Radical Sympathy

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Introduction:
Radical Sympathy

I've been led to the topic of radical sympathy by following the initiatives and activities of friends, peers and cultural workers, as well as institutions, who, over the recent years, have progressively focused on issues of care and commoning, articulating forms of empathic pedagogies and decolonization across a range of contexts and environments. In light of ongoing challenges and struggles shaped by climate catastrophe, systemic racism, heteronormative discriminations, and extractivist sensibilities and actions, demanding and nurturing greater orientation toward more egalitarian, pluriversal and destituent methods and modes of existence continues to inform and mobilize a great deal of creative and critical efforts. Radical sympathy is posed here as a contribution to such efforts, one that may speak toward a more general understanding and research into planetary connectedness, as well as lend a vocabulary for situated, historically embedded and embodied experiences and engagements. While notions of sympathy demand critical questioning, it is posed here as a generative capacity and embodied intelligence, echoing with what Francisco Varela terms "ethical know-how". As Varela argues, ethical know-how is grounded less in forms of "deliberation" and "moral reasoning", and more in embodied action; such actions draw upon a situated, historical self, where know-how is figured through a wisdom of the heart. For Varela, ethical expertise grounds ethical deliberation (Varela 1999).

Radical sympathy is underscored along the lines of ethical know-how as conceived by Varela, one that moves from personal compassion, and the sharing of immediate relations, to more pronounced enactments of care and justice. As a proposal, radical sympathy may be said to work at nurturing a type of general activism and sensitivity aimed at fostering cultures of solidarity.

On sympathy

What is sympathy and how does it impact onto particular situations? How does sympathy relate to care and the capacity to extend oneself toward others? In what ways is sympathy learned or mobilized, and in what ways can it participate within current

discourses as well as critical and creative initiatives? In his work on philosophical ethics, Stephen Darwall makes a useful distinction between empathy and sympathy. Empathy is understood as an experience of feeling what others feel, as a "sharing of another's mental states". Darwall further underscores empathy as an "emotional contagion" that passes between people as well as a form of "emotional projection" (Darwall 2002:54). An empathetic response takes the form of: *I show you how you feel.* There is a sense of emotional and physical charge at play, which may manifest as a gesture of mimicry – a mirroring by which one participates in the feelings of another and which supports greater sensitivity for the experience of others.

In contrast to empathy, sympathy is underscored as a concern for others that does not stay within the confines of shared emotion or a movement of interpersonal reflection. Rather, sympathy is a feeling or emotion that responds to an apparent threat or obstacle to another's well-being. To be sympathetic is to feel compassion for someone else's challenges. While everyday understandings of both empathy and sympathy often overlap – as what nurtures fellow feeling and helps produce a sense of commonality as well as compassionate action – Darwall's distinction is embraced here as a useful base. In contrast to empathy, as feeling what others feel, sympathy is responsive and the basis for action, where sympathy leads to a position of "caring-for" – or, *the one who cares* – and therefore, works on behalf of another's well-being. Sympathy is therefore motivated or prompted by an understanding for the vulnerabilities and challenges people share, and yet which some experience more than others; as a form of embodied intelligence, it underpins moral obligation and informs ethical responsiveness, lending to the capacity to sense beyond one's immediate circles and to bring care to others.

Extending from Darwall's work on sympathy, the author Jane Bennett equally addresses the topic, opening up a more materialist, environmental perspective. In her book *Influx and Efflux*, Bennett highlights the porosity and interdependency of persons, how one is susceptible to the influx of worldly experience and how expressions of agency are bound to complex webs

of relation. She elaborates this understanding by focusing on sympathy. In particular, she poses sympathy, or what she terms "currents of sympathy", as a helpful guide in capturing the complexity of bodily connectedness. Currents of sympathy are not only about the individual capacity to sympathize with others and the expression of care and compassion; rather, Bennett emphasizes a materialist, somewhat "impersonal" perspective, shifting from emotion toward "currents of affection" which circulate "in the atmosphere to connect different types of beings and things" (Bennett 2021:29). Currents of sympathy and affection thus wield a force that sensitizes as to the interconnectedness of things.[1]

Currents of sympathy, for Bennett, speak to the affective tonalities that pass across and through bodies and environments, subjects and objects, humans and more-than-human others. Such currents are material ambiences and resonant flows – the influx and efflux of influence and attraction. They are, rather, nonconscious, vibrant, embodied and impersonal, and yet they do come to inform personal decision-making and ethical know-how, figuring itself in "gravitational leanings" and the articulations of sensibility (Bennett 2021:23).

Bennett's concern for the influx and efflux of worldly contact helps accent sympathy as what gives gravity to things and relationships – what pulls at us, or what pushes things in and out of place, and which influences a general disposition of consideration and concern. Stephen Darwall argues along similar lines, suggesting that sympathy performs on the level of personal compassion – to feel for the plight of others – in such a way that emphasizes well-being "categorically" (Darwall 71). From a direct relation – *I sympathize with what you struggle with* – to more indirect concern – *it is necessary to address the difficulties marginalized communities face* – sympathy extends beyond first-person narratives. Rather, third-person narratives emerge by way of sympathy, where I as an author or agent take on the role of telling

1   Such views draw forward a greater history of sympathetic thought, from Greek Antiquity and Stoicism, which conceptualized "cosmic sympathy" in order to explain forms of universal causality. See Eric Schliesser (ed.), *Sympathy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

a different human story; I give my voice to the stories of others, or so as to enable the voice of others to speak through me. And I act in such a way as to benefit others, for *their* sake. As such, sympathy moves across different registers and modes, from direct to indirect action, from personal to impersonal care and concern, from sense to sensibility. It captures a dynamics of interconnectivity, figuring affective, sensual experiences that extend beyond empathetic feeling toward ethical responsiveness and reason.

Toward justice

Engaging with questions of sympathy allows for a greater reflection on the ways in which caring-for manifests as a general, ethical position or disposition, extending beyond personal well-being and toward the work of justice. In what sense is sympathy connected to justice? If sympathy contributes to ethical know-how, and an embodied intelligence of caring-for, how might it lend to fostering the building of what the Care Collective calls "caring societies"? (The Care Collective 2020).

There is ongoing debate regarding sympathy's place in legal decision-making, for instance in the act of judgment. Within the courtroom should a judge decide by way of the heart or the head? How does sympathy impact on a jury's ability to be impartial? We can appreciate how movements of social justice, for example, are driven by attracting the sympathy of others, especially those outside a given struggle; to adopt another's struggle as one's own is often to sympathize with the cause.

Sympathy, in this sense, is passionate, in terms of arousing feelings for the struggles of others, and therefore can be argued to cloud one's judgment. Law, as such, is understood as an institutional or moral pillar based fundamentally on reason – law as what should not be tainted by emotion. Yet, sympathy is also called upon within certain situations, as it can help in recognizing the extent of another's suffering, and thereby assist in the passing of fair judgment. On one hand justice is pursued passionately within our democratic, legal systems, while at the same time it must be seen to proceed dispassionately – justice

expresses sympathy for the suffering of others while upholding itself as rational and without emotional bias. If sympathy is what moves one to come to the aid of others, such movements are often required to take a more objective or impartial tone when entering the courts or other scenes of deliberation. How one approaches law and legal rights therefore is fraught with sympathy's complex influence.

In contrast to such views, there is a counter-argument within legal scholarship, which highlights sympathy not only as an emotional response, but one that is equally cognitive. Sympathy can enable a better understanding of complex situations by allowing one to appreciate a range of perspectives, for instance between a defendant and a plaintiff. In this way, sympathy is deemed helpful in leading one to more effectively understand opposing arguments or views. Sympathy allows for understanding the perspective of others, even those we may disagree with; it can move from personal to impersonal identification, from aiding a friend to supporting social movements of justice which require the heart as well as the head.

Although moral obligation often carries a connotation of duty, even discipline – that it is my duty to be responsible for others – I might equally approach obligation from a position of enchantment, wonder and joy, to suggest that what obliges one to others is rather a sense of fascination or amazement when facing each other – *to marvel at the face of the other*. The defenselessness which Emmanuel Levinas sees in the face, and which acts as a defining pivot in shaping one's responsibility for the other, is equally its enchantment. The face shines, it suffers, it is gravitational, marked by so much; the face of the other is equally attractive as it is repulsive, beautiful as well as disgusting – the face is the beginning of love as well as conflict and anguish. The ways in which the face participates in Levinas' ethical schema extends beyond the actual character or moral disposition of the other; rather, the face, even in its most striking or horrific, invites or compels consideration. What I'm keen to suggest is that ethical responsiveness and moral obligation are also affectionate, shaped by fascination, attraction as well as fear, even bewilderment.

In her writings Jane Bennett also focuses on the question of ethics by way of enchantment, leading to what she calls "energetic ethics" (Bennett 2001:155). This is based on the argument that moral codes require embodied enactment. While one may grasp an obligation of responsibility when facing the other, the movement toward being responsive is a question of affect, sensibility, know-how. "Enchantment is not a moral code, but it might spark a bodily will to enact such a code and foster the presumption of generosity toward those who transgress or question it" (Bennett 2001:32). The energetics of ethics is positioned as key to moving from facing the other, on a theoretical and abstract level, toward becoming answerable, concerned, sympathetic – to working at a generosity of understanding. Enchantment, for Bennett, is precisely what underpins the energetics of ethics, and lends to the cultivation of a disposition of caring-for. To move from code and duty to a sensibility predisposed to caring-for is to affirm a general wonder and amazement for life itself.

Energetics, and the enchanted materialism Bennett maps, gestures toward the ways in which sympathy may figure within the work of justice. Here, sympathy appeals to a generosity of understanding when facing others, contributing to greater sensitivity for the intricacy of arguments and the suffering of others; it may also keep one attuned to the complexity of real-world situations, balancing moral duty and responsibility with an embodied intelligence and knowledge.

Critical perspectives

There are a range of critical views onto sympathy which are important to consider, and which can help in capturing sympathy in its complexity. In the publication, *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, Lauren Berlant challenges the ways in which compassion wields an "ethics of privilege", whereby the sufferer is always "over there". As she queries: "In a given scene of suffering, how do we know what does and what should constitute sympathetic agency?" (Berlant 2004:4) Berlant rightly seeks to enact a critique of how compassion and sympathetic agency

get articulated and positioned within Western liberal democracy (particularly in the United States, which is her focus), demanding greater tussle with assumptions as to what moral obligation for the suffering of others requires. What comes forward is an attack on the ways in which compassion formulates and concretizes a social relation between "spectator and sufferer", often relegating others to a position of *needing help*. For Berlant, it becomes imperative to debunk how compassion and sympathetic agency are shamelessly held up as always already a sign of the good, and that often do little to intervene or challenge on a political level the ongoingness of systems of abuse. "The modern social logic of compassion can as easily provide an alibi for an ethical or political betrayal as it can initiate a circuit of practical relief" (Berlant 2004:11).

Berlant's arguments open onto an important reminder of the complexity of sympathy and compassion: that in the work of compassionate action, or sympathetic agency, there needs to be room for questioning and also reorienting what it means to be moved by the pain of others. This critical questioning appears additionally in Carolyn Pedwell's work on "decolonizing empathy". Pedwell aims to challenge the ways in which the rhetoric of the "empathy economy" pervades much of neoliberalism and contemporary business practices, where empathy, and an affective politics, is instrumentalized in supporting development and growth: becoming better "attuned" to customers, and the global partnerships defining transnational corporate prosperity, becomes a means for businesses to mobilize opportunities for growth. She seeks to bring attention then to the "transnational politics of empathy", and how empathy flows through the global circuits of power. By doing so, Pedwell ultimately argues for "alternative empathy", founded on "'provincializing' emotional discourses and practices that have presented themselves as universal as a means to open up other ways of thinking and feeling affective politics" (Pedwell 2016). Alternative empathy finds traction through a more pronounced engagement with postcolonial and feminist discourses, which can enable greater attention and critical work onto the particular positionalities within affective relations.

Berlant's critique of compassion as an indicator of the good, and Pedwell's work on decolonizing empathy, both supply us with critical tools for approaching sympathy and the notion of radical sympathy being offered here. As Stephen Darwall poses, sympathy names an ethical and moral ground by which care and caring-for are mobilized. Whether this is always already housed within a moral or social construct of what constitutes the good is also to be questioned. Without a doubt, sympathy can perpetuate ongoing uneven relations across spectator and sufferer, the privileged and the underprivileged. At the same time, as Bennett and Darwall both suggest, sympathy is never only about suffering, or aiding those in struggle; rather, sympathy names an affective, emotional and material sensing of greater webs of interconnectedness, from direct to indirect, personal to impersonal relatedness. As such, sympathy requires critical practices so as to better interrogate the terms by which it is articulated and set in motion. Radical sympathy as a project aims to contribute to such practices; it recognizes a dynamic range of cultural, political, scientific and social activities taking place today which aim at addressing and ameliorating the suffering of others, while also bringing forward extremely dynamic vocabularies, positions and articulations of collaborative, planetary engagement that do much to warrant deeper attention to what sympathy is. While sympathy, empathy and compassion may continue to be instrumentalized for any number of financial and political gains, they may be equally conceived as forces that make challenging such instrumentalization possible.

Overview of contributions

In pursuing questions of radical sympathy, contributions have been sought across artistic and academic contexts. This includes forms of critical and creative research methods, and which integrate forms of reflection as well as activistic and sited fieldwork. The essay by Anastasia A Khodyreva, Milla Tiainen, Taru Leppänen & Katve-Kaisa Kontturi opens key perspectives onto the question of attunement, and how attunement contributes to

forming and fostering collaborative research activities. Through an examination of the affective, embodied qualities of research, and stemming from new materialist and feminist theories that prompt greater recognition of interconnectedness across bodies and environments, people and things, attunement is posited as a generative lens by which to foster research processes aimed at posthuman inquiry and knowledge making. Following their essay, and related practice-oriented methods, attunement's significance and power are brought forward.

Questions of attunement and sympathy find a point of reference in the practice-based research of Margarida Mendes, a scholar and curator based in Lisbon. Her essay talks through fieldwork undertaken along the Mississippi river in Louisiana, which probes the ongoing environmental contamination perpetrated by a range of industries and corporations. Concerns for the toxicity of the site, and its impact onto local communities, both human and more-than-human, Mendes draws out important questions as to the links between colonialism, and histories of slavery, and contemporary industrial infrastructures and business practices. Throughout her fieldwork, a focus on sound, listening and the vibrational and resonant materialities found on site are emphasized, figuring an embodied, sensory and affective approach toward social and more-than-social engagement practices.

Attunement and resonance, listening and situatedness, are positioned as creative and critical means for research, and gesture towards radical sympathy as an ethically responsive, socially engaged framework. By way of research practices that seek to step beyond strictly discursive methodologies, radical sympathy can be captured as a *sensing-knowing along the way*, and that supports response-ability, not only to identifiable others, but equally to what may emerge within any critical and creative process, especially for those concerned with the urgencies of our times.

Extending from new materialist and environmental work, an interview with Achille Mbembe expands the discussion by addressing questions of coloniality on a broader scale. Mbembe articulates a range of key insights into the ongoingness of colonialism, and its relation to planetary crises, underscoring what's

at stake in acts and initiatives of decolonization. The concept of a "planetary curriculum" is proposed in order to intensify planetary thinking, and to bring greater engagement with the intersectional realities defining contemporary struggles, where environmental catastrophe, systemic racism, and gender inequality are intertwined with transnational financial instruments. Planetary curriculum becomes a ground by which to build up and support transversal knowledge – and the imperative of diversity mobilized by planetary thinking (Yui 2020).

Scholar, curator and creative practitioner Cecilie Sachs Olsen contributes to such a planetary curriculum through her research into urban planning and degrowth. Her essay, "Towards an Urban Attention Ecology", poses degrowth as an important concept and practice, one that can interrupt the rhetoric of development and expansion defining capitalism and its extractive practices. This is given greater attention by way of documentation of the Oslo Architecture Triennial, which Olsen co-curated in 2019. Organized under the theme of degrowth, the Triennial sought to articulate a model of curating that would invite more speculative, propositional and discussion-based examination of contemporary architectural practice, especially with the aim of challenging the more "spectacular" visions of future architecture. Underpinning her arguments is a focus on attentional ecologies which, following Yves Citton, foster our capacity for engaged reflection, for attending to others, and that supports learning, listening and relational sensitivity.

The crafting of ecologies of attention as a relational method finds echo in the work of Michelle-Marie Letelier. Her research-based practice often works at extending relationality to the more-than-human, tracking geopolitical infrastructures and their impact on animal and human life. Documenting an artist residency she undertook in southern Chile in 2021, Letelier considers the salmon farming industries in the country, and how the introduction of salmon to the southern hemisphere has upset the natural ecology of the region. Through a role-play workshop with participating students, the artist worked at bringing such issues to the fore, in which the personification of a range of relevant actors,

from natural entities to corporate agencies, assists in drawing attention to the importance of formulating a planetary ethics.

The project and platform Pirate Care, initiated by Valeria Graziano, Tomislav Medak and Marcell Mars, has emerged in recent years as an important network of discussion and information related to the care crisis. Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the intensification of an ongoing crisis in care infrastructures across Europe and elsewhere, Pirate Care provides a critical view onto the politics of care. Through a pirate approach, in terms of articulating a form of disobedience onto existing regimes of care, they capture a range of deeply committed and activistic initiatives that work at bringing care to those in need as well as arguing for greater caring imaginaries across society. Through their online platform, Pirate Care shows how care takes many forms.

Through the contributions gathered in *Radical Sympathy*, critical and creative practices articulate sympathetic agency in ways that extend from personal relationships across families and friends to that of institutional settings, self-organized scenes and professional environments; from curatorial, scholarly, artistic and activistic modalities, sympathetic agency is expressed through the material arrangement of things and the crafting of scenes of public gathering; through critical reflection and the sharing of knowledge and information; through paying attention to the world of others and bringing an imagination to such observations and what they may reveal about the infrastructures and systems that surround. Or, through the act of writing a letter. Concluding the publication, Lilia Mestre, a choreographer and researcher based in Brussels, addresses an imaginary You through a letter of sympathy written in the midst of lockdown. For Mestre, it becomes crucial to reorient understandings of friendship toward a more general perspective, where You are always already closer than imagined.

Sympathetic agency: conduits of cooperation

Sympathy, and a radical sympathy model, becomes a way of fostering modes of solidarity informed by interdependency, affection,

an ethics of hospitality and care, and by recognizing that the problems of the fallen are the world's problems. Such a view raises a question of proximity as well as scale, which are fundamentally shaping current global challenges. For instance, how might one come to respond to climate crisis, or the Covid-19 pandemic, both of which vastly exceed one's individual or local view, requiring evermore imagination. Radical sympathy may act as a framework for helping to approach such challenges, reminding how questions of causality are always embedded within a density of relations, systems and histories that are equally emotional, personal, *thick*. In this regard, I follow sympathy as a way of being-attentive that is adept at moving across scales, and that works at figuring affinity and concern. Such attentiveness, as I'm imagining, finds echo in the forms of attention theorized by the composer Pauline Oliveros (Oliveros 2005). Extending from her philosophy and practice of deep listening, Oliveros emphasizes the importance of cultivating one's capacity for focusing on an immediate field of details while, at the same time, attuning to a greater context. From the particular and the proximate to the diffuse and the global, Oliveros' deep listening mobilizes a form of being-attentive that is not solely about the reception of information; rather, such attentiveness comes to open onto recognition of the interconnectedness of things, where what is in front is always informed and influenced by a range of extended relations and forces, histories and ecologies.

In my own experience as an educator, I also understand sympathy as what draws me into an engagement with others in such a way as to cast the pedagogical scene as deeply transformative. The construct of the workshop or the seminar becomes an aesthetic, ethical and explorative form, a kind of dramaturgical work through which narratives emerge along the way, co-created by the gathering of participants. Facilitating such enactments requires that one hosts the emergence of what may come: to nurture and welcome debate and discussion, while bringing forward one's energies to challenging and guiding the narrative, supporting a plurality of voices and views (what Richard Kearney emphasizes as "narrative empathy" (Kearney & Fitzpatrick 2021)).

This I understand as a form of radical sympathy, manifesting as a conscientious, energetic figuring of attention and concern for the benefit of all. This requires fostering trust and to figuring an inspirational tone, where criticality is equally poetic, and knowledge is in touch with personal lives. As Paolo Freire has commented, "teaching is an act of love". I follow this in that I work at being generous and nurturing, understanding that pedagogy always requires *something more*.

Sympathy here is not so much aimed at the suffering of others, but rather, affords a sense of deep responsibility and responsiveness, and a disposition of consideration and concern, that exceeds the task of teaching. Following such perspectives and understandings, I've been moved to approach the pedagogical scene as an opportunity for cultivating sympathy, as well as empathy – in short, to construct such a scene as one of radical hospitality. Hospitality is cast here as the welcoming of the strange: strange and unexpected ideas, new and emergent doings, deep and critical discussions, as well as the sharing of passion, all of which push at the limits of what we know and imagine (Kearney and Fitzpatrick 2021). Hospitality is not without its challenges, for the strange certainly intrudes and interrupts – it may overstep and over-reach. Such moments though become opportunities for deepening one's capacity for sympathy, for learning of other views and perspectives, following the voices of others, and bringing forward a sensibility of care and adventure for what we may do together.

Returning to Bennett's energetic ethics, sympathy can be captured as a deeply creative force – from personal compassion, and caring-for others, to the sensitive crafting of things and the tending of material worlds, sympathy as what often prompts *doing something more*. Such a view resonates with Donna Haraway's understanding of "sympoiesis", as that sense of co-creation that passes across bodies and things, subjects and objects (Haraway 2016). In contrast to "auto-poiesis", as the automatic making of oneself, sympoiesis is a "making-with", a making bound to being in company with others – sympoiesis, I might say, as a gravitational current of co-making. In this sense,

sympathy is fundamentally explorative, inciting responsiveness, improvisation, ethical sensitivity and that positively extends the limits of what counts as one's own. Radical sympathy is posed then as a model of sympathy that passes across the consonant and the dissonant, the near and the far, a pushing and pulling that is foundational to being a subject in the world with others – and that figures community less as an enclave of identity and more as a conduit of cooperation.

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Attuning to attunements: towards new materialist politics of attunement?

