FROM PRAXIS TO POLICY: **environmental shift through art and culture**

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contents

introduction

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At the beginning, we would like to acknowledge and to express our gratitude to everybody who made this publication come alive: all of the participants in the "Art, Climate, Transition" (ACT) project; all of the participants in Lokomotiva's ACT-related activities; and all of our colleagues and supporters who worked on them in the past years. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the contributors who shared a pluriverse of thoughts and, together with us, proposed and reflected on ideas for the future of societies, communities, institutions and other collective forms that would generate conviviality among humans and non-humans. This publication contains a collection of those thoughts and viewpoints on the position of art and culture, particularly apropos of the climate catastrophe, environmental distress, and consequential social/economic injustices.

In this publication we desire; we wish to pursue our anxieties, our dilemmas, our aspirations, our resentment; we speculate; we believe and share ideological stands for the need of a major shift that would resonate with our wishes and desires, but resonate most of all with the empirically proven human potential to create futures of convivial communities of interconnected beings that care for one another.

This publication serves as a humble contribution to our collective pursuit of change. It explores various actions in the cultural and art field that advocate for radical transformation, equitable spaces, social justice, solidarity, and the nurturing of common resources. It is a thoughtful exploration, mapping the intricate connections between the art field, critical theory, socio-political and cultural perspectives, as well as environmental dilemmas and collective action. It resonates profoundly with the turbulent times we currently live in, characterised by crises and uncertainty. With it, we want to invigorate and rejuvenate our perspectives and offer a fresh outlook on these pressing issues, create a collaborative and inclusive space--where diverse practices converge to generate knowledge--and inspire transformative action.

The awareness that we live in a rapidly self-destructive society is greater than ever. The fact that natural hazards, wars, and consequent economic (and other social) inequalities spread equally to all parts of the world, exposing the weaknesses of the "strongest" or "developed" nations and societies, can be an impetus for transformation. Even the most conservative discourses have considered links between crises and irresponsible social and environmental behaviour, and detected the relation thereof to colonial powers and consumerism. Intersectionality, on the other hand, has upgraded the discourse of feminism, reflecting on socio-cultural and economic inequalities, and excavating its relation to the destruction of public and common goods, and the trans-generational connection to exploitation in all its forms: neoliberal capitalism, white supremacism, and patriarchal ideologies politics that perpetuate hell on earth.

The publication is imbued with written material and praxis, looking at institutional imagination, cultural policies, sustainability, care, degrowth, ecofeminism, commons, art practices and educational politics. It generates new perspectives that transgress conventional boundaries, transforming personal and collective politics to prevent or mitigate the socio-economic, cultural, and political injustices resulting from the climate catastrophe. The transformative and challenging potential of art practices and cultural production in political action and activism (not just politics as a topic in art practice, media, or messages) has been central to movements such as Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Coloured Revolutions (and those in South-Eastern Europe), the popular resistance in occupied Palestine, the conservation movements, the indigenous

environment protectors' actions, and even in one of the most commonly organised forms of pursuit of justice and equity in the 21 century: the occupations (of theatres, dormitories, universities and other public institutions). In addition to the establishment of a new (often temporary) system of relations, mechanisms of care, and rules of conduct; there was a discourse of applying artistic practices in joint action, creating a temporary cultural policy (values, activities, and use) as a part of the assessed needs and potentials of the members of the new (temporary) micro society. Those crises, combined with the additional struggle to navigate the Covid 19 pandemic, or atrocities such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, or the refugee ordeal, have opened a new chapter of re-evaluating and rethinking the position and role of public institutions, policies, services - and/or the commons. The humans (and non-humans unwillingly) have found themselves at the boiling point of human-made natural disasters, turbo-capitalism and war atrocities: and it's time to shift en route. Therefore, we raise the following questions: How do we establish new systems of relations in our societies and how do arts, collaboration and practices of self-organisation, commoning, ecofeminist approaches and critical thinking assist the struggle for the commons? We see this publication as sharing, and offering space for discussion and polemics in these perspectives, for opening questions and offering standpoints that could transform the future.

Setting the ground for the questions of policies and institutional politics is the first chapter **"Cultural policies and institutions".** Višnja Kisić and Goran Tomka give us a wider viewpoint on the "ecological turn in culture" and the two currently dominant frameworks for thinking about environmental issues within culture - sustainable development and greening. The authors critically reflect on them as locked frames of living in current times, bound by anthropocentrism, capitalism, and coloniality. They propose unlocking these restrained futures through diverse sensibilities and ways of relating and being with the world, creating without extracting and exploiting, through pluriversing, kindness and life-affirming ways of thinking, practicing and living culture: ways that don't fall into traps of maintaining the status quo, as they explain. They elaborate seven contours, as they express it, of what it would mean to envision and work toward an "ecological turn in culture".

In his article, also in the first section, Zoran Erić writes about cultural institutions as one of the main players in the societies contributing or challenging the 'ecological turn'. He explores the need for a paradigm shift in social relations, a shift away from extractivist capitalism and towards more equitable and environmentally conscious models. His article also examines the challenges faced by cultural institutions in redefining their roles and adopting sustainable practices, while emphasising the importance of addressing environmental justice and incorporating principles of sustainability in curatorial practices and exhibition politics. The challenge is, he writes, to address the issue of environmental justice both in content and in form, but also to re-think politics and ethics of work.

The second section **"Ecofeminist alliances and tactics for the future"** depicts ecofeminist perspectives from the past to the future. Firstly, Suzana Milevska profoundly dissects ecofeminism as a notion and a movement and reflects on the possible extrapolation of the unique ecofeminist performative art practices of several artists as examples. Milevska explores the efforts of these ecofeminist artists to challenge patriarchal hierarchies through their work and highlights the limitations of human perception in understanding other species. The discussion also touches upon the concept of hybrid knowledge as a means to undo systemic hierarchies and address climate change denialism. Feminist ecology, ecofeminism and its gendered knowledge are nomadic by default, she notes, since they move in all sorts of different directions and thus their power stems from the impossibility to grasp, define, and conquer it once and for all. However, this is not the same as to say that it is weak and disempowered. In that context, she analyses and reflects on several related concepts, emphasizing the important distinction between the noun commons as passive resource or property, and the active relations assumed by commoning, specifically engagement with nature in an attempt to go above and beyond its stereotypical and naïve understanding as a romanticist ideal and myth.

Further on in the section Giulia Casalini proposes her decolonial ecotransfeminist approach as a framework that combines feminist, queer, and decolonial ecological thinking to address environmental issues and challenge essentialist notions of the woman-nature link. She suggests three principles for decolonial ecotrans-

feminist praxis: radical solidarity, radical restructuring, and radical empathy, advocating for alliances, institutional reorganization, and empathetic understanding to bring about transformative change in the arts and beyond. Casalini believes in the importance of transnational connections, visionary fiction, and understanding positionality in promoting decolonial ecotransfeminism, while also highlighting the significance of intersectionality and indigenous perspectives in reframing our relationship with nature.

We dedicated the third section, **"(Un)learning practice"** to educational and education policy dilemmas. Here, Nikolina Pristaš and Slobodanka Stevceska develop playful proposals for tackling those issues, reflecting on the importance of support of exploring, practising the impossible and other processes that lead to diverse experiences and empowerment of the students. They both refer to their own artistic practices and to the collaboration processes which shape their pedagogical work. Referring to Cage`s concept of the practicality of the impossible, and a Chicago-based theatre collective, Goat Island, Pristaš notes that the action of practising the impossible with its ethical and political intent, is what gives impetus to the process, rather than the completion of the artwork. She writes about the exhaustion of pedagogy in the transference of skills and types of knowledge that aim to reproduce already established performance practices; and she raises questions about the limitations of traditional artistic education, and the consequent need to rethink pedagogical approaches to embrace gestures of interruption, challenging inertial practices and fostering connections with other fields to address urgent political and ethical issues.

Stevceska refers to her work with marginalised communities and her socially aware art practices which often incorporate created situations where listening to the audience and collective action are key elements that create common space and the bases of her practice. If such concepts are included in the formal curriculum, would other concepts still penetrate, no matter whether they are retrograde, or obscure?, she reflects. She paints a vivid picture of the contextual complexity of the country struggling with economic, political and social crises--as well as corruption that has its effects on educational, health and social systems in general--and suggests that

such burning issues in the educational system need to be approached by drawing inspiration from alternative educational concepts and fostering a balance between freedom and systematic work, while addressing social, ethical, and environmental challenges through critical thinking, dialogue, and collective action.

The last section, **"Possible worlds"** is the most playful of all the sections and gives insight into several artistic practices and artworks that have dealt with or are dealing with the assembly of concepts, ideologies and values mentioned in all of the articles before. Artists Krista Burāne, Filip Jovanovski and Zorica Zafirovska reveal their practice, and Miloš Kovačević interviews artist Irena Ristić in an effort to bring to the fore what happens when artists discover commons (literally the title of the article).

We imagined this publication as a discursive but playful platform that does not limit or frame ways of expressing or reflecting, but one that still positions itself as a critical base that tends to firmly take a stand on historically relevant issues. We would like to consider the possibilities of communicating these ideas among us humans and non-humans too, and how they could shift living paradigms which we detect as harmful. Art and education have always been at the core of cultural resilience, embodying conviviality in struggle and producing resistance where it's most necessary.

We would like to thank all of the authors for generously sharing the knowledge and experience they've obtained over the course of their work. Their participation in our activities and events created this constellation we plan to maintain for as long as it serves us on Earth - humans and non-humans. We would also like to show appreciation to our kin of different kinds, shapes and species for being with us through the uplifting and difficult times on this endeavour. Another world is possible - and it's currently being worked on.

cultural policies and institutions

ecological turn in culture

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Introduction

In this text,[1] we are exploring what "an ecological turn in culture" could mean, a turn that follows a different path than *sustainable development* and *greening*, two currently dominant frameworks for thinking about environmental issues within culture. In the first part of the text, we will offer a multiperspective critique of sustainable development and greening. In the second part, we will turn towards what we call "the ecological turn in culture". In doing so, we invite symbiotic, convivial, plural, caring, just and life-affirming ways of thinking, practicing, and living culture: ways that don't fall into traps of maintaining the *status quo*.

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1. This article is based on the lecture we have given within project ACT: Art, climate, transition/ Other spaces, in organization of Lokomotiva, on 7 October 2021.

Why Not Go Along With Sustainable Development and Greening?

Sustainable development and its child "sustainability" have been part of one of the most extraordinary interventions in public opinion of the last 50 years or so. On the surface, they look desirable, and even utterly good. However, from a broader historical and political view, the evolution of these two terms and their acceptance have given the ideological and political grounding to an unimaginable destruction of the global ecosystem and life on Earth.

The post-War period, of the fifties and sixties, saw an economic and political consensus globally (on both sides of the Iron curtain) centred around rebuilding, development and growth. The famous Bretton Woods Conference set up the modern economic system with the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and other big financial institutions, and their primary concern was development and growth. The narrative was that we want to grow out of animosities over the Second World War, to grow out of poverty, to grow out of colonial relations, to grow out of all ills. Big investments like the Marshall Plan and others, brought growth across the globe. They brought cars, houses, electronic appliances – together with consumerism -- to millions of people.

However, already in the 60s, many people already started being worried about this kind of growth. In 1972, a very influential book called "The Limits to Growth" (Meadows et al, 1972) appeared, which stated: this can't go on. Economics is not something that should run over our societies and our ecosystems. It is very illogical and even stupid to think that in a finite planet, we can have infinite growth. We have to rethink it. And the main way to confront growth for them was to introduce limits – limits to the endless growth of industries, cities, and populations. That book was very influential in the 70s, initiating a whole range of conferences and publications.

Not everyone was happy about it however. It went straight against the founding

logic of the liberal capitalist system, which is that no one should impose limits on business. And that is the political and economic ambience in which we must look at the Brundtland Report of 1987 (Brundtland et al, 1987), the iconic report that introduced the notion and famous definition of sustainability. The basic idea of the whole report and the policies and paradigm that followed, is that we cannot look only at ecology and society, when we look at what to sustain, but that we have to look at economics as well. As such, it brought economics back to the centre of policymaking and in effect claimed that unfettered development must go on. In positing that economic development should be sustained (instead of limited), the Brundtland Report, and all other sustainability policies that followed, have saved the capitalist notion of growth and development. The most striking proof of the failure of the sustainable development paradigm is that the damage to global eco-systems, species extinction, social inequalities, and gas emissions have all acceler-ated since its adoption.

Fast-forward to the 21st Century, and with increased ecological, social and climate crises we get the concept of "greening" that appears to be more concerned about "Nature". However, it is not only a continuation of sustainable development, but proves to be an even more apolitical, more techno-optimistic, more economy-driv-en and less socially engaged concept. The greening paradigm is once again trying to rescue the idea of the intrinsic value of economics and growth by enlarging the markets to include natural capital and economic services of ecosystems within capitalist logic. It relies on the idea that new poverty and inequalities will be tack-led by providing "green jobs", and it measures its successes and failures in CO_2 and other gas emissions reduction. Suddenly, everything gets calculated through it - the trees, the oceans, ants, whole landscapes and histories. In a way very sim-ilar to the way capitalism transformed everything into a commodity and then into money, here loss of life is converted into CO_2. All the social, ecological, political, spiritual and psychological relations through which we are exploiting, polluting and destroying everything alive are somehow just pushed aside and sent to the back. This approach to change is perpetuating extinction while offering a false sense of struggle and transformation.

The problem with both sustainable development and greening is that they are not questioning at least three key roots of the ecological crisis today, as we see it. First, they are not questioning the *capitalist world order*, and its global neoliberal system of power-making, which is extracting life and creative forces of the Earth and across the Earth. These approaches obscure the role of exploitative, industrial, capitalist, colonial power relations and the destruction they have on the world. They largely remain aligned with the development paradigm, rarely challenging profit making logic and consumption patterns. They look at how to revive capitalism in the wake of mass extinction, instead of seeing it as an economic and world-ecology system that allows for radical inequalities and exploitation of life, both human and more-than-human.

Second, they are not questioning *anthropocentrism,* and its belief in human superiority over the rest of the living world, as well as humanity's assumed right to the more-than-human world as a "resource". On the contrary, they push for maintenance of the Nature vs Culture (Society) divide. In that, the human, cultural, social part of the divide must constantly be rethought and innovated, through creativity, technology and investment. But the other side, Nature, is there to be discovered, extracted, exploited, ruled upon and colonised.

And finally, both the sustainable development paradigm and the idea of the greening of culture are deeply *Eurocentric, and Western-centric* and as such are repeating colonial relations in a neo-colonial way. Both paradigms claim universalizing visions of the future. They frame the problems and promise the solutions as if the world as a whole is under the same danger; as if we are all of the same social status, live in very similar ecosystems, have the same ways of sustaining life and have the same responsibility in perpetuating the crises. The world thus becomes a ''One-World World,'' in which the Western world and its dualist, developmentalist, patriarchal, secular, capitalist worldview ''arrogates for itself the right to be 'the' world'' (Escobar, 2015, p. 15). Through notions such as cultural rights and cultural diversity or greening of cultural institutions and organisations, these same universalising and colonising worldviews are promoted when sustainable development and greening are applied within the cultural field.

Towards Ecological Turn in Culture

In the wake of the Capitalocene (Moore, 2016) and its severing consequences, the issue of humanity's relationship with the "more-than-human" world (Abram, 1997) asks for searching philosophical and existential trajectories beyond the anthropocentric culture/nature dualism, capitalist world-ecology, and Western exceptionalism. As a way of departing from sustainability and greening, we propose a deeper transformation of culture in the sense of what we might call "the ecological turn in culture". It is an epistemic, political and spiritual turn towards thinking and practicing how to create when we feel Earth as a living complex web of life that we share with many creatures. How we create when we do not segregate, exclude, extract and exploit, but practice mutual care and dependence. How we create when we embrace complexities, vulnerabilities and troubles of being alive together. We are of course not alone in the search of alternative ways of being and creating along these lines of thought. It is a shared struggle of many, many people that we are very happy to be inspired by. What we are offering here are several basic contours of transformations of culture towards an ecological turn, illustrated by examples that we find interesting, inspiring and important.

Repoliticising Culture

In transforming culture beyond existing hegemonic pathways, we have to get rid of the idea that culture is a separated, autonomous, apolitical field. Culture has to break away from being an epitome of what is good, civilised and beautiful, recognising itself as an integral part of political, social, economic and ecological interrelations and power structures. Repoliticising culture means understanding it as both the practice that can help maintain existing destructive systems, as well as a practice that can disrupt and transform them – a practice that frames current issues, reorders, and creates different possible conceptualisations and relations.

Museum of homelessness[2] is a charity organisation from the UK run by people who have experienced homelessness. On purpose, it's not about the homeless people, but about homelessness - a condition that is fuelled by the capitalist system. So, the museum talks about different experiences, but also about homelessness as a structural issue. It joins forces with charity workers, people who are homeless or who have been homeless, policymakers, shelter workers, public kitchens, and so on. Doing so it builds and reinforces different kinds of networks of solidarity and care. It collects stories about homelessness as such, but also fights very carefully for the recognition of homelessness as a social issue related to the property market, asymmetry of power, rising prices and soaring profits of the rental industry and so on. They work both on a policy level and on providing care and shelter for people who are currently experiencing homelessness.

If we can expand this concept even beyond the anthropocentric view, we see that many other species are homeless due to capitalist exploitations. Sharing experiences of what it means to be without home or with home, as well as what are the current material social, economic, and ecological conditions that allow for such existence to happen can in fact bring us closer across different social and biological divides. Museum of Homelessness is thus a repoliticising cultural institution. First, it deconstructs homelessness and critically views the big structural picture. Second, it destabilises the way to be a museum and questions the very foundations of what a cultural institution is, for whom it cares, and what kind of stories it shares. And finally, it is a museum that practices kindness and solidarity as its working ethical and political principle.

Embracing the More-Than-Human World

Culture played a lead role in the transformations which took us away from the more-than-human world, because becoming "cultured", urban and cosmopolitan brought about a lot of elimination and severing of the webs of life. As Fisher (2019,

2.	https://museumofhomelessness.org/

p3) puts it: "The connective modes of experience by which we may feel our kinship with life - modes that are bodily-felt, sensuous, emotional, playful (...) - have been devalued and marginalized in our nature-dominating Society." We have become different humans and with our powerful influence on all other forms of life on Earth, Earth has also become a much more segregated, exploited and troubled space. Attempts to repoliticise culture should include a welcoming of the more-than-human world, the recognition of, reconnection with and respect for the complex web of life. From such recognition, respect and reconnection a different culture would arise. Such culture can and should play an important role in healing these severances.

There are many, many interesting examples and artistic works that are trying to re-establish the relation between humans and more-than-humans. _Choco Base art residency_,[3] by the foundation Más Arte más Acción—which we had the huge joy to spend some time in, next to the ocean in western Columbia--is one that is all about embracing relations with the more-than-human world. It's a house unlike most artistic spaces. Usually artist studios, galleries, concert halls and theatres are conceived as spaces isolated from reality to be able to show art as something artificial, beyond and above the messy reality. This house is all about plunging you back into that messy reality - into the sounds of birds and creatures and snakes and winds and waves. At first it is very uncomfortable, but then it's really teeming with life and interdependence. It is a powerful way, in a very material sense, to shed the illusion of human-centredness and of the primacy of secluded spaces for artistic creation.

Nurturing Pluriverse

The idea of pluriverse (Escobar, 2018), coined by Mexican Zapatistas, strives for a 'world in which many worlds exist', a world beyond Western universalist logic. It goes much further than the notion of cultural diversity or plurality and intervenes

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3. https://www.masartemasaccion.org/?lang=en

in the ontological and epistemic realm. Pluriverse means going beyond the claim that there is one world and one solution that fits everyone and opens numerous ways of being, feeling, knowing and inhabiting the Earth that have been marginalized by Western hegemony. There are, consequently, many ways of practicing, experiencing and producing culture and arts that go beyond modern nation-state or global capitalist paradigms.

As an illustration, we find the following project very important. It boldly brings a very different way of relating to the world in a package that is very familiar to cultural policy - a heritage management plan of a _Budj Bim Cultural Landscape_[4], an UNESCO World Heritage site. _Healthy land, healthy people_ is an example of heritage management and protection project from the southwest of Australia, where the indigenous community has succeeded in putting together a management plan for a particular cultural landscape that is important for them in many ways. It is the territory where their ancestors have lived but also the territory of their subsistence today. It is the territory in which the modern division between the human and the more-than-human world is not practiced. This Management plan sets the vision of healthier land or country, a healthy territory, and healthy people in a way that people are there as the carers, but land is also there to care for people. There is a kind of entanglement between what humans do and what other species do to one another to sustain life in a healthy and hospitable territory.

