and say, "stick." The [redacted], most of them anyway, would give me the translation in their language. Then I might let the stick drop to the ground and say, "the stick falls to the ground" or, "I throw the stick away" or, "two sticks drop to the ground," and so on. I would transcribe the responses and say them back at least three times to the speaker, making sure I had them right. I was able to follow their translations and also write down their comments. But the occasional speaker would ignore my request and instead say something that turned out to be even more interesting. *Zaooí Zaohoaí saha?ai ?apaitíiso?aba?áigio hiahohaáti*, which means: "Do not talk with a crooked head. Talk with a straight head." The [redacted] wanted me to talk like a person, not like a bizarre foreigner. Like an American tourist in France, the Pirahã could not understand why I couldn't speak their language. Then one day a missionary plane had brought us some supplies in the jungle. Among those was lettuce. I was so excited to have greens. The [redacted] eat no greens and think of them as worm food. I was cheerfully eating lettuce from a bowl when a

Fill the boxes along the text. Start first with your name. The following missing words could refer to people, places or actions you could have encountered throughout your life experience. Different paths will drive the individuals to only one, shared opportunity.

Fill the boxes along the text. Start first with your name. The following missing words could refer to people, places or actions you could have encountered throughout your life experience. Different paths will drive the individuals to only one, shared opportunity

friend walked up and said, "That's why you don't speak [redacted] yet. We don't eat leaves."

Fun Fact All Pirahã people know the name of every single species of flora and fauna in their environment

In other words, the [redacted] man believed that language emerges from culture as well as the entirety of our behavior as members of a society. This is a belief I have come to as well. They felt we could not learn their language at native level unless we became also part of their culture, and native level is what matters to them. There are no prizes for merely speaking their language intelligibly. This was against everything I had been taught about language in university courses, and it underscored the gap between them and me. Languages and cultures interact symbiotically, each affecting the other. Our sense of self and of society emerges from our enveloping culture and from the language and accents we hear most during our childhood development. The speed of our conversations and the structures of our interactions with others are formed in local communities of people like ourselves. The most comfortable conversations are with people who sound like you, put their phrases together as you do, and who reach similar conclusions.



Fig.5 For Pirahã, there are no words for "good night". They would say: "Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes".

There are many ways in which we confront otherness. Strangers are not always people. Nature is often a foreigner to most of us and we can learn by submitting ourselves to it. One reason that I annually read the American Henry David Thoreau's Walden, my favorite book in all of American literature, is that Thoreau was so articulately different from me. That is irrelevant to Thoreau's account of his year alone. His year was a brilliant experiment. Thoreau did not remain at Walden. He returned to take up a fairly boring life as a handyman in the adjacent city of Concord, Massachusetts. Yet, the book he wrote is full brilliant observations based on the concepts of American Transcendentalism: the idea that people and nature are inherently good and that they are best when left alone by society and its institutions. Transcendentalism implies that as we come to know ourselves and remove the otherness of nature by experiencing it with all our senses.

That our sense of oneness with others, as embodied in that very nature, grows. Thoreau's insights into his lessons from nature - as the stranger - teach us about what it means to live as a human, to be independent, and to occupy a part of the natural world. Through Thoreau we encounter the strangeness of a solitary life in nature. Oneness with ourselves and nature - and the others that are strange to us but are, like us, just part of nature - requires slow work of contemplation and experience that at once embraces the otherness of nature. It demands working towards removing this sense of otherness and embracing it as part of the oneness that we seek with the world around us.

Summary Otherness is related to anything considered as stranger, referring both living creatures and material things to. Embrace the otherness of nature and our sense of oneness with others flourish.

Otherness, as I see it, is the spark of original thought and greater appreciation of nature, while the sense of oneness is the paradoxical goal of encounters with otherness. We need a sense of oneness of ourselves with nature to clearly see otherness, and we need otherness to build a more encompassing and

panoramic sense of self and oneness with the world. Thoreau ignored society to know himself. Most of us ignore ourselves to be part of society. Thoreau eloquently expressed the loss that, being carried away by the demands of others and society, brings us to our sense of self. We think of conformity rather than our own unique identity and so blur who we are as individuals. Thoreau captured this well when he exclaimed that, "the one is more important than the million. That is, it is only as we each individually appreciate our oneness with the world, nature, and the other as part of this oneness that we can achieve the best individual life, and thus society."

Thoreau's hut Walden stands still as light in the heart of the forest, a small cabin where one can sit and think and read and wonder about the reasons for living. Jungle nights were this light in my life, as I sat around campfires, talking in a language that was so hard for me to learn. Albert Camus said that the biggest mystery of philosophy is why not everyone commits suicide when honestly contemplating the futility of life. As a possible answer to his own question, Camus in his essay The Myth of Sisyphus, held up poor Sisyphus as an example of a good life. Sisyphus, after all, had an objective, one that entailed a measurable daily activity that always ended in the accomplishment of getting that rock up the hill. But Thoreau perspective rejects Camus's analysis. He saw no reason to count familiarity or predictability of social life, foods, or accomplishments as among the goals of life. They teach us little and change our behavior insignificantly. His example was that we learn most when we insert ourselves as aliens in new conceptual, cultural, and social environments (in his case, the absence of society). I am convinced that our lives become richer when they are less predictable. This is not to say that our lives are always predictable in the absence of the other. Otherness renders our expectations less fixed and requires more thinking, planning, and learning.

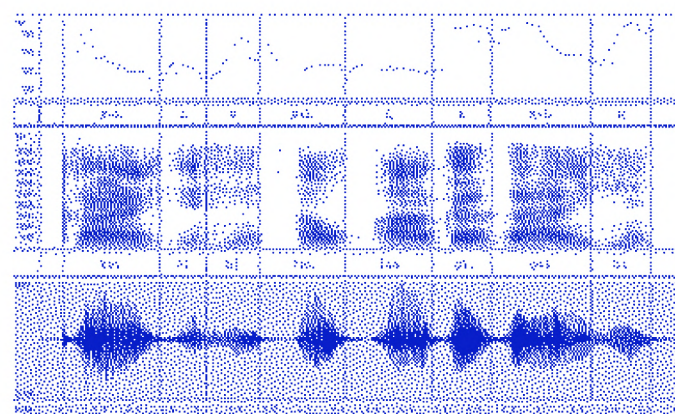


Fig.6 Recording of a conversation between Pirahã. The Pirahã can communicate through humming, singing and whistling information.

The [redacted] would disagree. They believe that it is homogeneity that gives us comfort and keeps us strong physically and psychologically. Otherness vs. predictability, which is more desirable? In essence, we need both even if we'd construct a greater sense of oneness that embraces the unexpected. The two greatest forces of preserving and constructing cultures are imitation and innovation.

When our environments, culturally and physically, are constant, innovation is rarely useful. Like biological mutations, cognitive and cultural innovations are usually unsuccessful. The effort to invent will usually isolate us as strange and less successful than those who merely imitate. Failed innovation in a society that most values imitation emphasizes our own 'otherness' and provides us with little advantage. As environments change - such as the ecology of the Pleistocene that so shaped our Homo ancestors, climate change today, the shifting political boundaries, or the intrusion of others into our environment - innovation becomes a more important force, providing new solutions to new problems that imitation alone is unable to provide. The [redacted] live in an environment that has changed little over the centuries. They value conformity and imitation over innovation. Consequently their language has changed little over time. Records of their culture and language from the 18th century show a people identical to the people we encounter today, three centuries later.

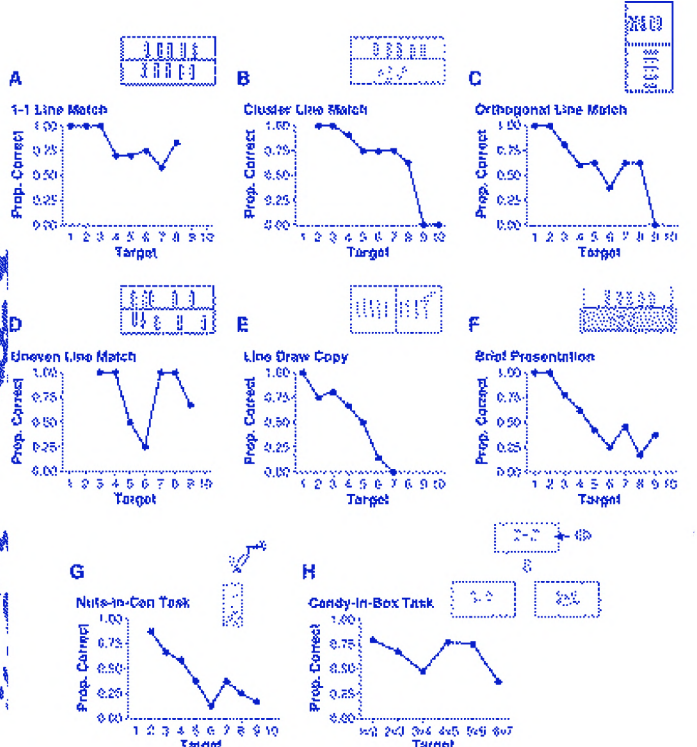
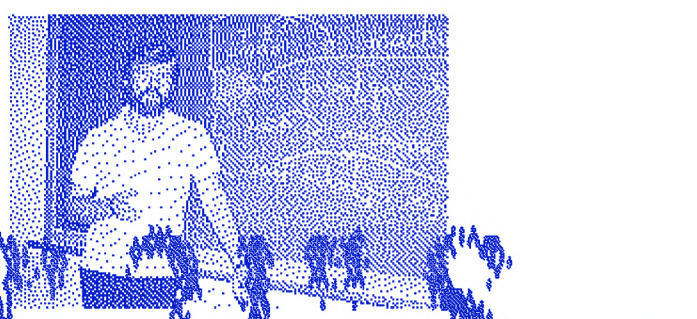


Fig.7 Results of numerical tasks with varying cognitive demands on Pirahã.