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The starting premise of our contribution to *Radical Sympathy* is our shared understanding of sympathy not as "a sentiment formed by a self-referential mind imaginatively re-creating the suffering from which it stands at a distance" (Bennett 2020:20, 33), or as a feeling enacted from a position of moral superiority, but as an embodied ethico-political practice developed *in attunement* to unjust social atmospheres one strives to query. That is, throughout our account which takes the form of interlinked notes, we propose to imagine attunement as a materially moving and embodied companion (if not a situated synonym) of sympathy. As a critical practice, attunement enfleshes or materializes in a multiplicity of forms, of which research that's committed to crafting nuanced and politically better[1] forms of knowledge is one. In our take, attunement emerges in-between each of us as thinking-feeling and writing bodies invested in feminist politics and research, and the complexity of intra-acting agentialities that take shape, dance or *immediate* (e.g. Manning 2019; Tiainen, Kontturi, Leppänen & Mehrabi 2020) together in our respective research projects. In this regard, we draw attention to specific materialities of which attunements are composed within the phenomena our research engages, or through the intra-action of which they emerge. Recalling the idea that no being or phenomenon pre-exists its localized relatings (Haraway 2003:6; Haraway 1988), it is through materialities and their situated relatings that the phenomenon in question – attunement – "shares" its political propositions. Our notes that follow make propositions about attunement in ways learned-with a feminist new materialist care for (or a striving to care for) agential matter and co-constitutive relations that blur the colonialist binaries of subject/object and human/nonhuman. We seek to come together with each other and with the processes, mutually affective materialities and bodies characteristic of our research endeavors to attend to the political adjustments that attunements might

1   Here, better (and, further, betterment) is not imagined in capitalist/neoliberal terms associated with progressivist linear development. Rather, betterment stands for the increased liveability of various positively different and situatedly marginalised – human and nonhuman – bodies.

suggest; nuances that might otherwise remain unacknowledged, especially when we find ourselves in need of complying with the formats of conventional academic writing.

The individual scrutinies we weave together in this critical reflection comprise a heterogeneity of matters. These relate to the political potential of sympathetic attunement in different sonic practices, from sound art to shared moments of music-making; and practices of *Feminist Colour-IN,* a form of craftivism (crafting as political activism), as minor, touchy, political gestures. All of our research acitivities related to these topics, which are formally united within the project *Localizing Feminist New Materialisms* (Academy of Finland, 2017–2021), have come to feature (various workings of) the notion of attunement without it being a predesigned conceptual or methodological component of the project. As such, this seemingly accidental "seeping" of attunement into our research may offer an example of how attunement accompanies critically thinking-feeling bodies in their knowledge-seeking ventures, but often goes unnoticed as an expressly engaged topic, or is rarely taken up in its full potential. We do not claim to reach this kind of full potential in these notes, or to offer an in-depth exploration of attunement. Yet we hope to make some initiatives toward better acknowledging attunement's significance and power.

Our respective and collaborative new materialist investments in considering the agentiality of different kinds of matter in their worldly becomings have made us wonder if a strategic slowing-down – of thinking, relating and research – might enable attunement to flourish in terms of its political and theoretical potential. If so, to slow down means something decidedly different from productivity-associated and capitalism-driven regulations of speed (familiar also in academic milieus) and related imaginaries of accumulating linear progress. In contemporary academe, these notions are often associated with demands for improvement in the assessment of someone's (professional) performance – how much they, or we, study, publish, receive funding – and with attendant negative feelings of not being fast enough.

In our notes, we propose *attuning to attunements* as one way of leaping away from the above understandings of temporality and productivity that also inform academic research. Joining Isabelle Stengers, we propose that to slow down, through attuning to attunements, is a project of "a passionate, bodily with-ness" (Neumark 2017:39). It is a project of with-ness of humans and non-humans that is impossible without leaving aside the certainty of possessing truths, however situation-specific they might be regarded as (Stengers 2004:2; see also Springgay and Truman 2019:1; Neumark 2017:36–40). To slow down is a motion towards a "space of hesitation" with its peculiar ecology of attention invested in cracks and fault lines in one's previously learned theoretical and conceptual imaginaries. Cracks and fault lines are ardently welcome and cherished in spaces of hesitation – such as our notes (Stengers 2004:2). Furthermore, "to slow down" entails devotion to imagining the emergence of phenomena through relatings, which are essentially intra-active dances of diverse bodies; dances transformative for each partner that make the involved bodies and minds other, whether subtly or more radically, and which make it possible to cultivate attentiveness to such transformations. Within the space of *Radical Sympathy*, we seek to slowly dance together and learn-with the matters and attunements endemic to our respective projects about the political capacities that attunement may involve and foster. How might it advance our alertness to or sensitivity for an emergent world? We slow down: zoom in, listen for, color in/to, feel and notice within and across our research endeavors, mapping the ethico-political affordances of attunement as embodied processes in which we as knowledge-seeking subjectivities seem to be always-already involved.

From where do we articulate the open-ended collective (Manning, Massumi and Stengers 2008) "we" of this text? First, this "we" crystallizes in-between our commitments to acknowledge other-than-linguistic, that is, material forces which intensively contribute to the formation of diverse socio-political phenomena. Second, we aim to unsettle habits which exclude the multiplicity of agentialities present in any knowledge production practice (of which research is only one). Being aware that new

materialisms have, to an extent, become an academic buzzword (this is perhaps the destiny of all newly appearing tendencies in fields of research, especially those labeled as "new" from the outset?), we would like to pause here to briefly introduce our new materialist investments through a set of questions which characterize our previous theoretical work as well as ongoing writing, educational and artistic projects:

> How to appreciate anew our involvements in and with matter? How to account for the distinctive forms that the material world and "us humans" in it are taking in current times, while these forms interlink scales from socioeconomic and artefactual production to altering ecosystems and the molecular compositions of life? How to consider aesthetics beyond the assessment of cultural expressive patterns as the initial impingement of the world's materialities upon us, ranging from physical locales to mediatized textures? How does this impingement incite our bodies–minds into feeling and thinking? How can we acknowledge, then, the teeming interfaces of "us" and "the world"? At those interfaces, categories such as these are not yet neatly separable. They re-arise from their mutual relation: a body modulating with its environments, environments experienced and signified afresh. How, overall, to engage both seriously and creatively with the site-specific co-occurrence of reality's terms – social meanings with biophysical processes, political economies with natural forces, artistic practices with technological and cosmic speeds beyond the human grasp? (Tiainen, Kontturi and Hongisto 2015:14–15; slightly modified from the original.)

In order to attune to attunements, we zoom in below on our own and each other's work. Parts of this work have been recently published, while other elements are in diverse stages of taking form, from work prepared for publication to tentative note-taking. Further, staying alert to the inter- or intra-mingling materialities which co-compose our respective research assemblages we

attend – sensorially, affectively, conceptually and structurally – to how attunements actualize both as sociolinguistic fixations and more-than-linguistic phenomena. That is, we seek to attend to how their processuality "takes shape in a bundle of relations with elements both conceptual and non-conceptual" (Tiainen, Kontturi and Hongisto 2015:16; see also Manning and Massumi 2014:VII–IX, 88–9). Through these notes, we hope to compose a fragmented, asynchronously (Cielemęcka, Rogowska-Stangret, Bhambra, Pető, Loyer, Ivancheva, Halldórsdóttir 2020) and multimodally emerging documentation of embodied and more-than-human processes of attunement while engaging with the matters of each other's research and writing, imbued with individual experiences and previous histories of attunement. Our eventual aim is to map what could be called political propositions[2] for the significance of attunement, or propositions for *a* new materialist, embodied politics of attunement.

Attuning to the attuning capacities of sound …

Sounds – vocal and instrumental, human and more-than-human – present an intriguing register for inquiries interested in the emergence of phenomena, human subjectivities and socio-political activity from within the mutual, intra-active, affectivity of heterogeneous agential terms. This is because at a basic existential level, sounds do not discriminate. The vibrations of which they are composed spread out and travel through all kinds of bodies and matters nearby, human and non-human alike, intra-acting with them but also encouraging their mutual intra-action within the shared sonic situation. Musical and other sounds, human and non-human materialities, and the instruments from which vibrations-sounds emanate are engaged in co-unfolding and -affective processes of becoming. These heterogeneous components

2   Here, in alliance with Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman (2019:14; see also Truman and Springay 2016), we imagine propositions to carry speculative event-specific methodological capacities if understood "not … as a set of directions or rules that contain and control movement, but as prompts for further experimentation and thought."

re-emerge and are, however minutely, transformed within each process of sounding or *musicking*: instances of making, being in contact with, and experiencing sound (Small 1998; Moisala, Leppänen, Tiainen & Väätäinen 2014).

Insofar as attunement concerns the modulation of the state and capacities of human and other agencies through their contact with sensorial matter – a quality, a signal, an event – the non-discriminatory travels of sound make them efficacious initiators and agents of attunement (cf. Massumi & McKim 2009:6). As Aden Evens summarizes in his book *Sound Ideas* (Evens 2005:6), which examines how music becomes sensible through its entanglement with different technologies, "[a]n open E string bowed on a violin excites at once the string, the body of the violin, the other strings, the body of the violinist, the air around the violin, the material of the room, and the bodies of the listeners". The air pressure waves constituting sounds thus move, affect and excite – are capable of attuning – diverse modes of being at once. They involve these modes in a shared, distributed sonic-sensorial event. Both the entities that emit sound and any bodies dwelling within its reach are somehow affected by the sound. They are *attuned by, to and through it*. At the same time, sound qualities are inflected by the bodies and actions of the sound producers and by the other materialities and spaces the sound traverses. Together, these attunements comprise sonically-induced modulations of response and action, existence and capacity. They range from physical vibrations and resonances in human bodily tissue and myriad other matters to complex experiential resonances – feelings, impressions, meanings, memories – which emerge on a continuum with material contact to sound. Hence, affective attunement "need not be solely located on a human scale. If conceived beyond human interaction, affective attunement might well describe the relational environment co-created by movements and sound" (Manning 2013:11). Sounds attune transversally across categorical distinctions and hierarchies that European-originated Western thought has held dear for a long time.

Of course, sounds' transversal capacity for attunement does not mean we should advocate a notion of sound as an inherently

equalizing process. The permeating capabilities of sound can be, and have been, harnessed toward divisive ends: to sonically claim social territory at the expense of others, to drive away, via specific uses of sound, groups that are unwanted in a particular socio-material space and web of power relations, or to exert sonic violence as part of warfare (e.g. Goodman 2009). Musical instruments, too, can contribute to more divisive and hierarchical dimensions of attunement. Based on technical and aesthetic criteria of "good" playing or on social background, only certain kinds of bodies may be allowed to intra-act with particular instruments, while others are hindered from doing so. In these processes, musical instruments may reestablish, as much as blur, gendered, racialized, ableist, and other boundaries and divisions involving human as well as non-human bodies. Instruments participate actively in macro- and micro-political processes of musicking and sonic attunement, as they both increase and decrease the capacities of the human (and other) bodies and actors involved.

Elaborating on the above, we find it fruitful to conceptualize a *(new) materialist and embodied politics of attunement*. This mode of politics differs from such understandings of sound in musicological, feminist and philosophical thinking which prioritize auditory means of engaging with vibrations and sound. A materialist and embodied politics of attunement also departs from many previous understandings of politics in that it may involve representational forms of communication – what the sounds communicate symbolically – but is not restricted to them. Many listening-centred conceptions of sound's socio-political power foreground the representational and discursive register and/or the faculty of hearing in the experiencing of sounds (e.g. Nancy 2002; Cavarero 2005; Stoever 2016). Many conceptions also focus mostly on the macro-political markers of identity manifest in musical and other sonic practices, such as the binary divisions of man/woman, white/non-white, hetero/homo, and so on. Yet, in addition to these divisions, musical and other sounds may also allow the participants of the given situation to attune *differently*. They may enable a tuning-in to sensations, events, and capacities emerging in oneself in intra-action with the

surroundings, which operate beyond the confining categories of language and the sense of hearing. Also research practices may partake in these processes of attunement, engaging the material and experiential affectivity of sounds which does not manifest only or narrowly in auditory and representational terms.

Our proposition for a new materialist, embodied politics of attunement seeks to acknowledge, then, both the discriminatory aspects of sound's attuning capacities, and the potential these capacities harbor for embracing heterogeneity and empowering multiple kinds of subjects and beings. This latter dimension of sounds' potential is enhanced by the realization that processes of attunement need not, and indeed cannot, bring about uniformity. While all the participating f/actors of the given sonic situation are animated or reoriented by the same event (whether a siren signal, drone sound or sub-auditory emanation, a co-musicked piece or improvised vocalization), this event affects each participant somewhat differently (cf. Massumi & McKim 2009:6). This is because the participants diverge from one another in terms of their material constitution, proclivities for response and action, lived pasts, and worldly relations within and beyond the situation at hand (Tiainen 2018:110).

In relation to this, we want to expand our conceptual venture by proposing *an enabling and empowering* politics of attunement. With this formulation, we refer to a mode of political potential and action that is predicated on fostering difference. This political orientation can be encountered in some contemporary sound art practices, for example. We are moved here by the explorations of Finnish-based voice and sound artist, Heidi Fast, among others. The recent artistic projects assembled by Fast, such as *Hospital Symphonies* (2018–), seek to re-attune the project participants' bodily sensibilities to and relations with their socio-physical surroundings through shared, improvised processes of singing. As can be experienced in relation to Fast's artistic practice-led research exposition "Vocal Nest – non-verbal atmospheres that matter" (2019), these improvisatory processes include various kinds of non-verbal vocalization: lowish pedal point-like tones, hums, sighs, breaths, higher-register attacks

and brief melodic passages. In the first instantiation of *Hospital Symphonies* titled "Vocal Nest", the sonic texture comprising the piece was set in motion by some initial vocal sounds emitted by Fast in the beginning of a series of singing workshops that she held with the inpatients and staff members of the Helsinki University Central Hospital's Psychiatry Center (after a meticulous ethical clearance process). In the wake of these initiatory sounds, many workshop participants began to join and intra-act in the unfolding situation by uttering various types of non-verbal vocal expression. Fast then went on to intermix these sounds, composing an eight-channel sound installation. Some of its sounds also echo or amplify the characteristic more-than-human sounds of the hospital environment, such as the approximate pitches of an elevator's sound signals (Fast 2019).

What incites resonance between Fast's project and the concept of an enabling and empowering politics of attunement is the notion sustaining Fast's work, which has found support in the feedback from the above project's partakers. This notion holds that if produced experimentally in terms of their sonic form and collective modes of generation, vocalizations may, in an ephemeral and hard to verbalize, yet affectively real way, re-attune the relations between fellow humans as well as between the human and non-human elements of a socio-material situation. Even if fleetingly, emergent experimental vocalizations may help to challenge such relational organizations of sound, space, matter, human bodies and social positions – for example, those of "healthy" and "sick" or "expert" and "patient" – which are societally dominant and normative. Yet, while this kind of re-attuning can play out as a moment of empowering togetherness and experiential change inflected by sound, it does not entail the erasure of the diverse connections that take shape between the different bodies and materialities involved, including the divergent bodily-psychic histories and states of the human agents. If vocal sounds do succeed in temporarily shifting prevailing organizations in a difference-friendly manner, they may loosen some of the social rules and preconceived categories that restrict both sonic expression and human subjectivities. They may open

up some new capacities to affect and be affected; to connect and intra-act, express, feel and experience (Fast 2019; Tiainen 2018:109–111).

Learning-with Fast's art and her conceptualizations of "the affective potentialities of voice" as beginning from "an act of immanent attunement with the surrounding situation" and the "unique methodology of vocal-affective attunement" (Fast 2019), we want to take our notion of an enabling and empowering politics of attunement a notch further by encapsulating it with yet another concept: *democracy of resonance*. This concept suggests that the attuning capacities of sound always occur on a continuum of heterogeneous human and more-than-human elements, and their intra-actions (Tiainen 2018:111). The premise of democracy of resonance is that no entities attuning to and through sound – whether human bodies-minds with different capacities, musical instruments, sound-carrying materials, or other elements – can be categorically prioritized over others. Thus, democracy, in this conceptualization, is not about equality premised on the putative common essence of things. Rather, it points to how sound can both highlight and enrich the "ruling" of reality by incompatibly different processes and materialities which, nonetheless, depend for their existence on their mutual attunements – instances of affecting and being affected. This attuning happens on a constant and situationally varying basis.

… Feminist Colour-IN …

"The Feminist Colour-IN is a practice and a methodology where participant-performers color-in black and white designs while attending a lecture in a teaching situation, a presentation at a conference, a group discussion in a domestic space, or, for example, a political speech or performance in a public space." This is how the creators of the *Feminist Colour-IN,* Kim Donaldson and Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, define the project (Donaldson & Kontturi 2019). The practice has involved, for example, the creation of coloring booklets based on a varied selection of local feminist artists' works to be colored-in at international conferences in Australia,

Finland and Poland. In other occasions, large-scale multi-sheet designs have been offered to be colored-in collaboratively while listening to feminist speakers of different ethnic and generational backgrounds (Donaldson & Kontturi 2019).

It is not only speeches, voices and silences of speakers, readers or commentators that intra-act in the instances of coloring initiated by this project, but also grainy and smooth, coarse or flawless textures of tables, papers, crayons and colors. That is, the feminisms present in the speech acts and images of the situations in which the coloring-in project takes shape, encourage the participants to attune to events of be(com)ing-together through a material-affective motion of coloring. The bodies that color find themselves busy and noisy with archiving multi-sensorial, more-than-linguistic experiences of attending to minglings of human and non-human material, speaking, sketching, lining, feeling and thinking bodies. If beings indeed do not pre-exist their relatings (Haraway 2003:6), then the bodies engaged in situations of coloring co-constitute an ever-incipient, potentially subversive collective body in a constant process of re-membering. This body's emergence is prompted and facilitated, but not predesigned, by *Feminist Colour-IN*. As a feminist connective and collective more-than-linguistic practice, the project instantiates a multi-modal with-ness. Hence, it gently pushes coloring bodies into a messy and not necessarily pleasant process of co-attunement. What may a coloring participant-performer learn within such a crayony process?

Primarily, coloring is premised on one body coloring others. It enables and embodies spacetimes in which practices of coloring other bodies become sensorial. Moreover, due to the bodies and scenarios pictured in the artworks of the coloring booklets, one finds or feels themselves in a spacetime where structural differences and one's access to or exclusion from power dissemination processes become palpable. This experience is in itself sensorial, involving grainy paper and the smoothness or roughness of one's crayony companions. For example, the Finnish edition of the *Feminist Colour-IN* booklet reaches towards participant-performers with a design that features a Sámi appropriation of the

Dr Alyson Campbell reading a feminist text at Feminist Colour-IN event outside ACCA: Australian Centre for Contemporary Arts, 13 April 2017, Melbourne. Photo by Lucia Rossi.

famous "we can do it" poster. The creators of the booklet explain that this piece by an anonymous Sámi group of artist-activists called *Suohpanterror*[3] portrays a woman in a traditional Sámi outfit. Nearby this design, the coloring hand might freeze while letting uncomfortableness to ooze in-between paper and hand. *Which colors to choose for the skin of the pictured indigenous woman?* "What if their chosen colors would not be culturally appropriate?", ask the creators of the *Feminist Colour-IN* project (Donaldson and Kontturi 2019). These moments of bodily unease or, as Donaldson and Kontturi call them, aesthetic activations, make a coloring body stumble. It may feel momentarily estranged, and this may enhance its alertness to its own positionality, continuously reconstituted by a multiplicity of both implicit and palpable power-disseminating structures.

Yet, can these structures, when being colored, appear less rigid or less detached from our bodies? Could they and the categories of race, or gender, sexuality and ability, crumble when encountered, imagined and sensed as a thousand tiny colorings, or, as Deleuze and Guattari would have it, a thousand tiny sexes? Might the lines of coloring assist in noticing "a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each other to the animal, the plant, etc.: *a thousand tiny sexes,*" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:213) – or races, when thinking about the subject matters of several *Feminist Colour-IN* booklets (Leppänen 2019; Saldanha 2007, 2012, 2013). If race is *not only* a macro-level, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms molar, category, but also composed of constant molecular becomings, may the promise to make a political difference in relation to race *loosen* to a thousand tiny races? Are colored lines powerful enough to demand accountability for *each of them,* ultimately co-constituting "a thousand" which stands for a never-ending process of differencing?

A colored body in the booklet has a perhaps infinitesimal, yet real, chance to push back on a coloring body. It may make the

latter aware of its difference in terms of gender, ethnicity or other markers, and of the weight of discrimination it may have encountered. Pushing back with unease and discomfort, colored-in race and other differences make palpable one's involvement in power-dissemination processes and, hence, one's non-innocence. Would it be too naive to imagine that a coloring body reassesses – in slots in-between the drawings – its ethico-political contributions to lived races, genders, sexualites, and other axes of difference? Can crayony molecular openings in-between the colored lines stand for cracks (Barad 2017:62) or interstices (Stengers 2004:4), and not only for molar categorizations of race, gender, sexuality and other differences, when they are broken down into a thousand colored lines, shapes and movements-feelings? Thus, *where* are we as coloring-in agentialities?

If we seek to localize where politics takes place in the coloring in practices, one answer would be in-between a hand-squeezed pointy end of a crayon and the figures of the images, which are infused with the feminisms that affected the matters visualized in the booklets' artworks and the artistic labor behind them. When participating in processes of coloring, we are pushed to reconsider where and how power asymmetries emerge. And, if situated relatings involve and crystallize situated politics, they may also propose situated subversions. Politics is always provisional; continuously reconstituted between the lines enacted by bodies coming-together – for example in seminar venues, feminist reading groups and coloring-in events (Donaldson & Kontturi 2019; Górska 2016:305; Cvetkovich 2012:1–15; Khodyreva 2022).

… and touch

To continue with coloring bodies, they constantly move in the proximity of otherness composed of a situated assemblage of other bodies and agentialities including self-otherness. Arguably, a coloring body is visited by the stranger within (see Barad 2012/2013; 2017). It might not even realize that it is being touched by its virtual self or by the angry looks of other, non-coloring, participants of the event. These angry reactions are something that several

3   'Suohpan' refers to the traditional Sami lasso created
     to catch reindeers.