Practicing Interdependence

Something that we all learn in our schools and in our histories is the day of independence and the Declaration(s) of Independence. We are raised as independent, free individuals. We celebrate independence on every corner in Western culture (Tomka, Kisić, 2019). In a weird way, we are constantly training ourselves to be "free", and thus isolated from others - other people, plants, animals. Becoming in-

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4.   https://www.budjbim.com.au/

dependent from a teacher, from a school, from a surrounding is always welcomed. No wonder we have segregation, no wonder we have social inequality and no wonder we have extinction and ecological crises. In contrast to that, interdependence (Kisić, Tomka, 2020) is not about celebrating boundaries and exclusion of oneself. It is about recognising and nurturing mutual dependence, a state of being connected and intertwined with others, as well as a state of being mutually responsible for one another and in care of one another.

Applied to culture, it is not about seeing culture or cultural professionals as a particular independent and secluded field, away from social, political and ecological relations. It means seeing culture not as something that can fit well into a museum, heritage protection list or cultural centre, but as something that is intertwined with everything else. While in Colombia we heard from an Afro-Colombian community a very clear rebuttal of such stances. That community lives in one of the most deprivileged regions of Colombia, a region which is brimming with illegal extractivism by multinational corporations. What they're saying is that their culture cannot be separated from other life concerns. Culture for them is truly and deeply related to the existential territories in which they live, in which they self-organise their economies, social and ecological relations. If they are expelled from these territories and if these territories get further exploited, there is no cultural centre or museum or any such building that could protect their culture, because without their life relations, this culture becomes just a symbolic empty signifier. What would it mean to start transforming the individualist modern vision of culture into a practice that grows from interdependence, and that connects, nurtures and regenerates?

Rooting and Expanding Subjectivities

Interdependence takes us to the notion of how we subjectivise and understand ourselves. The question is how we build the awareness of our very existence that is rooted in interdependence with different forms of life. It is what Eco-psychologists call the removing of boundaries between the Self, the Society and the Nature,

a usual frame through which we are used to imagine ourselves and our psyche (Fisher, 2013). In a way, seeing what are the material and spiritual conditions that sustain our existence. When we expand subjectivities in such a way, we start noticing and reverting the extractivist capitalist logic all around, as well as the deeply anthropocentric worldviews that shape us.

A very interesting example of "ecological -subjectivity"[5] is _Ruta Pacifica de las Mojeres_[6], from Colombia. It is a network of many, many different female leaders, fighters, and strugglers for life against violence. In Colombia, an internationally acclaimed peace process has produced a network of new museums and new memory institutions in urban centres. What they are doing is that researchers, artists and curators are traveling to the rural areas of Colombia, where the most violence occurred, to take interviews, to get testimonies; to take the memory from the territory to urban centres. Then they are taking it to be safeguarded, documented, and interpreted somewhere in a city museum. And of course, from our Western perspective, there's nothing wrong with that. That's the way to safeguard memory. But for this group of women, this is something that is deeply illustrative of capitalist and colonial extractivist logic. You come, you extract the very knowledge from the territory, you extract the narration from the bodies that have suffered the violence, and you take all of that into the city centre to be presented in a new building to tourists, and urban populations living usually in privileged areas of cities. Therefore, these women have started establishing the tours that really practice the notion of existential territory and of the body as a territory. For them, their bodies are rooted in the territory of their existence and memories are rooted where this territory is. To really safeguard these memories and make them alive, they do walks and storytelling, as a way to actually remember and heal--but heal together with the territory. This includes not only human perspectives and human violence, but also the violations of the more-than-human world.

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5. Ecological subjectivity is a notion of existence that is relational and embodied, which extends to the social and physical environment, and as such is not limited to a single body, fixed notion of the self, or a set of specific practicing that we usually think of as ecological. It is in the permeability, interconnectedness and relations that subjectivity is being felt and enacted. For more details see Posthumus 2017.

6. https://rutapacifica.org.co/wp/

Welcoming Vulnerability and Kindness

While dominant ways of dealing with the crises popularise ideas of sustaining and being resilient, many alternative thinkers recognise that the feeling of vulnerability (Butler, 2004) and state of insecurity (Lorrey, 2015), exacerbated by the ecological crisis, can be a ground for a new kind of ethics. When we are all under some kind of threat, we are all vulnerable, we all can lose our homes, our memories, and our loved ones, a new kind of kindness and care can emerge. "Staying with the trouble", as Donna Haraway (2016, p1) puts it, might serve as an inspiration for what it means to be vulnerable and kind within crises:

Staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings. The task is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present.

A Berlin based project _Animalesque city_ [7]starts from the fact that we as humans have devastated endless numbers of habitats. So maybe as architects, in their case, but also as artists, as dancers and theatre makers or whoever we are, we can also make some places for other fellow humans and other forms of life who are in need.They're going around the city and constructing aestheticised animal hideaways and places for animals in an effort to share the city with them. This is a new cultural logic that is not trying to abstract art and culture from the precariousness of life, but to feel the endangerment and vulnerability together with others and to be kind to them. That is a morality that is not transactional, but is opening, sharing and acknowledging other ways of being just because they exist.

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7.   https://archplus.net/de/animalesque-city/

Enacting a Culture of Degrowing

The possibility and desire of constant and unlimited growth is one of the strongest beliefs with which capitalist world relations perpetuate themselves (D'Alisa et al, 2014). The materiality of this myth results in the ever-increasing extraction of both human and more-than-human life forces, continuous overproduction, overconsumption, and wasting of both things and beings. One of the strong alternatives is the international degrowth movement. It is however not so much about reversing growth as such, but about the radical rethinking of what is valuable (and what gets counted): what is really meaningful and important. It is also about reclaiming decision-making powers about production (of everything) from large-scale structures like stock markets or national governments which are all addicted to growth.

Among actors in the cultural field, numerous practices such as abstinence from producing more artworks, more arts events and institutions or valuing and engaging long-term processes instead of fast product-making, come as a conscious decision towards practicing degrowth. For example, the decision by Museu da Maré from Brazil not to collect and store objects as a community museum, but to focus on memory dialogues, life relations and knowledge sharing, comes as an active response to extractivist and commodifying practices of modern, capitalist logic museums. Degrowing in arts and culture also gets practiced through collectives, such as _Guerilla Girls_[8], who engage in "culture jamming" - reworking and subverting consumerist images and creating what Alexander (2017) calls "aesthetics of degrowth". It also entails actively working towards minimizing inequalities, creating connections, and solidarity acts between diverse territories. Finally, the sharing of resources and prolonging the life of creative practices by making them accessible for longer periods and in numerous locations is also one more way to respect work and disengage from unnecessary pollution, production and extraction.

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8. https://www.guerrillagirls.com/

Unlocking Futures

The sustainable development and greening of culture offer us locked frames of living in current times and pursuing futures to come – frames bound by anthropo-centrism, capitalism, and coloniality. This is why we find it utterly important to un-lock these restrained futures through unlocking different sensibilities and ways of relating to the world; through unlocking different perspectives and ways of know-ing that are not rooted in Western exceptionalism; and through unlocking different ways of being with the world and creating, without extracting and exploiting.

In this text we have proposed seven contours of what it would mean to envision and work toward an "ecological turn in culture". We see this text as one of the possible blueprints for discussions, disruptions, and creations towards a more just, convivial, and caring world, and we look forward to its future life as we develop these ideas and practices together with many others. The important current and future work of unlocking futures through pluriversing, through kindness, through re-politicisation can take many shapes and forms, and we invite you to let us know about your ideas, works and practices that go towards those directions.

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the role of art and cultural institutions in the global eco-social crises

Zoran Erić

1. Analysis of the Eco-Social Crises and the Concept of Economic Growth

The year 1972 was marked by several major pioneering events that gave a strong impetus to the increase of awareness of humanity that climate change is not just a phase to be considered in the future, but the imminent threat to all living organisms on the planet and the predominant issue that needs to be urgently and carefully addressed. Initially, the United Nations Conference on Human Environment was held in Stockholm in June 1972 and delivered the so-called Stockholm Declaration.[1] This was the first supranational initiative to draft a globally binding document on the human environment that overtly pointed out the main ecological threats the world is facing, such as the destruction and depletion of irreplaceable resources, the extinction of numerous species, pollution of land, water, and air, etc.: all results of human activity. As a response to this negligence, a set of principles was detailed in the Declaration in order to protect and safeguard the environment.

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1.   See: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/29567/ELGP1StockD.pdf

The same year 1972 witnessed ground-breaking research and a report by the Club of Rome's experts called *The Limits to Growth.*[2] This document leaned on the pioneering study by computer engineer Jay Forrester of MIT. The researchers used computer simulations to predict the economic and social consequences of exponential growth in relation to the limited availability of resources. The research concluded that labour and capital should be largely redirected to combat global environmental constraints and that at some point during the 21st century, it would thwart further growth. As a possible solution to the problem of excessive growth, the theory of degrowth appeared.[3]

John Bellamy Forester has rightfully argued that the crisis the planet Earth faced at that time could not be regarded as "a crisis of *nature* but a crisis of *society*".[4] At the roots of the crisis are the relations of production, and the imperative of technological advancement that—along with demographic changes (i.e. overpopulation)—are shaping the dominant social system.[5] Nowadays, fifty years and numerous UN conferences, protocols, and documents later, humanity has not advanced much in fighting the effects of climate change. The *fossil economy* of self-sustaining growth, based on the growing consumption of fossil fuels and the consequent continuous increase in carbon dioxide emissions, which is also the main cause of global warming, is still in place along with the latest version of capitalism.[6]

2. Meadows, Donella H.; Meadows, Dennis L.; Randers, Jørgen. & Behrens, William W., III. (1972). The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind, digital version accessed at: https://collections.dartmouth.edu/teitexts/meadows/diplomatic/meadows_ltg-diplomatic.html

3. The term *decroissane* was proposed by social philosopher and journalist André Gorz exactly in 1972, and theoretical frameworks were set by mathematician and economist Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, philosopher Jacques Grinevald. etc. The theory was originally developed in the French-speaking world, but it was not until 2008 that the English term *degrowth* appeared and the theory gained a global dimension. See: Momčilović, P. (2019). *Odrast, održivost i hrana.* Beograd: Institut za urbane politike; i zajedničko.org Platforma za teoriju i praksu društvenih dobara, p. 39.

4. Forester, John Bellamy. (1999). *The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment,* New York: Monthly Review Press, p. 12.

5. Ibid.

6. Malm, Andreas. (2018). Fosilni kapital: Uspon parnoga pogona i korijeni globalnog zatopljenja. Zagreb: Faktura, p. 21.

As Patel and Moore have argued, it appears that for the majority of the population, it is paradoxically easier "to imagine the end of the planet, than to imagine the end of capitalism".[7] The logic of profit-seeking, growth-based, extractivist capitalism is still very difficult to change and replace, even with the softened version of "green capitalism" that would seek to explore the monetization of new and renewable sources of energy. Over the centuries, capitalism has proven not to be a mere economic system, but a method for humanity to orchestrate its relations to nature,[8] namely through the Anthropocentric and exploitative perspective.

Nevertheless, in academic debates, the scepticism towards the threat of climate change and its strong effects (that are already causing numerous natural disasters) diminishes, while the heated debates over alternative social models and futures are getting the spotlight. Along with global networks or much stronger grassroots environmental organizations of activists, the need for a paradigm shift and different social relations beyond self-destructive *disaster capitalism*[9] has proven to be the only response to the eco-social crises of today. One example of the potential of the movements for social, environmental, and distributive justice to produce a discursive shift is the clear distinction between economic *development* that underlines the need for improvement in human capacities and conditions, and the ever-present economic *growth* that solely aims to increase the production of goods and services that generate profit.[10]

Today's eco-social crisis is clearly the outcome of global capitalism, by whatever term we want to define it. Therefore, it is a great misconception that the environmental crisis, which is perceived as a problem of all humanity, can be solved by the universalist attitude of the entire human species that strives to preserve the planet if we ignore the social tensions in which we live.[11]

7.   Patel, Raj & Moore, W. Jason. (2018). *History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature and the Future of the Planet*, Carlton, Australia: Black Inc., p. 15.

8.   Ibid.

9.   The term of Naomi Klein.

10. Harvey, David. (1996). Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference. Cambridge, Massachusetts & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, p. 379.

11. Keucheyan, Razmig. (2016). *Nature Is a Battlefield: Towards a Political Ecology.* Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 4.

These tensions are particularly strongly felt in the Global South, as well in the European "semi-periphery", most notably in the "Western Balkans". These regions are still subjugated (often willingly and in accord with local corrupt politicians) to the neo-colonial and neo-extractivist policies of huge transnational corporations and the most powerful countries that either seek to explore newly discovered resources (lithium, gold, cobalt, or other minerals and ores), or to treat these lands as *sacrifice zones* for "export" and disposal of their waste. The ecocides that the lands and local population will suffer from these actions cannot be an obstacle to the battle for energy, resources, and profit. Henceforth, systemic social changes are needed to deal with the effects of predatory extractivist capitalism whose leitmotif is "Grow or Die!".[12] A paradigm shift in social relations that would acknowledge and appreciate the uneven global development and all social, racial, cultural, etc. differences is the only path to address the crisis of the environment, its devastation, and pollution would, it is to be hoped, slow down the rapid pace of climate change.

2. The Artistic Practices That Introduce New Models of Environmentally Conscious Working Methods

Recent artistic practices that tackle environmental problematics from diverse perspectives have strongly emphasised the need for transdisciplinary work and alliances with various natural as well as humanistic scientific disciplines.[13] These artistic positions have engaged in the sphere of the political in order to reimagine, rethink and reinvent new perspectives and horizons for action that would contribute to the establishment of different types of social interactions, more sensitized to environmental protection. In their practice, the artists are conducting research on diverse natural and cultural complexes while entering the field of political ecology discourse, and examining the unequal distribution of costs and benefits of environmental change according to social, cultural,

12. Kovel, Joel & Löwy, Michael (2001) *EcoSocialist Manifesto,* https://climateandcapitalism.com/2017/04/27/three-manifestos-climate-struggles-and-ecosocialism/

13. De la Torre, Blanca. & Erić, Zoran. (2022) "Con los pies en la Tierra", pref. cat. CAAM, Las Palmas, pp. 208-209.

and economic differences. They join the aesthetic dimension of experimental and perceptual engagement with a commitment to postcolonial ethical-political practice while bearing in mind the way local—and particularly indigenous—activities and knowledge interact with global economic constellations.[14]

In the United Nations Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, culture and the arts stand out as the fourth pillar of sustainability and are important for the so-called "green transition" and the active struggle for a fairer future and coexistence of all living beings on the planet. However, much more relevant than the often declarative protocols are the artistic initiatives themselves which are of great importance in finding creative solutions to new and different social relationships. and creating connections based on the principles of solidarity and social justice. The capacity of art to transgress the limits of the art system, transversally connecting with other humanities and scientific fields in the struggle for environmental justice, has proven to be exemplary in the debate for the paradigm shift in social relations. Nevertheless, the role of socially engaged art has often been criticized from the "far left" positions for being strongly embedded, even in its small niches, in the art system that is still predominantly reproducing the capitalist system and hence cannot have a strong transformative role and potential to "repair the society". On the other hand, the blurred boundaries between art that strives for social and environmental changes and the positions of radical activists, have contributed to the criticism from the "far right" that their actions are perceived as "eco-terrorism".

Bearing in mind such distant critical positions, it is important to emphasise that the policies of artistic approaches dealing with environmental problematics seek to redefine social relations based on respect for class and race, gender, and other differences, but also the rights of the non-human world in the fight against exploitative extractive capitalism, new forms of economic colonialism, and production relations that threaten the global ecosystem and the survival of the living

14.   Demos, T. J. (2016). *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology.* Berlin: Sternberg Press, pp. 9, 12, 26.

world on earth. These artistic practices are associated with the social movements that grew out of the struggle against extractivist politics in many corners of the world. They are forming new horizontal associations and alliances striving for pluriverse – a myriad of different worlds with their own epistemic foundations – with the aim to explore the potential for social transformations, so needed to cope with eco-social crises. The critical potential or artistic practices that arise at different latitudes and geographies is seen in the habitus of the artists as individuals and collectives sensitised to the different and more equitable ways of treating the natural environment whilst taking care of their own carbon footprint. Their working ethics are based on the principles of solidarity which is sufficient to be considered an alternative model of thinking and acting in the social sphere that is in the shadow of the ever-growing authoritarian political forces. Regardless of the performative effect art has on actual social relations, the only way to deal with the global eco-social crises is to start reinventing and reimagining different futures beyond capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism.[15]

3. The Role of the Cultural Institutions: To Reproduce the Dominant Ideological Matrix or to Challenge It?

In the current eco-social crisis and the threat climate change presents, cultural institutions are facing the same problem of how to cope with these urgent issues. To this end, major international associations such as the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art (CIMAM) have formed working groups and provided guidelines and toolkits touching on sustainability issues.[16] The need to rethink and re-imagine the methodology of working so as to face the eco-social crisis has forced museums

15. De la Torre, Blanca. & Erić, Zoran. (2022) op. cit. pp. 196-209.

16. See the following documents: **OECD/ICOM Guide "Culture and Local Development: Maximising the Impact",** https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/OECD-ICOM-GUIDE-MUSEUMS.pdf Resolutions adopted by ICOM'S 34th General Assembly https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Resolutions_2019_EN.pdf CIMAM Toolkit on Environmental Sustainability in the Museum Practice https://

and other cultural institutions to redefine their roles in society. Still, in many local contexts, these institutions cannot be considered independent from dominant ideological constructs they are bound to reproduce in the cultural sphere, such as retraditionalization on one hand or commercialization on the other. The politically and economically driven phantasm of creating spectacles for a large number of audiences, even in the period of the global pandemic, still positions many cultural institutions as *landscapes of power*. On the opposite pole are the institutions whose activities and work with the public and communities represent an ideal position for raising awareness, and education concerning climate change and familiarisation with the goals of sustainable development and *green transformation* in all spheres of society, including culture. The role of museums and other cultural institutions could therefore be one of strongly stepping forward as vital social actors in the domain of environmental problematics, and not waiting for "top-down" legislation and "green agendas". Museums should thus enable all activities related to climate change to be carried out in a way that does not inherently disenfranchise people or communities, locally or globally. They should therefore first understand the impact of climate change and adapt their practices, buildings, programmes, and collections to be prepared for future challenges. Museums, along with all other institutions should globally support the tendencies and social processes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible.[17] In all aspects of their activities, they should lead by example and persistently encourage the reduction of their carbon footprint. Finally, they should encourage and empower their audiences to understand the role that everyone has to play in climate action and to be trained and master the skills for that role: consume fewer goods and materials, create less waste, and ensure that everything they use can be renewable.[18]

cimam.org/documents/159/CIMAM_Toolkit_on_Environmental_Sustainability_in_the_Museum_Practice._2021.pdf

17. For more detailed analysis, see: Erić, Zoran; Marković Božović, Ksenija; Karaulić, Jovana & Đurđević, Vladimir. (2022) „Ka zelenim muzejima i galerijama", Green Art Incubator toolkit, https://greenartincubator.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Ka-zelenim-muzejima-i-galerijama.pdf

18. McGhie, Henry (2021). Mobilising Museums for Climate Action: Tools, frameworks and opportunities to accelerate climate action in and with museums. London: Museums for Climate Action, pp. 4-5.

In spite of all the guidelines given by the professional associations, and notwithstanding the examples of good practices that are happening in recent years, it is difficult to say that most of the cultural institutions are sensitised and take care of their sustainability and carbon footprint. Furthermore, we are witnessing that environmental issues are often becoming the theme for many exhibitions of contemporary art, and that major institutions and art manifestations are getting along with this "trend". However, a major concern raised by T.J. Demos is how these exhibitions are being produced and realized. He claims that:

… one must also confront the troubling observation that exhibitions dedicated to sustainability are fundamentally contradictory; for even as they seek to address climate change and work towards creative solutions (…) they contribute to the very problem of global warming by virtue of their own carbon footprint, the results of transporting artworks, maintaining the exhibition spaces climate control and printing catalogues.[19]

A big curatorial challenge is thus how to address the issue of environmental justice both in content and in form, and also to rethink exhibition politics with respect to the proposed set of sustainability guidelines for each project and for the cultural institution itself. The new curatorial methodology of work that I strongly advocate must follow the set principles of sustainability and implement them in all phases of each project and its realization. To this end, a number of guidelines have to be established in order to take care of the carbon footprint of the curatorial project such as:

– No new petrol-derived materials will be used: plastic, PVC, etc.

– No pollutants will be used.

– New materials will have ecolabels: ecological paints, etc.

– Recycled paper and FSC wood will be used.

– Plinths, vitrines, frames and exhibition devices will be reused if possible.

19. Demos, T.J. "The Politics of Sustainability: Contemporary Art and Ecology," in *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969–2009.* London: Barbican Art Gallery, 2009. p. 19.

– A waste plan will be made.

– There will be a general plan of reducing energy.

– Biodegradable materials will be very welcome!

– LED lighting is used in the whole exhibition space.