In environments that, especially culturally, change at light speed we need to learn to think, speak, act differently, and innovate in multiple areas simultaneously as the changes we encounter transform our familiar environment into 'an other'. Every day brings problems that we never faced before. Diversity of experiences and encounters with others inspire new ways of thinking and new forms of living. If we all look the same, talk the same, value the same things, paint the same pictures, dance the same dances, and hear the same music then we are simply imitators falling behind the challenges of our world. This applies to all of us whether we are hunter-gatherers in the Amazon or advertising agents in New York City. It blinds us to new forms of beauty. What we see around us, with the rise of anti-immigration political movements in Europe and the USA is, at least partially, a fear of otherness. Our preference is for conformity and imitation; our fear then itself arises from that preference in contrast to otherness and the greater steps towards an ever more encompassing oneness of the type that motivated Thoreau. However, the ultimate engine of innovation is otherness - of people, food, environments, art, and culture - it strengthens us and prospers us.

Our languages and cognitive abilities expand as we learn new vocabularies and new values by talking to people and experiencing their relationships to nature that are unlike our own. Human language emerged within the Homo line because it was the only creature to embrace otherness as to actively explore for the sake of exploration; to seek encounters with otherness. As Homo erectus sailed to islands beyond the horizon it invented symbols and language to cope with the greater need for communal efforts to expand experiences. Language change is an indication of cultural change (and cultural change will change language). Together, they amplify our species ability to innovate and survive. All that we are is the result of our human embrace of the other, the love of alterity that makes us distinct from all other creatures. Alterity is one of our greatest fears. And yet it should be our greatest treasure.



Daniel L. Everett (USA) is a linguist and author best known for his study of the Amazon Basin's Pirahã people and their language. His extensive writings about the experience of living among this tribe and learning their culture and language - among which his book Don't Sleep, There Are Snakes: Life and Language in the Amazonian Jungle, has been met with controversy among linguist, biologists and other scientists worldwide.

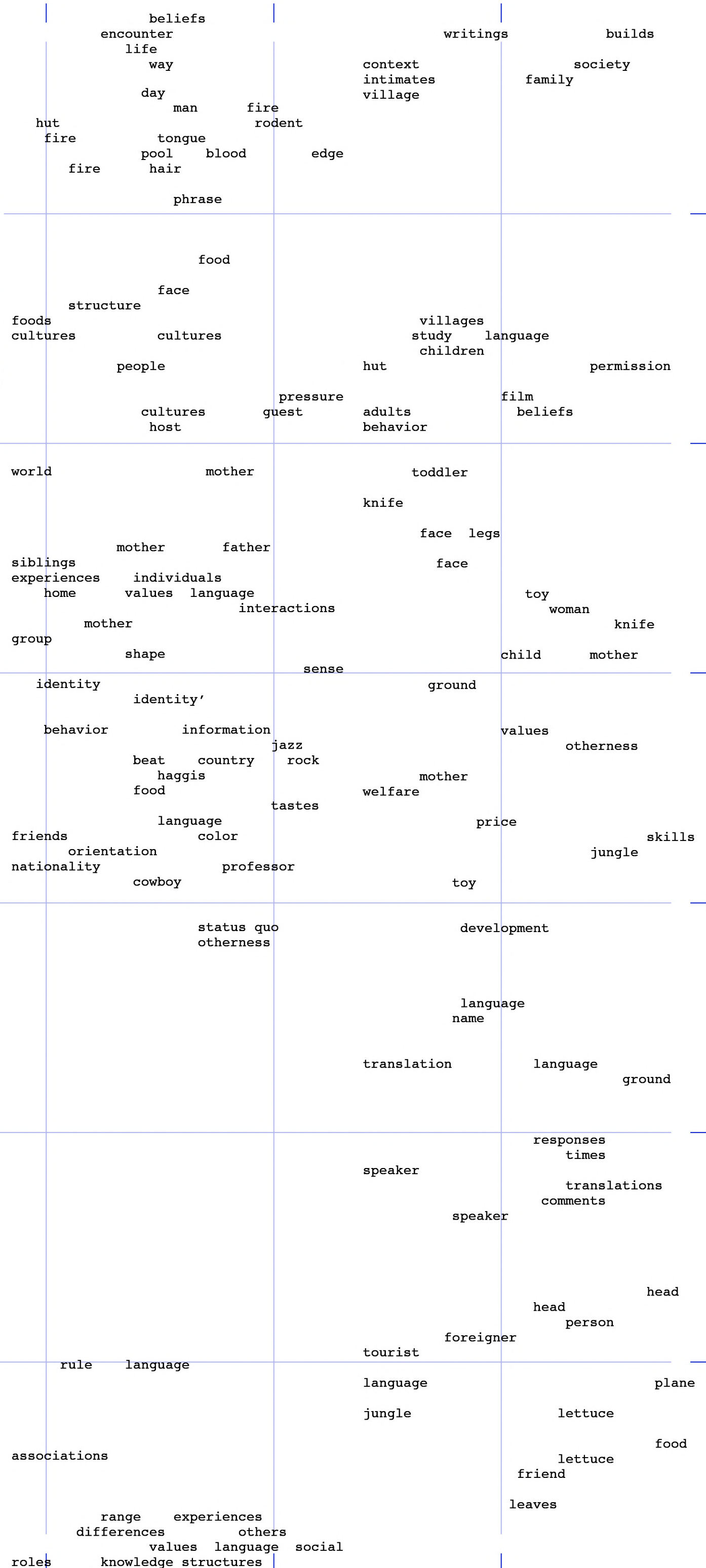
1. For Everett's writings see among other titles: Everett, Daniel. Don't sleep, there are snakes: life and language in the Amazonian jungle (2008). Pantheon Books, New York.
2. The doomed soul in Greek mythology who had the repetitive job of daily pushing a huge stone up a hill only to see it roll down at the end of his efforts and leave him with the same task to perform the next day.



Otherness is Everything, beyond me. Everything, including me.

The nouns, stripped of all context, are just nouns. Otherness presumes at least two terms of comparison. What defines the identity of you and others; of all things, both tangible and intangible, are the correlations between these things themselves. Meanwhile, the ensemble of all these connections continues regenerating the reality in which we live.

Based on these assumptions, our world is shaped by complex patterns of associations between all the things we encounter day-by-day through life experience, which are dependently inter-connected: nature, people, culture, language and knowledge. Holding the Otherness becomes the only possibility to re-imagine a well-balanced future, that would include space both for individual perspective and small-fragmented realities, which, in turn, could be eventually preserved from a ferocious innovation.



1) Take a pencil, a pen or whatever you want. Start to draw connections, making relations between the Nouns you encounter. You can erase the Nouns you don't need.



Islands for Alterity

Islands become an experience and a tool for understanding the world through the eye of the Otherness.

Trans-ocean explorations started in XV sec. and boosted by America's discovery, have irreversibly changed the face of the world while affecting our perception of the "Other". Otherness could also specifically describe how a dominant group could define other groups with less power, usually a dominant majority.

From the perspective of a map, the process of "Enlightenment" has been unreservedly redefined. Since its fruition, the drawn

boundaries of the globe are made in a way as fluid and easy, as drawing some lines on paper during a phone call.

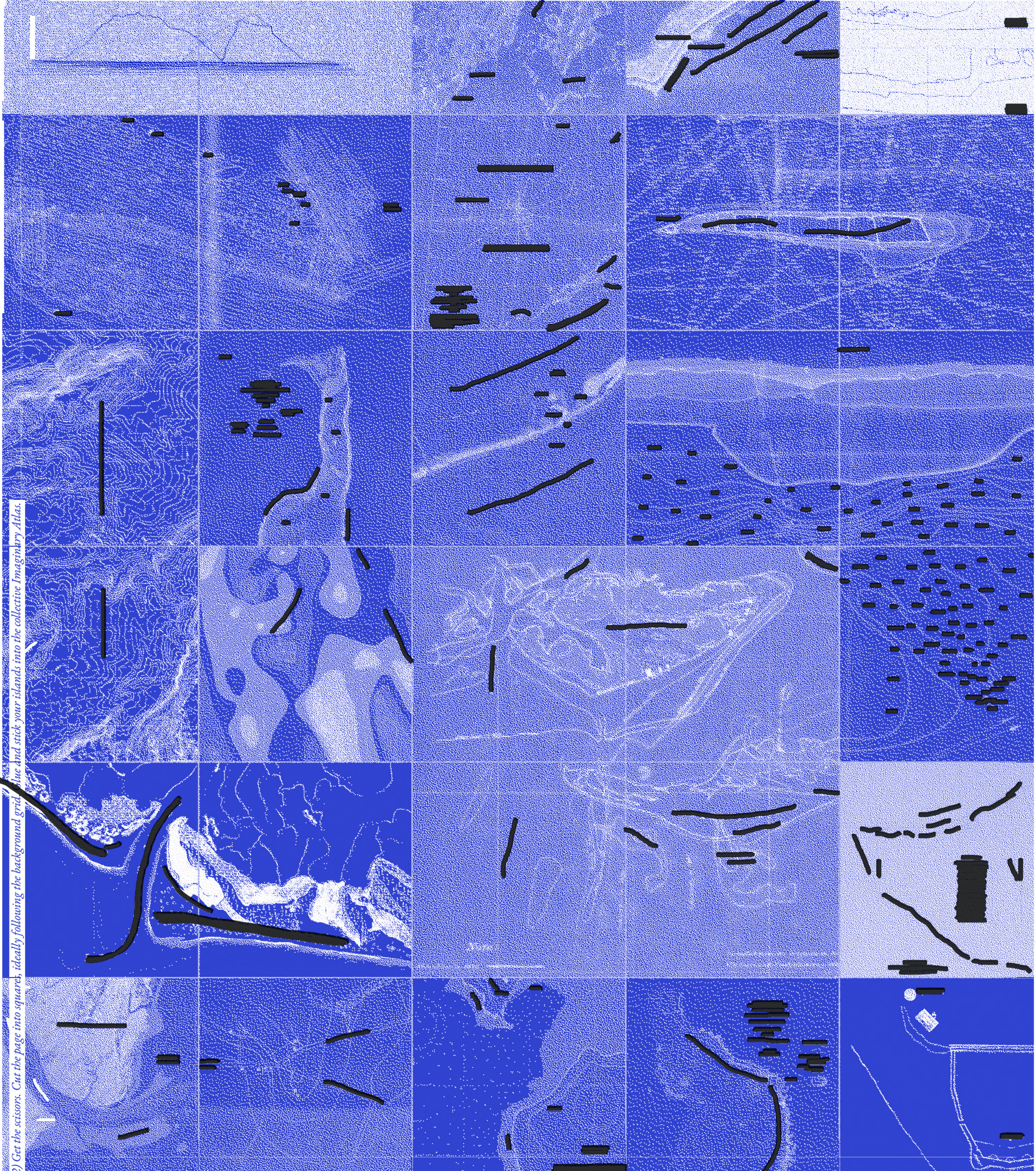
With the same readiness, it has been eventually possible to erase the spirituality and identity of "other", small, submitted cultures. When the necessity to represent the "new world" by this new, western-oriented perspective came up, it brought with it the geographical renaming of places the conquistadores were imposing on. Naming is political, too. These outsider-imposed names (exonyms) are not the names that the various people knew in their own language (autonyms). The name is attached to stories that help people make sense of their lives, while also helping to understand how people fought to protect their boundaries. The current islands' names have long been erased due to the limitations affecting cartographic representations.