A detail of coloring in process.
Feminist Colour-IN event, a participatory performance
by artists and scholars reading feminist texts outside
ACCA: Australian Centre for Contemporary Arts, 13 April
2017, Melbourne. Photo by Lucia Rossi.

participant-performers of *Feminist Colour-IN* have reported to the project's creators. These looks were received, for example, in response to the selection and sharpening of pencils, the sounds of which gently disturb the code of conduct of academic and other public events. *Feminist Colour-IN* brings forth hatching-listening bodies that are touched by collective affective atmospheres emergent in relation to where, how and what is being discussed or otherwise happening during acts of coloring. While being in touch with others, a coloring body also touches itself, thus differencing with itself and the others. Put otherwise, the politics of attunement initiated by *Feminist Colour-IN* is *of* touch.

Relatedly, attunement itself unfolds as an exceptionally *intimate* political project. It both demands and proposes specific sensitivities to situation-bound and care-ful ways of acting, as opposed to methods understood as tools which predetermine and hence limit our attention to processes of coming-together (Kontturi 2018:16). It promises to rob an embrained coloring dominant Western subject of their imaginary status as a discrete entity, volitionally distant from the worldly mess. If acts of coloring unsettle this imaginary of a distinct body that transcends its desire to be touched, they may make one notice the noninnocence of this notion. This may happen at a moment when unequal structures presented in the colored images *grab* a body, perhaps even more intensely than in acts of listening. Bodies that are constantly touched as well as touching may notice a shifting of their certainties and privileges as subjects. This process has the potential to intensify these bodies' commitment to *better* practices of being together. That is, imagined through touch the commitment to attunement makes subjects reconsider their role in reiterative, politically charged and metastable processes of differentiating-entangling (Barad 2017:78; Manning 2007:xx; Khodyreva 2022). Through a touchy project of attunement, a used-to-be-certain body is persuaded to stay attentive to the subtly noisy murmuring of coloring. These subtle becomings may be as important for renewing political subjectivities and communities (LaBelle 2010:82) as louder forms and matters of feminism-infused politics. One is required to open oneself "up to a movement that

exceeds the position one holds, the experiences one has had, and the knowledge one possesses" (Kontturi 2018:9). The unavoidable intimacy of bodies-to-come, which attunement makes viscerally known, calls for "care *for* the unknown" (LaBelle 2010:83). The unknown touches coloring bodies and selves. It may grab, shake or embrace them. Or rather, attunement promises to train a coloring body to care-with bodies-to-come, learning with them to care for them, instead of imposing a mode of care-ful relatings before these relatings actually happen.[4]

The task of reimagining one's be(com)ing with the world(ing) through touch in coloring in can also involve a sense of enfleshment through a visceral and multisensorial bodily feeling of unease, which emerges when one learns one is constantly being touched. A sense of being touched beyond one's own volition may generate a variety of unpleasant and disturbing affective pulls. A continuously touched coloring body may grow anxious or stressed (as many of the bodies being colored may have been due to power asymmetries of gender, race, and other differences). But does this possibly unpleasant intimacy cancel off better alliances which a politics of attunement aims at building? Following the imaginaries proposed by the quantum insights of Karen Barad, which tell us that repulsion lies at the core of attraction, while remaining skeptical about a simplifying classification of affects as negative vs. positive, we may answer this question with a no. The task of committing to alliances carved through possible corpo-affective displeasures and differencing (cf. Ngai 2007; Halberstam 2011:2; Straube 2019) must start with a shift of imaginaries which propose that "the ability to think politically today might be found not in a presumed notion of resolve, in consensus, but in recognition of the political as a process that always involves or requires the tension of confrontation, the prolongation of an uncertain language, and the ongoing dislocation of assumptions of a liberal perspective" (Mouffe discussed by LaBelle 2010:82).

4   For a profound new materialist discussion the matters of touch and cf. Puig de la Bellacasa 2017.

A jar of crayons at *Feminist Colour-IN* event,
a participatory performance by artists and scholars
reading feminist texts outside ACCA: Australian Centre
for Contemporary Arts, 13 April 2017, Melbourne.
Photo by Lucia Rossi.

The attunements instantiated by *Feminist Colour-IN* attain their specificity when a hand grasps a pencil which then presses against the paper. Furthermore, visceral and affective unease, which emerges differently for different bodies, is also *of* complex touch. Infused with the touchy material-affective propositions of *Colour-IN,* attunement becomes, in turn, an incarnation of a complex ethico-political project of loosening the focus on molar categories. It unfolds as a project of being committed to touching other bodies and being touched by them, and of letting the residue of this touching inflect the affective dynamics of the self, or the infinity of incipient selves (Khodyreva 2022). In other words, attunement cannot but acknowledge subjectivity as a *relational* phenomenon. Loosening, cracking, and slowing attunements offer some hope for better futures of (be)coming together. We would like to imagine the *Feminist Colour-IN* project, then, as one of committed touching, which aspires to a more sensitively relational and fairer sociality shared with other bodies. These bodies remain different, and they are constantly rebuilt *through* relational differencing. Thus, the kind of attunement we are proposing only becomes possible if one lets go of the imaginary of human subjectivity as an ontologically self-contained entity. Bodily unease, which at times accompanies processes of attuning through coloring, or is at least virtually present in them, does not preclude these desired futures from unfolding. Both poles of situated affective relatings – any versions of bodily unease, such as disgust, irritation or anxiety, on the one hand, and affirmative embraces of coloring, on the other – materialize through a pluri-potent event of intimate touch. A critical and intimate touch is necessary when deciding what corpo-affective and socio-political bonds one wishes to establish, ignore or erase.

What might attunements do?

We would like to finish this mapping with a string of unsettled questions which guide us in thinking collaboratively what attunements may be capable of, and why they matter as a theoretical, artistic and political phenomenon.

What political sensitivities and ideas could one learn about, or with, singing, musicking, coloring and touching as processes of attunement? What may one learn when thinking-feeling oneself in intimate contact with various attuning materialities: the acoustic materials of the surroundings, the woods, metals and plastics of musical instruments, the sounds and echoes vibrating through space and one's body, the textures of ink, paper and color, and the hatching noises of bodies engaged in acts of coloring or other embodied and mindful doing?

How might one re-imagine a notion of "radical" which affirms that politics happen not only in parliament chambers, street protests and other conventionally political situations? May a radical change, in fact, occur in bodily tissues intoxicated by venomous substances produced by settler-colonial and extractive capitalist industries, or between a body's ribs when it inhales the air of an environment infused with the exhaustive production-oriented logics of the current economy? Where could new and proliferating ways of challenging harmful oppressive politics be found (Górska 2016:305)? How to discover a more liveable elsewhere in unexpected milieus and activities? How to generate unlikely alliances toward this end? (Khodyreva 2022.)

In this mapping, we have suggested that even seemingly quiet collective bodies that intra-act and take shape in milieus distant from overtly political modes of action can be engaged in intensive, potential politics (Donaldson & Kontturi 2019). Noticing the political potential of these more subtle becomings or minor gestures (Manning 2016) entails attuning to the affective vibrations and interchanges of emerging collective bodies that also involve ambivalences and political adjustments. Relatedly, we wonder: how to embrace the political – molar *and* molecular – agentiality of textures, temperatures, places, speeds and scales that come to matter together in particular becomings? How to imagine a politics that is busy negotiating what's being said, seen, heard, felt and thought, but which never eventuates in a cleat-cut and conclusive way? We propose that attuning to attunements may provide fruitful partial answers to this question. Attunement may help to unimagine sympathy, the matter

which agglutinates the essays of the present collection, as a sentiment enacted by "the (white, middle-class) sympathizer in the position of moral superiority", whereby "the sympathizer is the active subject facing the passive object of pity" (Bennett 2020:33). Instead, we propose that attunement may nurture commitments to imagining and enacting bodies and their doings otherwise, towards the betterment of liveability especially for systematically and structurally marginalized bodies.

However: who, what and on whose terms may be able to join an attuning with-ness? Who is touched while not perhaps being able to touch back? Can at*tune*ment, with its immediate quotidian references to hearing and listening, end up in performing a discriminative cut that polices and restricts access to attunement's political affordances? Or can attunement impel its practitioners "to switch metaphors" (Haraway 1988:580), while truly empowering multiple kinds of agentialities and subjects and acknowledging the discriminatory aspects of attunement? How about bodies' variegated ways of sensing and being? For example, as hearing beings, we have largely left undiscussed other – for instance deaf – bodies whose processes of attuning to sound, speech and other sensorial matters positively differ from ours, and in whose case the auditory connotations of attunement appear as problematic. This involves the risk of an ableism-infused understanding of attunement. Thus, attuning to attunements must be accompanied by a critical awareness of how sociolinguistic fixations inherent in concepts and metaphors – such as in the notion of attunement – are as efficacious politically as, for example, the agentiality of graphite, paper or ink (Haraway 2016:12; cf. 1988; Tuck and Yang 2012). Yet, this is not to say attunement would ever be only about hearing-centred processes of intra-action. As we have proposed throughout this mapping, the auditory is, in fact, the vibratory. With this in mind, we hope that the situated, emergent, affective, human and more-than-human phenomenon we have called attunement may gently propose increasingly inclusive and sensitive becomings of bodies, selves and worlds that are born of touch in its multisensorial and plural meanings.

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Margarida Mendes

Sounding the Mississippi

River systems are enormous hydrogeological, chemical, electromagnetic and infrastructural systems that expand way beyond their margins, connecting surrounding inhabitants and ecosystems through an irreverent flux of discharges and motions. In continuum, bodies of water extend beyond spectral boundaries and unfold through multiple forms of existence. How do we sense the environment and how does the environment sense us?

> *As I am rowing down the Mississippi, my body becomes one with the pulling strength of the river. I am slowly projected by the kinetic lure of its course, drifting along the side lanes of the river channel where barges and tankers manoeuvre. The sun reflects its rays on the mirrored water, where muddy vortexes keep forming. I am surrounded by low engine sounds and the distant hum of incessant pumping. There is little silence on this stretch of the river as we approach the Gulf. Human voices are replaced by the sounds of occasional birds, as the machinic steering boats and factory supply infrastructures become a constant presence. My senses are awakened, merging with the enveloping soundscape as the kinetic pull of the river sets the pace to my paddling. My canoe team proceeds in silence as the rhythm of these encircling entities becomes the commanding force that draws our vessels forward. The raging flux of the waters becomes one with the muscular strength of our paddling, as we become synchronous with the river. As I attune to the incessant rush of its flowing waters, a meditative state falls upon me: I realize that I am no longer autonomous from the flowing rhythmic architectures of the river that surrounds me.*

The stretch of the Mississippi river between Baton Rouge and New Orleans is known as the petrochemical corridor. It used to be referred to as plantation country as four hundred plantations occupied the land from Plaquemine's island down, which have now been replaced by two hundred oil refineries. These days, the petrochemical corridor is known as "cancer alley" or "death alley", due to the extremely high cancer rates. "The level of

toxicity increases with the darkness of the skin" said local activist Wendi Moore O'Neal, who has been working with singing and story circles as community healing tools.[1] In the petrochemical corridor, forms of labor and land dispossession have been taking place over the centuries, as water is militarized and the land occupied by international corporations that expropriate local communities, erase memorials, and colonize healthy bodies, as petrochemical industries and carceral institutions replace previous plantations (McKittrick 2013).[2] The massive alteration of Louisiana's landscapes through the centuries has been greatly defined by the ruling impacts of intensive agriculture and petrochemical refinery industry downstate. While upriver, intensive logging and mining zones have immersed local communities in a sense of solastalgia. This is a state of psychological distress that communities live through when their homelands feel alienating due to intensive industrialization, extractive intervention and landscape transformation.[3]

This is the case in the Lower Mississippi. Along with its haunting plantation history and the imprints of settler colonialism erasing the presence of indigenous peoples, massive infrastructural projects have been developed over the years significantly altering its landscape. The Mississippi river dates back from the Cretaceous period and became the main drainage

system of the central United States only about 15 million years ago (Jackson & Chapple 2018: 49). The river has changed its course times uncounted, as the Delta gyrated across Louisiana, and the water flowed on courses up to 150 km apart over the last few millennia. Currently the river's kinetic pull is pushing it into the Atchafalaya River, only to be detained by the continuous intervention of the Army Corps of Engineers. "Seen from the air, the Mississippi Delta looks like a gigantic cancerous lung, excoriated with ten thousand miles of oil and gas canals, widened and widening over decades into a cast disassemblage of open water" says marine biologist Jeremy Jackson (Jackson & Chapple: 45). With the settlement of industrial and agricultural facilities, the need to control the river's course incited the construction of 16.000 km of canals, water diversions and levees, forever changing the conservation status of the local marsh, while providing industry new shipping lanes. This project of containment has permanently altered the ecosystem and the lives of those that inhabit it.

Houma nation descendant artist Monique Verdin is known for her longstanding community activism in the lower Mississippi. Her photography and documentary filmmaking practices expose the impacts of toxicity and the controversial entanglements of petrochemical investments in the region. On our journey, Verdin mentioned that she had never seen the petrochemical corridor from the river's perspective, even though she worked in the area for decades. She was born in a family of shrimpers, out in Bayou St. Bernard and had a tight relation with her grandmother, from who she inherited her weaving skills and connection to land cultivation rhythms, and medicinal plants. In the Bayou, water flows up and down to the rhythm of not only climatic, but also industrial pulls, just as the income of the community seems less tied into the seasonality of the land and the nourishments of the Delta's water, than to the offers of the petrochemical industry.

These factory complexes have worked their way around the alchemical fantasies of molecular shape-shifting to provide many derivatives from oil refining, and some of them have emerged intertwined with local agriculture, as its intensive rhythm became highly dependent of fertilizers and pesticides. As

1   Connecting to the riverine landscapes, Moore O'Neal claims that the river is the root of her spiritual practice, under the hypervigilant state of grief that submerges the local population. Songs are a powerful form of indigenous medicine that has travelled intergenerationally along the years, affirming modes of collectivity, animism and environmental interconnection, interspecies co-dependency, and belonging to a particular site. In a way, songs are interscalar vehicles of spiri-tual elevation, where the epigenetics of trauma is mended through a vibrational field that interacts with different modes of existence. They have circulated for long in the Southern landscapes as a mode of narrating the precarious life of shrimpers, land workers and other Delta inhabitants, long connected with histories of geotrauma.

2   Today the aftermath of slavery is entrenched in numerous forms of exclusionary politics, that hygienized post-Katrina New Orleans, where many institutions have been shut down, schools have been fully privatized and black population reduced to 59%.

3   A term coined by philosopher Glenn Albrecht.

such, the water became filled with nitrogen and phosphate, which destroys the roots of marshes, allowing storms to rush through them easily. The increased salinity of the marshes, due to incoming gulf waters, allowed for coastal erosion to step in, weakening the land, contributing to further alteration of the water chemistry. This affected profoundly not only the water's oxygen levels, creating so-called dead zones in the lower Mississippi and in the Gulf, but also the biodiversity, deeply impacting the bayou communities who have always subsisted through their food sovereignty (Jackson & Chapple, 65).[4]

Verdin was brought up under the sonic plurality of musical genres that envelop New Orleans, from jazz, to Cajun blues and swamp pop. But it was the industrial soundscape that set the backdrop to her locality. Refinery hums echoed through the skies, alongside engines pumping, river dredging sounds, and boat traffic. The reverberations of the petrochemical infrastructure expanded through the riverbanks amplified by the river's mirrored surface, travelling also through the depths of its waters at greater speed. This background noise, a constant 24/7 hum, punctured the air with its continuous drone among interceptions of traffic and loud engine sounds. Yet surprisingly, during my conversations with Verdin she mentioned that the constant noise had never worried people, as cancer and coastal erosion are the most important battles for riverine communities.

I wondered then, how different forms of attunement to rhythmic registers of geotrauma were necessary, in order to find connections between the sonic environment that surrounds us and the rhythmic expressions that this very environment has on the bodies that inhabit it. Could one develop forms of restorative listening to soundscapes under constant distress? What kinds of environmental literacy would one need in order to develop a deeper sense of attunement?

During our journey through the petrochemical corridor, we had continuous conversations about the Mississippi's changing ecosystems, where the presence of industry was naturalized. We camped along the riverbanks, on small beaches, deserted islands, or outside the levee systems, where sediments accumulated. These fluctuating intertidal spaces were not seen as private property, but as mutable territories where sand and mud regurgitated by the river formed embankments and deposits, to be later sold by property developers as valuable resources downstream.[5] The cyclicality of climate change and coastal erosion in the area contributes to massive and unexpected flooding, increasing land loss, while at the same time opens paths to business opportunities. There is a thin line dividing governmental strategies for hydrological planning and catastrophe profit – the same sediments that are being drawn away by the river when it floods peoples' homes and rushes through the foundations of houses, is being sold back to them. As we travelled on our wooden canoes packed with tents and DIY assemblages of technology, we also had a small taste of what it was to become molecular, a small particle in the river system, which is dominated by long barges, towboats and tankers circulating night and day to transfer refined goods and other resources from surrounding industrial facilities.

My recordings comprise mostly engine sounds and registers of river vessels. I could hear their propellers and machinery underwater, with their cyclical patterns, as they undertook boat diversion manoeuvres. It was difficult to track animal presences underwater, like fish or other local crustaceans due to the sound of the vessels. The omnipresence of engine sounds was only interrupted by the occasional presence of dredging or other pumping devices. Other infrastructural hums surrounded the river, such as that of the refinery complexes and factories' resource

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4   A dead zone emerges because of excessive organic matter and debris accumulation in the river bottom, which makes it impossible for large amounts of carbon to be processed and converted to oxygen.

5   We encountered such operations of sediment collection by private companies next to BonnyCarrey waterspill. This piece of riverine infrastructure was built to allow the river to overflow on the direction of Lake Portchain and prevent downstream river flooding. Its construction was planned on a site that would flood over former plantation land, submerging the grave site of previously enslaved people.

supply machinery, connecting warehouses to the river's piers. At times, we were visited by the intense buzz of light aircraft which sprayed pesticides over the crops in their spiralling flight, leaving their vibrational traces amplified by the river. Above water, we could also hear the vague presence of birds and other insects, such as cicadas, or nightly crickets, among the scarce presence of boat horns. These punctured the soundscape, just as the occasional phantom of a refinery's flare resonated from a distance.

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The Mississippi passes through thirty-one American states and has many tributaries. Its importance in the region is highly connected to the dependency of the river as a source of hydro maintenance for refineries, particularly in the petrochemical corridor, which contains 25 percent of the nation's production capacity in the combined petroleum and chemical industries (Jackson & Chapple, 53). Not to mention its role as a transportation canal for international shipping: crude oil, natural gas, coal, steel, soybeans, maize, chemical fertilizers, animal feed, wheat, and sugar are a few of the major products traded along its course. The Mississippi Delta holds 8 percent of total U.S. Gas reserves, processes 3.3 million barrels of crude oil per day, and is the third largest coal exporting port.

Theorist Brian Holmes who travelled a leg of the journey upriver, describes rivers not as a linear continuum stretching from source to the sea, but instead as a fluctuating aquatic/terrestrial transition zone, a moving littoral offering the image of a dynamic process that does not disrupt, but rather, defines the river (Holmes 2020). In a similar way architect Dilip da Cunha revises our concept of river, asking how we frame it territorially and infrastructurally, questioning what is the extent of its course. He asks: "what would it mean for designers to take responsibility for the existence of the river?" (da Cunha) Da Cunha questions the naturalization of infrastructure and the role of design and spatial practices in re-inscribing forms of partition in natural systems. He calls for new kinds of river literacy and guides us

through, rethinking the role and mutations of the coastline, the riverbank, and the water's edge at a time when sea-level rise and resource management necessitate the construction of levees and land retirement schemes.

What if this moving littoral and all the processes that it entails would be re-conceptualized as travelling within and outside bodies and communities? How would this redefine a rhythmic continuity between bodies and the environment and reframe our notion of corporeality and territory?

The impermanence of the river and the intensity of the hydrocycle subjects the city of New Orleans and its surroundings to the need of a "pacemaker", says architect Aron Chang. He explained to me that seventy-eight drainage pumping stations worked 24/7 to prevent soil from subsiding. Some of these stations are quite loud and they are distributed around the city and its outskirts. The Army Corps' Mississippi River & Tributaries Project of emergency floodways was designed to grant territorial diversions that temporarily relieve the pressure of rapidly rising river stages. Together with massive levee systems, floodgates, locks, diversions and spillways, these infrastructures have controlled the movement and presence of water in the area since the first settlements. The seasonal pulse of water is now replaced by its industrial version.

Brian Holmes criticizes the permanent techno-fixing and the impacts of the Army Corps' Mississippi River & Tributaries Project, as its design partakes in zoning practices, including some and excluding others, creating conflicts in communities while persisting with an ideology of human mastery over nature. He says that the river diversion and containment project is in sync with the extractive rhythm of intensive agriculture and oil industry, that has defined the ecology of the floodplains to the point of favoring corn, soybeans, cotton, and rice over any other life-form. The result, complete with copious amounts of diesel fuel and synthetic nitrogen is one of the major components of global climate change: a completely industrialized agricultural system, based on fossil fuel inputs, oriented toward foreign markets, and exported to the rest of the world as a development model. The seasonal

pulse of riverine flooding which plays a vital role in planetary metabolism, is today determined by the fossil fuel industry and agriculture lobbies, who through the purchase of flowage rights since the 1930s determine what can get flooded, deciding on what may be conceived as more valuable (Holmes).

I returned to the same question I had upon my arrival, as I wondered what would be the reverberations and infrastructural rhythms that industrialization imprints on matter, and how the cyclicality of these patterns re-inscribes new metabolic fluxes, and possibly different evolutionary pathways. Sensing the sonic residues of industrialization, I revisited my thoughts about the capacity of matter to mutate, analyzing the river system as a complex metabolic site, where numerous transactions occur.

Land and sea, a tale of perpetual intermixing and partition. Of those who merge and adapt, those that grow to extract. Those hidden in the woods, the swamps, and the brinks of matter, the shapeshifters, the fugitives, the oyster pickers, the storytellers. The river rats, the unliberated and the tree cutters. Haunted by the tempest of salinity and wind, they sing back from the intertidal zone, where oaks creak immemorial prayers of a thousand lives. In-between, the marshes give slow birth to shells and crustaceans. Edifying the foundations of buildings and bodies, they rumble through the mud as living rocks filled with offerings. Their acoustic body spells the horizon with filtered stories, sunken in carbon, flesh and the mud of the wetlands where uprisings once conjured. In the intertidal zone we unsettle the paths of locks and containment, where the earth quivers with the rupture of a million flowing waters. The river remembers its course, as it pours down the fluid strata of geotime in the making. And with it, a million souls arise, emerging from the interwoven subconscious of its perpetual flux. Waters settle, waters know. Waters revolt, waters flow.