– No air shipping of artworks. Only land transportation will be used.

– Priority to local production and materials will be emphasised.

– Artists who use photography or digital print will be asked to produce the works on site and to recycle them after the exhibition.

– Meetings will be done via Skype, never requiring any trip to the museum.

– The 7 R's of sustainability will be applied to all decisions: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, Repurpose, Rethink and Reject.[20]

Still, these guidelines are more ambitious than regular practice in the context of "official" cultural policies and politics of exhibiting, at least in the institutions in the "Western Balkans". The apparently neglected cultural institutions in this "region", with poor infrastructure, basic funds, and lack of staff, are facing the same dilemma as any other blockbuster institution in major financial centres of the world – how to respond to climate change. Regardless of the globally uneven positions and economic aptitudes, there is no doubt that opting for the capitalist logic of growth and profit should not be the one that cultural institutions must follow. Within its own local context and capacities, each institution needs to adopt a particular set of measures, implement educational programmes, draft sustainability guidelines, and develop practices with respect to energy consumption, politics of programming, and behaviour of the workers, that would all be respectful to the environment and sensitised to the urgent need to respond to the imminent threat of climate change.

20. The sustainability guidelines that a colleague Blanca de la Torre and I have adopted for the projects *Overview Effect* at MoCA, Belgrade 2020/2021 and *Con los pies en la Tierra*, at the CAAM, Las Palmas, 2022/2023 we curated together.

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ecofeminist alliances and tactics for the future

the clean, the dirty, and the hybrid:
nature, culture, and gender in ecofeminist art practice

Suzana Milevska

I want to start with an awkward question: what does Koch Empire have in common with ecofeminism and ecofeminist art? This is neither a simplification of the current complex socio-political climate and the economic context, nor is it meant as a joke about the correlation between these apparently unrelated phenomena. Irrespective of their starting positions, different interests, or even opposite directions they are all profoundly aware, concerned, and/or affected by the issues as environmental crisis, climate change (and its denialism), extractivism, sustainability, carbon footprint, reproducibility, renewable energy, ecosystems, deforestation, etc.

In different world cultures the patriarchal regimes of representation have long interpreted women as obsessed with cleaning (e.g. the image of "domestic goddess") and purification. Central to such restricted and simplified interpretation is the negative anthropologically-driven representation of women as "dirty." Nevertheless, ever since Mary Douglas published her quintessential book *Purity and Danger: An*

Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (1966),[1] the asymmetrical and hierarchical relations between anthropology, patriarchy, and ecology were unravelled and ceased to be viable, as did the asymmetrical dichotomy between the concepts of the clean and the pure, on the one hand, and the dirty, on the other hand.

Although it seems as though it is behind us I still find it relevant to critically address the notion that women's art is "naturally" closer to nature and natural reproduction. I particularly want to focus on a couple of art projects by ecofeminist artists who attempted a conceptualisation and application of the rhizomatic model of hybrid knowledge in order to undo the existing systemic hierarchies and rooted-tree model of knowledge and monopolisation of the expertise and scientific data that eventually contributed to climate change denialism.

The stereotypical image of the "domestic goddess" in a way resulted in the impossible and never-ending task/punishment to overcome the taboos of pollution and secular defilement. Various art practices of women artists have mounted ecofeminism as a critical frame that not only offers environmental awareness, but also aims to deconstruct contentious assumptions that dwell on stereotypical hierarchical patriarchal understanding of women's creativity and productivity in the general male-dominated societal context. Female pollution as a societal and anthropological concept related to the general fear of dirt as danger coming from the feminine side is related to the attempt to treat women simultaneously as persons, and as the currency of male transactions.[2]

Ecofeminism and Ecofeminist Arts

Many feminist artists in their works have pointed to the paradoxical subjugated positioning of female procreativity, knowledge, care, and other domestic repro-

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1. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966).

2. Ibid., 154.

ductive activities as prerequisites for population quality that are a simultaneous and unpaid counterpart to labour in the general productive sphere. Rather than presenting an overview of various ecofeminist art practices in this text I want to reflect and extrapolate the unique ecofeminist performative art practice of several artists as examples of the complex intersection between feminism, art, ecology, and hybrid epistemology.

The word ecofeminism was coined by Francois d' Eaubonne, in *Le Feminisme ou la Mort (Feminism or Death),* 1974.[3] Ecofeminism is a practical and logical response to the reality of rapidly degrading environmental changes. Different ecofeminists agreed that since the domination of women and the domination of nature have occurred in the same societal registry, women have and have had a particular stake in ending the domination over nature. Both feminism and eco-feminism stand for an egalitarian, non- hierarchical system and for providing an alternative vision for a more egalitarian harmonious future society. Ecofeminists see a correlation between the general status of women in society and their exploitation, while treating them as deplorable, and the extractivism of the dilapidating environment. The dominance which men have assumed over Earth is reflected in the dialectical relation between men and women.

Since the early 1970s, many other ecological feminists have defended the assumption that the environment is a feminist issue. Ecofeminists came up with several interrelated concepts, terms and movements such as: ecological feminism (Karen J. Warren), feminist environmentalism (Seager), social ecofeminism (Heller, King), and critical feminist eco-socialism (Plumwood).[4] For example, Karen J. Warren, one of the leading ecofeminist theorists, in the introduction to *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology.,* stated that "many feminists have

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3.   At its core the book had the notion that women have unique relationship to nature ground in their intuitive ethic of caring and preserving. D' Eaubonne argued that the struggle of women's liberation was inherently anti-imperialistic because women constituted a colonised group (referred to as "fourth world") and that women have potential to bring about an ecological revolution to save the planet.

4.   Virginie Maris, "Ecofeminism Towards a fruitful dialogue between feminism and ecology", *Eurozine,* 30 October 2009, https://www.eurozine.com/ecofeminism/

argued that the goals of these two movements are mutually reinforcing; ultimately they involve the development of world views and practices that are not based on male-biased models of domination."[5]

Karen Warren's ecofeminism takes the subjects and objects of knowledge to be relational and multidimensional, and emphasises how physical and social inter-dependencies affect existence on all layers, from the physical and chemical to the global economic. Warren and Australian philosopher Val Plumwood stressed the *eco* in ecofeminism. They applied feminist philosophy (and especially feminist ethics) to our relations with the more than human world, in turn articulating a broader theory of oppression and liberation. Their analytic approaches resulted in a philosophy that synthesizes as it clarifies, taking seriously the value of nature, the history of philosophy, the power of culture, and the insights of good science.

Ecofeminism can be used as a broader term, but there are varying degrees of inter-pretation and interaction. For example, Mary Daly developed arguments in favour of the collaboration between the ecological and feminist movements due to their common adversary - male domination in various decisions regarding political, sys-temic, structural, economical, and environmental issues.[6]

However I want to argue that sometimes in writings about art, and curatorial texts about art projects that address environmental topics, the ecological arguments are obscured, obfuscated, and are contradictory to the ones of the feminist cri-tique; and this gives way to a possible conflation of the essentialisation of the relation between women and the environment and the political connectedness of feminism, art and ecology. Such interpretation becomes particularly problematic when the references to highly theoretical and radical ecofeminist experiments are taken literally and without critical interpretation and recontextualisation. Thus, the art projects or their interpretation may remain rather on the level of illustration,

5. Michael E. Zimmerman, J. Baird Callicott, George Sessions, Karen J. Warren, and John Clark (Eds.), *Environ-mental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology. Englewood Cliffs* (NJ:Prentice-Hall, 1993), p. 253.

6. Mary Daly, *GYN/ECOLOGY The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Beacon Press: Boston, 1978, or *Ecofeminism, Women, Animals, Nature,* Ed. by *Greta Gaard* (Philadelphia, PA.: Temple University Press, 1993).

without paying attention to the nuanced differences between different ecofeminist movements and arguments.

By the 1980s two dominant strands of ecofeminist theories started to be distinguished, since it had begun to branch out into two distinct schools of thought: cultural and social ecofeminism. Cultural ecofeminism incorporates symbology, drawing on religious and mythical iconography. Social and constructivist ecofeminism incorporate environmental activism and action, and they do not accept the assumption that earth is inherently feminine since "Mother Earth" is a form of "essentialism." Constructivist ecofeminism thus emphasises that the link between women and nature is a social construction because women do not have an essential relationship to nature that men do not. Pointing to these differences however is not the same as saying that the various ecofeminisms are not correlated.[7]

Rosemary Radford Ruether, a feminist theologian, cautioned women to look with suspicion on the symbolic role that women would be asked to play in an ecological crisis as portrayed by the dominant (patriarchal) culture's perspective:

Any effort to reconcile such a male with "nature," which does not restructure the psychology and social patterns which make nature "alien," will tend to shape women, the patriarchal symbol of "nature," into romanticized servitude to a male-defined alienation.[8]

In a similar direction of thinking Radford Ruether stated that

women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical re-shaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this [modern industrial] society.[9]

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7.   Jade Wildy, "The Artistic Progressions of Ecofeminism: The Changing Focus of Women in Environmental Art", *The International Journal Of The Arts In Society,* Volume 6, Issue 1, *www.Arts-Journal.com*

8.   Rosemary Radford Ruether. *New Woman/New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975) p. 203.

9.   Ibid., p. 204.

Grafting and Hybridization: Feminist Knowledge Production[10]

From its start ecofeminist performative artistic practices opted for the use of various objects and written material, as well as different events to be activated either as ordinary props and passing references, or as a basis for creating new critical discourses and artistic strategies. The latter use is to convey an awareness of the importance of feminist knowledge production and to induce the deconstruction of long-prevailing pedagogical hierarchies based on the urgency for a simultaneous activation of materiality and temporality.[11]

As several feminist theorists of the "new materialism" have recently discussed in unison, feminist philosophers in the past did not necessarily argue for either an essentialist or constructivist conceptualization of gender difference. Rather, this dogmatic division was a result of a non-rigorous reading of seminal feminist theoretical texts.[12]

The means and methods of metaphoric transfer intentionally and significantly differ from the assumed, accepted, and well-maintained epistemic structures and products inherited from the power-centred, hegemonic scientific discourses. For example, in order to make the leap out of the patriarchal institutional epistem-

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10.   Part of this text was first published in: "Elisabeth von Samsonow" Editor Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, Abteilung Kunst und Kultur, St. Pölten, Austria, June 2016,ISBN 978-3-7356-0222-0 Texts by Boyan Manchev, Suzana Milevska, Elisabeth von Samsonow, Alexandra Schantl, Felicitas Thun-Hohenstein, Ebadur Rahman, Lisa Stuckey (published in German, unedited English version).

11.   For an attempt to link feminist new materialism, object oriented ontology, and speculative realism, see: Cecilia Åsberg, Kathrin Thiele, Iris van der Tuin, "Speculative *Before* the Turn: Reintroducing Feminist Materialist Performativity," *Cultural Studies Review,* 21.2 (September 2015): 145–172, online: http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/csrj/index (Accessed 4/9/2016).

12.   Cf. Clare Hemmings, "Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn," *Cultural Studies* 19.5 (September 2005): 548–567, 555. According to Rosi Braidotti, Elisabeth Grosz, Claire Colebrook, and others, some of the early feminist philosophical texts had already explored the complexity of gender relations, pointing to the inextricability of biology and culture in the matter, but for a long time "essentialism" was strictly used as a pejorative term.

ic frame, Elisabeth von Samsonow activates women characters from literature or the mythic past (e.g., Ariadne, Mary Magdalene, Electra) in her performances and objects. More precisely, in this context these famous female figures are linked to events of suppression or empowerment and transgressions of subjectivity, thus emphasizing the urgency for a certain deconstruction of established patriarchal hierarchies among subjects. Samsonow often uses her own body, voice, or electronically amplified sounds created by her or other invited participants and collaborators on sculptural instruments specifically crafted for this purpose. She overcomes the binary opposition between the essentialist and material/cultural realm through operations that characterize her specific artistic practice.

In order to transgress the anthropocentric and, more specifically, the gynocentric order, Elisabeth von Samsonow often uses tree-like sculptures, plants, or animal figures in her performative practice. The intersection of the materiality of plant-like objects and the immateriality of sound and that of the live organic body (the artist herself) and the tree—or animal-shaped wood sculptures—are a radical take on the traditional representation of the established structure of the "Tree of Knowledge" symbol with the usual "dendritic" hierarchy that in a way subsumes the subject in the fixed entity of an ideologically "enhanced" institutional science rooted in the past. For example, the artist "cross-dressed" as a statue-tree in her performance *General Practice* (2013). By standing still amid sculptures in a grass dress and a wig she became a part of the installation of differently sized sculptures (some of them stringed like instruments and therefore resonant). When Elisabeth von Samsonow starts singing and reciting in regressive "primordial" sentences (e.g. by using "basic phonemes and morphemes of German in a way that makes the audience feel like assisting the birth of a language") while playing on her sculptures-turned-instruments, plucking the strings or rubbing them with double-bass bows, she activates the "transplant orchestra," thus introducing the grafting and hybridization of woman, plant, animal, or mineral, and inevitably forging a transgenic communication.[13]

13.   Suzana Milevska, "Grafting and Hybridization: Feminist Knowledge Production in Elisabeth von Samsonow's Performances and Objects" in: *Elisabeth von Samsonow* Editor Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, Abteilung Kunst und Kultur, St. Pölten, Austria, June 2016,ISBN 978-3-7356-0222-0 Texts by Boyan

As the artist continues to experiment with different formats of lecture-performances based on the philosophical and conceptual articulation of various issues (e.g., constantly stepping in and out of a large willow tree trunk in her performance *Hybrid Knowledge*), she also explores the materiality of writing and teaching or, more precisely, how writing and universes of knowledge relate to bodies and objects. The ultimate result of the hybrid "tree-body" in combination with Elisabeth von Samsonow's "ventriloquist" position— speaking from the plant's "stomach"— bears reference to Ivan Illich's "vernacular" knowledge production and plea for a "deschooling of society," which in turn relates to the concept of "situated knowledge" as coined by Donna Haraway, but only to a certain extent. The fusion of plant and human or animal and human would be wholly organic, but has yet to be explored in a productive way—perhaps because of the "miasma," a taboo of cross-species mixing.

However, due to the ostensibly organic or natural species proximity, this still does not sound as threatening as the hybridization of machines and humans. Inscribed in the refrain of her lecture-performance *Hybrid Knowledge* is the dual position as artist and professor. The two roles are acted out simultaneously: the role of the artistproducer and the role of intellectual, performing and therefore staging knowledge/discourse/power production and knowledge deconstruction as simultaneous processes taking place in parallel in real time. Elisabeth von Samsonow repeats the verse, "I am an interlectual / I am an intersexual / I am an intertextual international interrational / I am an interfacial interrational… I am on I am on…," several times throughout the performance. She thus creates a kind of syncope, an interruption of the main text and distance to both the main text and the dominant lecture's rhythm and flow. By inserting the pronoun of the first person singular, she confirms her own position within the general narrative.

Manchev, Suzana Milevska, Elisabeth von Samsonow, Alexandra Schantl, Felicitas Thun-Hohenstein, Ebadur Rahman, Lisa Stuckey (published in German, unedited English version). Also see: http://www.samsonow.net/index.php/en/elektra-project-2007-2011 and http://www.samsonow.net/index.php/en/urpflanzen-aria (Accessed 4/09/2020).

The Institutional Symptom
and The Art as Cure
of the Wounded World

Samsonow's lecture-performance interweaves myriad voices with Paul Feyerabend's words. These quotes from the artist's philosophy professor, who, in fact, already called for a deconstruction of the scientific method and institutional knowledge very early on, remind us that he is one of the major philosophers who paradoxically enough established himself as one of the most relevant male authorities behind the epistemological turn in philosophy that ultimately left little or no space for women philosophers.[14] Only one intention lies behind such grafting of different voices (accompanied Ida-Marie Corell, who bowed the strings attached to the enormous willow tree trunk): to deconstruct and subvert the existing hierarchies of various knowledges, male and female, masculine and feminine, majoritarian and minoritarian, dominant and subaltern. Thus to pinpoint the grafting of different knowledges turns into a major challenge necessary for understanding the process of subjectivity construction.

Such assumptions come close to the basic principles of Ernst von Glasersfeld's Radical Constructivism about constructing the object of observation throughout that very process. For Glasersfeld, "knowledge is not passively received either through the senses or by way of communication, but it is actively built up by the cognising subject. The function of cognition is adaptive and serves the subject's organisation of the experiential world, not the discovery of an objective ontological reality."[15]

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14. One of the most recent examples of such gender imbalance is the Festival G10 of Economics and Philosophy, which took place on April 1 and 2, 2016 in Amsterdam with speakers such as Julian Assange, Zygmunt Bauman, Yanis Varoufakis, and Slavoj Žižek, and included 17 speakers and only one female speaker. For the announced line-up (accessed 3/8/2016), see http://www.g10vandeeconomie.nl/programEN.php. More female speakers were added after feminist activists had reacted: http://g10vandeeconomie.nl/bouwsteen_en/ (Accessed 4/9/2020).

15. Ernst von Glasersfeld, "The Reluctance to Change a Way of Thinking," *The Irish Journal of Psychology* 9.1 (1988): 83.

The spaces usually signified as "cross-,", "inter-," "trans-," or "between," or in the "syn-" of the dominant discourses are the liminal spaces that remain in Samsonow's focus in both her artistic and philosophical work. Rhizomatic knowledge versus the rooted-tree model of hierarchies among disciplines and knowledges—that is exactly the dichotomy that is deconstructed by the use of the tree with wheels attached to it. Thus the tree that usually stands for the static and hallowed space of science suddenly becomes moveable in contrast to the heavy and sturdy armchair or the professor's cathedra, which are undoubtedly symbols for any and all authoritarian positions.

Feminist ecology, ecofeminism, and its gendered knowledge are nomadic by default. They move in all sorts of different directions and thus their power stems from the impossibility to grasp it, define it, and conquer it once and for all. However, this is not the same as to say that it is weak and disempowered. If feminist knowledge is fuzzy and ungraspable, it is because it does not obey accepted rules. It is "hysteric" in terms of unpredictability, outbursts of energy, and visual convolutions. If patriarchy is understood to be the "*archê*", the main rule, and if the man is understood as the ruler it could be that this knowledge is always already anarchic, but at the same time the anarchy behind the "hybrid method" would always mean a certain "secondary condition" trapped into the existing hierarchical positioning of the knowledges. Therefore, Samsonow conceptualized her lecture performance *Hybrid Knowledge* as yet another potential model of thinking, producing and disseminating different feminist knowledges about non-feminist sciences.[16]

Central to Elisabeth von Samsonow's work is her questioning of the subsuming of the subject to a fixed entity in the ideologically "enhanced" institutional science. Looking at knowledge as routed in the past hierarchical structures of the knowledge production, and reproduced based on the rational mind, is contrasted by a profound feminist commitment. Ironic takes on the stereotypical ancient philosophical interpretation of the artistic creativity as divine madness and a gift from the gods (Plato),

16. Here I refer to Elisabeth von Samsonow's lecture-performance *Hybrid Knowledge* at the Generali Foundation, 12 December 2013.

and the feminist artistic ridiculing of the scientific academic "seriousness" are addressed in Samsonow's career, both on personal and professional level.

Knowing all the physical facts we still do not know "what it is like to be a bat."[17] We may agree with the assertion that if we know everything physical about certain plants and creatures we can still not be certain if they are self-aware and have consciousness (in the sense that we consider ourselves a conscious species). We may also agree that knowledge of physical facts about plants and animals does not allow us to know what their experiences are like. Agreeing with both premises does not imply that we should give up trying to get closer to those unfamiliar "others" and quit the attempt to explore the question "what it is like to be" other than ourselves.[18]

While the mouth-opening rituals in several of Samsonow's earlier performances stood for unleashing woman's consciousness and women's subjectivity through speech and language—but without giving privilege to her body over the plant and animal based on any assumption of a radical difference separating them from each other—recently the artist expanded her practice in an oppositional and critical direction. In her "assisted performance" *The Symptom and The Cure* (2016) she included as a direct participant and thus collaborator a professional from the medical field: more precisely her performance wouldn't have been possible without the anaesthetist who injected an appropriate dose of three different anaesthetics in the artist's body.[19]

The performance turned the artist-performer into a contradiction—a body unable

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17. D. J. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 103.

18. The question "what is it like to be a bat" originates from the renowned text by Thomas Nagel "What is it like to be a bat?", first published and reproduced in *Mortal Questions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Nagel warns us that it will not help us to try to imagine what it feels like to perceive the surrounding world by a system of reflected high frequency sound signals (fruitbats echolocate usually with 30,000 to 80,000 hertz that human ears cannot hear). This reminds us that all relevant physical facts are not enough to provide us with proficient answers to the question "what is it like to be" unconscious. Nagel, 65,180.