Islands, for instance, are the only places where natural borders imposed by the water help to preserve local cultures from eventually-

imposed boundaries. These are often followed by invasions; while making a privileged space for developing small and autonomous communities.

Sometimes centres of activity, residing on margins, the islands keep a hold onto an evocative force, even when they supposed to be only imaginary, as the example brought by Utopia by Thomas More (1516) would call back. Islands concretely represent the Otherness in its purest essence, while the Otherness finds in the Islands a flourishing soil to grow, remaining limited while still protecting, at the same time, their natural conformity. Islands become an experience and a tool for understanding the world through the eye of the Otherness.

In this Imaginary Atlas, Otherness is embodying various types of islands' representations, which you can use to imagine and build new community structures for the future.



2) Get the scissors. Cut the page into squares, ideally following the background grid. Use and stick your islands into the collective Imaginary Atlas.

PRAGMATICAL TRANSLATIONS IN AFRICAN LANGUAGES

Jola
and English.
Practical translations
with my friend Barsa,
from Coubanao, Senegal

A few weeks back someone told me that it is an exceptional achievement for a short story to be translated into a dozen languages. I had never really thought about it, as I am not drawn from a long tradition of scholarship in literary translations. I could not quantify his statement in any way. For me those words came across as a big compliment given the scope of the work done by the Jalada Collective in the past year in the area of translations and the use of digital facilities.

Jalada is a pan-African collective of young African writers from all over the African continent, of which I am member as well as the managing editor. It began in 2013 during a workshop convened by renowned editor, Ellah Wakatama Allfrey. We had a lively conversation among the participants about what we as young African creatives drawn from different geographical locations could do with the resources we valued: language, knowledge and our web of connections. So Jalada was born. From wherever we were, we worked together online in what seemed like a virtual office. All you needed to do was post a message, and another member would take action. The Internet became an enabler of collaboration and a resource in the production process of a digital Jalada magazine. Our first thematic issue tackled the often-underexplored subject of mental health within the African context. Our second anthology focused on stories of fictionalized sexual experiences in ways that broke the implied modesty of our fictional boundaries. We also did an anthology on Afrofutures, a publication that allowed us, as Africans, to capture multiple and alternative ways of imagining futures.

THE TRANSLATION ISSUE

Then, we embarked on a translation project in which we aimed to have one short story translated into as many languages as possible. Since March 2016, when we first published the story *Ituika Rīa Mūrūngarū: Kana Kīrīa Gītūmaga Andū Mathīi Marūngīi*, [1] the story has been translated into sixty-eight languages. The initiative has been critically lauded by several scholars as one of the most essential projects in fostering communication amongst readers and speakers of different languages across the globe. Under the umbrella of the powerful magic of storytelling, online publishing has enabled different languages and cultures to find expression and converse with each other. The Jalada website, where the story and its translations are published, acts as a kind of portal to a multiplicity of languages wherein you can find codified languages you may never have heard about. Because for us at Jalada we are keen on multiple narrative modes of textual and visual storytelling, the story continues to be available in podcasts and live multilingual dramatizations.

We conceptualised the Jalada translations issue with a specific focus on African Languages. Each language remains a representation of a specific culture on the continent. Taken together, our continent is infinitely rich in its cultural resources. Over 2000 languages exist across the 54 nations. Imagine the monumental impact of a story in all these languages. It would be an immovable symbol. In history and in scholarship it would stand as a testament to the fact that all languages are equal: It does not matter the origins, the color, or the number of people who use any specific language, nor the standardisation of such a language or the lack thereof. The coming together of all those languages would smash any doubt that in our diversity immense beauty can be created with a great and lasting impact.

Jalada Translations issue was born from the firm faith that one day, whether it is during my lifetime or in the generations to come, one such short story will exist in all African languages. I want to imagine that over the years the spill over effect of this will transform our attitudes towards the use of our mother tongues and the languages that we learn from our neighbours through our daily interactions. I want to imagine the impact it might have on the access that our children have to texts written in all manner of languages, especially the marginalised languages. We continually learn to reap from the resources that we have. One such irrefutable resource is the language of our mother tongues.

THE ILLUSION OF UNIFYING LANGUAGE

Some of the distinctive African languages represented in the translations issue have suffered many years of non-representation in the written form. There are worrisome statistics of the number of books or articles that have been published in these languages. Yet, across many countries and regions within the continent, thousands, tens of thousands, or millions of people use these languages every day. They transact businesses, they pray, they love, and dream of love and life in these languages. And yet, so little is written in them. What is even more worrying is the fewer number of people who get access to these written resources. Most of the written material is in European languages – English, French, and Portuguese – as well as a few dominant African national languages.

Wi Meko (Kikamba)
Woni
Dhana
Tekelezwaji (Kiswahili)
Umbono
Oqondile (IsiZulu)
Déffe
Guisse (Wolof)

1. Languages
2. Knowledge
3. Web of Connections



ALL LANGUAGES ARE EQUAL.

Most African countries are a colonial invention: there are tribes, and every tribe has its own language.

Usually, in Senegal, people speak three languages. Namely, French in institutions, learned at schools, Wolof learned from mass media and their mother tongue or other tribal language learned from family.

Many Nairobians learn French and German even if it is not

The illusion of unifying a nation through a single language is wide spread. This has meant a very deliberate marginalisation of African languages and the almost brutal emphasis on the spread and dominance of English or other European languages. Additionally, we feed on that illusion instilled in us by our education systems, which were designed by European colonialists to serve the empire and then continued as desirable norms by post-colonial governments. But there is a daily struggle from many quarters and initiatives to effect change in our school systems.

Today, one does not need to go to a well-equipped library to see texts in other languages. You only need to log into social media, and you will see the flow of conversations in all manner of languages, albeit a little inconstant. We do not have to look at that with suspicion. We do not have to feel hate and resentment for the existence of the other or feel burdened by the colonial idea that this is divisive. Over the years, I have noted how many young Nairobians flood institutions to learn French and German. marvel at the possibility of acquiring what is not necessarily ours. This in itself is a beautiful thing; all knowledge is power. However, most of the individuals learning these languages will never go to France or Germany. They will use that resource they have attained amongst themselves in a very small circle, or for employment purpose such as to serve the occasional tourist or to work at one of the multinationals. Even worse, sometimes it is never put to use. It exists merely as a placeholder in a Curriculum vita or for prestige, such as when someone mentions that they have studied this or that European Language. In their minds they remain psychologically arrested in the desire and continually gravitate towards the European home of the new learned language. However, they will interact very occasionally with speakers of other African Languages. What if that beautiful desire to learn and appreciate a foreign language was also inherently directed towards other African Languages? In failing to have enough systems that can facilitate this kind of interest and indulgence, the online publishing of stories in different languages, multilingual performances, and podcasts are a small but possibly vital contribution. Not just for readers that want to read other languages, but those who have grown up with very little exposure to written texts in their own mother tongue.

Ngũgi wa Thiong'o has used the term "practical vision" to describe the fresh opportunities for disseminating African literature that the digital age makes possible. Practical vision is about activating dreams in the present; it is about translating a vision that seems at far distance into a doing that brings you there. What we envision, is building a future of multilingual pride and connections that know no boundaries between writers, publishers, and readers. And because of our access to and connectivity with the Internet, we are able to move beyond mere conversations towards the execution of ideas. This however requires grit and a lot of help from all corners. If we had done the Translation Issue in the pre-internet age, it would have taken us decades and huge financial means to put it together. The web of translators grew because of my colleagues and interested participants who encouraged others to contribute to the bringing together of sixty-eight languages into one volume. The volume bears the hallmark of conversations between cultures, languages, and people of the world. Thanks to the generosity [2] and time invested by the writers and translators we were able to do this work efficiently in less than a year. Our ways of consuming information have changed radically since oral literature was shared around a bonfire in early evenings. As publisher we therefore try to understand the changing nature of communication and the resultant structures. We want to find ways to take full advantage of digital facilities as it is the reality of our generation and of those to come.

PRACTICAL VISION

We continue to experiment with many more ways to tap into these digital facilities to share stories in all manner of African Languages. The current question is how we can have a continued publication of translations that allow a conversation between the languages of Africa and those of the world. Can we create a digital publication that captures the infinite resources in our languages and cultures? In order to meet this challenge, we decided to select one short story a year – short enough to allow a relatively ease of work in terms of translation – that was powerful enough to speak across multiple cultures.

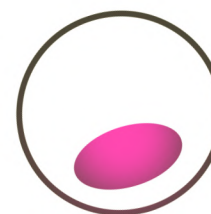
Our vision is to have each story translated into as many African Languages as possible. And one day, in the not so distant future, we will have an online archive of stories and translations in all manner of languages. Pursuit of such a vision is not easy. There is a great deal of misconception about African Languages and their places in our personal and communal intellectual discourse. In our contribution to improving the publication of, as well as encouraging readership of works in African languages we needed to lay a firm foundation. First, we recognise that there are voices that have come before us who have already done a great deal to fight for language rights. Our selection of a story by Ngũgi wa Thiong'o was a recognition towards those who had taken responsibility for our languages. As practical visionaries, interested more in turning ideas into actions, we work with full acknowledgement of what has come before. We take into consideration the conversations that have been held on the subject, and bring these further by pursuing our translation work in ways that examine barriers of the past and find ways to overcome them now.