As we camped in the midst of the swampy landscapes and wetlands changing climate, the perimeter between the interior and

exterior of our bodies and tents became fuzzy, as if made out of a thin membrane, continuously exposed to surrounding atmospheric fluctuations. We weathered through the journey, while non-stop humidity and noise endured through our bodies. Our epidermal ears extended from the canoe, through the river waters, up along the shores of the riverbank, where sleepless factories pumped incessantly, with a roaring drive. The pores and extremities of our nervous systems became interwoven with the cyclical humming of boat engines and the dragged sounds of the queues of barges passing by, occasionally interrupted by cicadas or other visiting insects.

If we sense the environment, how does the environment sense us? And how does the variety of life-forms in this stretch of the river listen and adapt to the extensive human presence in the region? Certainly other-than-human entities would have a lot to say about this, as the intersubjective aural space is extremely diverse. Different species occupy different parts of the frequency spectrum, depending on their hearing mechanisms, some of which evolved very differently. This area in Louisiana is populated by alligators, snakes, arachnids, locusts and many other insects. Insects in particular have had seventeen independent evolutions of their hearing systems and have very different hearing organs. Locusts hear through a sensing organ on their belly, which changes the thickness of its membrane's constitution according to different diffractions of sound waves. Moths have neurons on their ears, which alter the mechanical structure of sound collection. Crickets, in their turn, attune to particular sounds by moving their tympanums and tune into particular frequencies. Spiders developed lyriform hearing organs along their leg joints with cracks that deform and are extremely sensitive to vibration, using these to catch prey. In all of these species the hearing process is an open loop process that connects the body with the environment.

Even willow trees and other vegetation surrounding the river would also listen back at us as their leafy hairs register minute changes and vibrations in the atmosphere, responding chemically to particular threats. The intersubjective listening moment,

an aurally diverse space par excellence, is also an environmental space, where life-forms and their surroundings respond mutually in a reciprocal process. Sensing is therefore an important step towards environing oneself and crucially a trigger for evolution. Different species would develop both behavioral and physical responses to different sonic and vibrational challenges.

Sonic tools provide an interesting methodological way to read the complexity of the petrochemical corridor as a site, since sonic modes of knowing register power dynamics at play, before they are fully legible in the landscape. Sound as a way of sensing may provide evidence for analysis of existing power relations, exposing forms of othering, colonial subjugation and sensorial dispossession. Sound spatializes differently across matter. It is expressed differently across species whose hearing mechanisms have adapted to different hearing thresholds. A bioacoustic analysis of an ecosystem is also an analysis into conservation, evolutionary performance and the adaptation of different species to the habitat demands. Hence, sound analysis can be useful in problematizing not only existing power relations, but also forms of interpersonal connection, and political mediation, exposing what sensing hierarchies are privileged in these ecosystems under transformation.

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Closer to the city, on one of our most sleepless nights, we camped under the sub-bass of the Louis Armstrong airport lane, whose intense aircraft traffic pounded through our bodily fascia catalyzing the strangest dreams. Awoken successively by the puncturing noise of arriving planes, boat engines and horns sounds, the group had very little rest. We were set for an early wake up call and sunrise paddle to avoid a storm in the evening, which would have blocked our way into New Orleans. As we got stuck in the morning fog we had time to reflect about the insomniac evening and the eerie place we had stopped. We asked ourselves how the aircraft's intense bass noise reverberated through the riverine ecosystem and affected local species, without really

understanding the connection between sonic emissions and environmental changes. Was the riverine spectrum also weaving through the spectral atmospheres of our dreams, building imaginary refractions in our sensorial systems as we rested? Where does the exercise of listening start and end, and what political, affective and physical imaginations does it produce?

Once in New Orleans I encountered sound artist Monica Haller, who together with Monique Verdin led a workshop titled "Exhaustion and Imagination", where they showed us the water diversion infrastructures built around New Orleans and Plaquemine's parish, while narrating their family's stories. Haller had family downriver, and was also a Houma descendent, but she grew up in the North. Her grandparents moved up to Minneapolis during the great migration running away from racial persecution. We drove together to her family's place further south in Plaquemine's parish outside of the levee system, and spent a whole day talking about the community's adaptation to storm surges and the rising waters, as well as her family's memory from the times of unfreedom. Louisiana's infrastructure had been built by hands of countless Senegambian descendants who had been abducted from Africa, arriving to New Orleans to work on the plantations upriver.

Haller's family place was now down to ruins, thorned by the forest that grew on top of it, but on this freezing November day, she welcomed us around a small fire lit in the middle of bricks that previously formed her grandparents' home. We sat and grounded ourselves in this site, enmeshed in spectral frequencies that travelled years of compressed history in those woods, and listened humbly, to the experiences of the unliberated. As she recounted her relation to this site, Haller asked us what it would be to try and think from an exhausted place, if we could connect and reflect from this experience of situatedness. A moment after she asked us to imagine how would it be if the settlement never took place and the river had continued to change its course, as it always did. Could we picture how these other river futures would be? We got to thinking about how many different narratives would have been possible around these Delta landscapes,

the one's we could access, and the one's that never got told. As it turns out, the land outside of the levee system had always a very specific magnetism, as former enslaved people took swamp refuge here when they escaped, establishing maroon colonies where the swamp and river waters meet the ocean. These were undesired lands where pestilence and difficult access drove away unwanted visitors, but full of fish and other resources to grant these communities subsistence. What untold stories would lay hidden in the density of these woods?

As the evening rose, we did a blindfolded soundwalk in pairs and connected to the soundscape of this site. Entangled in the forest we sunk, among the sounds of wooden cracking, and the imaginary echoes of its past inhabitations.

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This text is part of a longer written piece and research project set in the Mississippi river petrochemical corridor, where since 2019 I have been investigating how the increase of background noise may be connected with endocrinological disruptions and environmental transformations. In conversation with scientists and local activists, I have been exploring what are the sonic residues of toxicity, using sound as a medium to sense and interpret the hidden rhythms of these changing landscapes.

All images are documentation of my Mississippi river journey in November 2019.

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Interview with Aron Chang in New Orleans, November 2019.

Sindre Bangstad & Torbjørn Tumyr Nilsen

Thoughts on the planetary: An interview with Achille Mbembe

Achille Mbembe first visited Norway on the occasion of the annual Holberg Debate organized by the Holberg Prize Secretariat at the University of Bergen on December 1, 2018 where he gave a keynote address. Mbembe is scheduled to give three invited lectures on "Bodies as Borders" at the House of Literature in Oslo on 13 and 14 September 2019.

This interview was conducted in Bergen, Norway, on 30 November 2018 by Torbjørn Tumyr Nilsen of the Norwegian newspaper Klassekampen. It was first published by *New Frame*, September 5, 2019, and is republished here under creative commons license.

Focusing on the global implications of decolonization, Achille Mbembe calls for the reformation of reason as a shared human faculty towards repairing and caring for life.

Nilsen:
In April 2015, the Rhodes statue fell in South Africa at the University of Cape Town. How did you interpret that event?

Mbembe:
For those who are not aware of who we are talking about, Cecil John Rhodes was a privateer. He was a ruthless actor in the mercantile expansionism that characterized 19th century settler colonialism in the southern part of Africa. Through political alliances, sheer brutality and expediency, he carved out for himself a huge chunk of South Africa's mineral wealth, in particular diamonds in Kimberley and gold in the Witwatersrand. He bestowed some of the land he had grabbed in Cape Town to the university which, in return, erected a statue in his honor on the steps of one of its main buildings.

Rhodes prefigured the extraction and privatization of ill-gotten wealth neoliberalism today has pushed to a refinement unseen in the history of humankind. He was a precursor of the type of predatory economic system and plutocratic politics at work in most parts of the world today, the results of which are the raping of the biosphere and the destruction at a massive scale of the basic conditions of life on Earth.

I interpret the toppling of his statue as a small, symbolic victory, in the long and protracted struggle for universal justice.

So there is a lineage from Rhodes to the neoliberal order we see today?

There is an explicit kinship between plantation slavery, colonial predation and contemporary forms of resource extraction and appropriation. In each of these instances, there is a constitutive denial of the fact that we, the humans, coevolve with the biosphere, depend on it, are defined with and through it and owe each other a debt of responsibility and care.

An important difference is the technological escalation that has led to the emergence of computational capitalism in our times. We are no longer in the era of the machine but in the age of the algorithm. Technological escalation, in turn, is threatening to turn us all into artefacts – what I have called elsewhere "the becoming-black-of-the world" – and to make redundant a huge chunk of the muscular power capitalism relied upon for a long time. It follows that today, although its main target remains the human body and earthly matter, domination and exploitation are becoming increasingly abstract and reticular. As a repository of our desires and emotions, dreams, fears and fantasies, our mind and psychic life have become the main raw material which digital capitalism aims at capturing and commodifying.

During Rhodes' times, the exploitation of black labor went hand in hand with a virulent form of racism. Contemporary capitalism still relies on racial subsidies. But the technologies of racialization have become ever more insidious and ever more encompassing. As the world becomes a huge data emporium, tomorrow's technologies of racialization will be more and more generated and instituted through data, calculation and computation. In short, racism is relocating both underneath and at the surface of the skin. It reproduces itself via screens and mirrors of various kinds. It is becoming both spectral and fractal.

Otherwise, as far as the toppling of Rhodes' statue is concerned, my argument has always been that the statue should have never been there in the first instance.

As a symbol?

Yes, as a reminder of the various crimes this cruel man committed in his attempt to deny black people any right to a human future in South Africa. As a reminder, too, of the cynicism with which he tried to launder his ill-gotten wealth under the guise of philanthropy.

But a proper critique of Rhodes' style of predatory economics and plutocratic politics cannot be limited to South Africa alone or to the confines of a specific nation-state. The project he served was colonial and imperial. Its horizon was not South Africa-centric. Ultimately, Rhodes is the symbol of the double damage capitalism in its racial, colonial and imperial form inflicted upon humankind and upon the biosphere. Such should be the starting point of any critique of Rhodes which strives to avoid the pitfalls of national chauvinism.

At the Holberg Debate at the University of Bergen tomorrow, you will discuss social movements through history. How will you describe this social movement, compared to, for example, the student movements in the late 1960s?

These are two different events. They are happening at two different historical moments in two different places. I am not even sure that contemporary protagonists have any knowledge or memory of what happened in 1968.

If my understanding is correct, one of the goals pursued by the decolonization movement in South Africa is to unbundle what is perceived as a structure of repetition, an old racial order which keeps donning the mantle of the new in its attempt at masking its degeneracy. In this context, to dismantle "whiteness" implies the awakening to self- knowledge and the reshaping of institutions inherited from a brutal past.

The actual question is whether in this instance, such a critique has been articulated in a way that is intellectually and politically compelling. Indeed with the drive towards the automatization of existence, contemporary social movements operate in a context characterized by huge changes in human experience. It is not only that the economy is becoming the eminent site of the new struggles for life. It is also that people and things, nature and objects, we are all increasingly at risk of being transformed into artefacts.

Many of these changes are partly enabled by the technological escalation represented by ubiquitous computing. A major consequence of this "great transformation" is that the human of the first quarter of the 21st century is not exactly the human of the late 1960s. The modes of individuation are not the same. Nor are the forms of subjectivation or its content. The complex entanglement of the human and the technological so typical of our age has deeply transformed the ways in which cognitive processes unfold, how people dream and what kind of change they dream about, in short, how the political is configured and experienced. In assessing the qualities and properties of contemporary mobilizations, we must therefore factor in the impact of media technologies on the formation of political subjectivity.

Striking in this regard is the apparent shift from a politics of reason to a politics of experience, if not of viscerality. In the eyes of many, personal experience has become the new way of being at home in the world. It's like the bubble that holds the foam at a distance. Experience nowadays trumps reason. We are led to believe that sensibility, emotions, affect, sentiments and feelings are the real stuff of subjecthood and therefore of radical agency. Paradoxically, in the paranoid tenor of our epoch, this is very much in tune with the dominant strictures of neoliberal individualism. It is also in line with the ongoing reconfigurations of the relation between technology, reason and other human faculties.

Whatever the case, this has given rise to ambiguous forms of collective mobilization, most of which we shouldn't romanticize. Behind the mask of radicalism, there is something fundamentally ambivalent in the political discourse of decolonization when, for instance, the injunction to decolonize goes hand in hand with high tolerance for xenophobia or the desire to control and defend what amounts to inverse racial borders. There is something

fundamentally debilitating when subaltern resistance politics is limited to an endless performance of purity and self-righteousness, or to a competition about who has suffered the most on the spiralling scale of victimization.

The same pathos is to be found in most debates on curriculum reform, on what we must or must not read and why, in short, on how to reconfigure or redesign the archive. Although fought in the name of equality and justice, some of these mobilizations might end up reenacting a sectarian logic of enclosure, underpinned as they are by flawed notions of identity, gender or culture as spaces of protection and immunity, as borders which allow for a closing off from "those who are not as radical as us".

Finally, a number of these mobilizations grant a preeminent status to notions of self and experience. The idea according to which self and experience – or for that matter radical agency – must now be found in the intimate microspheres of everyday life must be subjected to a thorough critique. Too often, it is presumed that our intimate interiorities, our moods, our states of mind are "safe spaces", the only spaces immune to racism and neoliberal intoxication. In fact, under contemporary conditions, there is no longer any "zone of being" that is free from "contamination".

The political cannot be reduced to the painstaking management of emotionally safe spaces and shared atmospheres. Radical agency is not about the sharing of boundaries. It is about deborderization. It is simply not true that unless I have undergone the exact same experience as the other, I know nothing about his or her pain and should simply shut up. Insofar as to be human is to open oneself up to the possibility always already there of becoming (an) other, such a conception of self and identity is by definition antihuman. The political in our time must start from the imperative to reconstruct the world in common. For the idea of decolonization to have any purchase at a planetary scale, it cannot start from the assumption that I am purer than my neighbor.

By using the term "planetary scale" here, I take it that you see this decolonization movement as important also on a global scale?

I am arguing that for the idea of decolonization to truly become a political, theoretical or aesthetic force on a global scale, a number of conditions must be met and a lot of work still needs to be done. For the time being, it is mostly a legitimate aspiration and, in some unfortunate instances, a compensatory discourse.

Decolonization never meant the return to some egosphere or to some elective self-image that would procure a stable identity, protection, safety and security and eventually immunity to an embattled self. The search for safety and immunity and the fear of risk so typical of this age is not at all part of, say, Frantz Fanon's decolonization lexicon which is all about undergoing a trial, or even facing an ordeal.

Furthermore, historically the expansion of colonialism had to do with the broader question, Who is it that the Earth belongs to? That was the key question underlying colonial conquest and imperial expansion since the 15th century. With the partition of Africa in the 19th century, European powers had decided that the Earth in its entirety belonged to them. They were its true owners, and they could occupy lands that were populated by foreign people. They could exploit these lands as well as the people who had always inhabited them, thereby carving out spheres of influence each of them had control over.

To a large extent, colonial expansion was a planetary project. Although driven in large part by national states and national business companies, it mostly had to do with the reallocation of the Earth's resources and their privatization by those who had the greatest military might and the largest technological advantage. This is why in its most historical sense, decolonization is by definition a planetary enterprise, a radical openness of and to the world, a deep breathing for the world as opposed to insulation.

And cynicism?

And cynicism, of course. And racism. Because racism is in the DNA of colonialism. There is no colonialism that doesn't entail a huge dose of structural racism. And there is no colonialism neither that is not driven, let's say, by some form or another of a genocidal impulse.

This genocidal potential can be actualized or it might not, but it is always there. It is there as Hannah Arendt shows in her own work on race and bureaucracy. This genocidal potential was put to work in the Americas, in Australia. It was put to work by the Germans in Namibia. So it is always there. Because where there is racism, this genocidal potential exists. Where there is racism, being-in-the-world is the same thing as being-against-others. The latter are treated as a threat against which one's own existence must be defended. At all cost, if necessary.

Some would then argue that there are still colonial or postcolonial structures operating in the neoliberal project. Would you say that there is then still a genocidal potential?

Perhaps more than at any other moment in our recent past, we are increasingly faced with the question of what to do with those whose very existence does not seem to be necessary for our reproduction; those whose mere existence or proximity is deemed to represent a physical or biological threat to our own life.

Throughout history, and in response to this question, various paradigms of rules have been designed for human bodies deemed either in excess, unwanted, illegal, dispensable or superfluous. One historical response has consisted in putting in place spatial exclusionary arrangements. Such was, for instance, the case during the early phases of modern settler or genocidal colonialism in relation to Native American reservations in the United States, island

prisons, penal colonies such as Australia, camps and even Bantustans in South Africa.

Two late modern examples are Gaza and the encaging of migrant children in the context of the ongoing planetary war on mobility. Gaza and the encaging of migrant children might well prefigure what is yet to come.

In the case of Gaza, control of vulnerable, unwanted, surplus or racialized people is exercised through a combination of tactics, chief among which is modulated blockade or *molecular strangulation*. A blockade prohibits, obstructs and limits who and what can enter and leave the Strip. The goal might not be to cut the Strip off entirely from supply lines, infrastructural grids or trade routes. The Strip is nevertheless relatively sealed off and strangulated in a way that effectively turns it into an imprisoned territory. Comprehensive or relative closure is accompanied by periodic military escalations and the generalized use of extrajudicial assassinations. Spatial violence, humanitarian strategies and a peculiar biopolitics of punishment all combine to produce, in turn, a peculiar carceral space in which people deemed surplus, unwanted or illegal are governed through abdication of any responsibility for their lives and their welfare.

But as I have intimated, there is another, early 21st century example, which consists in waging new forms of wars, which can be called wars on speed and mobility. Wars on mobility are wars whose aim is to turn discounted bodies into borders. They generally begin by turning into dust and piles of ruins the milieux as well as means of existence and survival of vulnerable people thus forced to flee in search of a refuge. These kinds of wars against milieux and ecosystems rendered toxic and uninhabitable are not accidental. They are methodically programmed and conducted. Such milieux and ecosystems are sites of experimentation of new weapons. The targets of this kind of warfare are not by any means singular bodies, but rather great swathes of humanity judged worthless and superfluous.

Can you elaborate a bit more on that?

Let me put it differently. Nowadays, the project is to render as many people as superfluous as possible. The novelty is the production at a massive scale of discounted bodies, a residual humanity that is akin to waste. With our entry into a new climatic regime, this process will only intensify. As the global conditions for the production and reproduction of life on Earth keeps changing, population politics at a planetary level will increasingly become synonymous with excess and waste management. In terms of the future geopolitics of our world, populations will be more and more treated not only in the Darwinian terms of sexual selection, but also within an utilitarian and bio-physiologico-organic framework.

Take a place such as South Africa where a very high percentage of the total population is unemployed. This is not because there is no "work as such". This is not because people do not want to work.

In fact, here as elsewhere in Africa and other parts of the global South, almost everything remains to be done. The amount of work needed in order to create a better life for all is incalculable. But the structure of the economy doesn't really need us all. Nor does it need our time. It doesn't really need every single body, all of our muscles or energies or even the bulk of our social and collective intelligence. And this will be more and more the case in the future, as we move to a phase of human history in which only that which is computable counts. As we speak, many bodies already fall beyond the scope of calculation. Unless we reinvent the terms of what counts and in the process resignify what value stands for as well as the procedures of assigning value, of measuring value, of exchanging value, things won't change. These are some of the key questions any decolonization project worthy of its name has to address if the injunction to decolonize is to be more than a mere ideological phantasm.

Back to the debate on decolonization. There was a heated debate in Norway, during the summer of 2018, about the decolonization of academia. How can #RhodesMustFall in South Africa be relevant for universities worldwide?

The need for a critical reappraisal of the relationship between knowledge, power and institutions is not an exclusively South African preoccupation. In South Africa, the term "decolonization" is one way in which concerns about "deracialization" are expressed. The imperative to "deracialize" is also valid for Europe, for the United States, for Brazil and for other parts of the world. The emergence of new varieties of racism in Europe and elsewhere, the reassertion of global white supremacy, of populism and retro-nationalism, the weaponization of difference and identity are not only symptoms of a deep distrust of the world. They are also fostered by transnational forces capable of making that same world inhospitable, uninhabitable and unbreathable for many of us.

All of this is, of course, important. But part of what truly frightens me is the recolonization of various fields of knowledge by all kinds of determinisms. What frightens me is the active confusion between knowledge and data, the reduction of knowledge to information. It's the idea that the world is a matter of numbers and the task of knowledge is to handle quantities. Furthermore, it's the belief that the best way to generate information is with computers and that which is not computable does not exist. It's the creeping sense that the computer is our new brain.

In such a context, "to decolonize" must start from the assumption that knowledge cannot be reduced to computational information processing. There is therefore a massive need to recover the ability to think. And for me, knowledge is on the verge of being reduced to a reified metaphor. As a result, we are witnessing almost everywhere a tremendous impoverishment of thought.

In the Norwegian debate on decolonization, one of the demands from the young student activists was to have a more global curriculum. What's your take on that?

Right now we are literally assaulted by forces that want to retreat from the world and rebuild a certain idea of the nation, of the community, of identity and difference that is premised on the capacity to determine who belongs, who must be excluded and shouldn't belong, who can settle where, why, how and for how long. Such forces are preoccupied with the erection of all kinds of borders and how they must be policed. They buy into the dream of a "pure" community, a community of people who look the same and act the same. They are sustained by the belief that we can go back to the past because the past is, in truth, our future. Let me just call it the dream of apartheid.

There is another dream, maybe not unrelated to the first. As I have just highlighted, it's the dream of reducing knowledge to calculation by computers. In fact, it's the dream of reducing everything to calculation and explaining everything from within biological and neurological strictures. A planetary library, archive or, for that matter, curriculum is one whose strategic project is to understand the incalculable and the incomputable. It can only be based on the will to go beyond cognitivism. I am not against calculation or mathematics. Nor am I against computation. I am simply saying that neither calculation, nor mathematics, nor computation are sufficient for explaining life. It can't be enough to do correct mathematics. Once we have done correct mathematics, we still need to determine what this exercise implies for the life of beings. Pushed to a certain level, correct mathematics alone impoverishes thought and destroys theory.