19. The anaesthesia that kept the artist numbed consisted of three different injections: 5mg Midazolam (Dormicum), 10mg Ketanest, and 5mg Flumazenil, for waking up.

to perform a conscious chain of actions, at least for the anaesthetics' duration of action (25 minutes). General anaesthesia stands for an ultimate state of absence of one's capacity to feel and involves the numbing of the senses and inability to speak. In Samsonow's art performance, this absence of conscience, authorized by the hosting art institution for the duration of the artistic event, becomes a metaphor for the systemic obstacles that a feminist artist usually faces. Regardless of whether her performances turn felicitous or infelicitous, ultimately the institutional context shapes her performative capability and/or neutralizes the critical efficiency (a difference between successful and failed speech acts, a difference coined by J. A. Austin depending on circumstances and context).[20]

For Rosi Braidotti, "[t]he key concept in feminist materialism is the sexualized nature and the radical immanence of power relations and their effects upon the world."[21] Elisabeth von Samsonow's continued investigations and her ponderings of the relations and intersections between body and consciousness, between materiality and subjectivity, are important points of departure for a critical feminist production of different knowledges. Her artworks propose a certain deconstruction of the perpetuated dichotomy between essentialism and constructivism, which arguably offers even less productive contributions in art than in philosophy.

Samsonow's provocative work is stimulated by the awareness that we cannot accomplish a thorough understanding even of our own consciousness and self and the fact that "no one has seen or ever will see a centre of gravity, or a self either".[22] This understanding echoes David Hume, who in 1740 wrote in his "Treatise of Human Nature": "I never can catch myself at any time without a perception and never can observe anything but the perception."[23] Samsonow employs the performance

20. John A. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Ed. by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. Second Edition (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1975), 100.

21. Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, Michigan, "Interview with Rosi Braidotti," in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2012, 22.

22. D. C. Dennett, "Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity" in F. Kessel, P. Cole and D. Johnson, eds, *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1992).

23. D. Hume, Treatise on Human Nature, I, IV, sec. 6, quoted acc. D. Dennett.

as a vehicle to investigate the link between perception, creation and consciousness as well as the possibilities for empathic experiences with other species. Given all accessible information, the problem of our unique experience (which forms the basis of our imagination) remains unsolved. It can obviously help us to try to understand what it would be like for us to behave as a bat behaves but it will not help us to know what it is like for a bat to be a bat.[24]

The work extends our abilities beyond consciousness and the human capability of perception, and it points to the main obstacle to our self-understanding and the understanding of others: our restriction to the natural resources of our body and mind which are inadequate for such tasks. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, there is no method that permits us to extrapolate completely from our own condition to the inner life of another creature. We are determined by our own bodily structure and innate capacity, which sets limits to the human experience.[25] In other words, ultimately human experience cannot be anything like the experience of other animals, no matter how close they are to humans on the phylogenetic tree.

The question of transferring data pertaining to one's inner experiences is closely related to the question of evidence for the existence of other minds noted in the beginning of this text. The questions explored by Samsonow's performance are the cognitive and epistemological ones: "what kinds of minds are there" and "how do we know what we know" which emerge from the fact that each of us knows only one mind from the inside and no two of us know the same mind from the inside.[26] The substantial disagreements among scientists about the existence of other minds comes from the impossibility to confirm the coincidence of one's inner with one's outwardly observable capabilities for perceptual discrimination, introspective avowal or intelligent actions.[27]

24.   T. Nagel, 169.

25.   H. L. Dreyfus, "The Current Relevance of Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Embodiment", *The Electronic Journal of Analytic Philosophy,* 4 (Spring 1996), http://ejap.louisiana.edu/EJAP/1996.spring/dreyfus.1996.spring.html, Last Accessed 10.07.2016.

26.   D. C. Dennett, *Kinds of Minds Toward an Understanding of Consciousness* (New York: Basic Books, 1996) 1-19.

27.   D. C. D. "Consciousness" in *The Oxford Companion to the Mind,* Ed. By Richard L. Gregory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 161.

Obviously, this problem is not limited only to radically different creatures for it exists between one person and another. The subjective and non-transferable character of experience is evident among people and is an inescapable obstacle to any complete understanding of and communication with each other. Moreover, "once that the ability to represent your own structure has reached a certain critical point that is the kiss of death: it guarantees that you can never represent yourself totally."[28]

For example, Samsonow's performance *The Symptom and The Cure* shows how "knowledge depends on being in a world that is inseparable from our bodies, or language, and our social history from our embodiment."[29] Even when "absent" and "unconscious" the artist is still embedded in her own culture, institutional context, and recognised biographical and career sequence. The "middle way" would mean that we should accept as facts the capacities that are rooted in our biological embodiment, but we should also accept that they are experienced within the domain of "consensual and cultural history"; that the idea of the world existing somewhere "out there" independent of the knower will never challenge our inherited conclusions of what the mind is. For the art, mind and consciousness are not "a special inner arena populated by internal models and representations, but is rather the operation of a profoundly interwoven system, incorporating aspects of brain, body and world."[30]

In July 2018 Violeta Čapovska completed her land-art performance *Salt*. This was the third part of Čapovska's long-term project that formed a kind of trilogy - it followed her previous land-print projects: *Small Lake* (1994) and *I and the Eye* (1996).[31] What is common to all three projects and also makes them specific is their unique location:

28. D. R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach an Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) 697. There is an interesting analogy between mind and ant colony that Hofstadter has developed in his book also questioning the existence of mind among animals.

29. F. J. Varela, E. Thompson, E. Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, 149. Further on, in the chapter "Steps to a Middle Way" (133-217) the authors discuss the Cartesian anxiety: in their opinion the extreme treating of "the world and mind as opposed objective and subjective poles".

30. A. Clark, "Embodiment and the Philosophy of Mind", *Trends in Neuroscience,* 19, 2 1996, 36.

31. It's important to stress that this project took place twenty five years after Čapovska climbed to the Small Lake for the first time in order to realise and record her art project at this location. The project *Salt* thus also points the artist's intimate relation to the nature and culture of her country of origin: Macedonia, although

they all took place at the Small Lake on Baba Mountain in Macedonia.[32] However by climbing the mountain once again all the way to the Small Lake while realising the latest project *Salt* Čapovska managed to address the various aspects of the relationship between her cultural and gender identity, nature, and her artistic practice.[33]

The Small Lake, particularly its purity and the incommensurable sublimity of nature in general could be interpreted as metaphors for temporality: "culturalscapes" and "memoryscapes." During the three projects it was particularly important for Čapovska to stress the impossibility to represent the sublime and the difficulty of preservation of fading childhood memories to aesthetical and ethical purity from the past.

Here it is important to address the distinctive complex connotation of the material "salt" from the title of the latest project (and the exhibition) and to unravel the specific background and development of the entire concept. At first sight the art project's concept and its structure are very simple: the artist aimed to climb once again to the Small Lake, to walk a circle around it and to "mark" her walk by a trace made of salt. She brought salt with her, but not any kind of salt. The origin of the salt was important in the artist's words. The salt actually consisted of a mixture of different kinds of salt that originated from Europe and Australia as a kind of metaphor of the intersection and marriage between different cultural identities.[34]

Čapovska's ongoing concerns and the main focus of her projects is the possibility to return to the same. She admits that each time it is more difficult to climb the mountain and to make the full "circle" around the lake's circumference (actually during the third project she didn't even complete the tour). In ecofeminist terms, it's impossible to reverse the time to "innocent" nature, if there was ever such thing.

she lives and works in Melbourne, Australia. See: Suzana Milevska, *Salt,* Violeta Čapovska, Open Graphic Art Studio, Museum of the City of Skopje, December, 2019.

32. Small Lake is one of the two lakes on Baba Mountain that is at an elevation of 2180 m, near its peak Pelister.

33. In 2019 Violeta Čapovska presented the project *Salt* in the frame of an eponymous solo exhibition at the Open Graphic Art Studio in Skopje. She exhibited the photo and video documentation of the performance and an accumulative installation of one ton of salt.

34. Back in 1996 Čapovska similarly brought sand from the Australian dessert Kakadu to the Small Lake and mixed it with the lake's own soil.

Salt has additional pertinent significance for Čapovska as it is durable substance (Sodium Chloride) that dissolves in water but doesn't evaporate, similar to memory. To be more precise: an imbalance of the salinity of the fresh and salt waters can subsequently cause an imbalance and disruption of the micro and macro ecosystems and can affect biodiversity depending on the society's capacity of managing the salination.[35]

The demarcation of the lake's shape during the artist's performance during which she was slowly walking around its shore as she was pouring small amounts of salt in an irregular line was also a kind of ephemeral print that could be also interpreted as illustrating the borderline between the intact nature and our questionable actions, as well as calling for "paying attention" in Isabelle Stengers' understanding of the term.[36] Although Čapovska's project is not focused on discursive analysis of the major arguments of feminist and ecological theorists, or activist initiatives for preservation of natural resources, the project *Salt* (as well as the first two parts of the trilogy) makes clear the argument that ecology and feminism can and should learn from each other, in many different ways.

Obviously, the artist engaged with the complex relations between woman, nature, memory, and art. Thus it is important to emphasise that Čapovska interpreted nature as culture, and not as a material resource that could be exploited endlessly in human interests. For the artist the salt and lake offer the symbiotic context that enables our cultural anchoring in nature even when one decides or has had to leave the original territorial and cultural landscape. Thus with its subtlety and complexity the project *Salt* could also motivate us to look more carefully at the potential misunderstandings that could stem from the misleading essentialist ways in which some theoretical assertions of ecofeminism have been simplified, appropriated and recontextualised in contemporary art, in visual and popular culture, or throughout digital media and social networks. The danger of wrongfully representing the relation between women

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35. Miguel Cañedo-Argüelles, Ben Kefford and Ralf Schäfer, "Salt in freshwaters: causes, effects and prospects" - introduction to the theme issue 03 December 2018, *The Royal Society Publishing*, https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rstb.2018.0002.

36. Martin Savransky and Isabelle Stengers, "Relearning the Art of Paying Attention: A Conversation." *SubStance,* Volume 47, Number 1, 2018 (Issue 145), pp. 130-145.

and nature in an essentialised way when dealing with ecological and environmental issues is, in the project *Salt*, circumvented by the artist's focus on the intersection between nature, and cultural and gender identity.

General Context
as Conclusion

[…] there is something subjective, philosophically naïve, and even something hazardous in a time of ecological crisis, about living in a reference frame where one species takes itself as absolute and values everything else in nature relative to its potential to produce value for itself.[37]

To conclude, ecofeminism and ecofeminist art is not related only to critique of the reasons and solutions for climate change, extinguishing resources, or lack of commoning of the commons, metaphors, and obvious grammatical rules.[38] Most importantly, the difference calls for clarification and reflection on economic and political ramifications when focussing on either of these concepts. The necessity of making an important distinction between the noun commons, as passive resource or property, and the active relations assumed by commoning has already been explained clearly by Peter Linebaugh who was among the first theorists to have used the latter term:

To speak of the commons as if it were a natural resource is misleading at best and dangerous at worst – the commons is an activity and, if anything, it expresses relationships in society that are inseparable from relations to nature. It might be better to keep the word as a verb, an activity, rather than as a noun, a substantive.[39]

37. Holmes Rolston III, *"*Value of Nature and Nature of Value*", in Robin Attfield and Andrew Belsey, eds. *Philosophy and the Natural Environment* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 13-30, p. 30.

38. Suzana Milevska, "The Grammar and Politics of Commoning", in *Commons as Work in Progress*, Trondheim, Norway*: LevArt*, park.levart.no/2018/10/15/the-grammar/.

39. Peter Linebough, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, p. 279.

It all depends on the decision of whether one focuses on the existing understanding of property, object-hood and materiality of resources (and therefore on passive acceptance of the existing institutional definitions, frameworks, and assumed meanings or governing laws and rules of ownership), or, as suggested by Linebaugh, one focuses on the shift towards a more active stance. This implies either acceptance of the assigned access to and distribution of the commons or a call for redefinition and redistribution of it through commoning.[40] It consists of cross-disciplinary theory and practice that introduce various methodologies, theories, concepts, and terms. For example, the term Anthropocene is a direct result of various feminist concerns about the value-ability of nature solely from the anthropocentric position.

The central issue of this critical term is the limitation of the anthropocentric axiological scale for the evaluation of the continuity of the ecosystems and different species, or the evaluation of the immanence of the danger from climate change and the damage from the extinction of certain species and from the deterioration of the conditions necessary for the continuity of the human race.[41] The use-value, generalisation and disavowal of the responsibility for Earth-systems disruption, validates further geoengineering experiments. The discourse surrounding the term Anthropocene "registers the geological impact of human activities, and unites climate science and environmental studies with the environmental arts and humanities—against climate change denialism, funded generously by the destructive fossil-fuel industry."[42] Therefore Capitalocene—the age of capital— has been interpreted as one of the instrumental culprits for indirectly or directly inducing climate change, and not merely in fossil fuels and other substances, but to complex socio-economic, political and material operations, involving classes and commodities, imperialism and empire, biotechnology and militarism.[43]

40.   Suzana Milevska, "The Grammar and Politics of Commoning", park.levart.no/2018/10/15/the-grammar/.

41.   Ibid., p. 29.

42.   D. J. Demos, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Gynocene: The Many Names of Resistance", *Anthropocene,* Friday, 12.06.2015, https://www.fotomuseum.ch/en/2015/06/12/anthropocene-capitalocene-gynocene-the-many-names-of-resistance/

43.   Ibid.

Chthulucene is a term that Donna Haraway coined in her attempt to name the post-anthropocentric age of multi-species assemblages. While the term shifts the focus from corporate neoliberalism, neo-colonialism, and extractivism, emphasized by the Capitalocene thesis, it does outline the necessary ethics, or "response-ability" in Haraway's terms, that include the practice of justice and sustainable belonging.

Finally, Gynocene implies a gender-equalized, even feminist-led, interventionist environmentalist art. Such artists locate anthropogenic geological violence as coextensive with patriarchal domination, linking ecocide and gynocide. The ecofeminist artists eventually erase the distinctions between activism and art and, following Gynocene thesis, they call for new models of eco-feminist stewardship, resonating as much with Indigenous reverence for Mother Earth and the multifaceted rights-of-nature mobilizations in South America, as with the post-heteronormative, eco-sexualist care for Earth-as Lover (e.g. as in the carnivalesque Earth-marriage ceremonies of performance artists Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle), who deploy matrimony as a radical act against environmental destruction, including mountain top removal mining in North America."[44]

I want to end with Marjetica Potrč, artist and architect from Slovenia, and her project *From Water to Nature – The Rights of Nature in Slovenia*. Starting from the most important commons - that is Water – and this highly charged topic in global terms the artist also addresses the urgent and political situation in Slovenia in regard of the rights to water. Even though the Republic of Slovenia added access to drinkable water to its constitution as a fundamental right in 2016 – the first country in the EU to do so – a law recently proposed by the government (already passed in the Parliament) makes water an endangered resource once again, and people still have to fight for the right to drinkable water. However Potrč goes much further and reverses the question of rights to water from the usual anthropocentric focus towards nature and its rights. In this work she engages in usual ecofeminist concerns with nature, earth, and water, but following Sydney Biennial's concept rīvus

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44.   Ibid.

she asks an atypical question: "is it perhaps time to move from the human-centred position that gives people the right to use water to a position that acknowledges and stands up for the Rights of Nature as a subject?"[45]

More recently the ecofeminist artists also started to engage with nature in an attempt to go above and beyond its stereotypical and naïve understanding as a romanticist ideal and myth. They consider nature rather as equal partner, going further and further from its subjective and selfish anthropocentric definition from the past.

45. Potrč's project was commissioned by the 23rd Biennale in Sydney (rīvus, 12 March – 13 June 2022). It focused on the Rights of Nature and two case studies – the Soča River in Slovenia and the Lachlan River in Australia. https://www.biennaleofsydney.art/ The artist already anticipated similar issues of coexistence between nature and people and commoning in her 2016 drawing "The Sami, Along with Their Ashaninka Friends, Contemplate Coexistence with the Earth" (from the series 'The Earth Drawings', ink on paper, 76 x 56 cm).

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proposals for decolonial ecotransfeminist alliances for the future

Giulia Casalini

This text is the result of an ongoing process of shifting my own and my communities' perspectives towards how we relate to the environment through sustainable practices of care in the arts and beyond.[1] In this work, I propose decolonial ecotransfeminism as a deeply rooted ethics of life and praxis that applies feminist, queer and decolonial ecological thinking in the many ways we create, curate and form communities locally and transnationally. This process started for me more consciously around 2018, when curating the festival Ecofutures (London, 2019) within the framework of the queer-feminist non-profit arts organisation I was co-directing (CUNTemporary, 2012-2020). Various texts, artists, artworks, friends, organisations, animals, plants, mosses, mushrooms, water, powerful stones, and spiritual practices have been – and still are – a constituent part of my process.[2]

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1.   I am grateful to Marijana Cvetkovic for inviting me to Bitef festival's conference (Belgrade, 2021), where I had the opportunity to present a first draft of the ideas that are now part of this text. At Bitef, I met Biljana Tanurovska and Ivana Dragšić, who invited me to the conference 'At the edge of climate catastrophe' (Skopje, 2022), where I further elaborated my proposals.

2.   In specific, I would like to thank artists and friends Niya B and Graham Bell Tornado for the constant source of inspiration and for the conversations and works around ecotransfeminism; Amanda Piña for the decolonial approaches; and Byuka for the overarching magic and rituals. In specific, I would like to thank Niya B for reading and making suggestions for the last draft of this text.

Questioning Ecofeminism

The term 'ecofeminism' was used for the first time by French activist Françoise d'Eaubonne in the book *Le féminisme ou la mort* (1974).[3] The concept engaged with the contemporary anti-nuclear and anti-deforestation movements, and addressed the ideology that symbolically and culturally links women to nature or the earth. The text also explored how men have oppressed both women and nature via reproduction and by exploiting the latter's 'natural' ability to care and nurture (Gates, 1996: 7-10).

Since the 80s, various ecofeminist scholars have been exploring the connections between women and nature: some essentialised or honoured this link through worshipping the divine feminine in nature, whilst others attempted to deconstruct it (Lorentzen and Eaton, 2002). Other fundamental ecofeminist positions have exposed the lack of class and race critique within the white environmentalist movements (Eaton and Lorentzen, 2003: viii), and various indigenous voices have brought a fundamental decolonial consciousness to the field.[4] Despite their critical contribution, I believe that some of these perspectives might still be essentialising in their understanding of the woman-nature link, and, therefore, I would attempt to problematize their perspectives through a queer critical approach. Whilst acknowledging the relationship between nature extractivism and (capitalist-driven, white) patriarchy, I also wish to de-essentialise the relation between women and nature for a number of reasons:

– Women have historically been socialised as being closer to 'nature' because of their reproductive capacities. However, their bodies could be non-reproductive for various reasons (for example, because of permanent sterilisation or other practices of reproductive control). Throughout history, until the present time,

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3. The term was presented in French as éco-féminisme (d'Eaubonne, 1974). Despite its widespread influence, the book was only translated into English in 2022.

4. For example, see the work of US-based Potawatomi writer and scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer or of the late environmental activist and Lenca indigenous leader Berta Cáceres in Honduras.

women refusing their birthing role have been stigmatised: Carolyn Merchant, in *The Death of Nature* (1980), talked about the way the scientific revolution rendered the relationship to nature and women's bodies mechanic and exploitative – the witch and the midwife being symbolic for their resistance against the control over production and reproduction (Merchant, 1990: 151).

– From a sexuality perspective, modern Western medicine used the concept of 'natural' to categorise behaviours that supposedly did not follow the course of 'nature.'[5] Probably the most famous work in this field, the book *Psychopathia Sexualis*, first published in 1886 by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, infamously contributed to the pathologisation of same-sex attraction and other sexual 'deviances.'[6]

– The woman/man binary does not take into account non-binary, gender non-conforming, or transgender embodiments, including culturally specific identifications such as muxe, travesti, two-spirit, femminielli, female husbands or sworn virgins, to name a few. Moreover, the gender binary contributes to rendering invisible the existence of intersex people, who, despite their sexual difference, until these days have been systemically mutilated at birth in order to fit a two-gender system (Fausto-Sterling, 2000: 78-114).

– One might be born with specific female organs and assigned female at birth. Still, with the help of science and technology, we can modify the way our bodies look, feel and function – for example, with the use of hormones, drugs, dildos, body implants or transplants. Paul Preciado, for instance, proposes a 'countersexual' contract that would replace our social contract with nature: 'countersexuality' would end nature 'as an order that legitimizes the subjection of some bodies to others' (Preciado, 2018: 20). Similarly, the collective Laboria Cuboniks proposes 'xenofeminism' as the wish to construct an 'alien future' where nature will no longer justify unjust behaviours or politics: 'If nature is unjust,' they say, 'change nature!' (Cuboniks, 2018: 93).

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5. For an overview of sexuality in relation to ecological discourses see Louis van den Hengel's chapter on 'sex-ecologies' (Hengel, 2017).