Just as we have created and continue to create a database of literary translators, we want to establish a base of devoted readers. Earlier in the process, someone was quick to ask me, rather sceptically, what happens after we have published the translations and who will even be interested in reading them? Once the first Translation Issue was published, the translators and our most devoted readers started sharing the work on Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs while expressing their excitement at seeing such a publication. People tweeted links and shared specific languages on their timelines. A twitter user in Ethiopia, @LindaYohannes, tweeted

"Reading Ngugi in #Amharic! This feels so right!"

Digital technologies helped us tap into greater and faster possibilities whereas the mere exhaustion of putting together the volume in print form would have been enough excuse for us to store the print copies in the warehouse for a month or two before venturing into marketing and distribution. The reality of such exhausting stretch of time in the production process was for a long while the reason why people kept stuck in conversation and never got into doing.

necessary, this comes from their colonial heritage. Sure, in itself it is a beautiful thing, since all knowledge is power, but this attitude often means people almost neglect their own mother tongue.

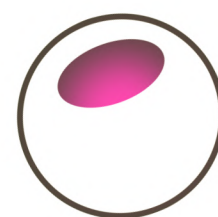


What if that beautiful desire to learn and appreciate a foreign language was also inherently directed towards other African Languages?

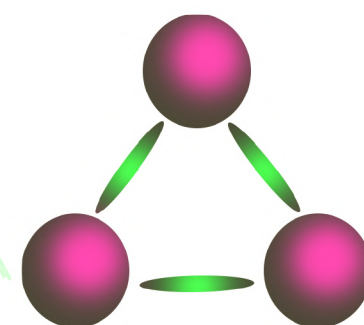
<http://salta.su/djisafoul>
<http://coubanao.salta.su>

PRACTICAL VISION:
the fresh opportunity for disseminating African literature that the digital age makes possible.

Practical Vision lives also in the digital realm. They protect past and future cultures, thanks to organic and inorganic networks.



Practical Vision fights against the attempt of a single language culture → Practical Vision fights against this global standardisation → Practical Vision thinks about another balanced globality.



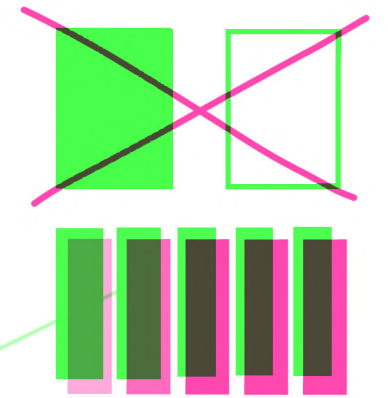
CREATING DIGITAL NETWORKS FOR TRANSLATION

A COLLECTIVE NETWORK OF TRANSLATORS

The connection that is formed between the writer and publisher is quite important, but the connection formed with reader is also crucial. We know by now that there are people across the continent and in the diaspora who believe in the importance of marginalised languages. Perhaps in their love for the translated stories and the process of translation, they too will be inspired to write and translate. In practise, this collective effort will call for a continuous and growing engagement with multi-linguistic storytelling practices. Vigorous social media campaigns and the sharing of the work in all possible media will enhance such reciprocal relations. Also the collaboration with universities and other learning institutions, can create interest or integrate the idea of African languages in research and teaching practises. We find it especially important that children grow up with multi-lingual content and digital facilities will make access possible at a minimal cost. We believe that a generation of young people with a passion for their languages, whatever these languages may be, will be here to hold this vision together for a very long time. To grow that generation we must continue to encourage those among us with the intellectual facilities and various experiences to participate in projects such as the Jalada translations issue. New translators will get the space to experiment with their abilities. And those who have already made attempts in prior translation issues will have the opportunity to continue in a supportive environment that allows their talents to grow.

Let's act to build a pluri-diverse future, while embracing technology to create knowledge.

THE FUTURE IS MULTI-LINGUAL!



Imagining better worlds is a multi-cultural discipline.

An important step in executing such a practical approach in the area of translations is to keep a good connection between different players: the writers who are interested in different languages, the translators who value the great power in the stories, and the various publishers who have demonstrated their willingness to disseminate these works further and further. This would not be possible without the connections and collaborative processes we have put in place. At the heart of our practical vision lies a growing network of connections, without which ideas would remain mere ideas. Adapting the structure of digital media - as a web of connections - onto our way of working allows for the perseverance and sharing of our valued resources: languages and the knowledge they carry.

THE FUTURE IS MULTI-LINGUAL

THERE ARE MORE THAN SIX THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED LANGUAGES ACROSS THE WORLD

However, despite the crucial importance of digital platforms we have seen that the work can grow into more than digitally published pieces once they have reached a widespread audience. From its digital space, Ngūgi wa Thiong'o's story has been adapted for the stage on several occasions. Each dramatization celebrated the power of cultural diversity in imagining better worlds. Secondly, the story has also gone into print. In Sweden, as a children book; for the occasion of the Mboka Festival of Arts Culture and Sport in three Gambian Languages (Wolof, Mandika, and Fula); and publishers across Spain will print editions in Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Basque, Bable, and Occitan. From digital to stage, to print and then back into the digital realm: In India, a print publication of a translation in Kannada, a Dravidian language, was later republished in an Indian online magazine that reached a few million readers. In the USA, the story was nominated for a project that aims to make short digital eBooks available on the subway for a year. There are more than six thousand nine hundred more languages across the world, and so the story travels. In the future, we hope to see the translators that we work with move on to bigger challenges. For them to take up translation of fictional and non-fiction books. While shorter works can be read much more easily online, actual books may require print publication, and in this sense, the digital and the analogue co-exist in mutual advantage.

This is the future: a place for practical visionaries.

Over the course of ten years we envision having ongoing translations of about ten different stories. With each story translated into a hundred or more languages, we will have made it a normal practise to write and translate into and between African Languages. With this practice comes the idea of conversation between the languages as they appear alongside each other. The beauty is in the use of any known language anywhere in the world with confidence and the faith in the good of what is your own, and respecting the faith and confidence of the other in using and celebrating what is theirs.

And this is the future: a place for practical visionaries. A time of multilingual pride and connections that know no boundaries between writers, publishers, and readers. When we act out our ideas, the future will smash the difficulty of access through digital technologies; the exclusion of languages through translations; and the limitations of opportunities through the growth of collective work. We will wake up one day soon and feel the light of possibility shine upon our faces. And because the 'Upright Revolution' of digital innovation is inevitable, the publisher, the writer, the translator and the reader - wants the works to survive and remain relevant - must find ways of taking advantage of the digital technologies at their disposal.

A practical Telegram BOT

@practical_vision_bot

This Telegram BOT makes a crowd-sourced dictionary with your translations. You can add every word/sentence you want from english to be translated into any language! Search for it and follow the instructions to add new translations:

word : translation : language
hello : dji safoul : Jola

[1] Translated into English by the author, Prof. Ngūgi wa Thiong'o, as The Upright Revolution: Or Why Humans Walk Upright.

[2] To be a part of the Translation Issue as a translator is to put yourself in the company of other translators making history. We publish each translation on a single page. The language, name, and biography of the translators are the credits listed. We do not discriminate, nor require any advanced experience in literary translation. The only requirement is the desire to produce authentic and verifiable translations that can communicate a story in one's own language. And while we do not compensate financially for now, we are looking into possibilities of funding and developing a financial model that would allow the sustainability of the work. As we engage more and more translators, the network grows, and opportunities are easily spread across the team for the benefit of diligent translators.

Original Contribution by Jalada.
A special thanks to El-Hadji Barsa Rachid Sagna and Munyao Kilolo.
Original Artistic Response by Print The Future.
Republished and complexified by Federico Poni.
Made with love and P5.js

Ngũgi wa Thiong'o has used the term

PRACTICAL VISION

to express the opportunity to disseminate African literature → the Digital Age makes it possible.

But Practical Vision can manage also other marginalised topics.

When more Practical Vision watch themselves, they create translations between different languages.

They attempt to protect past and future cultures and they work through organic and inorganic networks.

In fact, Practical Vision is not a standard vision. It attempts to take care of diversity as a whole.

Complexity contains dreams and violence, skyscrapers and slums, freedom and control, smart fridges and phone cables, colonialism and conspiracies, holy buildings and sheds full of computers to store data *and so on*.

A hyperobject is multi-dimensional. That means we cannot see the effects of its events clearly.

A hyperobject is something that creates, continuously, small or big events somewhere. Not here, not there - it is more a shadow.

They inhabit this hyperobject called Complexity.

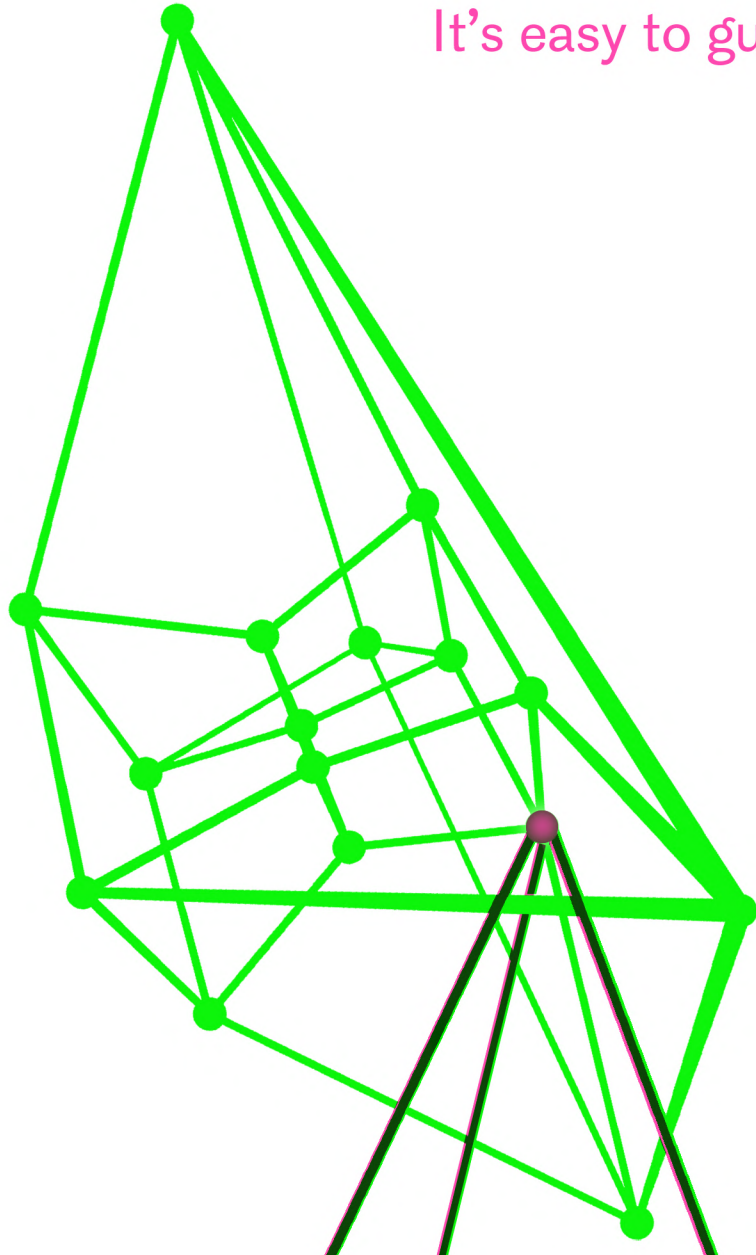
The Complexity is a very big hyperobject: it contains all the different existing realities.