Otherwise, we only have one world. We might dream about colonizing Mars or Venus or other unknown planets in the future, but for the time being that is not part

of our actuality. We only have one world, one solar system and for this world to last as long as possible and for this solar system to not calcinate life as such, we need to become a bit more intelligent and wiser. This Earth is our shared roof and our shared shelter. Sharing this roof and shelter is the great condition for the sustainability of life on Earth. We have to share it as equitably as possible. And, in any case, our lives, here and elsewhere, have become so entangled, that trying to separate them will require a tremendous amount of violence. It will require a lot of violence to disentangle humanity from itself and from the rest of the living species. And therefore, especially in the face of the kinds of ecological challenges we face, it is absolutely important to reinvent forms of life in common that go beyond the requisite of the nation state, ethnicity, race, religion, and so on. A curriculum that takes seriously such concerns is absolutely necessary.

And you see these two forces visible in the debate on the composition of the curriculum?

Yes, I do. I would go further and argue that to design a truly planetary curriculum implies salvaging whatever remains of reason as a shared human faculty. To be sure and in view of its own history of violence and unreason, reason must be reformed. But I cannot possibly see how, without it, we can adequately answer one of the most urgent questions that will haunt the human race in this century – *the question of life futures.*

For a long time, we have been concerned with how life emerges and the conditions of its evolution. The key question today is how it can be repaired, reproduced, sustained and cared for, made durable, preserved and universally shared, and under what conditions it ends. Overall, these debates about how life on Earth can be reproduced and sustained and under what conditions it ends are forced upon us by the epoch itself, characterized as it is

by the impending ecological catastrophe and by techno-logical escalation. I am not sure that they can be properly answered from a purely market logic perspective that addresses *life as a commodity* to be manipulated and repli-cated under conditions of volatility.

On the other hand, there is a shifting distribution of powers between the human and the technological in the sense that technologies are moving towards "general intelligence" and self-replication. Over the last decades, we have witnessed the development of algorithmic forms of intelligence. They have been growing in parallel with genetic research, and often in its alliance. The integration of algorithms and big data analysis in the biological sphere does not only bring with it a greater and greater belief in techno-positivism and modes of statistical thought. It also paves the way for regimes of assessment of the natural world, and modes of prediction and analysis that treat *life itself as a computable object*.

Concomitantly, algorithms inspired by the natural world, and ideas of natural selection and evolution are on the rise. Such is the case with genetic algorithms. As Margarida Mendes ("Molecular Colonialism") has shown, the belief today is that everything is *potentially computable and predictable*. In the process, what is rejected is the fact that life itself is an open system, nonlinear and exponen-tially chaotic.

I keep raising these issues because they are not unre-lated to a *problématique* of "decolonization" that would not be a mere ideological phantasm. In fact, these issues may be symptomatic of a truly momentous event we might not be willing or ready to contemplate. Reason may well have reached its final limits. Or, in any case, reason is on trial. On the one hand, it is increasingly replaced and subsumed by instrumental rationality when it is not simply reduced to procedural or algorithmic processing of information. In other words, the logic of reason is morphing from within machines and computers and algorithms while the human

brain is being "downloaded" into nano-machines and all kinds of devices.

As we are increasingly surrounded by multiple and expanding wavefronts of calculation, all we are willing to ask from it is to detect patterns or to recover artifacts whose existence is derived from financial models built on technologies of miniaturization and automation. As a result, *techne* is becoming the quintessential language of reason, its only legitimate manifestation. Furthermore, instrumental reason, or reason in the guise of *techne* is increasingly *weaponized*. Life itself is increasingly con-strued via statistics, metadata, modelling, mathematics.

If my description of current trends is accurate, then one of the questions a planetary curriculum must ask is the following: What remains of the human subject in an age when the instrumentality of reason is carried out by and through information machines and technologies of calculation?

The second is: Who will define the threshold or set the boundary that distinguishes between the calculable and the incalculable, between that which is deemed worthy and that which is deemed worthless, and therefore dispensable?

The third is whether we can turn these new instru-ments of calculation and power into instruments of liber-ation. In other words, will we be able to invent different modes of measuring that might open up the possibility of a different aesthetics, a different politics of inhabiting the Earth, of repairing and sharing the planet?

But what about those who are concerned about loosening texts from canonized European theorists and thinkers in this process?

I am talking about expanding the archive, not excising it. For this to happen, it must be clear to all that the European archive alone can no longer account for the complexities, both of history, of the present, and of the future of our

human and other-than-human world. What we all inherit are the archives of the world at large. Not just one kind of archive. For me, this is a matter of common sense. I am in favor of expanding the archive, reading the different archives of the world critically, each with and against the others. There can't be any other meaning to a planetary curriculum.

In all fields?

In all fields. Naturally. In any subject that has any impact whatsoever on the future history of the world and of life. Or let me put it this way: I feel sorry for any young person who might go through the Norwegian educational system without ever having learned anything about Africa, Asia or China, without having read any African, Indian or Chinese novels or poetry, or without having studied any African, Japanese or Chinese thinker of note. I am deeply sorry for that person. His or her situation makes me genuinely sad. For it is a kind of mental self-amputation, a form of active or passive rejection of the world. The purpose of a planetary curriculum would be to cure our souls from such human-inflicted ills.

In the debate in Norway, the demand for a more global curriculum was labelled by detractors as a campaign for "identity politics". How do you see this argument?

It is a mischaracterization of what is at stake. Because that is not what it is. Actually, it is not about identity politics. It's about the challenges we spoke about earlier. It is about how we locate ourselves in the world today. In a world that has to be sustainable, that has to be built in common. It has nothing to do with the dream of apartheid.

There is a critique of "identity politics" that is a right-wing critique. It usually comes from those forces that have used the trope of identity precisely to oppress and exclude

certain people, to racialize and dehumanize them. Identity politics has historically been used the most by those who were keen to stigmatize different "races", those who in the first place did not believe in our common humanity. They worshipped difference, which they weaponized.

The drama is that the people who were thus objectified and pushed aside, unfortunately embraced these prejudices and internalized them, as Frantz Fanon and many others have shown. In their attempt to reclaim a voice, they ended up defining themselves in the terms of the "difference" to which they had been assigned. So when we say "identity politics", we have to know exactly what is the historical genealogy of this term, and who is practicing it. Those who are practicing it are, for instance, those who, when a black African lands at an airport in Norway, in the midst of a group of many other people, select exactly that person and racially "profile" him or her.

To talk about a planetary curriculum has nothing to do with racially profiling people or texts or archives. It has to do with bringing as equitably as possible everybody, every person and every text, every archive and every memory in the sphere of care and concern. It has to do with proximity as opposed to insulation, with the invention in common of a shared inside, a shared roof and a shared shelter.

Did "racial profiling" happen to you at a Norwegian airport?

For many people of African descent travelling in the world today, these are regular occurrences. I don't want to say more than that.

But since you opened that door, it seems to me that identity politics and other forms of the politics of difference, that is the new opium for the masses. By expressing myself in this way, I am in no way trying to hurt many people who, today, must still fight to reclaim a voice or to recover a face we can truly identify as a human voice and a human face.

What I mean is that in this age of globalized capitalism, identity is increasingly used both as a weapon to further brutalize the weakest in our midst and as a leverage to claim a status of pure or authentic victim. To have been brutalized or to have been victimized, in turn, is increasingly seen as the most potent way to claim one's rights or one's access to care, justice, redress or reparation. The question I would like to ask is, why is this the case? In the conditions of our times, what are the reasons why vengeance or vengefulness is increasingly confused with justice? Is it because we have reached a point where the form of capitalism we live in, the kind of technological progress we have achieved, are no longer compatible with liberal democracies?

The two figures of identity politics I have highlighted will not save liberal democracy from its deadly entanglement with neoliberalism and retronationalism. We can direct as many people as we want to the things that ultimately don't matter – who is wearing a burka in public, who is sporting a Muslim beard, those foreigners who steal our jobs and "our women" and corrupt our culture – such subterfuges won't address what is at the core of the present malaise worldwide. They will only accentuate the present distress that many people feel, inflame negative passions and pave the way for brutalism.

Also in your own country Cameroon you see these forms of identity politics?

In Cameroon in particular, a similar pathos surrounds the question of identities and languages inherited from colonialism. One of the ongoing disputes is about who is more British than French or more French than British. It is totally absurd. Having said that, the question we need to ask is the following: Why is it that various struggles for selfhood and common rights necessarily express themselves in these exclusionary idioms? Why are they not conducted in terms other than those that merely mimic the very categories of

oppression? Why do people keep colluding with the forces that objectively work against their own material self-interest? What are the forms of compensation or enjoyment they derive from what appears to be self-servitude?

What is the solution then?

We need to develop a better understanding of what we are up against and throw out a number of old assumptions. This can't happen if we do not recover the faculty of critique, re-educate our desires and rehabilitate reason as a key faculty for any project of freedom or emancipation. Reason is under siege, reduced as it is to its instrumental dimension. It is being replaced by technicism on the one hand and all forms of negative passions on the other hand.

I am, of course, aware of the violent and tragic histories of reason and not only in our part of the world. So maybe it is more a matter of reforming reason than anything else. Maybe it's about educating reason to cohabit with other faculties. But I cannot see how we can possibly dismiss reason wholesale without deeply damaging the category of truth itself. I deeply believe that democracy cannot survive in the absence of reason, that we cannot share the world, repair it or properly take care of life in the absence of a reformed notion of reason, one that marries thinking, feeling and projecting.

Another critique of the decolonization movement in Norway was that this was smelling of "American campus activism" and that it was therefore not relevant for a Norwegian context.

A proper critique of the decolonization movement must be well informed. I myself have produced a number of critical observations relating to this project. It is true that there is a circulation of tropes, concepts and categories between activists in the United States and activists in the rest of the world.

In the South African case, it is true that the movement has at times been tempted to rely wholesale on concepts and modes of action drawn from the African-American experience or lexicon, in particular insofar as the critique of race or even gender is concerned. This probably has to do with South Africa's own inability to theorize its own historical experience, to speak to its potential universality.

This having been said, to our Norwegian friends, I would simply say this. On matters of decolonization, you should invent forms of student activism relevant to your specific context. But to deny the necessity of decolonizing is part of what Jean-Paul Sartre characterized as "bad faith".

But underlying that argument is probably the idea that the Norwegian universities are not connected to colonialism such as other universities in other countries might be.

Throughout our conversation, I have tried to offer a theory of decolonization that is as expansive as possible. Norway is not an island in the world. Norway is entangled with the rest of the world and has to respond to the address the rest of the world is putting to it. And it has to take this address very seriously, just as South Africa has to respond to the address that is put to her by the rest of the continent, by other parts of the world. That is how we will salvage reason and build a world that is sustainable.

To what extent are our knowledge systems of today still determined by colonialism or oppression?

We need to develop a broader understanding of "colonization". Knowledge systems worldwide are still underpinned by the logic of value extraction. In fact, knowledge as such is increasingly designed as the principal means for value extraction. Colonization is going on when the world we inhabit is understood as a vast field of data awaiting

extraction. Colonization is going on when we throw out of the window the role of critical reason and theoretical thinking, and we reduce knowledge to the mere collection of data, its analysis and its use by governments, military bureaucracies and corporations. Colonization is going on when we are surrounded by so-called smart devices that constantly watch us and record us, harvesting vast quantities of data, or when every activity is captured by sensors and cameras embedded within them. This is what colonization in the 21st century is all about. It is about extraction, capture, the cult of data, the commodification of human capacity for thought and the dismissal of critical reason in favor of programing.

These are some of the issues the decolonization project has to embrace if it is to be more than a slogan. Now more than ever before, what we need is a new critique of technology, of the experience of technical life. For all kinds of reasons. What we are witnessing, whether we see it or not, is the emergence of an entirely new species of humans. It is not the human of the Renaissance or of the 18th century, nor the human of the early or mid-20th century. It's an entirely different species of human, which is coupled with it its object.

The distinctions we used to make between the human and the object are no longer entirely valid. Because nowadays there is no human being without its prosthesis. Our environment is not only saturated with all kinds of technological devices. In fact, we spend most of our lives living with or through screens. This experience has very serious implications in terms of the new natures of cognition, in terms of how we perceive things and reality itself, in terms of what it is that we know or must know, in terms of how we know what we know, in terms of the distinction between fact and fiction, matter and substance or in terms of the monopolization of thought within technical infrastructures.

For "decolonization" to be more than a slogan and be given an edge, we need to attend to these shifts, particularly

in relation to the anthropocene as well as in relation to the reticular nature of computational technologies and the "softwarization" of our existence and that of every other living entity on Earth. We must resist the push to reduce knowledge to what can be bought and sold and reinvent the category of "relevance". This can only happen if we put a renewed emphasis on the questions of "ends", and not only of "means". Saying this, I am fully aware of the fact that our world is going through a period when nihilism is lurking, brutalism is the new norm and the desire for an apocalypse is not far.

Recently you have also been writing about what you call "savage objects". What does it mean that these objects are still in the possession of European museums and how can restitution be done in practice?

This is a complex question that has been thoroughly studied by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy. Together they have produced a compelling report on these matters, and I would advise anyone who is concerned about the ongoing presence of African objects in Western museums to read it. I have been trying to relate the call for restitution to broader questions of debt, reparation and universal justice.

In precolonial systems of African thought, restitution was an obligation in the case that a conscious, malicious and deliberate act of violation was undertaken on another's life. The most damaging wrongs were considered those causing harm to one's "vital force". In contexts such as these, where life was fragile or was liable to being diminished, every attack on the integrity and life force of being, human or any other entity, however slight, merited restoration.

The damages or injury could be calculated in economic terms. But in the last instance, damages, injury or loss were assessed according to a measure of the value of life. In line with this philosophy, veritable restitution is

therefore one that participates in making reparations to life. The law subtending it is more person- than property-oriented. Wherever material damages and interests came into play, the only sense they had was to undertake that restoration of life.

Ultimately, no real restitution could occur without what we must indeed call avowal, that is to say, *the capacity to tell the truth*. From this viewpoint, to restitute was part of an unconditional duty – part of the infinitely irrecusable thing that is life, all life, of that form of debt that was the debt of truth.

The truth is that Europe took things from us that it will never be able to restitute. We will learn to live with this loss. Europe, for its part, will have to take responsibility for its acts, for that shady part of our shared history which it keeps denying or of which it has sought to divest itself. The risk is that by restituting our objects without giving an account of itself, it concludes that, with the restitution complete, our right to remind it of the truth is removed. If new ties are to be woven, Europe must honor the truth, as the truth is the teacher of responsibility. This debt of truth cannot be erased as a matter of principle. It will haunt us until the end of times.

Honoring truth comes with the commitment to learn and remember together. As Édouard Glissant never ceased to reiterate, each of us needs the memory of the other. This is not a matter of charity or compassion. It is a condition for the survival of our world. If we want to share the world's beauty, he would add, we ought to learn to be united with all its suffering. We will have to learn to remember together, and this doing, to repair together the world's fabric and its visage. Restitution will always be partial. There are irreparable losses that no compensation can ever bring back – which does not mean it is not necessary to compensate. To have compensated, does not mean to have erased the wrong. To compensate, as Kwame Anthony Appiah underlines, is about offering to repair the relation.

Cecilie Sachs Olsen

Towards an Urban Attention Ecology

Despite its centrality to urban politics, economies and life, the cultivation of attention, as a way of seeing and inhabiting the world, remains a neglected and undertheorized domain in urban research. Although marginalized as a background noise of "the real politics", I aim in this article to recuperate the focus on attention as a political and practical domain through which the city is produced, lived and contested, and which offers a critical opportunity to develop alternative urban futures. I am specifically interested in how attention is shaped, performed and organized spatially, and what role a spatial reorganization of attention could play in changing the ways we relate to each other and the urban environment.

The French cultural theorist Yves Citton (2017a) advocates a view of attention as a kind of ecology. Resisting attempts to quantify and commodify attention through concepts such as "the attention economy", "the ecology of attention" examines how the many different environments to which we are exposed – from literature to mass media, from the Internet to art performances – condition our attention in different ways. The aim is to reorient our attention towards the shared conditions of life, which is more attentive to the quality of what surrounds these conditions than the quantity of their finances. Attention is here understood as an interaction that foregrounds materiality and spatial relationality. As Citton argues:

> [i]t represents the essential mediator charged with assuring my relationship with the environment that nourishes my survival: a being can only persist in existence to the extent that it manages to "pay attention" to that on which it depends for the reproduction of its life form. It must "attend to" that which enables it to live, it must be concerned for it in order to take care of it (2017a, p. 22).

The logics that today determine our attention economy are, according to Citton, at best unsatisfactory and at worst self-destructive. For example, he observes how the so-called security attention regime directs our attention to mortal threats that have been exaggerated to the great benefit of a few political and

commercial interests, rather than to the possibilities for a better life that we might all share on a planetary scale. This is illustrated in the way in which our epoch is dramatically "inattentive" to the climate imbalance brought about by the continuation of our unsustainable lifestyles. Attending to the climate crisis is not a question of "being conscious" of it as a problem, or thinking about it or even worrying about it, but of dedicating the necessary background resources to deal with it. As Citton points out, it is therefore of greatest importance that we reorient our attention towards commonly held and articulated priorities rather than see it diverted to the profit of particular and narrow financial and/or political interests.

In this article, I use the example of Oslo Architecture Triennale 2019 to discuss how such a reorientation of attention can promote a long-term commitment to planetary care as the most important perspective for architecture and urbanism in our times of catastrophic social and environmental degradation. Founded in 2000, Oslo Architecture Triennale is the Nordic regions' largest festival for architecture and has become one of the world's prominent arenas for dissemination and discussion of architectural and urban challenges. The festival presents a wide program of exhibitions, events, publications, conferences and discussions targeting the general public alongside built environment professionals during a 10-weeks period every third year. The curators of each edition are selected through an Open Call that I responded to together with Maria Smith, Matthew Dalziel and Phineas Harper. We proposed, and won the bid, to curate a festival revolving around "the architecture of degrowth", posing the question: how do we build our cities when economic growth is no longer the goal but social and ecological flourishing matter most?

Degrowth has recently gained momentum as social movements strive for ecologically sustainable and socially just responses to current social and environmental crises (Demaria et al. 2019). As an idea and social movement proposed by scholars, public intellectuals and activists (see e.g. Gorz 1975; Latouche 2009; Kallis 2018) degrowth acts as a powerful call to reject the obsession with economic growth and seek out alternative ways

of organizing society. The most prominent advocate of degrowth is perhaps Serge Latouche (2009) for whom degrowth is a project of decolonizing the imaginary from growth. The ideology of growth is here seen as continued colonial relations "with a pretense of generalized betterment" (cited in Demaria et al., 2019, p. 439), while securing a resource expansion that only benefits the rich minority of the world's population. Degrowth, in this sense, is not a material process of lowering consumption (an irrelevant demand for those who are living below limits) but a sustained practical and intellectual critique or resistance to the destructive and extractive processes of economic growth and "development" (Kallis and March 2015). In other words, degrowth promotes a cultural transformation that re-establishes livelihoods, relationships and politics around a new suite of values and goals. The potential for such transformative change is found in habitual practices through which skills, perspectives, denials and desires are viscerally embodied, as well as in the cultural systems (economic, religious, gender and other) that govern those practices and make them meaningful (Paulson 2017). Citton's notion of the ecology of attention encompasses both these habitual practices and the cultural systems, and thus foreground the importance of cultivating our attention in ways that entail shifts in ways of seeing and inhabiting the world. This task is not simply about asking to what we should be attentive, but also to help us understand what we can do with our attention. How can attention be inserted into practical frameworks that change the way we relate to each other and our environments?

Citton focuses on media systems and digital cultures in his analysis of the environments that condition our attention. However, he stresses how these mediatic systems should be conceived of not just as communication networks but as a common environment that we are immersed in (see Citton 2014). I accordingly extend Citton's analysis to urban space, considering how architecture and the built environment spatially condition our attention in certain ways. I here understand the urban environment as a form of communication network in which we are immersed. This understanding foregrounds that the spaces

through which our attention moves are not simply subject to our attention, but constitutive of it. Consider, for example, how public space is transformed into an advertising medium, studded with billboards and installations serving as eye-catchers for the attention economy. Or how the previously mentioned security attention regime manifests itself in the so-called "new military urbanism" (Graham 2010) that renders cities' communal and private spaces, as well as their infrastructure, a source of targets and threats. The architecture and built environment of cities here direct and constitute our attention by physically preventing or channelling movement, serving or expressing certain political or commercial interests and policing different kinds of people in different ways.

I aim to show in this paper how the current spatial organization of attention may be reoriented around what I call "an urban attention ecology", building on the theories of Citton. My conceptualization of the urban attention ecology is rooted in a two-fold observation. Firstly, that attention rests at the core of our environmental challenges. And secondly, that by becoming more attentive to our urban environment, we may also be better equipped to attend to the needs and challenges our planet is currently facing. The urban attention ecology is here defined through our ability to attend to the built environment in ways that enable us to question its figures of foundation. While these foundations are often seen as static or given, the urban attention ecology foregrounds how they are contingent, performative and temporal. That which is contingent opens up possibilities that things could have been otherwise. The urban attention ecology thus promotes a progressive urban politics in which we seek to lay new foundations and do not doubt our ability to do so. As I demonstrate in the first part of this article, the challenge is that the current urban regime of attention alienates us from the urban spaces that we inhabit by promoting an understanding of the built environment as a form of "natural order" with inherent meanings and predetermined functions that exercise control over the people who use it. Through examining this "naturalization" of the built environment, I flesh out what urban epistemes the focus on

attention may call into question. In the second part of the article, I focus on Oslo Architecture Triennale 2019 as an example of how aesthetic experiences can be deployed to recuperate our attention from alienation, and in so doing open up possibilities for a progressive urban politics in which a long-term commitment to planetary care becomes the most important perspective for urbanism in our times of catastrophic social and environmental degradation.