6. Among the 'deviances,' the psychiatrist included female masturbation or other practices that today would fall either within the realm of a normative sexuality or within a 'kink' umbrella (von Krafft-Ebing, 2011).

– Are 'women' in industrialised, urban societies, still those who are more connected to nature?

– Last but not least, I would like to reflect on the term 'woman' as one that implicates a mature age group, which excludes young people.

Adding to the above points, which elaborate ecofeminism in relation to sex and gender, it is imperative also to adopt a multi-layered intersectional approach, which takes into account class, ethnicity, race and other characteristics when dialoguing with climate and environmental issues. For instance, less than 20% of women worldwide own land, lacking equal rights to its access, control and use in over 90 countries; at the same time, they can reach up to 60-80% of the agricultural workforce (especially in parts of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa); women also make up 80% of people displaced by climate change (Njunge, 2022). Furthermore, ecofeminism should be based on political accountability rather than identity: as much as the subjects of feminism are multiple – and not solely subscribed to the identity of 'woman' – also within ecofeminism any individual can take action to sustain life (and the love for life) on this planet. Finally, as ecofeminists, we should reclaim and reframe our relationship with nature.

Expanding Ecofeminism via 'decolonial' and 'trans'

Following the above critique, I propose an ecofeminism that is both decolonial and trans(gender). It is decolonial because it opposes any form of (neo-)colonialism and extractive capitalism; it draws its knowledge and praxis from indigenous communities' relationship to nature by honouring – and not appropriating – this connection. In a related manner, indigenous scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer says that we must decolonise our relationship to the land and become indigenous to place '[not] to appropriate the culture of indigenous people… [but] to live as if we'll be here for the long haul, to take care of the land as if our lives, both spiritual and material, depended on it' (Kimmerer, 2008).

Ecofeminism should be trans(gender) because, as explained previously, it is imperative to dismantle the sex/gender binaries and include other identities beyond 'woman.' As a non-negotiable element, 'trans' will then be placed in the middle of the word 'ecofeminism'. In this text, I also understand trans beyond its strictly human gender embodiments by expanding its processes of transition towards the nonhuman: transition can therefore be thought of as 'species crossing' (on a speculative level) or as 'being with' one another.[7] Trans is also at work to integrate other diversity categories within feminism (e.g. age, ethnicity, race and class): the intersectionality of ecotransfeminism will hence help reading and acting upon cases of environmental racism or other ecological and health-related social injustices. Moreover, trans as a performative prefix also implicates the dynamics of movement or crossing, which can be both physical and political: trans conceptualises transnational and translocal solidarity and alliance-building that are imperative for ecofeminist thinking and its coalitional strategies.

Decolonial Ecotransfeminism: Strategies for the Arts and Beyond

I therefore propose a 'decolonial ecotransfeminist' praxis in curating, art, activism and critical thinking. To do so, I am grouping and articulating various strategies around three main principles: radical solidarity, radical restructuring, and radical empathy. I will reference artists, authors and projects I am familiar with to exemplify these concepts (all links to the artists' websites are at the end of this text).

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7.   The concept of 'being with' is inspired by Donna Haraway's idea of 'staying with the trouble' – which is 'the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth' (Haraway, 2016: 2-3). These perspectives can also be understood within the framework of posthuman critical theory: Rosi Braidotti, who conceptualised the term at the intersections of post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism, states that '[t]he former proposes the philosophical critique of the Western Humanist ideal of 'Man' as the allegedly universal measure of all things, whereas the latter rests on the rejection of species hierarchy and human exceptionalism' (Braidotti, 2018: 339).

decolonial ecotransfeminism in the arts & beyond

radical restructuring
- visionary fiction
- more creativity/ less productivity
- always positon oneself
- make time for time
- equity not equality

radical empathy
- start from disability justice
- make oddkin
- be like lovers to each other
- think/feel like the nonhuman
- speak/act for those who can't

radical solidarity
- uplift/platform each other with generosity
- connect the struggles/ form alliances
- know your legacy
- cross-disciplinarity
- transfeminism
- create systems of mutual support

Radical Solidarity

Radical solidarity consists in finding common ground in political struggles, by looking at what we share rather than what divides us, through:

– Connecting the struggles and forming alliances instead of working separately (e.g. among activist groups, artists, institutions, and universities).

– Creating systems of mutual support (e.g. unions or grassroots initiatives like 'food banks' or emergency funds).

– Cross-disciplinarity: by collaborating across fields that are usually separated (e.g. retail, medicine, sports). The project Ateliê TRANSmoras in Brazil, for example, has created a network of support for transgender people across the country that empowers them to create clothes (or textile 'art pieces') with the use of second-hand and discarded materials.[8]

– Uplifting and platforming each other with generosity rather than through destructive criticism. In academia, for instance, Gill Dolan proposes to apply 'critical generosity' when writing about performance by forming relationships with the subjects one writes about, whilst balancing advocacy and engagement through their work (Dolan, 2013).

– Legacy: knowing the work done before us is crucial to understanding and acknowledging the continuity of struggles. For instance, if one would like to set up an initiative, it might be worth connecting with similar ones to unite our efforts rather than fragmenting our collective energy.

– Transnationalism: by thinking beyond the Nation-state, we should form fruitful transnational connections to support each other politically, creatively and – when possible – financially. It is essential to consider the latter aspect, especially when collaborating with artists living in less privileged contexts. Transnational-

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8.   Ateliê TRANSmoras was funded in 2013 by Vicenta Perrotta in Campinas, as an occupation of the local university (#Transmoras, no date).

ism strongly influences my PhD research and curatorial practice, so I will give a few examples from my collaborative work: Va-Bene Elikem Fiatsi is an artist and activist who tirelessly fights for LGBTQI+ human rights in Ghana. In conversation with Va-Bene, and through the artistic direction of Niya B, we created a 360 Virtual Reality experience that honours Va-Bene and her fights (Niya B, 2022). Additionally, I have collaborated with artist/curator Rhine Bernardino for their in-progress (not yet launched) project ACCESS, which documents and platforms artist-led initiatives across the globe: in October 2022, we travelled across the islands of the Philippines to map the work of artists residing in the peripheries.

I will summarise the principle of radical solidarity with Donna Haraway's concept of sympoiesis, which means 'making-with': 'Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing... Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with, in company' (Haraway, 2016: 58).

Radical Restructuring

Radical restructuring refers to the internal reorganising of institutions, companies, associations, informal groups, collectives, or individuals, by questioning the established ways in which they operate, through:

– Visionary fiction: by imagining possible futures beyond capitalism, extractivism and neo-colonialism. Black feminists Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown coined the term 'visionary fiction' for a world-building practice that is different 'from the mainstream strain of science fiction, which most often reinforces dominant narratives of power... Visionary fiction encompasses all of the fantastic, with the arc always bending toward justice' (Imarisha and brown, 2015: 4). The authors believe this is a vital space for decolonisation because 'the decolonization of the imagination is the most dangerous and subversive form there is... Once the imagination is unshackled, liberation is limitless' (ibid.).

– Making time for time.

– Enjoying more creativity and connection whilst doing less work directed towards productivity and alienation. For instance, artist Mirna Bamieh tries to reconnect people to Palestinian history through food in her ongoing project *Palestinian Hosting Society*. Bamieh does so by studying the plants and the cooking methods used to prepare traditional dishes that have been forgotten or appropriated by Israeli cuisine. Finally, the communal performative meals create the space for story-telling and conversations (Mirna Bamieh, 2017).

– Equity, not equality: whilst 'equality' has been an important concept for feminist movements worldwide, we need to shift our thinking towards the different needs that our differences generate. For example, individuals who are disabled, with chronic illnesses, single mothers, underpaid, trans or racialised might need specific support and/or benefits.

– Being aware of our positionality: what position do we speak and act from? When inhabiting a place of privilege, we should use that to help others.

Radical Empathy

Radical empathy is rooted in affects and feelings. Trying to emotionally understand those who are oppressed or marginalised can teach us how to operate, survive and thrive, starting from that very position of oppression. Radical empathy can be achieved in various ways, such as by:

– Considering a disability justice perspective when devising our events and spaces rather than making this an afterthought. This point spans from the use of wheelchair-accessible venues to sign language interpretation. More plainly, though, accessibility can involve a less packed festival schedule and exhibitions that integrate resting spaces or 'quiet rooms' where participants can nap, relax, or meditate.

– Thinking or trying to feel like an earthling or other nonhuman organisms. For instance, the artistic collective Quimera Rosa explores the processes of 'becoming plant' in *Trans*plant*: a project that investigates what it means to be 'less human' through various techniques, including speculative fiction and biohacking. In one of the strands of this project, they performed an intravenous chlorophyll injection and followed the body's responses as it became photosynthetic (Trans*Plant, no date).

– Telling stories in the name of those who can't communicate with words (like, for example, rivers, mountains, or animals). Amanda Piña, in her project *Mountains of Resistance,* engages the public through performances made in collaboration with Wixárika indigenous leader and shaman Mara'akame Katira. The engagements include walks, video installations, and talks that connect the participants with the mineral bodies of the mountains and the waters that run through them (nadaproductions, 2022).

– Falling in love with each other! The most prominent example of treating nature like a lover is most likely the collaborative duo Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle. For decades, Stephens and Sprinkle have developed their work around the principle of 'ecosexuality' and have written an *Ecosexual Manifesto* that has influenced artists from all over the globe (Sprinkle & Stephens Collaboration, 2023). The basic principle of ecosexuality is to consider and treat the earth like a lover (i.e. not to be taken for granted) rather than a benevolent and always-forgiving mother.

– Making oddkin: the principle of creating responsible relations beyond blood ties. Donna Haraway explains the idea thus: 'Making kin as oddkin rather than, or at least in addition to, godkin and genealogical and biogenetic family troubles important matters, like to whom one is actually responsible' (Haraway, 2016: 2).

By bringing the above-mentioned open-ended proposals under the three principles of radical solidarity, restructuring, and empathy, I do not wish to compartmentalise them under specific categories, but to render them more easily understandable and accessible to those reading this text. These three principles make up

a living structure that can be employed for a decolonial ecotransfeminist methodology in the arts. From this mutating and intertwining structure, various contents (artworks, practices, activism, theory...) can germinate, flourish, rot, or regenerate like leaves, fruits, and buds. It is therefore my wish to visualise this system like the mutating network of a forest. However, I also hope the readers will put this text aside and start practicing decolonial ecotransfeminism in a less prescriptive way, and move instead towards more sensed and spiritual notions of ecological alliance-building on the earth and on a cosmic level.

Artists Referenced

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– Ateliê TRANSmoras: https://www.transmoras.com/

– Beth Stephens & Annie Sprinkle: https://sprinklestephens.ucsc.edu/

– Byuka: https://byukakrow.wixsite.com/artist

– Graham Bell Tornado: http://www.grahambelltornado.com/

– Mirna Bamieh: https://mirnabamieh.info/

– Niya B: https://www.niyab.com/

– Quimera Rosa: https://quimerarosa.net/

– Rhine Bernardino: http://www.rhinebernardino.com/

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(un)learning practice

continuity through interruption

Nikolina Pristaš

"Collective work cannot be seen as a form, only as an effort."
Đuro Seder "The Collective Work" (1963)

In an interview in the midst of the process of composing the "Freeman Etudes"[1], John Cage said: "...these are intentionally as difficult as I can make them, because I think that we're now surrounded by very serious problems in the society, and that we tend to think that the situation is hopeless and that it's just impossible to do something that will make everything turn out properly. (laughs) So I think that this music, which is almost impossible, gives an instance of the practicality of the impossible."[2] The work was commissioned for virtuoso violinist Charles Zukofsky but the laborious and long process of making the etudes was primarily motivated by the composer`s need to rethink the artistic practice of making music from his own feeling of situatedness in the society. What made the practice of composing an instance of the practicality of the impossible was not a desire or ambition to create a great piece of music, to add one more *thing* to the world of music, but rather to commit to a process that engages the artist in a disciplined work*ing,* as a symbolic gesture.

1. Cage, John, "Freeman Etudes" (1977-1990), commissioned by Betty Freeman for a violinist Charles Zukofsky.
2. Interview with John Cage, Thomas Moore and Laura Fletcher, https://thomasmoore.info/interview-john-cage/

The composer was not a violinist himself; he needed to collaborate closely with a violinist to get the necessary information on acoustic qualities, expressive detail and what is technically possible on a violin, in other words, he needed the intricate musical and kinaesthetic knowledge of a violin virtuoso. Composing began as a random choice of a first note and proceeded, note by note, using hundreds of chance procedures, as if every note was in itself an event in time, a discrete unit of sound, separated from the preceding and following one. After three years of work, the process was brought to a temporary halt due to the violinist`s conclusion that because of determinate specificity of each note-event, extreme profusion of detail and rigorously controlled time-structure, some of the etudes were impossible to perform. The composer, unwilling to change the method or make compromises to the endeavour, stopped the process of composing. The first sixteen etudes were published and occasionally performed as an unfinished composition. However, it took another nine years for an insight to happen for Cage to resume composing. Hearing another virtuoso, Irwine Arditti, play the etudes faster then he determined structurally, the composer learned that the performer took on an active role in the compositional process and this, consequently, opened the path to resolve some irresolvable compositional conditions by a simple instruction of letting the musician decide in these specific impossible moments. When the composer eventually set to finish the etudes, after nine years of break, he realized that his own compositional logic was too complex and working notes almost undecipherable. It is only with the assistance of a musicologist, an expert analyst of his chance–based compositional systems, that he was able to re-enter his own endeavour and bring it to a close by completing all thirty two etudes in 1990.

The insistence on the rigorousness of the practice brings Cage`s endeavour closer to the idea of praxis (action) then of poiesis (production). The action of practicing the impossible, with its ethical and political intent, is what is giving impetus to the process, rather than the desire for the completion of the artwork. In this sense, the practice itself becomes an end in itself, a means "devoid of any end that is effectively communicated to people" (Agamben, 2007). Furthermore, due to its complexity, the composition at moments truly implodes on itself: it gets interrupted by its own systematic, exhaustive procedure, in other words, it becomes gestural. Gesture is an action different from

praxis and poiesis, as it presents "means which, *as such,* are removed from the sphere of mediation without thereby becoming ends" (Agamben, 2007). Furthermore, Cage`s gesture creates an environment for other actors (a musician, a listener, a musicologist) to co-engage with the practice of the impossible, be that in the sphere of performance, reception or analysis and intermediation of the initial practice. By practicing, the composer makes a gesture but the gesture is incomplete: it calls for others to endure it, to support it, to continue giving meaning to it through their practice.

Directly referring to Cage`s concept of the practicality of the impossible, a Chicago-based theatre collective, Goat Island, appropriated practice of the impossible, as one of the important poetic interests driving the making of a performance "The Sea and Poison" (1996-1998). Their impossible proposal was differently formulated: "We set out to construct an impossible dance. We would construct this dance from a series of unperformable individual movements… Each individual brought in a complete fragment of a single movement as a response to an impossible image or an impossible phrase. The combination of those five fragments constructed one unperformable movement phrase in the impossible dance."[3](Goat Island, 1998) They began by compiling a series of unperformable movement phrases as responses to untranslatable poetry images, cipher-like diagrams for the Scottish Highland Dances, or difficult movement proposals like "a 100-step run up a castle tower" (Goat Island, 1998). Each impossible dance resulted from an assembly of four or five impossible movements. The final phrase was composed of all the impossible dances made over a period of several months. To perform it as a group dance, the phrase was subjected to a rigid mathematical division where each performer performed a different division of choreography[4], with beginnings of each phrase set at

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3. Goat Island, "the impossible & the poison and 37 squared – a reading companion to "The Sea and Poison", 1997, Chicago.

4. "We decided to structure this assembly according to the 1:2:3:4 ratio… In this way, using five different movement phrases, the four performers perform the same material in the same pace, but according to different divisions. Mark performs each movement phrase completely from beginning to the end. Brian performs the first half of each movement phrase in the series, followed by the second half of each movement phrase in the series. Karen performs the first third of each movement phrase in the series, followed by the second third of each movement phrase, followed by the third third. Matthew performs the first fourth quarter of

different, precisely mutually coordinated points in time so that "the aspect of impossibility in the dances derives both from the oddity of each individual movement and the complexity of the precisely timed structure of the assembly of movements into dance. The actual human performance results in a style of ongoing failure and adjustment during each moment of each impossible dance" (Goat Island, 1998). It is important to stress here that only one performer had dance education, meaning, only one of them had been trained in movement creation and reproduction so that for them a decision to dance already meant to make the gesture of dance communicating their decision to choose dance as a medium of expression. The athleticism and perseverance are reminiscent of Arditti`s performance, clearly communicating a sense of uncompromising determination.

The problem with choreography/performance is that performers are wired to strive for a perfection of performance, to eliminate lapses, mistakes, imperfections, clashes, sudden breaks, noises, all in order to maintain the temporal flow of the performance`s progress. And although some of the Goat Island members remembered the experience of performing impossible dances with an acute sense of failure--explaining that they rarely managed to embody the choreography as it was written, that they were constantly "falling out" of choreographic structure--those interruptions were not really visible in performance. One could clearly see and feel endeavour, crystalline concentration, combinatorial precision and endurance in continuity (It is more than twenty years since I saw "The Sea and Poison" but I vividly remember a feeling of breathlessness that this 13`47`` scene had on me.). However, the conditions of impossibility, implicit in the choreographic writing, stayed hidden for the spectator. Interestingly, rather than in performance, it was in the practice of writing the impossible dance that Cage`s gesture found continuity. The practice of writing was from the start an important mode of artistic existence of Goat Island, standing in close proximity to performance as its political and ethical environment. And what is more, that writing was consistently plurivocal, the

each movement phrase, followed by the second quarters, then by the third quarters and finally the fourth quarters of each movement phrase."

result of a process of commitment to the practicing of the impossible - together.

When we, BADco., began working on "Impossible Dances" (2018) at the invitation of Goat Island and Chicago Centre for Culture to make a performative response to honour Goat Island`s work, a question arose as to how to formulate our horizon of practicing the impossible? In many ways, difficult or impossible poietic problems were very much a recurring aspect of our practice but this invitation was for us an opportunity to think again. It was also particularly, intimately, important to all of us since seeing "The Sea and Poison" on Eurokaz festival in 2001 represented a moment of recognition, one of those transformative experiences that generated impetus which called for creative continuation in our work, long term.

We began rehearsing by trying to embody, in real time, what we saw on the video: each one of us would watch two chosen Goat Island performers and try to embody all the movements and idiosyncrasies of both bodies as simultaneously as possible. Working with continuous shifts of attention from one to the other body on screen, our dancing was progressing as an irregular flux of contradictory and awkwardly coordinated movements composed from all the details we managed to perceive in split seconds at any given moment. From this experience we came up with a list of impossibilities: to be in two positions at the same time, to jump front but be pulled to the right, to simultaneously jump up and roll on the floor, to disappear from space when the performer jumps out of frame, to perform a movement that is hesitant and direct at the same time, to fling oneself into air and perform a turn with two feet on the floor, and it goes on and on.

As images of their recorded movements were finding home in our movements, it was vital that we continued looking for ways of compositionally conditioning the choreography that would systematically build up impossibilities over time, and thus make every instance of performing gestural, an instance of practicing the impossible in performance. These compositional conditionings were spatial, sensorial (interrupting our attention and our vision) and rhythmical. We started dancing within the space of original dances, 2x2m square floor plan with performers at the corners and then expanded it onto the overall performance space which was for us

8x10m rectangle with spectators organized all over the performance space, creating meandering pathways and obstacles that forced a sudden change of direction, adding a moment of complete spatial unpredictability of movement trajectory. The next compositional procedure was more interruption to our attention flows by adding one more source of image with which we montaged the dance, a live dancer. Then, turning the screens off, leaving us only with images in memory and the urgency to work against the inertia of the already familiar, then, shutting our eyes to disrupt our ease in travelling through space, then adding reversal of movement impulses, then overlapping spaces of four dancers into one smaller shared space intermingling and composing with bodies of spectators and their gazes as imaginary vectors of direction for some of movements, and eventually, dancing arhythmically against the pulsation of the sound of the original from the soundtrack.

The act of watching was also structurally interrupted for the spectators. This was done not only by having to montage their gaze between interspersed dancers and the surrounding screens, but also by choreographic scores on display on music stands all over the performance space. The dancers turned the pages of the scores as the performance progressed, so that for each structural level of choreography another set of impossibilities were articulated in the score (for, e.g., Impossible Bodies: Dancing the magnitude vector of combined forces of two bodies. Dances of mutual hesitation. Dance of indiscernible forces. Impossible Models: Dances for a neutral eye. A vacuum dance. An anti-inertia dance. Impossible prospects: Rear-view dances. Facing yourself dances. Negative space dance. An over-the-shoulder dance. etc.), creating interruptions in the continuity of the spectators` perception and the reception of events around them.