Complexity is the magnificent result of interaction. Interaction is possible thanks to language.

Programming languages (currently) are close to 700.
Human languages are closer to 9600.

There are a lot of different kind of languages.

It's easy to guess the Complexity is a complex dude.



for granted, that "stable" capitalist infrastructures allowed us, or more precisely, allowed some of us. ①

▲If you have enough of the forest and want to find some civilisation, go to 7.

▼If you want to eat the mushroom, go to 14.

►14 FOREST

You eat the mushroom. I look at you and laugh. "Are you gonna get one for me, too?", I ask. You don't really get why I can't just get my own, but for the sake of the story moving forward you pick another one and hand it to me. I start reading with my mouth full of mushroom:

① Tsing follows the wild Matsutake mushroom that thrives in ruined forests - forests ruined by natural catastrophes or by blind extraction, but also by projects meant to ensure a "rational and sustainable" exploitation, that discovered too late that what they had eliminated as prejudicial or expendable did matter. Devastation, the unravelling of the weaving that enables life, does not need to be willful, deliberate - blindly trusting an idea may be sufficient. As for Tsing, she is not relying on overbearing ideas. What she notices is factual but does not allow to abstract what would objectively matter from situational entanglements, in this case articulated by the highly sought mushroom and its symbionts including humans. Facts, here, are not stepping stones for a conquering knowledge and do not oppose objectivity to subjectivity. What is noticed is first of all what appears as interesting or intriguing. It may be enlightening but the light is not defining the situation, it rather generates new possible ways of learning, of weaving new relations with the situation. ①

▲If you feel like slowly making your way back to the volcano, go to 4.

▼If you've had enough of me and want to talk to other people, go to 10.

►15 WEAVERS

As we are walking towards a clearance, a group of elderly women comes to greet us. They ask us to join their circle. We follow them into their home, where everything is covered in endless fabrics. One of the women is showing us around the different rooms, where we lay down on a beautiful rug, looking at the weathered stone ceiling. I open up the essay and starting reading to you:

① We are the weavers and we are the woven

If our future is in the ruins, the possibility of resurgence is the possibility of cultivating, of weaving again what has been unravelled in the name of "the Ascent of Man." We are not to

take ourselves for the weavers after having played the masters, or the assemblers after having glorified extraction. "We are the weavers and we are the web", sing the contemporary witches who know and cultivate generativity.⁶ The arts of cultivation are arts of interdependence, of consenting to the precariousness of lives involved in each other. Those who cultivate do their part, trusting that others may do their own but knowing that what they aim at depends on what cannot be commanded or explained. Those who claim to explain growth or weaving are often only telling about the preparations required by what they have learned to foster, or they depend on the selection of what can be obtained and mobilized off-ground in rarefied, reproducible environments. In the ruins of such environments, resurgence is not a return to the past, rather the challenge to learn again what we were made to forget - but what some have refused to forget. ①

You close your eyes, thinking of all of the things you refuse to forget and carry with you. Conscious and subconscious threads woven into the very fabric of your being.

▲If you want to stay to hear what the weaver thinks about this, go to 11.

▲If you want to go back outside, go to 4.

►16 WEAVERS

I wrote you a story, but it lost its thread. We are now chasing white mice. I am losing a sense of purpose. Does it matter? Could we make a change, even if we found what we were looking for? You feel a bit out of place, as I become teary-eyed. "What the hell is it with this one?", you ask yourself. Our silence reveals a nearby dispute. As we make our way into the courtyard of the building, we witness a group of elderly women arguing with people from the inside of the institution. Before you make your way into their midst, I read you this passage:

① When the environmental, social and climate justice, multiracial Alliance of alliances, led by women, gender oppressed people of colour, and Indigenous Peoples, claim that "it takes roots to grow resistance," or else, to "weather the storm," they talk about the need to name and honour what sustains them and what they struggle for.⁷ When those who try to revive the ancient commons, which were destroyed all over the world in the name of property rights, claim that there is "no commons without commoning," that is, without learning how to "think like commoners," they talk about the need to not only reclaim what was privatized but to recover the capacity to be involved with others in the ongoing concern and care for their maintenance of the commons.⁸ Resurgence is a word for the future as it confronts us with what William James called a "genuine option concerning this future". Daring to trust, as do today's activists, in an uncertified, indeed improbable, not to say "speculative," possibility of reclaiming a future worth living and dying for, may seem ludicrous. But the option cannot be avoided

because today there is no free standing place outside of the alternative: condescending skepticism, refusing to opt or opting against resurgence, are equivalent. ①

▲ go to 11.

►17 ACADEMY

"What difference does it make, her taking me all the way out here to read this essay?", you ask yourself. "Wouldn't it have been easier to just read it by myself, in the order it was meant to be read in?" Maybe it would have been easier, but maybe something would have gone lost in the process. Sing with me:

① Such an option has no privileged ground. Neither the soil sustaining the roots nor the mutually involved of interdependent partners composing a commons, can be defined in abstraction from the always-situated learning process of weaving relations that matter. These are generative processes liable to include new ways of being with new concerns. New voices enter a song, both participating in this song and contributing to reinvent it. For us academics it does not mean giving up scientific facts, critical attention, or critical concern. It demands instead that such facts, attention, and concerns are liable to participate in the song, even if it means adding new dimensions that complicate it. As such, even scientific facts thus communicate with what William James presented as the "great question" associated with a pluriverse in the making: "does it, with our additions, rise or fall in value? Are the additions worthy or unworthy?"⁹ Such a question is great because it obviously cannot get a certified answer but demands that we do accept that what we add makes a difference in the world and that we have to answer for the manner of this difference. ①

✕Your journey ends here. Thank you for joining me. Take a moment to visualise our shared imaginary landscape, and start mapping it out on the main map.

?Footnotes

1. Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch. Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2004.
2. Rose, Hilary. "My Enemies Enemy Is, Only Perhaps, My Friend." *Social Text*, no. 45 (1996): 61-80. doi:10.2307/466844.
3. Gilbert, Scott F., Jan Sapp, and Alfred I. Tauber. "A Symbiotic View of Life: We Have Never Been Individuals." *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 87, no. 4 (2012): 325-41. doi:10.1086/668166.
4. Doolittle, W. Ford, and Austin Booth. "It's the Song, Not the Singer: An Exploration of Holobiosis and Evolutionary Theory." *Biology & Philosophy* 32, no. 1 (2016): 5-24. doi:10.1007/s10539-016-9542-2.
5. Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015.
6. Starhawk. *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997. 225.
7. "It Takes Roots - An Alliance of Alliances." *It Takes Roots*. <http://ittakesroots.org/>.
8. Bollier, David. *Think like a Commoner: A Short Introduction to the Life of the Commons*. Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2014.
9. William, James. *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. New York, NY: Longman Green and Co., 1907. 98.

distance themselves from concerned voices, protesting against the dismemberment of what they care for. ①

▼Go to 17.

▶▶10 WEAVERS

Not too far from us, you hear a loud discussion. A crowd of people have gathered in the courtyard of an academy building. Someone from inside the building has come out to talk. We step closer. It seems like they are arguing about the meaning of common sense. "Don't you have common sense?", they scream from the building. I pull you aside and read you this passage:

① Making common sense

Addressing situations that are a matter of usually diverging concerns in a way that resists dismembering them, means betraying the mobilization for the advance of knowledge. The resurgence of cooperative and non-antagonist relations towards situation-centred achievements. It requires that the situation itself be given the power to make those concerned think together, that is to induce a laborious, hesitant, and sometimes conflictual collective learning process of what each particular situation demands from those who approach it. This requirement is a practical one. If the eradication power of the objective/subjective disjunction is to collapse and give way to a collective process, we need to question many academic customs. The ritual of presentations with PowerPoint authoritative bullet-point like arguments, for instance, perfectly illustrates the way situations are mobilized in a confrontational game, when truth is associated with the power of one position to defeat the others. In addition, we may need to find inspiration in ancient customs. New academic rituals may learn for instance from the way the traditional African palavers or the sweat lodge rituals in North American First Nations, these examples ward off one-way-truths and weaponized arguments. ①

Hm. Common sense can therefore never be a single man's opinion, but could there ever be something like common sense if we sense so differently from one another?

▼Go to 11.

▶▶11 WEAVERS

Did we dig too deep or not deep enough, I wonder. Is it enough? I tell you to wait for a moment, so I can be alone. When I think I've made it far enough, I scream along with the shaking earth. Clearly I was not far enough, I realise shortly after you approach me hesitantly, asking what my goddamn problem is. I look at you for a moment trying to put the force pressing against the inner walls of my heart into words, as an elderly woman approaches us. The

lines on her face are profound, but somehow soft. "There are times when you have to scream to be heard", she says, pointing at this passage of the essay I am somehow still holding in my hand:

① Today, many activist groups share with reclaiming contemporary witches the reinvention of the art of consensus-making deliberation; giving the issue of deliberation the power to make common sense. What they learn to artfully design are resurgent ways to take care of the truth, to protect it from power games and relate it to an agreement - generated by a very deliberative process - that no party may appropriate it. They experiment with practices that generate the capacity to think and feel together. For the witches, convoking the goddess is giving room to the power of generativity. When they chant "She changes everything She touches, and everything She touches changes," they honour a change that affects everything, but to which each affected being responds in its own way and not through some conversion She would command. Of course, such arts presuppose a shared trust in the possibility of generativity and we are free to suspect some kind of participatory role-playing. But refusing to participate is also playing a role. Holding to our own reasons demands that, when we feel we understand something about the other's position, we suppress any temptation to doubt the kind of authority we confer to our reasons, as if such a hesitation was a betrayal of oneself. What if the art of transformation encounters cultivated the slow emergence and intensification of a mutual sensitivity? A mutual sensitivity that generates a change in the relationship that each entertains with their own reasons. ①

◀If you have been to the forest, go to 9.