The urban regime of alienation

Geographer Doreen Massey (2005) defines urban space as a social and contingent construction that is the product of interrelations and interactions between people, their practices and activities. Always in the process of becoming, space then is best understood not as a static or bounded "thing" but rather as flexible and dynamic. However, today we increasingly see attempts to create and portray space as static and fixed through various exclusionary mechanisms. The erection of borders and walls to exclude outsiders reflects an understanding of space related to a sense of bounded community and a mythic or pure sense of place identity. Statues and monuments, as well as the increase in gated communities and privately owned public spaces, further demonstrate how the built environment reflect ideas about who belongs to a space and who does not. Such exclusionary mechanisms are amplified in the grand constructions of architect-designed space that promote moderated urban scenes in which harsh, uncanny and ambivalent sensations are kept at bay by the regulation of sensory intrusion. In this urban realm of new, perpetually replaced, pristine, smooth, polished, shiny and glossy commodities, we are, according to cultural geographer Tim Edensor, "affectively and sensually alienated from the material world" (2007, 226). The result of this sensual alienation is an entrenched form of attention that inures us to sensory overload while at the same time inhibits us from relating to the inextricably communal ground that supports our existence in the city. To understand how this sensual alienation affects the urban attention ecology, we need to unpack the relation between attention and care.

In French, the word attention refers both to a capacity to notice something (être attentif) and to a capacity to care for it (être attentionné). Accordingly Citton (2017a) understands attention as something that forms slowly through a complex system of care. In the recent work of feminist scholar Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) care is defined through connectedness and interdependency, as an activity that thinks of subjects in connectedness with others. As Citton suggests, the ecology of attention is constituted through the attentive performance of this care activity. According to de la Bellacasa, the care activity consists of three aspects: a vital affective state, an ethical obligation and a practical labor. As an affective state, care is to be affected by another, to be emotionally at stake in them in some way. As an ethical obligation, to care is to become subject to another, to recognise an obligation to look after another. And, as a practical labor, caring requires more from us than abstract well wishing, it requires that we get involved and act in some concrete way, that we do something (wherever possible) to take care of another.

The valorization of interrelations that underpin these three aspects of care are under threat in the current urban regime of alienation. Firstly, the affective state of care and the ability to be affected by another is compromised through a "singling-out" of urban inhabitants. In the obsession with urban design as the fresh, crisp assurance afforded by the latest new thing, we remove all memory of the collective practice of other uses and the confidence in the traces they leave behind. Consider contexts where an action can be risky. Signs of previous acts which are repeated, and therefore in principle "successful", will guide whoever subsequently encounters the same problem; for example the gradual forming of a path through a terrain that is difficult to traverse, or the double door where the one handle that is polished from use indicates that this is the side that will open. Rather than recognizing how these signs of "wear" may function as a medium for sharing and establishing relationships that brings one closer to the crowd, they are assigned negative connotations as signs of aging, breaking down, decline, deterioration and vulnerability. As urban inhabitants we are singled out because the first alteration of an

artefact carries with it responsibility; the artefact is moved from its intact, fixed and immaculate state and into one of transformation. Take for example the decision to hang a shelf on the wall in a rented flat: if there are already holes in the wall, it might be easier to decide to hang the shelf there than if the wall has no holes in it. As a result, urban dwellers are constructed as mere renters of urban space with the sense of little or no ownership over it.

Secondly, the regulation of sensory intrusion through urban design may support official and unofficial mechanisms of control and regulation that compromises the ethical obligation of care. Consider flat surfaces that are spiked to prevent sitting, smooth surfaces adorned with bumps to prevent skateboarding and benches with armrests to prevent people from lying on them. In his famous book *City of Quartz* from 1990, Mike Davis observes how the new upscale places of downtown Los Angeles are full of such "invisible signs" that warn off an underclass "other":

> Although architectural critics are usually oblivious to how the built environment contributes to segregation, pariah groups – whether poor Latino families, young Black men, or elderly homeless white females – read the meaning immediately (p. 226).

Most of us are often oblivious to these exclusionary mechanisms as we are not in need for a place to lie down and rest our body in urban space. Yet, cultivating our attention to such "invisible" exclusions and uses of urban space are central for producing more socially just cities.

Thirdly, our ability to get involved and take action in relation to social and/or ecological justice through a practical labor of care is compromised by current conditions of accelerated neoliberalism, oligarchism and authoritarian populism. Cultural theorist Elke Krasny (2019) observes how such conditions have put demands on architecture and the built environment that are extremely averse to the attentive considerations of interrelations that constitute care. Modern architecture, she observes, is linked to detachment, autonomy and the independent, almost exclusively

male, genius. Hence, despite the initial function of architecture to provide shelter indispensable to the continuation of human life and survival, the glorification of independence and individualism positions the architect's work outside the realms of connectedness, dependency and care giving. The essentially individual approach to attention in the current attention economy plays its part in promoting the genius starchitect-celebrity, who in turn produces individual buildings that are meant to "stand out" (and thus maximise attention "income") more than they relate to (and ultimately care for) the urban environment in which they are placed. As a consequence, modern architecture, Krasny observes, "is very often built on a tabula rasa claim, a deeply colonial mechanism that annihilates nature and everyone and everything that existed on and with the land before" (p. 35).

Current practices of urban development more generally are also criticized for building the future on the annihilation of the existing. In their writings on the evolutionary notion of succession in urban redevelopment, planning scholars Raul Lejano and Erualdo González (2017), observes a tendency in urban (re) development processes in which planners and architects project an imagined community on to a place and direct growth and change toward the same. Invariably, they argue, this turns the attention away from the existing community, effaces it, and through a series of disciplinary mechanisms, unravels the social fabric of everyday life. In similar vein, the use of computer generated images (CGIs) to express visions of future urban space in architecture and urban planning, is critiqued for projecting the future as a terrain that is empty, open and subject to colonization (see e.g., Adam and Groves 2007; Dunman 2017; Speight 2013). The CGIs are criticized for transforming the urban environment into sleek promotional images, displaying racial homogeneity, economic inequality, atomized subjectivities, cultural appropriations, speculative global investments and a privately managed public realm.

The architectural theorist Jeremy Till (1994) argues that the ways in which we conceive of and eventually build cities, and the buildings that constitute them, are to a large extent determined by the way that we represent them. He accordingly

problematizes the diagrammatic, large scale and rationally orientated techniques that are predominantly employed in standard modes of architectural presentation. Through these techniques, the architectural project is reduced to a coherent and rational system presented through stable, unified and ordered elements: "[it] proceeds in steady manner from the scale of the city, through the scale of the building and finally to the scale of the architectural detail" (p. 239). The production of the built environment is depicted as a linear process that reduce the city to a series of codes that are reductive and exclusive: the scale excludes the realm of the body, the graphic excludes the social and political, and the rational method of representation exclude the imaginative, the suppressed and the irrational. In other words, the city is presented as a form of master plan and system to be controlled, rather than as a social product of inhabitable difference.

The diagrammatic, large scale and rationally orientated techniques that are employed in these presentations can be understood as what Citton refers to as "the second material ground" (2017a, p. 199) of the environments that condition our attention. In general we do not see this second material ground: when we inhabit urban space we see buildings and streets, not the urban master plans and architectural drawings that underpin them. Yet, Citton argues, it is only by adapting our ways of seeing and our intelligence to this second material ground, that we will be able to unite the ecology of attention with a real attention to ecology, planetary care and the interrelations between humans, non-humans and their material environments.

Reorienting attention through aesthetic experiences

Being attentive to the second material ground that underpins the urban spaces we dwell in, requires that we be actively attentive to the concrete relational fabric which assures the consistency of the representations and functions that we project onto the built environment. A building or a square, as the material and spatial grounds of our urban experience, are part of a system that is simultaneously productive and destructive, and whose

fabrication cannot be separated from the weaving of concrete demands of our lives. According to Citton (2017a), aesthetic experiences provide both a scale model, a full-size trial, an opportunity for practical exercise and for critical reflection in this regard. I find that theatre and performance are good examples of this as their relationship to matter put the second material ground into focus: Imagine that you are at the theatre. On stage there is a standard wooden chair. The actress playing the Queen enters the stage with her court, and sits down on the chair. The audience now agree that the chair is a throne, without it having changed its physical appearance. The imaginative labour required to transform a chair into a throne is significantly less demanding than the physical and cognitive labor of the carpenter who carves a throne out of oak. However, by letting the semiotic and experiential processes through which meaning is produced come readily into view, theatre expands our view of materiality: it reveals the relation between practice and representation by elucidating how representations are inseparable from the broader social practices that authorize their existence. So, if we transfer this view to the built environment, it reorients our attention to the second material ground of architecture, and cities in general, by foregrounding that these are never fixed or predetermined, but always emerging – they are a process to be constantly invented and reinvented. This perspective, then, challenges the idea that the built environment is something exterior to us, something we cannot influence, because if something can be imagined and made, it can also be reimagined and remade.

As curators of the Oslo Architecture Triennale, we saw the festival as a platform for producing aesthetic experiences that in similar vein could reorient our attention to the second material ground of architecture and the built environment. Practically, this meant that we broke with the standard modes of architectural presentation in which the architectural project is reduced to a coherent and rational system presented through stable, unified and ordered elements. Instead, we focused on how buildings, and their representations, are settings in and through which spaces are made, negotiated, experienced and contested,

encouraging Triennale visitors to consider broader questions about the assumptions, beliefs, everyday practices and political goals that underpin architecture.

Exploring degrowth within a festival of architecture and urbanism seemed specifically pertinent seeing that urbanization processes are a major player in the world's socio-ecological predicament, as the main culprit of the world's accelerating resource depletion. Furthermore, cities are the terrain where the growth paradigm has been materialized through increasing privatization, enclaves of regulated consumption, and real estate speculation. At the same time, the city is the place where people mobilize in public squares and streets to make visible their desires for change, fostering a "politics of the possible" (Swyngedouw 2018). Accordingly, the degrowth call to limit economic growth is not an external call based simply on the fact that nature is running out of resources. Rather it is a social call for limits: we want to limit ourselves in order to collectively take responsibility for each other and the planet we are living on. This approach highlights that environmental damage is a question of culture, with implications for how we treat each other and the planet that is much more embedded and deep-rooted than the technocratic questions that dominate architectural sustainability discourse and only address how to reduce carbon emissions. Rather, it involves raising complex questions about the commons, equality and redistribution – and thereby also sticky questions about values and convictions. In order to engage with such sticky questions, we – the curators – moved away from notions of immanent meanings that can be investigated, exposed and made obvious through the expected Triennale exhibition, and rather focused on producing what curator and cultural theorists Irit Rogoff (2006) terms "embedded criticality".

To Rogoff, embedded criticality implies that one create the conditions that "actualise people's inherent and often intuitive notions of how to produce criticality through inhabiting a problem and 'living things out' rather than by analysing it". Criticality can here be seen as an activity that brings together that being studied and those doing the studying so that it is not

possible to stand outside of the problematic and objectify it as a disinterested mode of learning. This activity, according to Rogoff, has a hugely transformative power as it, rather than simply looking for an answer, enables a heightened awareness and access to a different mode of inhabitation. Citton (2017b) similarly points to the reading of literature as an example of an aesthetic experience that fosters this form of heightened awareness: in our everyday lives we tend to filter stimuli through a number of criteria that defines what we are sensitive or insensitive to (certain smells, certain views, certain patterns and so on). This enables us to navigate and feel at ease at the places we are in because we can attend to the same things wherever we are. The extreme version of this form of attention is the projection of power through a colonizing mission, which deletes local features only to impose the colonizer's standards (the tabula rasa claim of modern architecture comes to mind here).

In contrast to this form of projection, Citton turns to the reading of literature as a regime of attention centred around immersion. Reading is about diving into worlds that are originally alien. He compares this immersive attention with a travellers' first arrival in an exotic city where she doesn't know the language, customs or standards and have to find her way on her own. Since she is not the master of the environment and might not even know the rules of the games played by the locals, her attention consists in an attitude of multidirectional and open-minded vigilances: dangers and rewards can come from any sides so the attention is intense but also wide and unfocused. The goal of immersion then, is not to reach a final explanation of something or revealing some kind of ultimate truth, rather it is to confront our preexisting forms of knowledge and certainty with something radical alien, which will help us refine and improve our possibly reductive and oversimplified worldview. This goal very much chimes with what degrowth is about, given its call for an altogether qualitatively different world that will evolve through confrontation with the existing one. Serge Latouche, accordingly describes degrowth as "a horizon chartered through confrontation with hegemonic worldviews" (2015, p. 362). For the Triennale to produce aesthetic experiences that would

immerse the visitors in possible degrowth worlds and in so doing make their perception of architecture performative rather than constative, we decide to present "a library of degrowth futures" (The Library) in lieu of the traditional architecture exhibition that characterizes architecture festivals.

The Library

The Library was built from materials repurposed from the previous exhibition in the National Museum of Architecture in which it was placed. It consisted of various lendable items such as books, furniture, tapestry, paintings, tools, compost, plants, games devices and material samples that had been collected through an open call. What the items had in common was that they all challenged the standard methods of architectural presentation: they focused on open-ended speculations around degrowth in relation to its spatial formations, societal structures, building materials, and everyday actions, rather than offering a blueprint model or masterplan for what a degrowth society would look like. These open-ended speculations challenged the figure of the autonomous and detached modern architect by promoting ways of knowing and practicing architecture that were oriented across various scales of connectedness, dependency and care giving. For example, a kaleidoscopic living atlas installation by the Hungutu Collective questioned how degrowth could be understood in, and embodied across, the spatial practices of ecosystems in sub-Saharan Africa. The kaleidoscope worked as a means of subverting the assumed objectivity of Western Canonical spatial knowledge production by insisting on an openness to plural perspectives. In the sound piece and afrofuturist archive called "the School of Mutants" blurred history and science fiction to construct a post-growth African future, speculating about what could be otherwise: what if colonialism did not happen? What if Africa was the centre?

Many items in The Library focused on how architecture starts with nature, what is already present in the world around us, rather than the tabula rasa claim of modern architecture. Nature is both the source of architecture in terms of building shelters to

Section of The Library.
Photo: OAT/Istvan Virag.

Kaleidoscopic Living Atlas by the Hungutu Collective.
Photo: OAT/Istvan Virag.

protect from it, but also in terms of imitating and learning from nature in the building of these shelters and making use of nature as a resource that provides the necessary materials (Krasny 2019). Foregrounding these perspectives, The Library raised questions around how architects, in the process of building, care for nature and other living beings (animals, plants, trees) involved and affected by the building process. For example, one of the larger items in The Library was a reading table which was constructed as part of the project *Shelter* for one stone, one tree, two people and four birds by the artist Kalle Grude. The table addressed not only the needs of the human users of the table: the techniques and materials used to construct the table was equally oriented around the care for nature and other living beings. Another example was the installation *Logistics* by the architecture office Lilla Sthml. The installation invited visitors to The Library to become custodians of a pine by bringing home a bag of seeds and with it the responsibility for the time and effort it takes to grow a single pine tree. Through such projects, The Library explored the architect's responsibility for the entire process of building, from the sourcing of materials and the environmental impacts of these processes, to caring for the people (workers, residents, neighbors) involved along with concerns around what has been displaced and how the building will be maintained.

There were also projects that more explicitly challenged the architectural design process. Visitors could borrow the book *From Subtraction* by the architecture think tank n'UNDO. The book approached architecture from a radical perspective: "doing" forms no part of the architectural project, rather "undoing" and "redoing" are the only strategies available. True architecture, the book argues, can be found in simple and everyday interventions, such as (re)orienting a chair to contemplate the landscape. The book *Moving House* by the architecture studio Fragment presented another option: Observing the Norwegian tradition of transporting houses from rural areas to growing urban residential areas, they asked how this tradition could be re-invigorated in Norway, as a form of radical re-use, a source of neighborly collaboration and as a reframing of the financial models for housing development.

Logistics by Lilla Sthlm.
Photo: OAT/Istvan Virag.

The architectural design process was also challenged in the playful sculpture *Under Construction* by Norell/Rodhe. Instead of following the persistent architectural conventions of considering abstract space before objects and materials, they proposed to start with reclaimed materials and use them to construct a fictional city under constant construction. The sculpture subverted the standard mode of architectural presentation by taking an intimate and tactile engagement with objects and materials as its starting point. The fictional city, then, was created by transforming the context and not the structure of the objects: a municipal sink became the town hall, trims from a domestic interior became an apartment building, plastic light diffusers became an office building. Through this process, the objects became animated, and thus initiated a world that cannot exist without the eye performing certain operations, manipulating and attending to the physical world in ways that test the relation between materiality and meaning. The sculpture, then, like the rest of the objects in The Library, offered themselves as a stage on which the viewers could project a series of actions, suggesting use, implementation and contextualization. Accordingly, The Library suggested the transmutability of things, training participants to search for alternatives within the present – to take apart the urban environment and combine or rearrange elements to form new social and material possibilities.

Instead of the traditional exhibition catalogue that normally provides a guided analysis of the works put on display, The Library presented a book of fiction titled *Gross Ideas: Tales of Tomorrow's Architecture.* The book presented a series of fictional short-stories written by, among others, authors, poets, activists, engineers and architects who had been invited to explore "the buildings, institutions and streets of the near [degrowth] future, glimpsed through the lens of fictional characters, places, and cities" (Harper 2019, p. 2). The reader was not introduced to stable and premade future worlds, but were taken through the dialectics, struggles and conflicts of making it. Alongside the protagonists of the stories, the readers are asked to imagine and immerse themselves in the full range of emotional challenges and difficult

choices that have to be made once all the usual landscape markers and reference points have shifted or disappeared.

Towards an urban attention ecology

For some critics, the Triennale was a failure because it did not present any concrete plans or solutions for what a degrowth future would be like. As one critic put it: "it is simply impossible to understand why [the curators] do not inform the audience about what they precisely are after. An exhibition like this should have a sign by the entrance saying THIS IS DEGROWTH" (Brochmann 2019). Another journalist lamented: "With these shortcomings [the curators] do not only reduce the ability of humans to solve problems, they are also reducing their own project. Oslo Architecture Triennale could be a provider of viable solutions in the field, but instead they are delivering science fiction!" (Choi and Austrheim 2019). These critiques point to an alarming situation in which attempts to challenge or question the status quo is ridiculed and or neutralized through a demand to present concrete solutions. The change of register, from a discussion of problems to one of solutions, from political critique to pragmatic politics, demonstrates a situation in which paying attention to something is valorized through a certain external purpose – gaining something, finding a solution, solving a problem. This may be detrimental for discussions around climate change and associated environmental challenges.

Kathryn Yusoff (2009), for example, observes how discussions around climate change tend to revolve around the questions of what do we know, how do we know it and what should be done about it. This focus results in the production of expert models, predictions and scenarios that aims to eradicate the uncertainties of how much cannot be known or is difficult to know. Yet, as Yusoff argues, we need to be attentive to "nonknowledge" as an important part of human experience even though it is often seen not to contribute to knowledge. This is important in order to attend to a complex natural system that cannot be regulated by technology and rational models alone. Accordingly, The Library

challenged the focus on pragmatic solutions, characterized by the attention economy, by foregrounding an urban attention ecology in which "being attentive" implies the practice of an activity that constitutes its own end. As Citton points out, this latter form of attentional effort carries its own benefit with it: in the increase in our ability to be attentive. Being attentive to something brings about an exit from the self and an absorption in the thing in question. The attentive being thus fosters and expresses a fundamental relational condition. While pragmatic solutions risk seeing things in isolation, the condition of an attentive being is one of interrelation. This implies a move from expertise to what Donna Haraway terms an "unsettling obligation of curiosity, which requires knowing more at the end of the day than at the beginning" (2008, p. 36). Citton argues that this form of curiosity is about learning to valorize and be astonished by everything that exceed the categories and anticipations through which we set about grasping them. The move from expertise to curiosity, then, implies an opportunity to "unbound" the city from all those categories and practices that limit our ability to attend to that which we do not yet necessarily know or see, or that which is not yet a subject in the world.

The potential for change is found in this ability to think beyond the status quo, and in so doing enabling us to imagine, communicate and construct an endless variety of socioecological worlds that ultimately broaden our scope of actions. This reorientation of our attention need not entail turning away from pragmatic and policy agendas. Rather, it may help move us towards an urban attention ecology – a wider vision that, by foregrounding the second material ground of our built environments, can provide a context for pragmatic policy debates and raise fundamental and often neglected questions about cities, urban space and architecture, about processes of urbanization and societal transformation, and what they might become.

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Emergency: Searching for sub-polar ethics

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As an artist and researcher, I'm interested in exploring the question of natural resources. This has led me to work across a range of contexts and in relation to specific minerals and materials, including copper, coal and saltpetre, all raw materials that have had a major impact on the development of industrial societies and are hence heavily charged with geopolitical, economic and cultural implications. Drawing from a wide range of media, my work poetically experiments with chemical and physical transformation processes that, based on the properties of each natural resource – such as electrical conductivity, crystallization and agency – all refer to and go beyond the rationales of extractive industries.

In 2017, during my first research residency in Norway, I met a passionate biologist and professor, Karin Pittman, at the University of Bergen. One of the documents she kindly shared with me was an ethical role-play she developed based on a paper by Vike et al.[1] in 2009. This was a role-play related to fisheries and aquaculture dynamics in Norway, Canada and Chile.

Role-playing is an active learning technique which can be very powerful and memorable. Ethical issues are explored in a safe environment and help participants prepare for real-world situations. The more authentically the roles are played, the more the participants learn a diversity of skills, gaining a broader awareness of all the actors that constellate, in this case, around the industry, trade, regulation and environmental impacts of salmon aquaculture; a species understood as introduced and establishing itself in the wild throughout the Southern Hemisphere.