The most difficult thing, however, was to keep oneself in the mind-frame of *practicing* in front of spectators. It is too easy, even automatic, to performers, as time sediments corporeal knowledge through experience of dancing and performing, to fall into inertia and familiarity of one`s image of one's own dancing, of its flows and easinesses. But to metabolyze the gesture without digesting it so that the performance can continue as a praxis, but in the public sphere, remains for me an important matter of concern.

When I first started reflecting on these gestures in the context of artistic education, I realized that it is almost impossible to introduce any gesture of interruption in the processes which are all orchestrated to lead towards one outcome – an educated contemporary dancer, who confirms an acknowledged image of a contemporary dancer and who can, once she finishes the studies, almost seamlessly continue her career reproducing the same model in the professional scene. The pedagogy is therefore dominantly exhausted in the transference of skills and types of knowledge that aim to reproduce the already established performance practices and ways of presenting dance, or, more rarely, at best, towards the empowerment of students to begin developing their own poetics. When I measure the insights I laid out in this text against the problem of immobilization of artistic imagination in face of climate disaster and the collapse of systems of values we bear witness to in our daily lives, I understand it is vital still to direct one`s artistic-pedagogic imagination towards the gestural way of thinking, towards imagining gestures that interrupt the inertialized reproduction of the already familiar practices as well as to rethink the limits of our practice, artistic or pedagogic, to search for moments where it might be interrupted, in order to proceed through connections with other non-artistic fields and other practices. Although it might not seem so at first glance, even to start knitting ideas and practices such as anti-utilitarianism or conviviality or zero-waste economy into processes of facilitation in the academic context has far reaching, radical consequences and asks for a shift in our inertialized ways of understanding pedagogy itself. But still, I follow Frank Ruda in his argument that it is important to insist still on formulating an impossible proposal but to think of it perhaps as "the most reasonable and minimal demand" (Ruda, 2016), something at the same time absolutely necessary and at the same time impossible, something we can stick with for some time, a small change with fundamental consequences because the looming question is really how to rethink artistic education and production for a situation where an artist needs to address certain political and ethical urgencies simply because there really is no other choice?

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teaching.

Slobodanka Stevceska

Teaching, the definition. The largest profession in the world according to the number of its members.

The periphery and semi-periphery. Teaching in the context of a rigid educational institution.

Form, dynamic, establishing mutual trust in the group. Communication, humour, joy and play. Encouraging students' curiosity / Student involvement / Shared decision-making.

Passivity... The indifference...

Encouraging self-initiative. Building critical thinking. Peer-to-Peer.

Disobedience as a topic. Grassroots communities. An active role.

We are seen as the ones who screwed it up.

Bullshit. Sounds like a project proposal draft!

I find it pretty hard to write about my teaching practice and not to fall into the stereotype of how a teacher is expected to sound. Well, in contexts such as this, the least I am expected to do is say something wise.

Not long ago, my partner asked what I think would be the essential point in my teaching practice, and I said – intuition. This surprised me. My answers to such questions are always complex and layered, so it was unexpected for me to see it in the light of a single notion. But I somehow agree with it. And it makes me look back and try to analyse my teaching practice more sharply.

When I try to summarize it, I see it based on two equally important practices.

The first would be my long experience with diverse groups of young people: young people at risk, institutionalized kids, ethnically mixed groups in conflicted areas, etc. This practice saved me too. In the period--and in a society with political turmoil, uncertainty, constant changes and transitions from one system to another, and the collapse of institutions and values—working with these kinds of young people not only shaped my views and attitudes, but the word 'teaching' became too narrow for what I've learned and experienced. The work with young people became, in a way, my mission, and part of my being.

The second would be my art practice. It is practice that I am happy can be based on collaborations and teamwork. Being post-disciplinary and context-based, it is freed from the formal and disciplinary per se, and freed from being fixed on the product. It is rather process- based, and it inevitably involves some preceding specific research. Thus, as a rule, it often enters the zone of uncertainty. It could sound tricky, but being under a constant reshaping, it resets itself and opens up new 'territories'.

Consequently, my knowledge in arts, and the experience gained by the social work I've been involved in, are fused and embodied in my teaching practice. In a race against time and urgency, I never really structured it on paper, and whenever I try to do it, it sounds too framed, trapped even.

For the purpose of this brief reflection, I would draw two key elements from my art practice.

My art practice often involves or incorporates created situations. Relying on the reactions of the audience, the project / the artwork I work on can often change its course. Thus, listening to the audience and getting it involved into (or even 'trapped' by) the work, would be its key element. The common space created here would be the space that inspires and stimulates further communication.

Furthermore, my culture-related work is never an individual work. For 22 years, I have been working as a member of an artistic duo. Also, a number of the works we've developed include other collaborators. So even creating and developing an artwork (or whatever we call it) is, for me, a constant exchange. Being also a part of a larger collective of artists and cultural workers in the period of the saturated political environment in my country, gives me the experience to witness the power of collective action.

So, I shall stress these two aspects – listening, and collective action -- and will return a bit later to them.

When speaking about art teaching, the bigger picture would inevitably reveal the political views behind it. I will list a few examples that continue to inspire me: the famous Black Mountain College and CalArts, for example, and their concepts of a horizontal way of communicating with students, anarchic vision, flexible curriculum (or as many curricula as students), discovering together, deciding cooperatively, etc. Or as additional examples, to mention several teachers I admire, and who triggered generational echoes and effects and chains of individual and communal changes, I note individuals such as Augusto Boal, Allan Kaprow, Joseph Beuys, Pavao Vuk-Pavlović (and his influence on the Aesthetic Laboratory in Skopje), and many others.

Behind the genius practices they developed, based on the very context they worked in, there is one important common element among them - non-conforming to the institutional rules and developing practices that go far beyond the confines of the school lessons. But unfortunately, the conditions for institutionalizing these anti-school concepts are long gone. And with them have gone the times of utopi-

an visions and the enthusiasm that creates and gathers curious and open-minded people. So, what we are facing now globally is a continuous commodification of the educational system and a neoliberal logic conquering the schools.

The very legitimate question here would be, is it possible today to institutionally apply these concepts of no fixed curriculum, and what would come of it in today's context?

I see it this way. Introducing them would definitely bring great advantages. For the teacher it would set a possibility for a comfortable and relaxed position, one that makes communication direct, immediate, and more substantial. It would open a space for creativity in both the teaching plan and the teacher's approach. And coming back to the one of the key aspects I mentioned previously, 'listening'--being able to listen to--would be a vital part in such ambience. Regardless of what we call it, an intuition or accumulated experience, relaying to all the perceptions generated while communicating with the students would be equally important. One would promote listening to the content, the voice, the dynamic, the speed, the body language, the facial expression, the eyes, the air around, and so on. It would involve asking a lot, but more importantly giving space, both the space to ask and that to tell. These are things that will inspire and generate chains of further discussions and exchange.

For the students it would bring many things. Firstly, it would provide a teacher who would rather be a companion, than a person who conveys information; one who facilitates their research and study, one who encourages curiosity and passion, and who is also open to understanding their particular contexts. This open space would lay a possibility for the processes of introspection, developing critical thought, and the courage to rely on their own capacities.

But I wonder if this concept of no fixed curriculum, no matter how much I admire it, might be porous for some problematic practices in art teaching? Would it permit the ones that foster the anti-intellectual approach to teaching arts, free of any analytical or critical thought, and a focus on the artist as genius? It is possible. It is an endless dilemma in the education system, the balance between freedom and regulations that promote systematic work.

It is also the concept of community that is at stake here. The examples I've pointed out functioned well in an appropriate ambience, a setting based on joint visions that count on collective work, progressive ideas, and cooperative exchange. Yet these visions are, unfortunately, rare or long forgotten.

What I am facing now here are young people raised in a desperate society, a society that does not believe a better tomorrow is possible. As a teacher, it is a big challenge and I have to shape my teaching process in accordance with this context.

The state in which I live and teach faces so many crises and difficulties. The crises are related to its economy, politics, education, its health system, the judicial system, and so on. And among the greatest challenges is the environmental complex of problems as well.

My country is one of the most polluted in the world. Ranked by air pollution, my home town has featured many times on the top of the list of the most polluted cities in the world. The entire territory of this tiny landlocked country contains scattered toxic hotspots made by now abandoned factories that even in their best
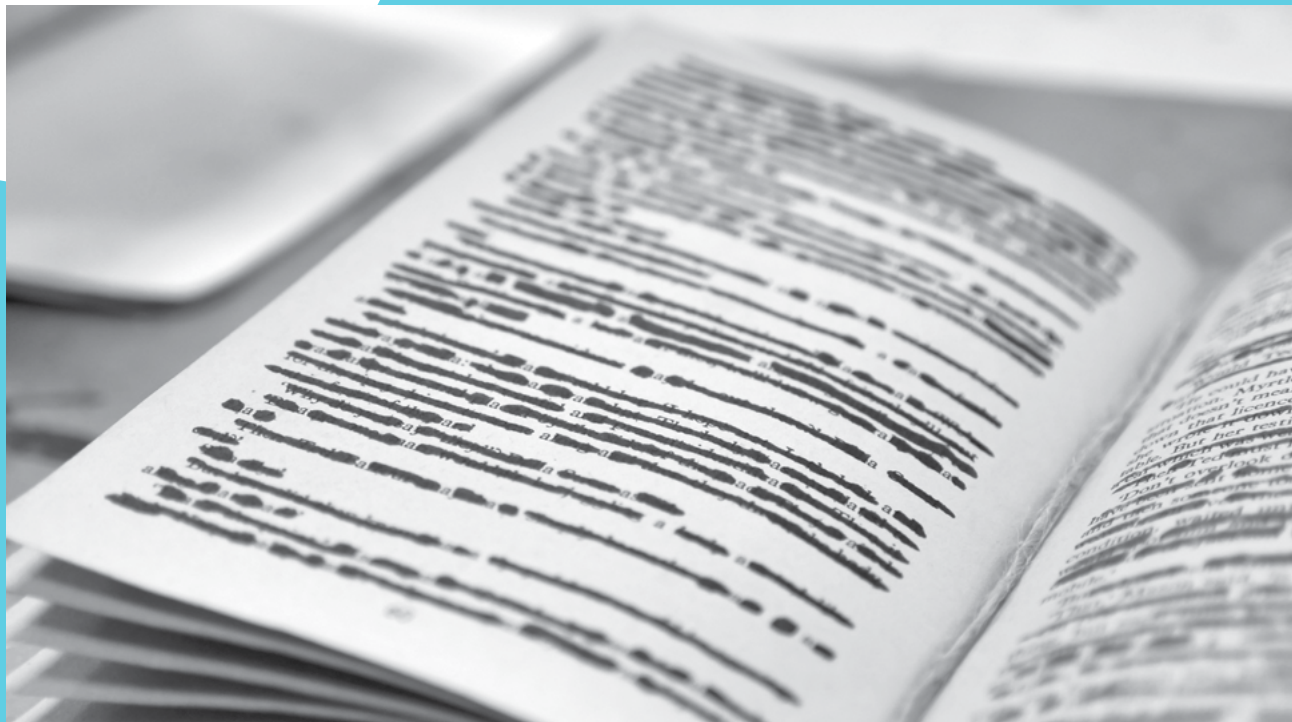
times, regarding the environmental aspect, operated with an obsolete technology. In those times, while being active, they produced mountains of slag that are now abandoned and left unprotected. These highly toxic mountains of dust are not only lethal to the nearby settlements, and are not only a regional risk factor, but from what I've learned recently, with strong winds its particles travel even to the Scandinavian territories.

And what is discouraging here is that the state doesn't have the capacity, not only financially but also politically, to solve these problems in the foreseeable future. The political parties depended on the mafia - the one consisting of oligarchs born in the murky times after the fall of communism-- so the condition will obviously stay stuck for a longer period. And knowing this, it makes you depressed and paralyzed.

Whenever I am faced with these facts, I am at first furious, then think frantically about possible actions, and there follows a moment of feeling depressed and trying to forget the naked truth.

But, as I said previously, working with young people can save you. As a teacher, there is a lot of work to be done. Nonetheless, teaching is a tool. It is a tool for imagining a better future.

I've mentioned concepts such as encouraging critical thinking and the courage to rely on your own capacities, as major mechanisms. Introducing social and ethical questions, and frequent discussions of them, is also essential. These can be followed by discussions relating the complexity of social processes, the effects and consequences, understanding the importance of responsibility, etc.

Regarding the burning issue of the environment, in the context in which I teach, awareness among young people varies, from complete ignorance on the one hand to well-informed young people, or even feelings like eco-anxiety, among some. Perhaps this very topic is the most representative example of the need for mutual (and intergenerational) comprehension and exchange.

And what I would underline here is the need for understanding the power of collective action. Because today, collective action may be the only possible way out.

Images

1. Darja Redzepagic (9 years old) explaining her creative works to the students of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje (2019)

2. Students from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje participating in the AKTO Festival for Contemporary Arts in Bitola, with reviews written for the student fanzine "Primus" (2018)

3. Ivana Samandova (third year of studies), intervention in the corridors of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje (2019)
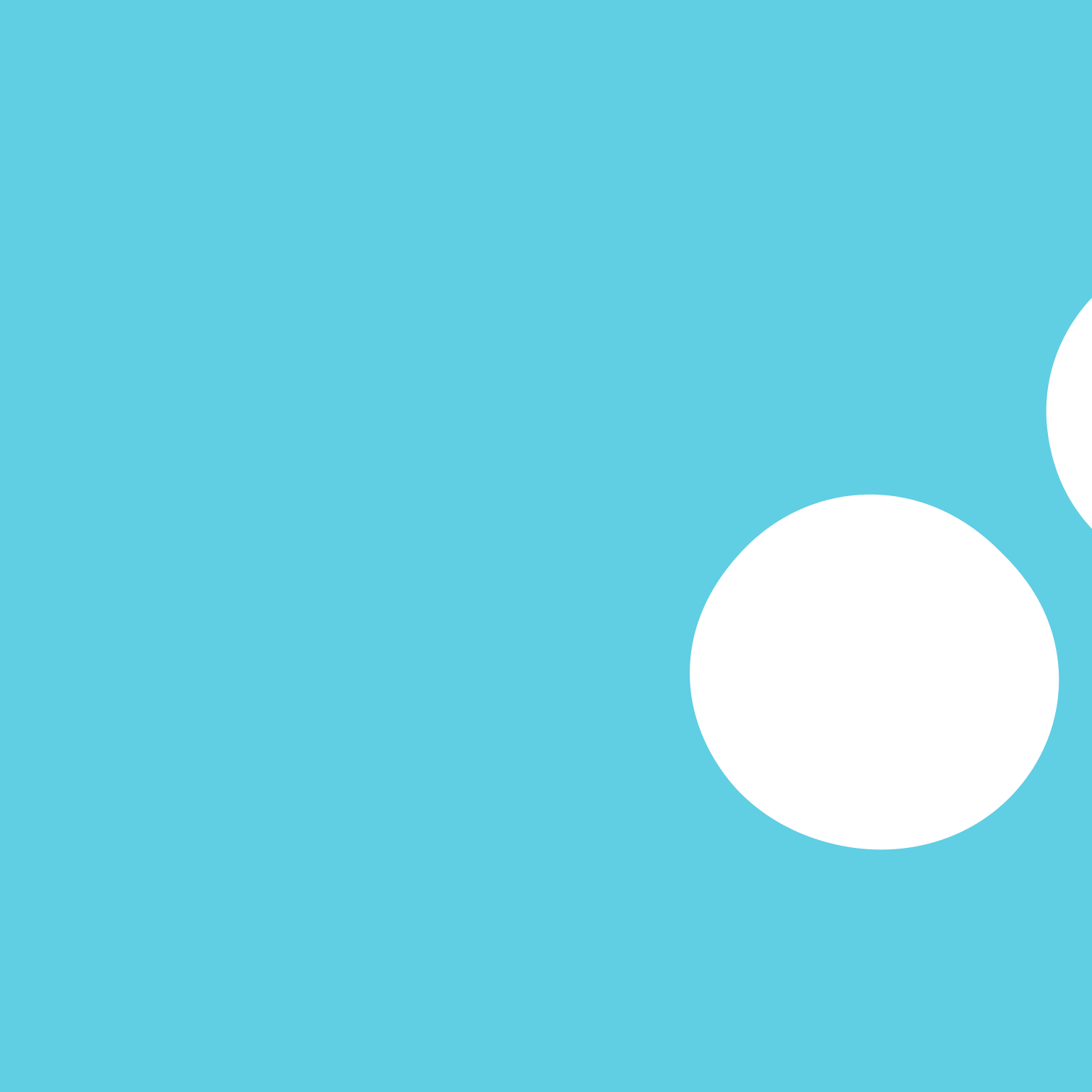
4. Kamelija Kalamernikova (second year of studies), book intervention (2021)

Photos by

1. Slobodanka Stevceska
2. Denis Saraginovski
3. Ivana Samandova
4. Denis Saraginovski
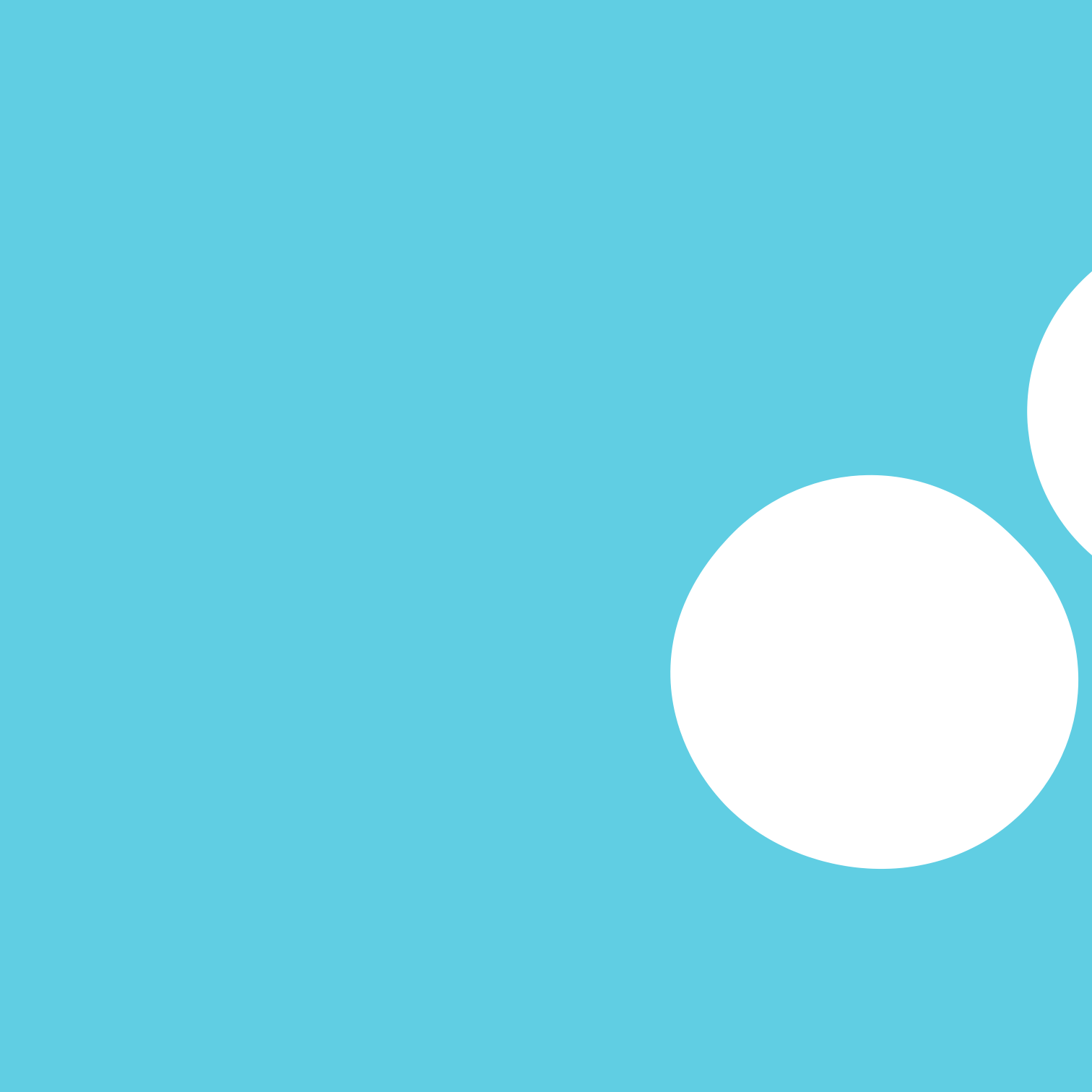
possible worlds

what happens when artists discover commons?
a conversation with irena ristić

Miloš Kovačević

Introduction

In the spring of 2019, thanks to my colleague Marijana Cvetković from the *Platform for the Theory and Practice of Commons*, there appeared on my computer screen an unpublished version of the scientific paper by theatre director Irene Ristić entitled "Fear of Commoning or It's Not Ours, It's Yours". Considering that we, in the *Platform*, also wrote about commoning, Irena wanted to discuss the results of her research with us, preferably in a format that would be open to the public. I immediately invited her to be a guest on the _Commonification_[1] - a show that I hosted at the time--together with my friend Aleksandra Vučković--on the Internet radio station *RadioAparat*. Irena's paper thematically fit perfectly into the concept of *Commonification*, which was the creation of a dialogue about alternatives to neoliberal transformation that are guided by the idea of the commons. Soon, Irena was in our improvised studio, where we had a conversation about her paper.