▼If you haven't been to the forest yet, go to 12.

▶▶12 FOREST

We are walking around the foot of the volcano, searching for anything significant I could use as a bridge to another passage.

Hm, strange. I swear I just heard something. You close your eyes and listen. There it was again! A humming sound coming from a nearby forest. We are following the rhythmic humming, as our legs carry us faster and faster into the dense forest. All of the sudden, we arrive at a crossing. You lean against the bark of a pine tree, as I read you another passage:

① Polyphonic song

Curiously enough the resurgence of the arts of partnering around a situation, of composing and weaving together relevant but not authoritative reasons, echoes with the work of laboratory biologists. Against the biotechnological redefinition of biology they claim that the self-contained isolable organisms might be a dubious abstraction. What they study are not individual beings

competing for having their interest prevail, but multiple specific assemblages between interdependent mutually sensitive partners weaving together capacities to make a living which belong to none of them separately. "We have never been individuals" write Scott Gilbert and his colleagues who are specialists in evolutionary developmental biology.³ "It is the song that matters, not the singer," adds Ford Doolittle, specialist in evolutionary microbiology, emphasizing the open character of assemblages, the composition of which (the singers) can change as long as the cooperative pattern, the polyphonic song, is preserved.⁴ In other words, biologists now discover that both in the lab and in the field, they have to address cooperative worlds and beings whose ways of life emerge together with their participation in worlding compositions. One could be tempted to speak about a revolution in biology, but it can also be said that it is a heresy, a challenge against the mobilizing creed in the advance of science. Undoubtedly, biology is becoming more interesting, but it is losing its power to define a conquering research direction, since each "song", each assemblage, needs to be deciphered as such. If modes of interdependence are what matters, extraction and isolation are no longer the royal road for progress. No theory - including complex or systemic ones - can define a priori its rightful object, that is, anticipate the way a situation should be addressed. ①

It feels comforting to read about interdependence. I feel a sense of belonging, do you?

▼If you want to go left, where the source of the humming seems to be, go to 15.

▼If you want to go right, where a weird growth of mushrooms is coming out of the roots of ancient pine trees, go to 13.

▶▶13 FOREST

You follow the path, stepping up the roots of a pine tree where wild Matsusake mushrooms are growing. As you take a closer look, I read you another passage:

① This "heretical" biology is apt to become an ally in the resurgence of cooperative relations between positive sciences and humanities at a time when we vitally need demobilization, relinquishing banners which justified our business-as-usual academic routines. I will borrow Anna Tsing's challenging proposition, that our future might be about learning to live in "capitalist ruins."⁵ That is, in the ruins of the socio-technical organizational infrastructures that ensured our business-as-usual life. Ruins may be horrific, but Tsing recognises ruins also as a place for the resurgence and cultivation of an art of paying attention, which she calls the "art of noticing." Indeed ruins are places where vigilance is required, where the relevance of our reasons is always at risk, where trusting the abstractions we entertain is inviting disaster. Ruins demand consenting to the precariousness of perspectives taken



- ◀ If you feel dizzy from the speed of science and its insatiable urge for progress of the human species, go to 3.
- ▶ If you crave rationality, go to 7.

▶▶ 5 VOLCANO

We are climbing up the volcano, dodging the streams of lava all around us, until we finally make it to the top. It's pretty hot up here, but then again we are in our shared imaginary, so it is only as hot as you choose to imagine. Writing this, I realise it's quite hard to imagine heat. As the volcano purges another gleaming hot rain of lava, I read you this passage:

① If resurgence is a word for the future, it is because we may use it in the way the granddaughters of the witches do: as a challenge to eradicated operations, with which what we call materialism and secularism are irreducibly associated, are still going on today. It is quite possible to inherit the struggle against the oppressive character of religious institutions without forgetting what came together with materialism and secularism; the destruction of what opposed the transition to capitalism both in Europe and in the colonized world.¹ ①

From up here you can see over the entire landscape. The volcano is surrounded by a dense pine tree forest. On the left end, you see a weird metal structure. On the right end, you see a large building.

- ▶ If you want to go left, go to 4.
- ▶ If you want to go right, go to 7.

▶▶ 6 RUINS

You tell me that you've had enough, that none of the options I give you are ever enough. None of the options are choices of your own. I try to think of a reasoning to clear our coast, but nothing comes to mind. We walk away from each other, as you think of which path to choose, now that they are laid out in front of you. Suddenly you find a note in your pocket:

① It is quite possible to resist the idea that what was destroyed is irrevocably lost and that we should have the courage to accept this loss.

Certainly it cannot be a question of resurrecting the past. What eventually returns is also reinventing itself as it takes root in a new environment, challenging the way it defined its destruction as a fait accompli. In the academic environment, defining as a fait accompli the destruction of the witches might be the only true point of agreement uniting two antagonist powers: those who take as an "objective fact" that the magic they claimed to practice does not exist, and those who understand magic as a cultural-subjective construction belonging to the past. ①

✕ Your journey ends here. Thank you for joining me. Take a moment

to visualise our shared imaginary landscape, and start mapping it out on the main map.

▶▶ 7 ACADEMY

I follow you as you walk on a concrete road towards a large building. It has 'FACTS ONLY' engraved on top of a massive wooden door. You ring the bell but noone is opening. Defeated from walking aimlessly, you sink down onto the ground, as you can't help but feel lost out here. You look to your side, where I am sitting in a weird squat position. "I'm lost too", I say to you. After some lengthy awkward silence between the two of us, I decide to pick the essay back up and read to you:

① Getting rid of the Objectivity - Subjectivity banners

In the academic world eradicated operations are a routine, performed as "methodology" by researchers who see it as their duty to disentangle situations in order to define them. Some will extract information about human practices only and give (always subjective) meaning to these situations. Others will only look at "(objective) facts," the value of which should be to hold independently of the way humans evaluate them. Doing so, these academics are not motivated by a quest for a relevant approach. Instead they act as mobilized armies of either objectivity or subjectivity, destroying complex situations that might have slowed them down, and would have forced them to listen to voices protesting against the way their method leaves unattended knowledge that matters to others. ①

We accept that this journey is more complex than we expected and slowly get back up. I look at you and wonder what you see. How you see. How it would feel to experience the world as you. How impossible it would be to decide whether your or my eyes see the truth. Does human objectivity exist, or is it some kind of ideal we are chasing?

- ▶ If you are feeling restless, go to 11.
- ▶ If you want to stay around here for a while longer, go to 8.

▶▶ 8 ACADEMY

An almost enjoyable silence is cut by a sudden screech. A white rat has attempted to climb up on your lap. You jump up and do a little dance to shake off the unwanted companion. Should we cross this line and let animals talk? I would say let's just go for it. So anyways, I pick up the rat, looking into its beady little eyes. "Are you looking at me?", the rat asks. The silence is telling, and the rat continues: "I could see once, now I'm blind as a mole. Go on, read your friend another passage!", the rat squeaks. I read:

① That objectivity is a mobilizing banner is easy to demonstrate. It would have no power if it were taken in the strict experimental

sense, where it means the obtaining of an exceptional and fragile achievement. An experimental objective fact is always extracted by active questioning. However, achieving objectivity then implies the creation of a situation that gives the thing questioned the very unusual power to authorize one interpretation that stands against any other possible one. Experimental objectivity is thus the name of an event, not the outcome of a method. Further, it is fragile because it is lost as soon as the experimental facts leave the lab - the techno-social rarefied milieu required by experimental achievements - and become ingredients in messy real world situations. When a claim of objectivity nevertheless sticks to those facts outside of the lab, it transforms this claim into a devastating operator. As for the kind of objectivity claimed by the sheer extraction of "data" or by the unilateral imposition of a method, it is a mere banner for conquest. On the other

hand, holding the ground of subjectivity against the claims of objectivity, not so very often means empowering the muted voices that point to ignored or disqualified matters. Scientists trying to resist the pseudo-facts that colonialize their fields, caring for a difference to be made between "good" (relevant) and "bad" (abusive) sciences, have found no allies in critical sciences.²

For those who are mobilized under the banner of subjectivity such scruples are ludicrous. ①

- ▶ To chase the rat, which has run off into the courtyard, go to 16.
- ▶ To confront the scientists inside the building, go to 9.

▶▶ 9 ACADEMY

You seem focussed, as you walk up the steps of the academic institution in front of us. I am quite amazed, watching you bang against the wooden door of the building like Donkey Kong's aggressive uncle. Something seems to have gotten you heated. The frustration of coming across a locked door, perhaps? Don't be demoralised, please. Can you never just take a moment to enjoy being out here today with me? I grab your arm and pull you away from the entrance towards a bench. I unfold the essay and read:

① Academic events such as theoretical turns or scientific revolutions - including the famous Anthropocene turn - won't help to foster cooperative relations or care for collaborative situations. Indeed, such events typically signal an advance, usually the creative destruction of some dregs of common sense that are still contaminating what was previously accepted. In contrast, if there were to be resurgence it would signal itself by the "demoralization" of the perspective of advance. Demoralization is not however about the sad recognition of a limit to the possibility of knowing. It rather conveys the possibility of reducing the feeling of legitimacy that academic researchers have about their objectivity - subjectivity methodologies. The signal of a process of resurgence might be researchers deserting their position when they recognise that subjectivity and objectivity are banners only, imperatives to



① Original Contribution By Isabelle Stengers
✦ Original Artistic Response By Ola Maciejewska
▶▶ Republished By Louisa Teichmann

resurgence:
an increase or revival after a period of little activity, popularity,
or occurrence.