Not used to working or directing groups of people within a performative event, I nevertheless proposed an extended role-play based on Pittman's play. Adding more-than-human roles, this proposal became a central part of my last research residency, which took place in November 2021 in the remote region of Magallanes in Chile. Above all, I believe bringing this play to Chile in the midst of its social and political changes, unfolding since

1   Siri Vike, Stian Nylund, Are Nylund, "ISA virus in Chile: Evidence of vertical transmission", Springer Verlag (2008).
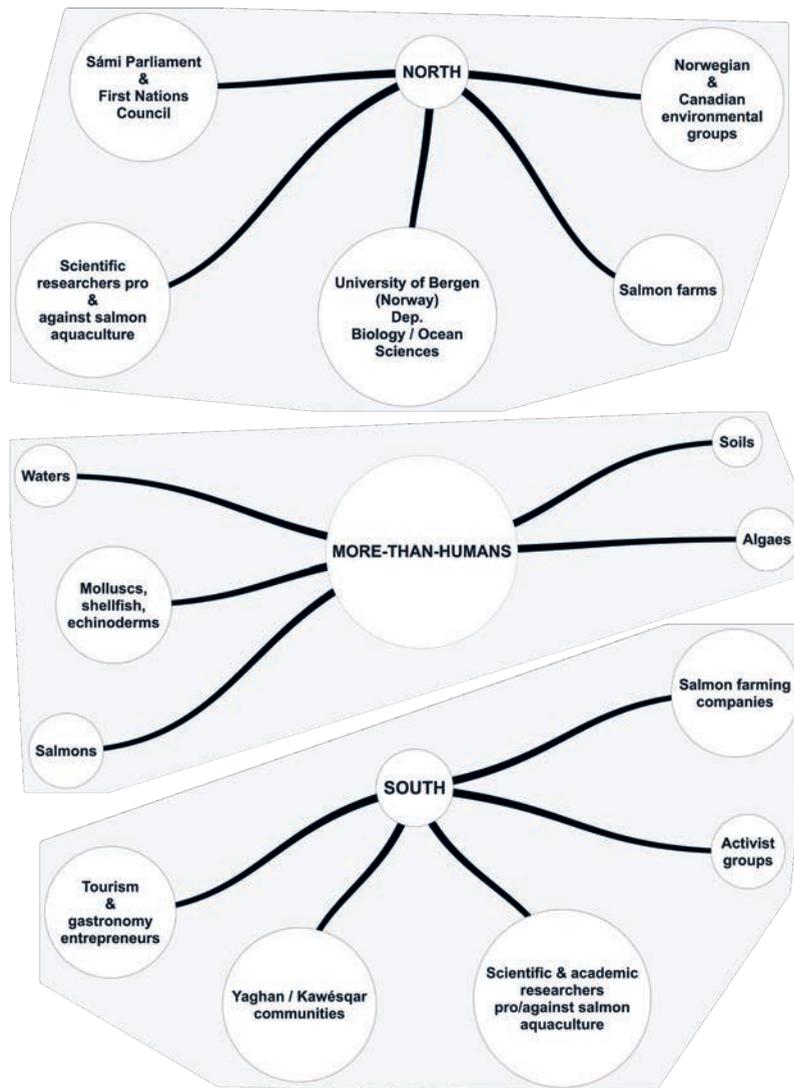
El Ethos role-play, mind map, (2021).
Courtesy of the author.

October 2019, can offer a way to explore the following questions:

How can we foster a collective human and more-than-human ethical reflection that encompasses the whole techno-scientific-political-economic-social spectrum surrounding the salmon industry? How can this reflection serve ancestral thought as an original de-anthropocentric language in coastal zones within a de-colonizing context? What are the ethical foundations that unite human organizations from different contexts and nations to paradoxically promote and resist the salmon industry?

Natives of the North Atlantic and North Pacific Oceans, salmonids were first introduced in Chile for recreational purposes. From the 1970s onwards, the first experiments were carried out to install them as an industrial resource and intensive harvesting for human consumption in technical cooperation with the Fisheries Association of Japan (DAISUI) and the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA), predecessor of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). Noting the possibility of commercial salmon farming in Chile, Chilean technicians, with new knowledge gained from this cooperation, retired from public functions and moved to salmon farming enterprises.[2]

Today, there is ample scientific evidence of the negative impacts this species has had on the country's freshwater ecosystems, mainly because it is a carnivorous apex predator in the trophic (food) chain and because of the polluting effects that the waste from its cultivation has on the seabed. One of the most immediate impacts is seen in the decline of populations of native species. According to data from the Environment Ministry, Chile's rivers and lakes are home to approximately forty-three species of endemic fish, most of which are in a state of vulnerable conservation or in danger of extinction.[3] Almost all of these

2   Soichiro Shirahata, "El recuerdo de Introducción de Salmón del Pacífico y Salmonicultura con la Cooperación técnica Chile-Japón efectuada entre 1972 y 1989", *Aqua.cl* (January 2017); online at: terram.cl/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Cooperación-Técnica-de-Salmón-Chile-Japón.pdf.

3   According to the Species Classification System of the Environment Ministry; online at: clasificacionespecies.mma.gob.cl/procesos-de-clasificacion.

species are small in size, with measurements that in some cases, such as *peladillas, puyes, pochas, pejerreyes,* catfish, or *karachi,* do not exceed ten to twenty centimeters in adult state. There are exceptions to these sizes, such as the large Chilean catfish (*Nematogenys inermis*) and the trout perch (*Percichthys trucha*) that reach a maximum of forty-five to fifty centimeters. Because of their size, these species are easy prey for all types of salmonids in Chile. This ecological problem is seen from the other side as an economic opportunity for nearby communities and, of course, salmon producers.

Within the political environment today, the country is drafting a new constitution that would replace the current one, written under Pinochet's dictatorship, which enabled neoliberalism's birthplace. Chile has also recently elected its youngest president in history; a former student leader originating precisely from Magallanes, who is promising social justice through a decentralized, feminist, green, non-binary and plurinational new administration.

In order to understand this unprecedented shift, listening was therefore the most necessary act of sympathy during this residency in Magallanes: a sub-antarctic region in the extreme South, where the so-called last "pristine" waters are slowly receiving melting glaciers and new invasive species. A region with strong military presence, consequence of historical multinational maritime transits through Cape Horn, and today's gateway to increasing international scientific expeditions to the White Continent. Its human settlements and seascapes are marked by patriarchy and colonialism, alongside

Acoustic pollution
Plastic pollution
And low tides revealing human dismissiveness

Emergency of the Benthos was the title of the residency program. *Emergency* was the keyword defining the program along with all my reflections and experiences there. In moments when the world closely observed the geopolitical PR held at the UN Climate Change Conference – COP26 –, and when Amazonas, Sahara, Patagonia, Arctic and Antarctic shed cries of disillusionment, I wonder if Gaia's Covid pandemic deployment would be radical enough for humans to understand this pivotal moment of anthropogenic ecocide.

Amidst all these revolving reflections and concerns, my ethical role-play proposal was articulated both to share specific knowledge about salmon as an ancient key species in the North, and to foster an understanding of the unique context of the invasiveness of this species in the Southern Hemisphere, alongside all its implications for its ecosystem and society. And by unique I also mean its geopolitical uniqueness. Salmon's introduction history in Southern watercourses has coincided with the implementation of an economic system that has failed in so many ways. While some farmed salmons manage to escape and survive, some generations have already been *rewilded*. They are familiarized to these waterscapes, swimming ever-south, either oriented by a confused magnetite in their noses, and/or searching for sub-antarctic temperatures as the planet warms up. All this, while some indigenous, civil, and scientific communities are strongly resisting against further aquaculture instalments.

On December 22nd, 2021, the first role-play took place at the Liceo Experimental LIUMAG, in Punta Arenas. Moderated by Jorge Trujillo Emilqueo, history, geography and social sciences teacher, the play included nine 14 year-old students, each of whom freely chose a role, and studied it during the previous two weeks:

- Dafne Pacheco: Tourism & gastronomy entrepreneurs from Chilean and Argentinean Patagonia
- Fernanda Castro: Aquaculture industries from the North
- Fernanda Quinchén: Aquaculture industries from Patagonia
- Martina Pérez: Scientists from University of Bergen (UiB)
- Nayeli Bugueño: Algae
- Nicolás Barría: Activists from Patagonia
- Rodrigo Mancilla: Yaghan community from Puerto Williams

El Ethos role-play, performance, December 2021.
Liceo Experimental LIUMAG, Punta Arenas, Chile.
Photo courtesy Rafael Cheuquelaf.

- Sofía Quezada: Soils
- Tomás Risco: Molluscs, shellfish & echinoderms

First, there was a definition round in which each participant presented her/his role, including a definition of its activities and position towards salmon farming. Afterwards, there was a reaction round in which each argued its position with figures and facts, followed by a brief pause to consider each other's arguments. In the last round, each role, from its own perspective, had to answer the question as to how the salmon industry could lower its impact on the environment. The duration of the performance lasted about 45 minutes.

Interestingly, both the role of scientists and the gastronomic/touristic entrepreneurs presented somewhat ambiguous positions. In the case of the UiB scientists, the student argued – departing from the information she gathered online – the need to have more effective research towards a better production, especially focused on defeating the industry's main problem: the salmon lice. In the case of the entrepreneurs, it was a divided position: Argentineans tend to have a strong position against salmon farming, benefiting local products and fostering the conservation of flora and fauna, whereas Chileans argue that salmon consumption is a healthy option, but their businesses are affected by its high price due to lower availability in the local market, since most of its production is exported overseas. All more-than-human roles (soils, algae and molluscs) had a negative view of salmon farming but offered a solution: having stronger supervision and monitoring from the state. The role of the fishing industry of Patagonia – salmon farmers – based its arguments on the human labor that this industry enables in the region, and its interest in sustainability goals set by its own associations among producers. Is this ethically enough?

According to Rafael Cheuquelaf; journalist, photographer and musician, who was present during the play, "the most strongly grounded positions were those of the students who played the roles of environmental activists and indigenous peoples. Because of the amount of data and arguments, as opposed to

Tourism & gastronomy entrepreneurs

Aquaculture industries from the North

Scientists UiB

Algae

Soils

Molluscs, shellfish & echinoderms

Yaghan community

Aquaculture industries from Patagonia

Activists from Patagonia

the other representations, which were not so elaborated or were only concerned with the generation of jobs and monetary gains. And the students themselves said at the end of the play: when it comes to research, there is much more material available to argue against this industry than to defend it."

What does this signify? In what way does the internet, social media, and other information channels, play a decisive role in forming ethical understanding and viewpoints? Could this be a true reflection of reality? Adopting role-play scenarios as an artistic research device is an attempt to bring these larger, infrastructural and geopolitical systems close to ourselves, where one may better attune to the complexities that impact across human and more-than-human worlds. Having to speak as if from the position of soil, salmon, or scientist, can function as a type of rehearsal for real-world situations. Shifting perspectives, especially from human to more-than-human, is to place one's body within the enormously influential and often damaging flows of global business.

Since "a changed economy reflects changed ethics and brings about changed identity", this role-play was intended to reflect on the possibility to accept that there is an ethical urgency for a more sympathetic approach to other planetary forces and beings, but also sympathy for our own credibility and identity.[4] Salmon is here to stay. But who is salmon? And who are we?

Valeria Graziano, Tomislav Medak, Marcell Mars

When care needs piracy: the case for disobedience in struggles against imperial property regimes

4 Paul Verhaege, "Neoliberalism has brought out the worst in us", The Guardian (September 2014); www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/29/neoliberalism-economic-system-ethics-personality-psychopathicsthic.

As a collective whose research work has focused on disobedient care practices, we found our work becoming increasingly topical after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.[1] As so many journalists and scholars began the labor of reflecting upon the wide-ranging impacts of the virus on social life, we were witness to the rapid rise of "care" – the focus of our research – to the status of a watchword. (To be more precise, care was one of the two focuses of our inquiry, the other was "piracy".) This watchword was endlessly repeated in the news, and relentlessly evoked in the wealth of statements and position pieces that proliferated across the mediascape. Our concern is that this explosion of "care" virtually everywhere – including, to our dismay, in management talk about the need for workers to "take good care" of themselves while keeping up normal levels of productivity – may lead to an exhaustion of the critical capacities of the term; and to the development of "care fatigue" – given the compulsory performative tone that "care" so often carries; and we are also concerned that being in favor of "care" is little more than an obligatory form of "virtue signalling" in polite society. This has prompted us to revisit our own investment in the concept, and to seek to better articulate the reasons for our coupling of the notion of "care" with the qualifier "pirate" when we started work on the topic four years ago. What is at stake, we feel, is more than a mere intellectual refining of vocabulary: it is, rather, a question of determining whether or not there is any possibility of orienting political action (aka, taking sides) within the complexities of this long pandemic.

Care, a pacifying notion?

Care is an extremely capacious notion. It encompasses labor, emotions, knowledges and resources, as well as ethical and moral reasonings. It can be work, either paid or performed for free; and it can be a pleasure, the most fulfilling of tasks. It can describe attention to the self, or it can be directed towards others,

sometimes at great personal cost. It encompasses the micropolitics of everyday interactions just as much as the vast scale of the global systems that shape them.

But it is precisely this capaciousness that makes a broad notion such as "care" prone to misuse and abuse when it begins to circulate as a keyword in current political wars over the future order of society. In the aftermath of the first pandemic waves, the concept of care is increasingly being used to deflect more radical and urgent political debates. Rather than being a conduit for a fundamental rethinking of institutions and infrastructures, the language of care risks confining debate to more "moral" or sentimental registers, in which mobilizing "togetherness" involves little more than symbolic acts. (The ritual of public applause for medical workers, celebrated as sacrificial heroes while they are put at risk by reckless policies, is one of the principal examples of this tendency.)

But we do not want to give up on care just yet. It is a notion that has the ability to express simultaneously an ethical orientation, a feeling and a mode of laboring; and, notwithstanding the problems we have been discussing, it can indeed be a useful tool for imagining a much needed reorientation of societal priorities. It is this way of understanding care that has been to the fore in recent struggles such as the Care Income campaign promoted by the transnational movement Global Women Strike; the Essential Autonomous Struggles Transnational campaign of the Transnational Social Strike Platform; and the #ProtectHomeCareWorkers campaign by the UNI Global Union; and it also informs discussion in *The Care Manifesto* (The Care Collective 2020). Working with the insights from our research into pirate care processes, we want to contribute to such efforts to anchor the use of "care" in political and materialist terms, by highlighting its (in our view increasingly unavoidable) relationship to criminalization, disobedience and piracy.

Despite the wealth of grassroots solidarity initiatives and some unprecedented relief measures taken at governmental level in various countries (which have included the temporary re-nationalization of hospitals and the distribution of basic income to

citizens affected by the pandemic), the year 2020 has tended to reinforce a perception that there is no space for political agency within community-based practices. Although grassroots organizing stepped in to fill the vast gap created by the sudden upsurge in demand for various kinds of support that neither states nor markets were able or willing to adequately supply, strong political mobilization aimed at the failures of care systems, either locally or internationally, has remained largely absent. For instance, campaigns to make Covid-19 vaccines globally accessible under open-patent licenses have been largely limited to online petitions.[2] In contrast to reactions in other historical moments of major crisis, there seems to have been serious difficulty in finding ways of organizing that are effective political responses to the current phenomenon of pauperization.

It seems important in this moment, therefore, to take stock of the practices that are able to politicize care, and able to push for structural change in the provision of care beyond the spheres of either grassroots solidarity or top-down state intervention. Thus, in this article, starting from our own research process within the Pirate Care project, we want to flesh out the importance of disobedience in this impasse: to find ways of politicizing the terrain of care, and actions that are able to redefine the terms of what counts as political in the first place.

These questions have been our point of departure in approaching the topic of care. And what we have wished to evoke with the term piracy is all the practices of survival and solidarity that disobey unjust legal and social rules that have as their primary goal the enforcement of an entrenched division of labor and the expansion of property at the expense of living beings.

Pirate narratives of care and freedom

The figure of the pirate is oft quoted and much beloved in left and libertarian political visual cultures because it immediately conjures up a defiance of authority and cheerful plebeian liberation.

In its most popular incarnation – a ragged sailor with a black patch over one eye and a wooden leg, and with a hook replacing a missing hand – the figure of the pirate already evokes a story of disobedient care; for it is well known that during the "Golden Age of Piracy", between 1650 and 1730, those sailing together under the flag of the Jolly Roger had strict rules of compensation for those injured in battle. Unlike the lower ranks in the navy or on commercial ships, who, once they were no longer useful, would be disembarked at the first opportunity and left to their own devices, sick pirates would be allowed to remain with their crews as long as they wished to and would receive healthcare on board (Konstam 1999). (The doctor himself, and his medicine chest, was one the most precious trophies to be acquired during a takeover (Kuhn 2010).) In fact, it was their poor conditions – "impressment, harsh discipline, poor provisions and health, long confinement aboard ship, and wage arrears" – that caused thousands of sailors to turn pirate in the first place (Linebaugh & Rediker 2000:160).

However, rather than being associated with care, the figure of the pirate has more often been seen as embodying the adventurous and convivial forms of life that might become possible once the squalid regime of Empire has been left behind. Historians tell us that accurate primary sources of information about the life of pirates are scarce, and mainly derived from trial documents written by hostile parties. It is therefore remarkable that pirate stories and legends have contributed so much to the shaping of the modern notion of freedom and liberation, and to the political imaginary of the Enlightenment era. According to the late anthropologist David Graeber, the popularity of the myths that pirates put in circulation about their deeds and ways of life – including stories about the free land of Libertalia – can be considered "the most important form of poetic expression produced by the proletariat emerging from the maritime traffic of the North Atlantic, whose mode of exploitation paved the way for the industrial revolution" (Graeber 2019).

The history of European imperialism and the rise of global capital are indeed maritime histories. Alongside the plantation and the mine, the ship is one of the key sites in which the modern capitalist regime of accumulation from labor and property came into being. In the ship's belly, relentless regimes of labor discipline were first implemented; while new forms of financial speculation over fungible property were introduced in order to insure its cargoes (Baucon 2005; Roscoe 2020). Unlike the privateer, who played a key role in imperial expansion, and whose right to plunder was sanctioned by official *Lettres des marques*, the pirate appeared as an intolerable figure of disruption in the emerging new world order. During a moment when Empires were extending their domination over all known lands and people, pirate ships were inadmissible outsiders, existing beyond the boundaries of the totalitarian capitalist project. As Amedeo Policante has argued, the concept of Universal Jurisdiction (the right of states to claim jurisdiction over an accused person regardless of their nationality or the site of the alleged crime) was first introduced by European states in the eighteenth century as an exceptional measure, specifically designed to deal with pirate crews who operated beyond any single state's jurisdiction. Subsequently, as the measure was gradually extended, it developed to the point of "radically transforming the very nature of international law" (Policante 2014).

As Policante also noted, the words Empire and pirate, curiously enough, share the same etymology, both deriving from the ancient Greek verb *peiran* – to attempt, to risk, to try (Policante 2015). The figure of the pirate is intimately linked to the expansion of those same empires that their way of life sought to challenge. What was at stake in the attempts and endeavors of both parties, and the risks and trials that they each undertook, was the form of government of the world itself: on the one hand, there was an attempt to create an integrated system of exploitation and ownership over humans and natural resources; on the other, an attempt to experiment with forms of decentralized and direct democracy – which some pirate communities even managed to replicate on land as well as on board of a ship (cf David Graeber). In other words, what was at stake was, on the one hand, a conception of freedom based on the idea of property;

and, on the other, an idea of liberation – based on its negation.

These different conceptions of freedom and property are the red thread that links the pirates of the Golden Age with their contemporary counterparts battling against modern property laws. The piracy of today is largely associated with battles over knowledge, culture and biogenetics: who owns the copyright, who owns the patent, and on whose terms can such knowledge, medicines or crops be used and shared? The answers to these questions have immense implications for the provision of care. These are the crucial issues at stake in the struggle between giant corporations and the networks of practitioners who are determined to repoliticize piracy as an act of legitimate defiance against laws that place property before freedom. But what kind of property regime are these contemporary pirates facing?

In the gap

We mentioned earlier how, during 2020, we found ourselves increasingly reflecting on the ever more visible gaps of provision that were opening up between care that was being organized by self-organized mutual aid and solidarity initiatives on the ground and what was being offered by governmental bodies in response to the multi-layered care crisis associated with the pandemic. Implementing the kinds of welfare reform that would be necessary at a relevant scale to meet people's needs in such a crisis would have implied, inevitably, a radical change to current taxation regimes – i.e. those very same international regimes that have evolved over the years since they were first conceived of to combat the pirates, and which today frame the scope and legitimacy of all global financial transactions. Unsurprisingly, this did not happen.

Instead, the void that existed beyond what could be provided by civic organizing and governmental actions was filled by the market. Caring for people is increasingly being organized through regimes of property, and this development was accelerated during the pandemic.

We outline here three trends within the world of big capital that are shaping, and benefitting from, the practices through which care is organized: an acceleration in the platformed division of labor; an increase in the marketization of targeted segments of healthcare provision; and the ongoing globalized landgrab that is depriving people of their means of sustenance and forcing them into migrancy.

Before considering some examples of how pirate care is seeking to resist these trends, let's look at each in turn.

An increase in the platformed division of labor

The accelerated digitization of all aspects of life in the present conjuncture of the pandemic has led to a significant transformation of labor conditions: those who could work in the safety of their homes have come to depend on digital platforms for their work, delivery of groceries and/or medicines, as well as contact with their friends and families, while their needs were being catered to by a mushrooming army of low-wage care-workers, warehouse pickers and couriers, who have had to continue moving along the logistical vectors, thus risking infection. The pandemic lockdown has led to a precipitous increase in the rate at which both telework and provision-work are being transformed into forms of "logged labor" – coordinated, quantified and measured through apps and platforms (Huws 2016). Similar processes have engulfed education, culture and recreation. The interaction between "domesticated/connected" and "mobile/disposable" subjects – operationalized through the networked capital that makes one the digital overseer of the other – has accelerated this kind of platformed division of labor and deepened the separation of the working classes (Paul 2020).

Big tech corporations have readily embraced their central position in the coordination of this new pandemic life. Amazon, Deliveroo and an endless roster of other delivery services have expanded to meet this exploding demand, unflinchingly piling pressure on their staff to work at a breakneck pace. In a parallel process, the kinds of tech companies that primarily command technology and data rather than labor were aiming for an increase in public esteem. Google and Apple claimed a role for themselves

as benevolent public health advocates, creating a privacy-preserving contact-tracing protocol, and regularly releasing community mobility reports to monitor the effects of lockdown measures. Meanwhile Zoom, WhatsApp and other communication services were determining our capacity to work, socialize and organize. Differences between those companies aside, this sudden dependence on private digital platforms – dubbed the "screen new deal" by Naomi Klein – has created a windfall for the techno-capitalist oligarchy. The financial markets, awash with money that had nowhere to be invested amid the largest global economic contraction since the second world war, have also secured fantastic increases in their wealth.