Several months earlier, Irena conducted research with all the employees who were involved in the preparation of a play that she directed at the *Šabac City Theater*. The goal of the research was to examine their relationship to commons. The research was divided into three phases. First, information on employees' earnings was obtained. In the second phase of the research, the artists were asked how they would distribute 1,000 euros of an imaginary common property, following their internal sense of social justice. Irena made an agreement with her associates (the playwright and the scenographer) to reduce their fees to the average fees of actors, which actually generated "surplus value" in the amount of 1,200 euros, which she declared to be common property. This was followed by the third phase of the research, in which a plenum was organized. The answers obtained in the previous phase of the research were presented to the artists. However, this time, instead of just a hypothetical distribution, they were invited to make an actual distribution of the common property generated in the way previously described.

This is the final part of the interview with Irena, in which we covered several topics that are important for both degrowth theory and the movement such as: the division and valorisation of labour, the naturalization of commodity production, attitudes towards the legacy of socialist self-management, etc. The entire interview[1] can be listened to on the website of the *Platform* zajedničko.org (Komonifikacija 2019). Irena's paper[2] was first published in the *Anthology of Essays by The Faculty of Dramatic Arts University of Arts in Belgrade* and then in an expanded version as a chapter in her book entitled *Small door: About commoning and the paths of radical imagination* (Ristić 2019, Ristić 2021).

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Interview

The one-hour long interview was conducted at the Gallery Collective (Kolektiv)/RadioAparat studio in Belgrade on May 29, 2019.

MILOŠ: You have delegated the decision on the distribution of common property only to members of the artistic team, i.e., actors and associates. For what reason did you exclude the technicians?

IRENA: The first version of the project was to have everyone involved. Then, for very practical reasons, I realized that my associates from the technical sector will not be available to me until ten days before the premiere and that I have no communication with them because, in fact, they jump into communication with the director only ten days or two weeks before the premiere, but no more thereafter A little in passing, I go through the workshop, *but actually it is two parallel worlds*. Then I thought, that's a wonderful analogy of social segregation. That's the problem. I have no contact with the base, even though they produce my play back there in the hinterlands and in their workshops. Since the whole decision to generate common property is an individual decision, not a group decision, which is perhaps questionable as part of the project, my logic was that I should put responsibility where it belongs in the real world. In my personal opinion, that responsibility belongs to the middle class. That is a question of giving up privileges. And then, from the position of deciding to generate some part of common property or some surplus value, I wanted to share my responsibility with the people to whom I thought the responsibility actually belonged in reality. Therefore, only artists were involved in the first phase.

ALEKSANDRA: How did they react to that? Did they like the responsibility, or did they feel the need to distance themselves? How did it look to them?

IRENA: When they did the questionnaire about imaginary property, they responded really well. They were imaginative in their ideas of how it could be distributed. There is really no shortage of inventiveness or the will to think about it.

MILOŠ: And some ideas about equality?

IRENA: There already appears the highest degree of agreement regarding the option to allocate resources within a team that includes both artists and technicians. This is where the idea that these funds should be distributed within the wider team appears. Not only to artists but also to the technicians. The greatest turbulence occurred during the plenum when we presented the method of generating real property and asked people if we need to reconsider their decisions from the questionnaire. This is where it actually turned out that this responsibility was difficult to accept. Several topics emerged as being very delicate. On the one hand, it was perceived as threatening because it did not fit into our legal framework. *Our legal frameworks are very narrow and restrictive regarding the generation of common property.* Another thing that was striking and impressive was that it was experienced as the introduction of disorder, as the introduction of anarchy into a system. *No matter how bad or problematic the hierarchy is, it is still believed that the system should be preserved and should not be disturbed so much.* In the end, the objection was made, and that line is in the subtitle of the paper: "It's not ours, it's yours". They also said: "We will not take it, we did not create it". It was an interesting issue because it points to the problem of responsibility, i.e., how much people are willing to take responsibility for the production and distribution of common property. This is where the inhibitory effect of fear, as we call it, showed up. What will others say? Is that permissible? How will this affect relationships? How can it be interpreted? In fact, there has been very strong resistance to taking on that responsibility.

MILOŠ: It seems to me that it shows the extent to which those hierarchical decisions are legitimized. You explained to the people at the plenum on what principle you generated common property and that you only equalized your salary with theirs. Nevertheless, they said "no, it's not ours, it's yours" in the way that everything you did, as well as our ideas about equality and justice, are neglected. What is important for them is what outsiders have come up with how much the director should receive. That appears fair to them, not what's intuitive or what you did.

IRENA: It is not aimed at some sort of apotheosis of the system, although one can see that there is trust in the hierarchy in which people remain stuck. But there are more issues there. First, it shows to what extent they correlate taking responsibility for the commons with ways of producing the commons. Thus, *the conceptualization of the commons necessarily precedes the prospective distribution*. I told them that, based on my personal decision, I decided to name this common property. They did not decide it themselves, so they did not produce it themselves. Thus, people can experience it as a responsibility that they did not choose and that was imposed on them. It is not an easy responsibility, and that is why it is perhaps easily dismissed.

ALEKSANDRA: I think it was difficult for them that they had to distribute the common property that was produced by someone else and intended for those purposes.

IRENA: This is normally a problem with all experimental forms of commoning, including with this research. The problem is in that you produce commons as an experiment, but it was not produced by the community. And *if something is not produced by the community, then the responsibility returns to the one who produced it, i.e. it is not perceived as one's own*.

MILOŠ: That is what I wanted to ask. There is a well-known slogan. I think *Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own* had it for the Belgrade elections: "Change comes from the bottom". It seems as if in your example the change came from the top, in the sense that you produced common property, and then you let this privileged part of the team distribute it. Do you have any idea how some research or experiment could be made that would create the precondition for common property to be taken seriously, i.e. for change to come from the bottom?

IRENA: When we look at it in micro-framework, it is really a change from the top. One central figure who has a position of power decides something and assigns responsibility to others. If nothing else, the distribution of that property partially went to the base. On the other hand, these are such small communities that I see it as a change from the bottom. When it would really start to function, let's say at the level of an entire season or at the level of two seasons, if all the directors

would decide to do the same, that would really be a change from the bottom. I think it is not possible without the active participation and responsibility of the middle class. Because the middle class holds the resources, just as I had that position in the theatre that allowed me to generate common property. It is not possible otherwise because it is actually a question of giving up privileges. It is not a question of whether they are hardworking and produce something together. They all produce something together! How do you otherwise live earning just 200 euros a month? By going there to the family to plow something, lend, sell... They are actually hardworking people. It is not a matter of them producing something, but of starting to think about the possibilities of joint production and transformation.

MILOŠ: Is it realistic to expect from the middle class to give up its privileges? On this micro-example that we are discussing now, we can talk about what policies we as leftists stand for. Are we advocating for policies that go in the direction of making the middle class aware that they should give up some of their privileges so that they make change, or policies that empower those at the very bottom, in this example technicians, to resist and to somehow force that middle class to give up their privileges? And do you think these two strategies are mutually exclusive?

IRENA: No, I do not think they are mutually exclusive. We were implicitly trying to do that in some way. Because the final decision about the distribution of common property was to share it within a wider team that includes both artists and technicians, one important question arose: the question of parity. Whether it should be equally distributed or whether someone, namely the artists, as was debated at the plenum, should receive a little more due to the increased volume of work.

ALEKSANDRA: Is the artist's workload really greater?

IRENA: That depends on how you count. If the actors had 45 rehearsals and the technicians had 15 rehearsals, we can say that the actors worked three times as much. However, we cannot isolate it from context if we know that technicians are paid 60% less.

ALEKSANDRA: And they are equally important.

IRENA: And every day they work in the evening. They put on a show, and the actors do not play in every show. So if you look only at our rehearsals, the actors worked three times as much, but when you look at the whole context, technicians are paid 60% less, and they do these technical tasks every day. So I understand why the artists reasoned that they should get at least 10% more, but it actually turned out to be a very significant moment, maybe a key moment, because actually during the distribution of the property... I actually talked to the technical sector. Conducted those short interviews with them. They showed their displeasure very clearly. They experienced it as a social injustice. *They said it was the same as being constantly put in a humiliating position.* Maybe with less complicated language, they were still able to express it, and they were shaken and somewhat angry. *Because of that 10% difference, even though that figure is symbolic, when you divide that figure by 30 people, it is all symbolic, but that symbolic difference is not so naive at all. It is actually essential, because it is an expression of the perpetuation of social inequality*. And in a way, that rebellion appeared there. The technicians said that we should discuss distribution. And then the artists said: "Well, we don't have to discuss it. Come on now. Come on, let it go now". Therefore, the turbulences that arose around this project were not simple or easy. They were emotionally very stressful for everyone who participated. They showed the potential for change. It was uncomfortable and very turbulent and tense, and people were under pressure thinking about their responsibilities, but it actually started some kind of conversation about possible change.

MILOŠ: In what ways does the fear of taking responsibility for managing the commons manifest itself?

IRENA: It manifests itself mostly through that resistance when real property actually appears. As long as it is in the sphere of the imaginary, the space is very free for manoeuvring, thinking, designing etc. When real property appears, it becomes a problem, and the strongest resistance could be seen in some contradictory reactions. On the one hand, there is very strong resistance to the very concept of commons because it automatically reminds people of the legacy of socialism, because people equate the concept of commons with social property. That is why they have
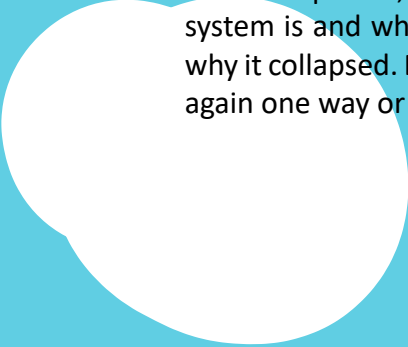
a blanket cynicism towards socialism, in the sense of, "Well, we are not going to self-manage now". You can see the devaluation of the socialist legacy. It is, I think, induced less by experience and more by the narratives that were produced...

MILOŠ: Because it is nurtured in the public sphere...

IRENA: Yes, it is nurtured, and the assumption that the way we are living now may not be the best, but it is the only possible one, is nurtured as well. What you would expertly call the naturalization of commodity production. As if it is actually the only possible way of social reproduction. When you combine the naturalization of commodity production with the devaluation of what came before, you get very strong resistance. On the other hand, the legacy of socialism is mentioned in the context of some good functioning. For example, artists are very happy to recall how well theatre functioned before the nineties, when the mechanism of variables was included, when it was known exactly how surpluses were distributed, etc. So, on the one hand, resistance is shown, and on the other hand, there is awareness that there were some mechanisms that were far more functional. I think that is not only because artists are often contradictory, but also because there is a strong feeling that it was never right—not then, not now—but maybe it was a little better then because there were more chances, more possibilities for something to be better. But when those possibilities to make something better were destroyed, when they are experienced as a kind of failure, then the current experience of them is extremely devaluative. They are cancelled and neutralized. All that, of course, benefits the modern system.

MILOŠ: How did we get to the point where self-management, which I see as taking control of one's own life through community, is devalued as something unfashionable? This is the way in which self-management, or commoning in modern vocabulary, is presented to us today, as something that is distinctly old-fashioned.

IRENA: Whether something is modern or old-fashioned is more of a question of a campaign that neoliberals do well. I think that the bigger problem is that self-management achievements are often idealized. We lost them due to systematic state bureaucratization. Suvin writes very seriously about how low self-management

had gotten by 1989. It came to that point not because of bad ideas and concepts but because those concepts were betrayed by systematic state bureaucratization. The impression that devalues that heritage is precisely related to that, to the perception that it is a space of social abuse, the legalization of theft, in which everyone steals as much as they can only if something is common. Therefore, the current attitude towards it is more related to those destructive tendencies that existed, especially in the period between 1983 and 1989. So we should not idealize that period, although we can very well understand what a self-management system is and what its potential is. Perhaps it would be important to understand why it collapsed. Because if we don't understand, if we idealize, it will be destroyed again one way or another.

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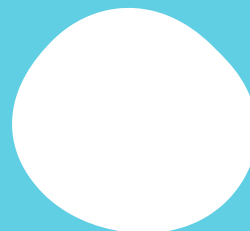
about the play "the end of the world and other nonsense"

Krista Burāne

What Is Your Method/Practice?
(in the presented work, and in your work in general)

In creating the play "The End of the World and other nonsense," I aimed to give young people a platform to express themselves, as they are the future caretakers of this world. It is my hope that they will be able to shift our current Anthropocene era towards a more harmonious Symbiocene one. Working alongside students from different schools, we collaborated with subject teachers to integrate the play's development into their daily school practices. Our research process involved geography, history, biology, social studies, and literature lessons, which culminated in the students writing fantasy stories about preventing the end of the world. The stories were audio recorded by the authors and were used to create five different routes through an empty school, providing a fun and interactive way to ask the question "How did we get into this trouble and what can be done to solve the situation?" The only rules for the stories were that the protagonist had to be a child or young person and be friends with another living being from the world of flora or fauna and together they have to seek the tool to save the world.

What Are the Values and Knowledge That Inform Your Topics of Work?

As an artist who works in various cultural fields, such as theatre, documentary film, and photography, I am always focused on cooperation with the audience and creating a space for conversation with the spectators. For me, artwork should be an event that ignites new experiences, provokes thought about our lifetime, and creates a deep and honest interest in life and humanity. Therefore, I mostly work in documentary, site-specific, and participatory theatre forms because I believe that the opportunity offered by art allows the viewer to be involved not only intellectually and emotionally but also physically and actively, helping to develop an empathetic and caring attitude towards other living beings and the environment we are in. In recent years, I have also worked extensively with themes of preserving biodiversity and environmental protection, doing my best within my capabilities to create changes in human-nature relationships.

About the Piece

The play consisted of a prologue, three acts, and an epilogue. In the prologue, the audience met Agents A and B and were divided into pairs, becoming agents themselves. In the first act, Agents A and B introduced the situation and informed the audience that they were responsible for taking action in seeking tools to save the world. This act was performed in the school assembly hall.

In the second act, the audience pairs went on a mission to different places in the school, such as classrooms, the library, gym, wardrobe, canteen, etc., to listen to different stories and look for tools for saving the world. Agent A and B led them with different instructions incorporated into the audio stories. These instructions encouraged the spectators to cooperate.

In the third act, the audience members returned to the assembly hall with four

tools they found and wrote their own scenarios for saving the world. In the epilogue, all spectators gathered at the Museum of the Tools for Saving the World, exhibited their tools and scenarios, and read and discussed the stories of other spectators.

This was a site-specific performance where 95% of the set and props already existed on the school premises. The performance was designed to be nature-friendly. The play provided a unique and interactive experience for the audience, making them agents in the story and empowering them to take action in making the world a better place.

More about the play: www.kristaburane.com

Hamster Tofu

Story by Veitners Tofu (15)

In the city of Valmiera, there were many hair salons and funeral homes. A young man named Peter Birks lived there. Peter's best friend was his hamster, Tofu. Peter was allergic to many animals, such as cats, dogs, panthers, koalas, and giraffes. Some of these animals had belonged to him before, but the only one he had ever really liked was Tofu. Peter's parents could afford to keep all kinds of exotic animals because they are very influential and wealthy people. In fact, they are among the richest people in the world, and they own all the hair salons and funeral homes in Valmiera. Only their son and Kanye West are wealthier than they are.

No one knew how Peter became so rich, but everyone knew that it would soon be meaningless. News had been circulating for some time that the Earth's atmosphere had disappeared, and harmful solar radiation was reaching the Earth. Flowers turn to dust, homes are damp, and rocks melt. Peter wasn't too worried about it because he knew it wouldn't be difficult for him to move to Mars, but one morning something happened that made him change his mind.

It was a sunny morning when Peter woke up and went to greet Tofu. This was a strange morning because his hamster was neither in his usual cage nor in the backyard where he sometimes sunbathed. Peter was about to call the gardeners when he suddenly noticed the note left on the table.

"I'm off to save the world!

Tofu

P.S. Someone has to do it!"

At first, Peter was surprised, and he thought it was a joke. However, Tofu was nowhere to be found, and none of the gardeners or cleaners remembered seeing him. All Peter knew was that his hamster had gone off to save the world.

The next few weeks were very depressing in Peter's house. Unusually for him, Peter sat in his room and didn't come out. His parents began to worry about his health. After about a month, Peter accidentally turned on the news. There was a story about a hamster travelling the world, informing people about impending disasters and the mass extinction that could only be prevented by restoring the atmosphere. It was Tofu! At the end of the report, Tofu invited everyone to join him in the search for a magical weapon that would help stop the ecological crisis. He also urged people to restore the atmosphere with clean air.

Tofu had created the largest tree-planting campaign in history, and it was working. People all over the world were joining his campaign and planting trees to restore the atmosphere. If people didn't have the opportunity to plant trees, they grew plants in their apartments or maintained existing forests. Peter had been trying to contact Tofu since he saw him on television, but it wasn't easy because first of all, hamsters don't have phones, and secondly, Tofu was always on the move. Peter chased after Tofu for two weeks until he finally caught him in Brazil. It was a brief reunion because Tofu had changed a lot. He was extremely busy and didn't have time for his owner. Peter asked his pet and best friend to come back home, but Tofu insisted on saving the world and asked Peter to help.

Peter changed his mind and bought the Amazon rainforest, the Sahara desert, and

most of Australia, and ordered them to invent a way to restore or create forests. Everyone around him was very surprised by the Valmiera resident's actions, but that wasn't all. Peter invested a huge amount of money in technologies that could temporarily stop harmful solar rays. Unfortunately, none of them was the right solution, so all attention was focused on finding a magical tool. They searched for it all over the world, but nothing was found.

Finally, Peter and Tofu went to Antarctica. The ozone hole had slowly been increasing and at one point, the ozone simply disappeared. When they reached their destination, they were surrounded only by ice, snow, and wind. A research camp was already set up there. They began to search for the cause of why the ozone hole started to form here. All they found on this icy continent was an old Electrolux vacuum cleaner. No one knew how it ended up 10 meters deep in the ice, but after intensive testing, it became clear that the operation of this object had caused the ozone hole. As quickly as possible, they prepared a rocket and launched this dangerous object into space, where it continued its suction work, but now in a good way - sucking up harmful solar radiation.

When the job was finally done, Peter and Tofu returned to Valmiera to relax. His parents were already waiting for them at home and were very worried about their son and his hamster, but when they found out how Tofu and Peter saved the world, they were overjoyed and very proud.

Super Suhariki

Story by Una Buksa (14)

After the bombing of Antarctica, the earth was flooded and devastated, struggling with all its might. As the world's superpowers fought over the division of territory on the Antarctic continent, each unleashed atomic bombs on their opponents. They detonated above the ice and melted the glaciers of the cold continent, causing massive floods around the world. Under the horrific amount of water, animals and farmland were destroyed, famine set in, and people fought for land that the floods had failed to devastate.

Brothers Juhans and Unads and their eternal friend, the land-dwelling creature named Bulbasaur, survived the disaster.

Brothers Juhans, Unads, and their lifelong friend, a land-dwelling creature named Bulbasaur, lived in a dirigible and saw how the wide sweep of the catastrophes engulfed the surfaces of the land, leaving only the treetops visible. The dirigible had been made by the boys' father, and when they reached adolescence, they helped him with the big sails. Wishing to be free and uninvolved in the events on the ground, the boys travelled by dirigible since reaching adulthood, leaving their relatives below. From time to time, they flew down to visit them and tell them about the sights seen from above. Regardless of the outside world, the boys, who came from Krāslava, took care of themselves, engaging in gardening on the front deck of the dirigible, next to which was a hidden cookie safe with legendary Krāslava "Masterpieces" cookies. The cookie collection was provided by the boys' grandmother, who lived in the "Masterpieces" cookie factory tower, which was as tall as television broadcast towers so that the dirigible could dock at it and easily replenish the cookie collection.

One day, while flying over the flooded fields, the brothers had breakfast and realized that their cookie stash was running low. So, they decided to fly to their

grandmother's house to replenish the emptiness inside their cookie jar with some incredibly delicious and fantastic masterpieces. When they arrived at their grandmother's house, the brothers greeted her and told her about the horrors they had seen on the ground. However, their grandmother, with great concern, told the young men that while making the latest batch of cookies, the ingredient proportions had been mixed up, making them as dry as a desert.