▶▶ 1 VOLCANO

Let's go on a walk. I am carrying a copy of "Resurgence" by
Isabelle Stengers and Ola Maciejewska with me, and I would like to
read you some passages. We are meeting in our shared imaginary.
Allow me to give you some keywords, so you can start imagining our
surroundings: ✦ earth, devastation, nature, magic. ✦

We are going to build on this first fleeting vision and subconscious
feeling you are experiencing now. If you need a moment to enter
your imagination, take your time. When you are ready, open your
eyes and keep reading.

I'm glad you're joining me out here today. We are walking towards
an active volcano, as the grounds around us start growing into a
solid piece of land. It's loud and hot and kind of exciting to be
here right now. You look down and see a cardboard sign lying by
your feet with the message "We are the grandchildren of the witches
you were not able to burn." Hm. What do you do?

▶ If you are intrigued, go to 2.

▶ If you want to explore the landscape, go to 5.

▶▶ 2 RUINS

I'm also intrigued and somewhat confused. Does this statement imply
that the people who were convicted and burned all those years ago
were actual witches? I don't know how to feel about it. Not too far
from where we are, some collapsed concrete pillars are sticking out
of the rocky ground. Let's climb them and sit on the top as I read
you a passage of the essay:

① "We are the grandchildren of the witches you were not able to
burn"

- Tish Thawer

I will take this motto, which has flourished in recent protests
in the United States, as the defiant cry of resurgence -
refusing to define the past as dead and buried. Not only were
the witches killed all over Europe, but their memory has been
buried by the many retrospective analyses which triumphantly
concluded that their power and practices were a matter of
imaginary collective construction affecting both the victims and
the inquisitors. Eco-feminists have proposed a very different
understanding of the "burning times". They associate it with

the destruction of rural cultures and their old rites, with the
violent appropriation of the commons, with the rule of a law
that consecrated the unquestionable rights of the owner, and
with the invention of the modern workers who can only sell their
labour-power on the market as a commodity. Listening to the
defiant cry of the women who name themselves granddaughters of
the past witches, I will go further. I will honour the vision
which, since the Reagan era, has sustained reclaiming witches
such as Starhawk, who associate their activism with the memory of
a past earth-based religion of the goddess - who now "returns."
Against the ongoing academic critical judgement, I claim that the
witches' resurgence, their chant about the goddess' return, and
inseparably their return to the goddess, should not be taken as
a "regression." ①

Somehow my confusion still lingers. The motto seems to stem from
a fictive book called "The Witches of BlackBrook", in which three
sisters escape the Salem witch trials by casting a magic spell.

Considering that not everyone who was accused of witchcraft during
the burning times and its witch trials might have actually been
practising magic, I fear these references could discredit the
horror and madness people experienced, being wrongly labelled and
persecuted as witches. I am staring at the lava streaming out of
the earth in front of us, feeling heated and conflicted.

▶ If you need to take a step away, go to 3.

▶ If you are feeling a sense of sisterhood with the victims, go to
12.

▶▶ 3 RUINS

You ask me to give you a moment. I don't know what you are
thinking right now, but you have been staring at your hands for
quite a while now. My mother once asked me: "Do you know what the
best tool is?", quickly followed by her answering her own question,
while digging into the grounds of our garden ripping out weeds:

"Your hands." You look at me and reach for my hand. I pull you up
from off the ground and we walk away from the burning fires of the
volcano towards industrial ruins. I am sensing that you are ready
to hear the following passage:

① Given the threatening unknown our future is facing, the question
of academic judgements may seem like a rather futile one. Very
few, including academics themselves, among those who disqualify the
resurgence of witches as regressive, are effectively forced to think
by this future, which the witches resolutely address. They are too
busy living up to the relentless neoliberal demands which they have
now to satisfy in order to survive. However, if there is something
to be learned from the past, it may well be the way in which
defending the victims of eradication operations has so often deemed
futile. In one way or another, these victims deserved their fate, or
this fate was the price to be unhappily paid for progress. "Creative

destructions," economists croon. What we have now discovered is
that these destructions come with cascading and interconnecting
consequences. Worlds are destroyed and no such destruction is ever
deserved. This is why I will address the academic world, which, in
turns, is facing its own destruction. Probably, because it is the
one I know best, also because of its specific responsibility in the
formation of the generations which will have to make their way in
the future. ①

I take a breath, trying to lighten the pressure on my chest. It
doesn't help. I am tired of hearing the constant argument replaying
itself in my head about whether it is all hopeless, or if the only
way to live is to endlessly battle this thought. To battle the
feeling of being out of control.

▶ If you have been with the weavers before, go to 6.

▶ If you haven't been with the weavers before, go to 16.

▶▶ 4 RUINS

I am now struggling to keep up with you, as you are walking
through the forest, using the volcano as a landmark to follow.
Suddenly you cannot go further, a fence is blocking the way,
allowing me to finally catch up. We look up at the fence and I
offer to push you up. You climb over the fence, pulling me up from
the other side and now we are walking towards what looks like
an overgrown amusement park. Moss and vines are tightly wrapped
around the base of a ferris wheel. We climb into one of the
compartments and sit down on the damp plastic. What a great moment
to read you another passage, it's almost as if I brought you here
for this reason:

① Resurgence often refers to the reappearance of something defined
as deleterious - e.g. an agricultural pest or an epidemic vector -
after a seemingly successful operation of eradication. It may also
refer to the reworlding of a landscape after a natural catastrophe
or a devastating industrial exploitation. Today, such a reworlding
is no longer understood by researchers in ecology in terms of the
restoration of some stable equilibrium. Ecology has succeeded in
freeing itself from the association of what we call "natural" with
an ordered reality verifying scientific generalization. In contrast,
academic judgements entailing the idea of regression still imply
what has been called "The Ascent of Man": "Man" irrevocably turning
his back on past attachments, beliefs, and scruples, affirming his
destiny of emancipation from traditions and the order of nature.
Even critical humanities including feminist studies, whatever their
deconstruction of the imperialist, sexist, and colonialist character
of the "Ascent of Man" motto, still do not know how to disentangle
themselves from the reference to a rational progress which opposes
the possibility of taking seriously the contemporary resurgence
of what does not conform to a materialist, that is, secularist,
position. ①



ECO-SWARAJ

**Original contribution by Ashish Kothari, environmentalist and Rodrigo Sobarzo, performance artist
Reinterpreted by Floor van Meeuwen**

In response to the abysmal socio-economic inequities and catastrophic ecological collapse we are witnessing globally, powerful resistance and alternative movements are emerging around the world. These are articulating and promoting practices and worldviews relating to achieving human and planetary wellbeing in just and sustainable ways. Some of these are re-affirmations of continuing lifestyles and livelihoods that have lived in relative harmony with the earth for millennia or centuries. Others are new initiatives emerging from resistance movements against the destructive nature of capitalism, industrialism, patriarchy, statism, and other forms of power concentration.

Though incredibly diverse in their settings and processes, these initiatives display some common features that enable the emergence of a general set of principles and values, forming a broad ideological framework, that may be applicable beyond the specific sites where they are operational. One of these features is the assertion of autonomy, or self-governance; or self-determination. This is most prominently articulated in numerous movements of indigenous peoples around the world, culminating globally in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Zapatista and Kurdish autonomy movements are also based on the principle of autonomy.

One such a framework that has emerged from grassroots experience in India, with significant global resonance, is *eco-swaraj*. The term *swaraj*, simplistically translated as self-rule, stems from ancient Indian notions and practices of people being involved in decision-making in local assemblies. It became popular and widely articulated during India's Independence struggle against the British colonial power, but it is important to realize that its use to mean 'national independence' is a very limited interpretation. MK Gandhi, in fact, in numerous writings including in particular *Hind Swaraj*, attempted to give it a much deeper and wider meaning. Encompassing individual to community to human autonomy and freedom, integrally linking to the ethics of responsibility towards others (including the rest of nature), and to the spiritual deepening necessary for ethically just and self-restrained behaviour.

Autonomy and Self-rule

Equally though, the notion of *eco-swaraj* emerges from grassroots praxis. This is illustrated in the following examples from three communities in different parts of India.

1. "Our government is in Mumbai and Delhi, but we are the government in our village", Mendha-Lekha village, Maharashtra.

The village of Mendha-Lekha, in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra state, has a population of about five hundred Gond *Adivasi* people, indigenous people who in India are also called 'tribals'. About thirty years ago these people were part of a resistance movement against a large dam that would have displaced them and submerged their forests. This mobilisation also led them to consider forms of organisation that could help deal with other problems and issues. They established their 'gram sabha' (village assembly) as the primary organ of decision-making, and after considerable discussion adopted the principle of consensus. They realised that voting and the *majoritarianism* that comes with it can be detrimental to village unity and the interests of minorities.

The villagers do not allow any government agency or politicians to take decisions on their behalf, nor may a village or tribal chief do so on his/her own. This is part of a 'tribal self-rule' campaign underway in some parts of India, though few villages have managed to achieve complete self-rule as it is a process that requires sustained effort, natural leadership, and the ability to resolve disputes – features that are not common. Both in Mendha-Lekha and at several other sites, communities are now also using the recent legislation that recognises their communal rights to govern and use forests, along with constitutional provisions of decentralisation, to assert varying levels of *swaraj*.

2. "These hills and forests belong to Niyamraja, they are the basis of our survival and livelihoods, we will not allow any company to take them away from us", Dongria Kondh *adivasis* (indigenous people), Odisha.

The ancient indigenous *adivasi* group of Dongria Kondh, was catapulted into national and global limelight when the UK-based transnational corporation (TNC) Vedanta proposed to mine bauxite in the hills where they live. The Dongria Kondh pointed out that these hills were their sacred territory, and also crucial for their livelihoods and cultural existence. When the state gave its permission for the corporation to begin mining, the Dongria Kondh, supported by civil society groups, took the matter to various levels of government, the courts, and even the shareholders of Vedanta Corporation in London. The Indian Supreme Court ruled that as a culturally important site for the Dongria Kondh, the government required the peoples' approval. This is a crucial order that established the right of consent (or rejection) to affected communities, somewhat akin to the global indigenous peoples' demand for 'free and prior informed consent' (FPIC) now enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. At village assemblies that were subsequently held, the Dongria Kondh unanimously rejected the mining proposal and have since then stood firm against renewed efforts to convince them otherwise, despite increased armed police presence and intimidation tactics by the state.