At first, the boys didn't believe their grandmother and each grabbed a cookie and took a bite. However, they quickly realized that these cookies were quite different from the usual treats. It seemed like their mouths were about to turn into a new miniature desert. After experiencing the unpleasant taste, or rather the lack of taste, the boys spat out the cookies and threw them away. Juhans was a basketball player, so he couldn't just throw the cookie away like that. He had to show off in front of his brother. He threw the cookie over the grandmother's aquarium, but it hit the ceiling and fell into the water. What happened next surprised everyone in the room: the cookie absorbed all the water in the aquarium, leaving only small puddles that couldn't flow onto the previously dry but now wet cookie, which had grown four times larger.

Upon seeing this wonder, Unads ran up to the aquarium and pulled out a cracker. After carefully examining, touching, and smelling it, he decided to take a bite and see how it tasted in his mouth. To his surprise, the cracker had become even tastier than the legendary "Masterpieces," and because of its large size, it gave the brothers a remarkable idea. Taking the new crackers, the brothers climbed onto a zeppelin and descended to ground level. Upon reaching the nearest shore, they tied the crackers to a Bulbasaur vine and instructed it to hold a cracker in each hand. Then, combining their strength, the boys pushed the vine into the water and watched as the crackers absorbed every drop of water that touched them. Seeing this exciting phenomenon, the boys used the zeppelin to spread the new cracker recipe all over the world and told everyone about its amazing power. Soon, cracker factories were built all over the world, producing the new crackers that the boys named "Super Suhariki." People tossed the crackers into the water, not only lowering the global water level but also eventually reaching a normal level. This also created a new food source that stopped global famine and saved humanity from extinction.

All photos by Nav Norādīts

the trees remember!

Filip Jovanovski
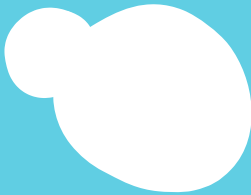
What Is Your Method/Practice?
(in the presented work, and in your work in general)

In recent years, together with my colleague Ivana Vaseva, we developed a methodology of work called *Reading buildings*[1], (pg.119).

The method – reading buildings - develops itself by performing, i.e. it performs an active space (instead of the static posture of the building) as an aesthetic and ethical process of creating relations and bonds.

Thus, the event emerging out of this specific method is a performance not as a physically built scenery, although it exists in a concrete building; instead, it is an experiential and emotional modelling by an artistic process, forming and transformative, which wants to become a caring community that will act beyond its own threshold.

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1. REPOSITORY: 49 METHODS AND ASSIGNMENTS FOR WRITING URBAN PLACES nai010 publishers, 2023 This Repository is the result of over three years of intense collaboration of Working Group 3 of COST Action Writing Urban Places. Digital edition: https://writingurbanplaces.eu/repository-49-methods-and.../

What Are the Values and Knowledge
That Inform Your Topics of Work?

I often create long-term socially-engaged artistic projects, which are based on re-search and collaboration with different communities, such as textile workers in Stip or residents in a Railway residential building in Skopje. For me it is important to create works of art that will create social relations, which will further on create an opportunity for (political) organization, an art that will encourage and empower the marginalized, the invisible. I am interested in producing artistic works that will create a "new" space (public) for action.

In that direction, the method translates theatre-making protocols into an ur-ban context. Despite the static posture of buildings, the method activates space through aesthetic and ethical processes of creating relations, whereby the main outcome is an event as experiential and emotional artistic endeavour. In general, it presents a cross-disciplinary approach that unites elements of architecture, visual and performing arts and film, extends their scope, and advocates meanings of the public and collective realm.

ОЈ ШТО НЕ УЧЕСТВУВА ВО НАСТАНИТЕ
СВОЈОТ ГРАД, НЕ Е МИРЕН, ТУКУ Е ЛОШ ГРАЃАНИН
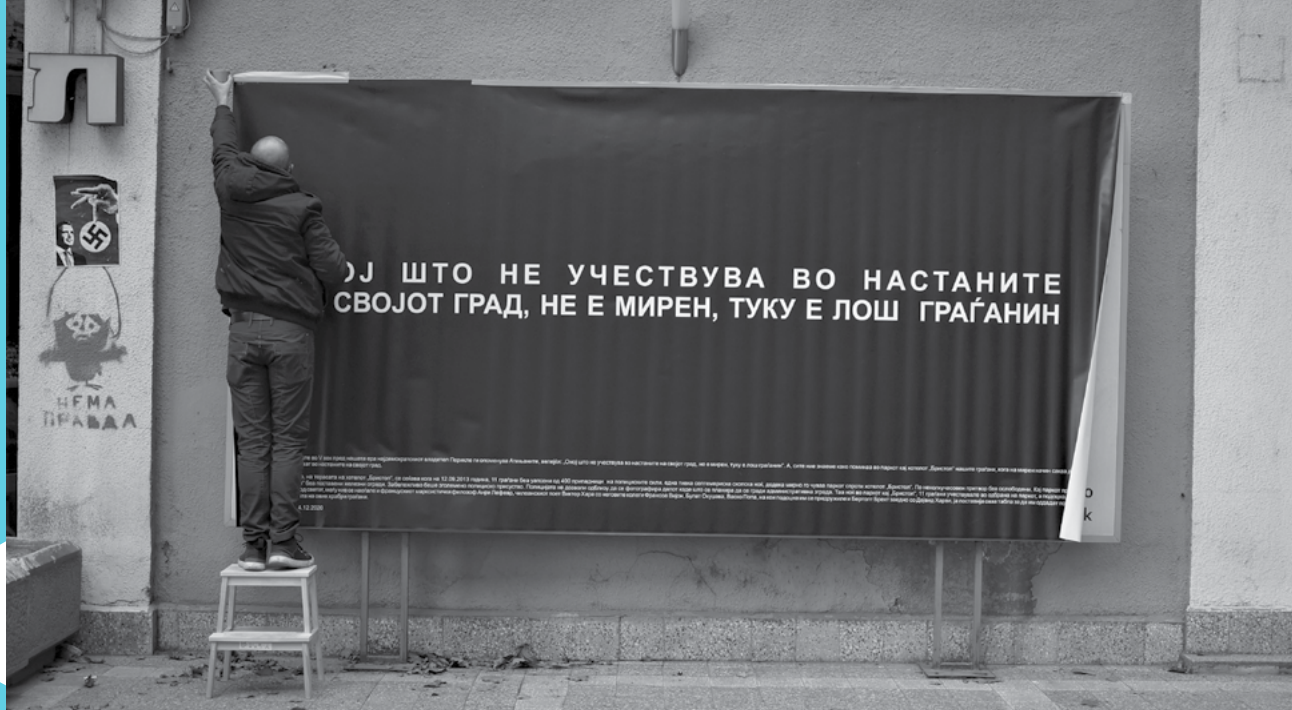
About
the Piece

I often organize my methodology of work around the following questions: What is it that makes a city? Its citizens? Its architecture? Its events? What is it that constitutes the cultural heritage of a city, apart from the visible buildings/facades/architecture? The trees and the way a city has been planned—particularly in the case of post-earthquake Skopje—is an exceptionally (politically) important aspect of both the urban planning and the life of the city. During the past few years of drastic, brutal destruction of the public spaces in the city of Skopje, the trees (in an almost equal measure to the citizens) turned out to be the most unprotected elements of the city.

The Trees Remember! is a research study in process, which starts with this action of "remembering" the history of the city (and the world) through the memory of the trees, building an archive of the violence and destruction of the public space in the city.
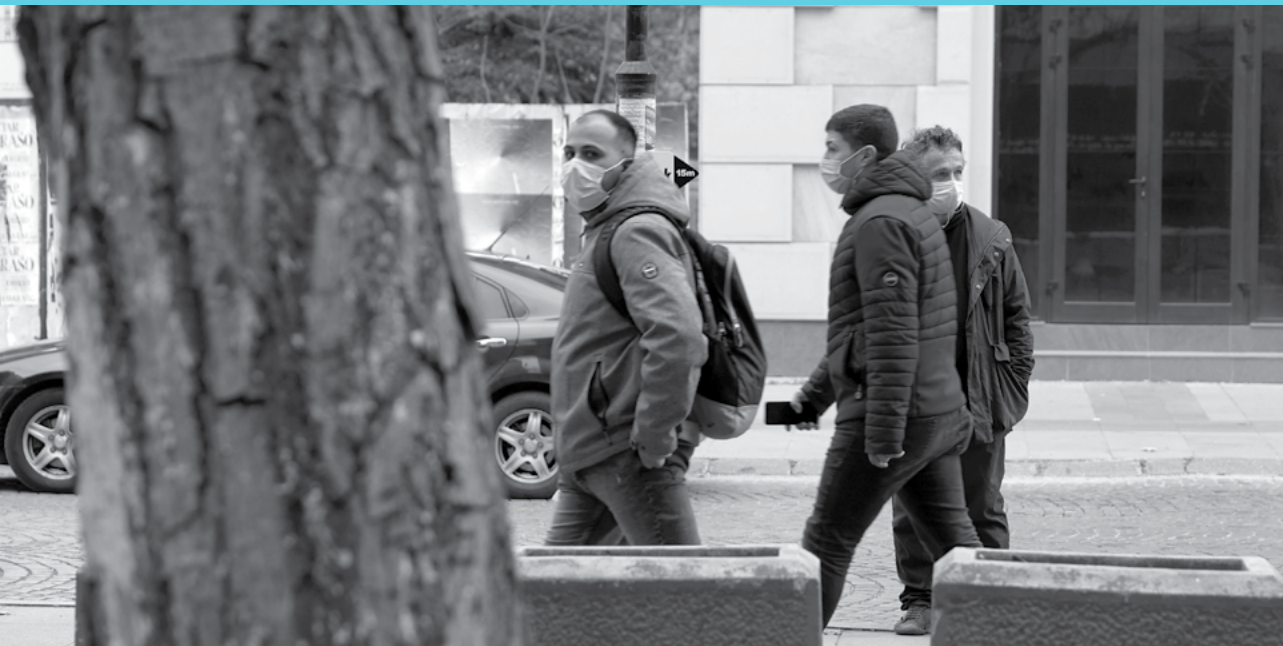
All photos by Kristijan Karadzovski

"grow me, water me, caress me!"[1]

Zorica Zafirovska

What Is Your Method/Practice?
(in the presented work, and in your work in general)

In the most recent period my practices include work and volunteering within different communities and vulnerable groups where we are trying to develop different activities together that are outside the neoliberal discourse where caring becomes a commodity exchange.

Parts of my practices consist of small actions or inactions, research concerning public and private space, urban gardens, environment, care, and exploring spatial neglect. I use dialogue, listening, research, and documenting of the ecological, social, and democratic processes of the urban, rural, and wild greenery, afforestation, devastation and so on, through conversational interviews with community members.

Others of my artistic practices include cultural work, programming, and co-organizing, with the aim of building an artistic practice of working together with other artists from different profiles, notably by supporting and promoting drag culture and the artists who practice it. An important segment of the practice is mediating and organizing drag events into institutional and academic contexts as an important performance art, to achieve curiosity, acceptance, and openness to drag culture.

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1. Video available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InOR1_6G7Eo

What Are the Values and Knowledge That Inform Your Topics of Work?

Referring to Robin Wall Kimmerer:"Western science is a powerful way of knowing, but it is not the only one." Through the creative processes, I try to learn about forgotten methods and knowledge through which we can truly understand and preserve the environment in which we live, particularly by trying to point out the existing ways that cannot be exploited by the accelerated way of living and the exploitation of capitalism.

As one of the members of "Bostanie" community garden, a project of "The Green Ark" organization—which practices a culture of togetherness, self-organization, shared responsibility, caring for others (not only people), and sharing of knowledge and resources—I try to develop artistic process in relation to (and in accordance with) other local gardeners, the present environment (i.e. the local landscapes, animals, and inhabitants) where I intervene of try not to leave traces, but to learn, observe, explore, exchange, share and document.

About the Piece

The video "Grow me, water me, caress me!" (created in the frame of Lokomotiva's Other spaces programme/ ACT Art, Climate, Transition project) is part of an ongoing project recording the rapid urbanization of the city and the growing need to go back to caring and preserving public green areas.

The video is a kind of distillation of long-term volunteering and sharing practices within different communities, guerilla gardening, performances and, through interviews, documents the "gardens of love, care and neglect" filmed at several locations around the city of Skopje, presented online and on social media during the pandemic in 2020.

As a continuation of the same project, within Lokomotiva's programmes, I developed the "Invisibility of presence"[2] project, presented in the Museum Gallery Kavadartsi. There, together with other artists, we have gathered experiences and shared opinions about the situation in the village of Vishni, the possibilities for its development and survival, the interaction of the village and the city and the integration, maintenance and participation of its citizens and the problems and challenges they face.

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2.   Video available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zh3oBjdTOoI

All photos by Zorica Zafirovska

biographies

Editors

Biljana Tanurovska – Kjulavkovski

is a curator, researcher and a cultural producer at the intersection of dance, theatre and visual arts performance. She is co-founder of Nomad Dance Academy (NDA), Kino Kultura (KK) - project space, and co-founder and program director of NGO Lokomotiva, Skopje. Currently she works on the Archive of dance and performance in North Macedonia as part of NDA project (Non)Aligned Movements; she was co-leader of the open course "Curatorial practices and context" at Stockholm University of Arts 2022 and co-mentor of the Critical Practice (made in Yu) program (ongoing). She co-curated several exhibitions, as latest "REALIZE! RESIST! REACT! Performance and Politics in the 1990s in the Post-Yugoslav Context'' in 2020 at the MOCAM Ljubljana and "Ecstatic Bodies: Archive of Performative Queer Bodies in Macedonia" at the Skopje Pride Weekend festival 2022. She teaches and is author and editor of texts, journals and book "Modeling art and cultural institutions". She is an art historian and holds a PhD from the Faculty of Drama Arts in Belgrade for which she won the ENCATC International Research Award. In 2021 she received AICA Macedonia "Ladislav Barishic" Award for the research "Political Performance as extended field in Macedonia in 90s".

Ivana Dragšić

is a sociologist and civil operator in the field of commons, culture and institutional innovation. Her research, production and publishing work recently focuses on new visions of policy-making at the edge of the climate catastrophe, interdisciplinarily referring to other fields such as: ecofeminism, commons, degrowth and arts. Dragšić is an amateur artist, performer and DJ on radios and in clubs.

Authors

Krista Burāne

is a theater and film director with master's degrees in philosophy and audiovisual arts. The center of her creative practice is a deep interest in life, creating trust, and the possibility of collaboration. Krista's works create a space and time for respectful dialogue between humans and other beings (non-humans). She is one of the few Latvian artists who purposefully works in the genre of documentary and participatory theater.

Krista's latest works, including "Nocturne"(2019), "...since then trees no longer speak" (2020), "The End of the World and Other Nonsense" (2021), and "All Birds Sing Beautifully" (2023), engage audiences in active thinking about the consequences of an anthropocentric lifestyle and encourage us to reconsider our relationship with nature.

Krista's works have been nominated and awarded multiple times with the Latvian National theatre award and have participated in numerous international festivals.

Giulia Casalini

´s practice spans across curating, performance, writing and research. Her (eco) transfeminist and queer activism has the scope of building and bridging communities across the globe through the arts and (nature)cultures. Giulia has been the co-founder of the non-profit arts organisation Arts Feminism Queer (aka CUNTemporary, 2012-2020), based in London. She now sits on the advisory board of Mimosa House gallery and she is a Technē-funded PhD candidate at the University of Roehampton, researching queer-feminist performance art from transnational and anti-colonial perspectives.

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Web: https://linktr.ee/queer_femme

Zoran Erić

is an art historian, curator, and lecturer. He holds a Ph.D. from the Faculty of Media, Bauhaus University in Weimar. His focus is on theoretical research, workshops, and international projects which deal with issues derived from the meeting points of human geography, spatial-cultural discourse, theory of radical democracy, and political ecology. From 2005 to 2008 he was a member of the IKT Board. From 2008 to 2010 he was the President of the Serbian Section of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA).

Filip Jovanovski

(1979) is a visual artist with a distinctive interdisciplinary approach. Jovanovski explores different media and their interdisciplinary connection - visual art, theater, video, film and spatial installation. He creates long-term social engaged artistic projects, which are based on research and often are in collaboration with different communities. In his projects, he tries to expose the hidden mechanism of dominant positions of power that leads to the destruction of public space and the public sphere in general, while deconstructing and encouraging different alternatives to the capitalist way of life.

His works are a transformation of political and social categories into spatial images. He often uses public spaces for his works or creates them, as well as unconventional and alternative exhibition spaces. He was one of the authors of the Macedonian pavilion titled "Freeing Space" which was presented at Venice biennale for architecture in 2018. He has made about 30 stage designs for theater plays, research and interdisciplinary artistic projects and won several international awards.

His project "This building talks truly", curated by Ivana Vaseva, which represented The Republic of North Macedonia at Prague Quadrennial for performance design and space in 2019, won the prestigious Golden Triga award for best exposition.

Miloš Kovačević

is philosopher, researcher at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, and member of the Platform for Theory and Practice of Commons – zajedničko. For five years, he has been hosting the radio show Commonification and interviewing over 70 left-wing scholars and activists. He developed a doughnut economic model for four cities in Serbia and annotated bibliography/library about commons. He is publishing on various topics, including non-standard employment, universal basic income/ services, and commoning. His most recent publication in the field of green politics is <u>What We Mean When We Say... The New Politics of Solidarity: Freedom From Work</u>.

Višnja Kisić and Goran Tomka

are a couple living by the forest of Fruska Gora, Serbia, and working in numerous other locations. In their research, teaching and practice they explore entanglements between culture, politics and ecology. They are both Professors at the Faculty of Sport and Tourism Novi Sad, lecturers at UNESCO Chair MA in Cultural Policy and Management in Belgrade and visiting professors at numerous universities like University Hassan II Casablanca, University Lyon II and International Relations University, Beijing. They are co-founders of educational environment Forest University, Fruška gora.

Dr. Suzana Milevska

is a curator and theorist of visual cultures. Her theoretical and curatorial interests include postcolonial and feminist critique of representational regimes and collaborative and participatory art practices in marginalized communities. From 2016-2019 she was Principal Investigator for the project Transmitting of Contentious Cultural Heritages with the Arts (TRACES – EU Programme Horizon 2020), Polytechnic University Milan. Milevska was appointed the first Endowed Professor of Central and South Eastern European Art Histories (2013-2015, Academy of Fine Art

Vienna). Milevska was a Fulbright Senior Research Scholar in Library of Congress and initiated the project Call the Witness - Roma Pavilion, Venice Biennale (2011). She holds a Ph.D. in Visual Cultures from Goldsmiths College London. She published the book Gender Difference in the Balkans (2010) and edited On Productive Shame, Reconciliation, and Agency (2016). In 2012 Milevska won the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory.

Nikolina Pristaš

is a dancer, a choreographer, co-founder of the performing arts collective BADco. (2000 -) a Professor at the Dance Department of the Academy of Dramatic Arts in Zagreb (2015 -). She graduated from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Zagreb (English Language and Literature and Comparative Literature), finished the eight-year program of the dance school Ane Maletić in Zagreb. Since 2000 she has been realizing her artistic interests through cooperation with members of the BADco. The specificity of artistic insights and knowledge produced in BADco, through a series of theater-dance performances, video installations, thematic symposia, art workshops and a few printed publications, resulted in her being invited to some of the prestigious art academies in Europe to attend as a lecturer and realize art projects in teaching practice. (Justus Liebig University – Giessen, P.A.R.T.S. – Brussel, The Danish National School for Performing Arts – Kopenhagen...). At the Dance Department of the Academy of Dramatic Art Zagreb she teaches courses of improvisational dance performance and contemporary choreography.

Slobodanka Stevceska

is a visual artist. Her work is context based, non-collectible and either ephemeral or distributed in multiple copies. Since 2001, she has been a member of the art duo OPA (Obsessive Possessive Aggression). The OPA's practices employ parody, created

or twisted reality, mockumentaries, subversive affirmation and over-identification strategies, moving towards practical utilitarian solutions and constructive art strategies in the later years. Since 2012 Slobodanka Stevceska has been teaching at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Skopje. She has been involved in art education and has been working with vulnerable young people and young people at risk since 1996.

Zorica Zafirovska

is an artist and cultural worker, working on socio-political topics, such as human trafficking, homelessness, consumerism, and ecology, by creating specific, time-space installations, small actions etc... Through collaborations and volunteering practices her multidisciplinary projects are presented and exhibited in public and noninstitutional spaces in North Macedonia, New York, Greece, and Germany. She is a co-founder and member of various collectives: F.R.I.K. - Cultural Development Association Formation, Art I.N.S.T.I.T.U.T., initiative "MOMI" and Jadro - Association of the independent culture scene. Since 2019, she has worked for Lokomotiva, Skopje. In 2016, she received the YAAward "DENES" from the Center for Contemporary Arts – Skopje and FRU.

From Praxis to Policy: Environmental Shift through Art and Culture

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