3. "Seeds are the core of our identity, our culture, our livelihoods, they are our heritage and no government agency or corporation can control them", Dalit women of Deccan Development Society, Telangana.

In India's unique caste system (mostly amongst Hindus), where people are born into a relatively unchanging hierarchical ordering of castes, Dalits are at the bottom of the run, oppressed and exploited in multiple ways. As Dalit women, there is double oppression in a society that is also highly patriarchal. And as small and marginal farmers, they are also economically marginalised. In such a situation, over the last three decades, these women have thrown off their socially oppressed status by achieving a remarkable revolution in sustainable farming, alternative media, and collective mobilisation. Assisted by some civil society activists, they collectivized several agricultural operations, revived traditional seed diversity, went completely organic, created grain banks for the poor to access, linked farmer producers to nearby consumers (through a healthy foods restaurant in a nearby town), fought for land rights for women, took up an influential role in the local Agricultural Science Centre (a government set-up), and in many other ways achieved food sovereignty and security. Thus empowered, they also set up a community radio station and a filmmaking unit, to generate their own media content. As part of several national and global networks, they have also participated in policy forums and civil society exchanges. Where once they were shunned as Dalits,

THE DECISION OF THIS DESIGN WAS BEING MADE BY OTHERS. VISITORS OF [HTTPS://HUB.XPUB.NL/SANDBOT/WORDS-FOR-THE-FUTURE/ECO-SWARAJ/](https://hub.xpub.nl/sandbot/words-for-the-future/eco-swaraj/) ARE GIVEN THREE OPTIONS TO VIEW THE LAYOUT. THE MOST PICKED LAYOUT IS THIS DESIGN. BY A UNIQUE VISITORS COUNTER IT WAS POSSIBLE TO KEEP TRACK OF THE MOST POPULAR PAGE. A SMALL COMMUNITY ON THE INTERNET MADE DECISIONS. ECO-SWARAJ IS ABOUT DECISION MAKING SYSTEMS. IT SHOWS THREE EXAMPLES OF HOW THIS PROCESS IS GOING ON IN INDIA.

marginalised as women, and poverty-stricken as marginal farmers with few productive assets, they are now assertive, self-confident controllers of their own destiny, advocates for local to global policy change, and path breakers in many other respects.

These and numerous other examples across India, including in urban areas such as the movements for the 'right to the city', like participatory budgeting, or *area sabha* (neighbourhood assembly) empowerment as an urban parallel to *gram sabha* (village assembly) self-governance, show the potential of *eco-swaraj*. Practices of *eco-swaraj* (as also others in the world) display an approach that respects the limits of the Earth and the rights of other species, while pursuing the core values of social justice and equity. With its strong democratic and egalitarian impulse, *eco-swaraj* seeks to empower every person to be a part of decision-making and requires a holistic vision of human wellbeing – that encompasses physical, material, socio-cultural, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. Instead of states and corporations, *eco-swaraj* places collectives and communities at the centre of governance and economy. *Eco-swaraj* is grounded in real-life initiatives across the Indian subcontinent, encompassing sustainable farming, fisheries and pastoralism, food and water sovereignty, decentralized energy production, direct local governance, community health, alternative learning and education, community-controlled media and communications, localization of economies, gender and caste justice, rights of differently abled and multiple sexualities, and many others.

Radical Ecological Democracy

Based on such grassroots experience and interactions with activist-thinkers and practitioners across India, a conceptual framework called Radical Ecological Democracy (RED) has emerged in the last few years as a somewhat more systematic or structured reworking of *eco-swaraj*. While it arose in India, it quickly found resonance in many other parts of the world as part of a process of generating Peoples' Sustainability Treaties for the Rio+20 Conference.

Eco-swaraj or RED encompasses the following five interlocking spheres (thematic composites of key elements), which have evolved through a process of bringing together alternative initiatives across India called *Vikalp Sangam* (Alternatives Confluence), begun in 2014:

Ecological wisdom and resilience: Reviving or strengthening the foundational belief in humanity being part of nature, and the intrinsic right of the rest of nature to thrive in all its diversity and complexity, promoting the conservation and resilience of nature (ecosystems, species, functions, and cycles).

Social well-being and justice: Moving towards lives that are fulfilling and satisfactory physically, socially, culturally, and spiritually; with equity in socio-economic and political entitlements, benefits, rights and responsibilities across gender, class, caste, age, ethnicities, 'abilities', sexualities, and other current divisions; and an ongoing attempt to balance collective interests and individual freedoms; so that peace and harmony are ensured.

Direct or radical political democracy: Establishing processes of decision-making power at the smallest unit of human settlement (rural or urban), in

which every human has the right, capacity and opportunity to take part. From these basic units outwards growth is envisioned to larger levels of governance that are accountable and answerable to these basic units. Political decision-making at larger levels is taken by ecoregional or biocultural regional institutions, which respect ecological and cultural linkages and boundaries (and therefore challenge current political boundaries, including those of nation-states). The role of the state eventually becomes minimal and is limited to facilitating the connection of peoples and initiatives across larger landscapes. It carries out welfare measures only till the time the basic units of direct and ecoregional democracy are not able to do so.

Economic democracy: Establishing or strengthening processes in which local communities including producers and consumers – often combined in one word as *prosumers* – have control over the means of production, distribution, exchange, and markets. Open localization is a key principle, in which the local regional economy provides for all basic needs. Dependence on global trade is minimised, without falling into the trap of xenophobic closure of boundaries to 'outsiders' (such as what we see in some parts of Europe that are anti-immigrants). Larger trade and exchange, if and where necessary, is built on – and safeguards – this local self-reliance. Nature, natural resources and other important elements that feed into the economy, are governed as the commons. Private property is minimized or disappears, non-monetized relations of caring and sharing regain their central importance and indicators are predominantly qualitative, focusing on basic needs and well-being.

Cultural and knowledge plurality: Promoting processes in which diversity is a key principle; knowledge and its generation, use and transmission is part of the public domain or commons; innovation is democratically generated and there are no ivory towers of 'expertise'; learning takes place as part of life rather than in specialized institutions; and individual or collective pathways of ethical and spiritual well being and of happiness are available to all.

Seen as a set of petals in a flower (see Figure below), the core or bud where they all intersect forms a set of values or principles, which too emerges as a crucial part of alternative initiatives of the kind mentioned above. These values, such as equality and equity, respect for all life, diversity and pluralism, balancing the collective and the individual, can also be seen as the possible/ideal ethical or spiritual foundation of RED societies, or the worldview(s) that its members hold.

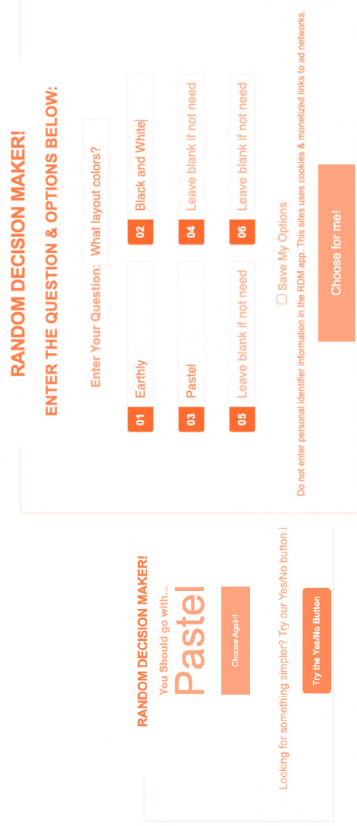
HOW TO MAKE A DECISION?

LET THE COMPUTER DECIDE

<https://www.8-ball-magic.com/>



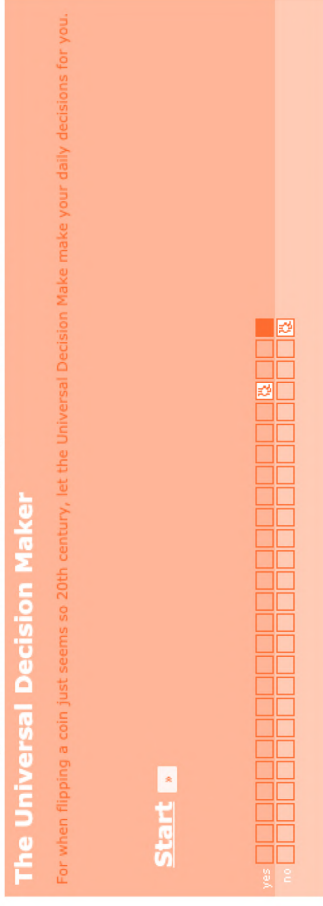
<https://www.randomdecisionmaker.com/>



<https://wheeldecide.com/wheels/chance-fortune/yes-or-no-decision-maker/>



<https://sam-i-am.com/play/5k/decisions/>



LET OTHERS DECIDE

Write down your decision.
Write down your options.
Ask others.

Decision:
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Options:
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.....
.....
.....
.....

Person 1:
.....
.....
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Person 2:
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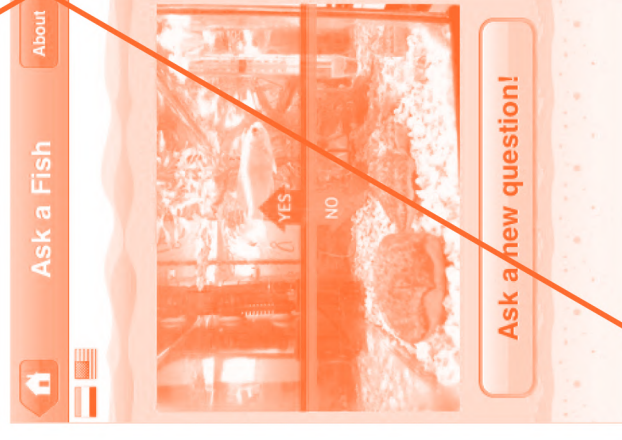
Person 3:
.....
.....
.....

Conclusion:
.....
.....
.....

LET ANIMALS DECIDE



Paul the octopus
Famous for decision making on the World Cup in 2010.
He died the same year.



Unfortunately Ask A Fish is also no longer alive. This method of decision making was easy; After asking a question you could see where the fish was swimming (live!). Either in the Yes or No area.



WOR(L)DS FOR THE FUTURE

A pluralistic open license

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