All of these companies will emerge from the current crisis ready to exert an inordinate impact on the future direction of societal development, and to continue their colonization of large parts of the care economy.

Precision-hedging the future of healthcare

The effort to ramp up healthcare capacity to contend with the exponentially rising number of Covid cases has been, and still remains, the central concern for epidemiological responses. In the famous "Flatten the Curve" graph illustrating this concern, healthcare capacity is shown as a straight line, but the unfolding of the pandemic has demonstrated that this capacity is a mirage. It was initially measured in terms of its ability to meet the urgent need for more ICU beds and ventilators, but shortfalls in care provision across the board were to prove equally problematic; these were hard-baked into the system as a result of the crippling effects of marketization in the decades prior to the outbreak: overworked medical staff; resource-strapped primary healthcare; the mass warehousing of the elderly in care-homes; and the precarity of care-workers who were shuffled between a large number of different care-homes. Healthcare systems in many countries had already been deliberately disaggregated: high-value treatments had been privatized, and private clinics had been allowed to extract high returns, while public healthcare systems were

tasked with basic health provision and disease prevention – areas that were constantly underfunded and under-resourced. With governments ignoring the warnings of scientists that an epidemic of this kind was only a matter of time, capacity to produce medical supplies and conduct epidemiological responses in the face of any such emergency had been severely cut over the years. Thus, governments found themselves dependent on the private sector for the speedy delivery of PPE equipment and test-and-trace procedures. In the UK – to take one example – efforts to secure both these services faltered and failed, as private providers were selected that had little experience or capacity to deliver.

This retreat from public provision is widespread, but it is arguably best evidenced in the field of high-tech medicines, where the domination of big pharma, together with a slow but ongoing process of divestment from public research and development infrastructure, has led to reduced capacity for the production of medicines that address public health concerns, or are seen as "non-rivalrous" (i.e. their consumption by one person does not affect the ability to consume of another person). The first Covid-19 vaccines were thus developed by venture-capitalized private research start-ups. The unprecedented public funding they received, and the advance orders for their vaccines placed prior to their finalization, socialized the risks of developing these new remedies, but the resulting market valuations, profits and patents will remain private. The net effect of this market-dependent approach will be that the less affluent part of the world will be left to its own devices, unless countries with a strong public healthcare orientation, such as the economically struggling Cuba, produce their own vaccines and pass them onto generic drugs producers. With vaccines becoming only slowly available to the less wealthy countries, the virus will continue spreading and evolving into more resistant strains, creating further complications down the line.

The novel approach to quick-delivery vaccines championed by BioNTech and Moderna is based on messenger RNA, which is also projected to be essential for custom therapies for cancer and heart diseases. This branch of medical research is dominated by

private companies and closed patents (Martin & Lowery 2020). Future high-value precision medicines are thus likely to remain in private ownership, meaning that in the future this model of development is likely to siphon off ever more resources from public healthcare systems, making them even less capable of responding to public health crises, and making the availability of treatments even more highly uneven.

Enclosures of land, disposability of migrant lives

The last future-hedging process we want to highlight is corporate landgrab and incursion into wildlife habitats, which is the underlying force driving the zoonotic leaps that lead to epidemics such as SARS-Cov-2. In the logistically-connected systems of global agricultural production, financial institutions based in New York drive landgrabs and forest clearing in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Wallace et al. 2020); agritech and fintech work together to create new frontiers of extraction. The resulting destruction of ancestral habitats, global rush for productive lands and expansion of industrial farming – facilitated by global agribusiness – are driving people away from their land and into urban slums, and from there, in search of basic sustenance, across deserts and seas to arrive at the borders of affluent countries.

There they are met by a bordering regime that both criminalizes migration and absorbs the exploitable illegal workforce; undocumented migrants are exactly what is needed for the performance of low-paid seasonal work in sectors such as agriculture or domestic labor. Global landgrabs and enclosures thus produce disposable populations: people who labor in the provision-systems of high-income countries, while living at the extreme end of the care labor asymmetry.

Piracy today is a struggle against property "on steroids"

What the three capitalist processes discussed above share is that they are part of an accelerated conversion of resources, infrastructures and social systems into assets – that is, a specific kind

of private property which focuses on profits from the rising values of assets rather than the production of goods. This is part of the wider trend towards the financialization of all economic transactions, and it provides the basis for financial capital to exert control over the future development of large swathes of goods and services, without necessarily holding directly property in them. Essential care provisions such as health, assistance for the elderly, housing, education, and so on, are being increasingly assetized; while at the same time the pensions, health insurance and savings of many ordinary people have come to depend on the income generated by these same processes of assetization. Assetization is thus progressively locking ever larger numbers of people into a trend in social development that will create even more radically segregated societies, while expropriating us from our very capacity to shape the future.

These future-hedging processes are deepening further the entrenched divisions of labor that already exist – within and across borders – in the work of provision for essential societal needs. The ample statistical detail of the 2018 report from the ILO on care-work paints a very clear picture (Addati et al. 2018): the majority of paid and unpaid care-labor is performed by working-class people, overwhelmingly women, migrants and people of color. During the pandemic most of these carers had no choice but to continue going to work at high risk to their own health and the health of their communities. It is no surprise, then, that their communities – traditionally underserved by care-systems – were the hardest-hit. As black and decolonial feminist literature highlights powerfully, care-labor under capitalism is structured around this asymmetry: those who provide care can least expect to receive adequate care in return.[3]

3   For more on that asymmetry: Evelyn Nakano Glenn, 'From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol 18 No 1, 1992: https://doi.org/10.1086/494777; Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 'You Have to Show Strength: An Exploration of Gender, Race, and Depression', *Gender & Society*, Vol 21 No 1, 2007; Alessandra Mezzadri, 'On the Value of Social Reproduction: Informal Labour, the Majority World and the Need for Inclusive Theories and Politics', *Radical Philosophy*, No 204, 2019: https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/on-the-value-of-social-reproduction; Natalia Quiroga Diaz, 'Economía Del Cuidado. Reflexiones Para Un Feminismo Decolonial', *Revista Feminista Casa de La Mujer* 20, No 2, 2011; Françoise Vergès, *Un féminisme décolonial*, La fabrique éditions 2019.

The wave of community-driven organizing we witnessed with the onset of the pandemic were geared towards filling the gaps created by insufficient capacity, bureaucratic negligence and deliberate exclusion across the institutional landscape of care provision. Such organizing is, however, situated and localized, while the mechanisms driving the development of the contemporary institutional landscape of care provision are structural and global. Assetization creates self-reinforcing mechanisms that seriously limit the future possibilities for institutional transformation, and pre-empt any change of direction towards more socialized and responsive care provision. This process is underpinned by technological change, which is entrenching a division of labor that normalizes the conditions for low-paid, often migrant, workers through the proliferation of legal tools that make them "legitimate".

In our work on Pirate Care, we have been focusing on practices that not only self-organize around care in novel ways, but do so by openly disobeying laws, executive orders and institutional arrangements, whenever these stand in the way of freedom and solidarity. People engaged in these practices frequently articulate their disobedient actions as political demands, contesting the normalization of regimes of exclusion.

This is why we named them "pirate". What they do often entails risk: they get arrested and prosecuted for saving people from drowning in the Mediterranean; for leaving water for migrants crossing the desert; for bringing pregnancy terminations to women from countries where such procedures are illegal; for providing shelter to the homeless; for downloading scientific articles.

In the absence of other means to mobilize around the future of care-provision, it is urgent that laws which support imperial processes of assetization, and the intensification of an unequal division of labor, are disobeyed and politicized. We want to highlight some of the initiatives that have inspired us as we have been working towards the articulation of what piracy and its political stakes could be today, in the context of the crisis of care (Fraser 2016). These initiatives are Sea-Watch, Docs Not Cops, Science Hub and Njal.la – all organizations that have shaped our analysis from the very beginning of our inquiry; and Sezonieri

and DREPT, organizations with which we have come in contact while preparing a research residency in Austria.[4]

Sea-Watch is a civilian search-and-rescue initiative helping migrants survive arguably the deadliest migration route in the world – the short stretch of the Mediterranean Sea between Northern Africa and Southern Europe. Since 2014 over 600,000 migrants have made the passage, with over 16,000 of them having been confirmed as dead or missing in shipwrecks. Earlier in the decade, after a series of major shipwrecks, EU states, especially Italy, temporarily committed themselves to the prevention of further loss of life at this southern border. However, with the so-called "refugee crisis" of 2015–16, the EU made an about-turn, rescinding its obligations under the Geneva Refugee Convention, Charter of Fundamental Rights of European Union and other human rights norms. This about-turn led to the denial of entry into Italian and Maltese ports for civilian sea and rescue ships which had previously been able to bring refugees to safety; and in August 2017 this culminated in the confiscation of the *Iuventa*, a ship run by the German NGO Jugend Rettet and captained by Pia Klemp, while *Sea-Watch 3*'s captain, Carola Rackete, was arrested in July 2019. Civilian sea and rescue organizations are estimated to have saved 100,000 lives since 2014. However, while up to thirteen ships constantly operated alongside a variety of civil society actors in 2016, Sea-Watch is now one of the few organizations still resisting the EU's clamp-down – and their ships are these days more often detained in port than in action. Despite the size of its operation and the risk its mission now entails, Sea-Watch nevertheless considers its efforts as having little more efficacy than the application of a sticking plaster. The solution they always put forward in their statements is a political one – securing a safe passage for all migrants.

4   See: https://kunsthallewien.at/en/event/pirate-care-ein-talk-mit-valeria-graziano-marcell-mars-and-tomislav-medak/. We have launched the collectively written Pirate Care Syllabus within the "… of bread, wine, cars, security and peace" exhibition at Kunsthaus Vienna, curated by the WHW. The exhibition opened on March 8th, 2020, and all the on-site activities, including our residency within the program of the exhbition, had to be cancelled.

Docs Not Cops is a campaign of medical staff and patients resisting the regulation imposed by the UK government on NHS England in 2017, requiring ID checks on all patients requiring non-emergency care, as required in the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts, aimed at policing migrants. On the grounds that they've been trained to provide care universally to all who need it, groups of medical staff in hospitals have been refusing to act as part of an "internal border", and as the extended arm of the immigration service. Furthermore, they have been refusing the accompanying introduction of charges for migrants, which could plant the seed for further expansion of charges to other patients.

Science Hub, the "Robin Hood of access to science", provides public access to tens of millions of scientific research papers that are protected by commercial intellectual property law and only legally available after payment – often of very large sums. It has had a number of its domains revoked over recent years, and recently Twitter also revoked its account, following an injunction from an Indian court initiated by the largest commercial publisher in the world, Elsevier, which is famous for the staggering 37 percent it rakes in for providing access to the articles that scientists write, review and edit, while receiving no compensation whatsoever. Losing domains is a given for "shadow libraries" such as Science Hub (Liang 2012).

Njal.la is a domain registration service that acts as a go-between and allows organizations and individuals to operate through domain names that do not identify them. Incorporated (as 1337 Ltd) in the tax haven of Nevis, it reappropriates the mechanisms used by globalized capital to avoid taxation to provide anonymity for precarious projects such as shadow libraries. It thus allows these libraries to continue to resist globalized intellectual property enforcement and make science accessible to all, whether in low-income countries or in rich institutions.

Sezonieri is an activist-led campaign for the rights of agricultural workers in Austria, which supports the labor struggles of migrant seasonal workers, in collaboration with the trade union PRO-GE. As part of its policy to close its borders to large numbers of people, Austria, like most European countries, has put in place processes that illegalize migrants, and has policed them heavily, and this in turn has led to shortages of exploitable labor; it has therefore had to organize a special fly-in visa regime for workers from Eastern European countries so that they can pick its asparagus and salad. These workers were provided with no epidemiologically safe accommodation nor medical care. To counter this, Sezonieri has been working with migrant seasonal workers to prevent exploitation, improve working conditions and help enforce their rights. In their outreach activities, its activists have to go onto farms to meet the workers, thus facing the threat of being charged with trespassing on private land. In the midst of the pandemic, however, they have been putting a list of demands onto the political agenda – for higher wages, better sanitary conditions, and compensation for the increased health risk incurred by migrant agricultural workers, as well as for the abolition of nativist and anti-migrant discourses, the de-criminalization of migration, and the creation of a more just system of food production.

DREPT is a self-organized initiative of eastern European live-in care-workers in Austria, founded in 2020 to protect caregivers from exploitation and abuse. The initiative provides counselling, crisis support and political advocacy for caregivers, who are nominally self-employed, but in reality are recruited and dependent on employment agencies, making them ineligible for trade union representation, minimum wage agreements, paid vacation or sick leave. DREPT argues that if caregivers were entitled to full protection under labor law, the entire system of elder-care would no longer be financially sustainable, and that this makes agencies, the state and the bulk of Austrian society complicit in their exploitation. Amid the pandemic, the initiative has built a Facebook community of over 10,000 and organized a protest – "Applause is not enough, employment now" – demanding proper employment status and protection for care-workers.

Conclusions

From our standpoint, it appears that at the onset of the pandemic much of the public expected governments to act rationally and to take decisions in the name of a common good. But in the end the key issues of concern were not just the extent to which individual governments took on the challenge of meeting this expectation – important though this was; rather, a much more important cause for concern was the nature of the systemic conditions and structures within which these governments were functioning. Governments act in an environment that is already market-dependent, and, as such, thrives on scarcity and exclusion. Under these conditions, a failure to seize on the pandemic as an opportunity to transform the politics and values underpinning public health (as well as other areas of welfare provision) for the better was a completely predictable response. This is why these conditions must be placed at the center of our political horizon: they must become politicized, and sooner rather than later. In the currently constrained terrain of political mobilization, however, such politicization may increasingly need to come from the standpoint of disobedient, maroon, and pirate, modes of organizing (James 2013).[5] We believe that the imaginary of piracy allows us to foreground the pressing need to expand the realm of conceivable responses to the crisis – and for coordinated action that questions the normalization of imperial property and labor regimes.

PS:

Our point about care increasingly needing piracy could be complemented by a second, parallel, one – that acts of piracy can also be understood as a call for care. Piracy is frequently a necessary strategy for finding workarounds for people living in societies ruled by corrupt thugs who care for no one but themselves. Disposable populations sometimes have no other choice but to lie, cheat and dissimulate, simply to re-assume some control over the conditions of their survival. Yet there is nothing romantic about piracy in the majority world, where tinkering is a necessary skill rather than a political practice of liberation. One testament to this in the "dial-up" parts of the world are the streets filled with stalls selling CDs with pirated content that the "broadband" rest of the world would regard as a nostalgic remnant from a bygone era. The ruling thugs in those countries have no compunction about shutting down this kind of street piracy whenever the imperial order incentivizes them to do so. This second question, however – the tragedy of piracy without care – will have to be left for another occasion.

5   For maroon resistance see Joy James, 'Afrarealism and the Black Matrix: Maroon Philosophy at Democracy's Border', *The Black Scholar* 43, No 4, 2013: https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2013.11413675.

Lilia Mestre

Artificial Friendship

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Brussels, 8 October 2020

Dear you,

We most probably have not met before and we might not meet again. That doesn't matter so much now. Meanwhile, between the past and the future we are here together, reading or listening to the same words, each of us in a different space and time. Me and you giving attention and attending to the words and presence of each other. In different temporalities, political constellations, economies, concerns and forms of awareness.

I hope you are well, I really do, and I also hope that you are able to deal with all the questions that come through this terrifying moment that we are living, and that you can, in one way or another, embrace them.

While writing these words, I remember the first verses of the book *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler, which I read throughout the first Covid-19 lockdown. The story tells about a dystopian world where survival becomes the only concern of all living creatures, humans and non-humans. Despite the dystopian reality, a sense of hope is carried by the main character, the 18-year-old Lauren Olmina. She believes in community building and in the possibility of re-seeding a new world. A world she doesn't know yet. To support her belief, she collects all of the knowledges at her disposal: books, tools, guns, seeds, landscapes and behaviors. She writes verses in her diary as a way to communicate her thoughts to others. The first verse is:

> All that you touch
> You change
> All that you Change
> Changes you.
> The only lasting truth
> Is Change
> God Is Change.

Regarding the question about "curating and performing in times of halting and transformation"* launched by Roselle Pineda, and to which I decided to write this letter, I ask myself how to curate change? and I tiptoe towards the question. I don't see any other way than to attempt to get closer to the will to accept change as a determinant intention. And, I don't want to thwart that possibility in any way. So I decided to write a letter because its address forms a "you". A "you" I want to entangle with.

I will most probably deviate from the task of telling you about my approach to the curatorial in the time of the pandemic but I hope you don't mind, because in that deviation I hope to touch the very heart of it. This approach takes time. The time to suspend fast conclusions. The time for observation. The time for caring and holding, the time we share. Maybe the time to not address everything at once but to focus and be closer to what we are doing. The time when we reach out. When we make ourselves visible to others. When we are seeking connection.

I like the way letters bring thought, feelings and words together. The writing of letters proposes a certain attention for the thoughts that appear, the involvement of the self, the looking out of the window, the starting again from the beginning to make sure the thought follows. To be thinking about you in every step. Maybe this is not just happening when writing letters but that's my feeling now.

I have to think about the project "Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine" initiated by Mette Edvardsen, which I'm part of. In this project, a collection of "living books" reads individually to one audience member at a time, a book they've learned by heart. This project takes place in libraries and raises many questions around the artwork in terms of authorship and spectatorship, but actually the most important is what happens in the encounter. Two people, a specific situation, a certain time, many questions. The text – learned by heart – passes through the performer in several ways, multiple times, and it is always new every time the performer retells it to an audience member. There is no way around it. Whatever happens here is in the in-between of the encounter. In the time we spend together.

And when Covid-19 made encounters impossible for awhile, Mette asked us (the books) to write to our readers in case of not being able to meet in person. What a beautiful thought to write the text again, this time not as one of the strategies to learn by heart but to actually send it to someone. Someone like you, someone that we have never seen before and probably will not see again. The intention of such a process engages in taking the audience as a friend. The epistolary calls for intimacy-at-a-distance. I will never forget you.

The last time I received a letter was the 4th September 2020, not so long ago. Tom Engels, a writer and dramaturge, and at this point also mentor at a.pass, an educational artistic research platform where I work for about 12 years now, presented himself by writing a letter to a.pass. It was great to be addressed personally, with precision and in such an attentive manner. In my experience, that letter made connections across the personal, the people in the room, and the world outside. We were woven at that moment between the personal, the collective, and the world. The letter was a way to create relations through what really mattered to Tom at that moment, his vicinity and the actual political context of homophobia. We were caught in between story and history, both making each other simultaneously.

The world is on fire. Don't you think?

In my work as a curator at a.pass, I continuously develop a research on scores that I title Scorescapes. When I was asked by former director Elke Van Campenhout to curate at a.pass I got obsessed with the idea of creating a modality of work with the postgraduate researchers that could encompass several types of research in the arts with multiple modes of expression. A kind of infrastructure that could support difference, even conflict or at least dissensus. A support structure for critical dialogue through making and articulating artistic practice. Not a place of unity, conclusion and certainty but a place of vulnerable co-existence where the capacity of learning and transformation is most important.

The practice of Scorescapes consists of creating a correspondence between several artistic researchers through a combination of presentations and writing practice. We don't address each other directly, as in a normal feedback activity, we address each other with the delay of the letter, the delay of reflecting about what a critical response could be and how we want to formulate it with which language. The delay of the letter produces critique as a modality of care. I'm holding on to you, while responding to your work. I carry you with me every day. I think through you. You change me. I'm totally in love with the idea that a critical world can be a world of change. An inclusive environment of transformation.

I want to mention that I see critique as a responsibility towards the constitution of the "we". A "we" that is constituted by taking the difference between me and you very seriously. A "we" that questions, speculates, embraces and takes responsibility for the "we". I think this is a place of utopia. A place to hope for. All together and all apart at the same time. No restriction of thought. No fear. What could be the politics of such a place?

Maybe the community that Lauren Olmina, in the book *Parable of the Sower*, is aspiring toward, is a community without identity. Meaning a community not based on recognition, similarity, identification, solidity and niceness but a community where difference can be shared. Always vulnerable but not weak. Always reflecting but not unifying. Where collected knowledges are the starting point to take action. Where change is the only truth.

Covid-19 made visible some curatorial approaches that have made sense to me for a long time. Many of these forms are not new but maybe they attach to the precarious and vulnerable environment of the arts in a different manner. For example, to bring people together in smaller groups, one on one performances, to use private spaces to perform and to work with what is there at hand as the conditions for the work. Many of these strategies have been practiced by artists even before the pandemic.

It may be because I'm getting older or because I care for alternative and experimental settings – where the art situation is not about consumption but about processes and experiencing

exchange through aesthetic practices – that I'm attached to this kind of work. Attached to the experience of attending to a poetic construction of the world. To attend to a specific sensibility and logic that makes the world a richer place for each of us. This is probably what art can do and this is not a minor gesture. I strongly hope that we all continue to practice it.

During the lockdown, from March until July, the a.pass researchers and myself used one iteration of Scorescapes to keep in touch with each other but also to keep in touch with ourselves and our individual practices. We called it Scorona. That ironic touch made life lighter while the world was collapsing. It made us laugh. The practice of the score became a way to try to make sense of our lives without panicking about what was going on in the world. Somehow it poeticized and articulated the moment of confusion, despair, isolation, precarity and sorrow that the lockdown ensued. Through the score, we shared and discussed our impressions, conditions and fears. We diligently worked on hopes, desires and aspirations for the world. What else than collective imagination can empower social change?

Scorona, like the other Scorescapes iterations, was a weekly practice. During the course of 3 months, on the same date and at the same hour each of us sent a 5 minute video, text or sound file to someone in the group. In response, two days later, we would get a personal email with a reflection about the material received. These responses led to other videos, sound files or texts, and so forth. Every week we let chance decide to whom each of us would send the material and to whom we would respond. Because we couldn't meet in person, we were somehow obliged to stay with the mediated supports at our disposal through our computers. Those mediating tools suddenly seemed so uncanny. Too familiar and too mediated … or had we never thought of them as existential devices? Somehow, they have been naturalized or socialized or humanized or colonized through Covid-19. We had to look them in the eye.

The only resistance against acting as if the world was normal was to stick to the delay of the responses we sent to each other. Wait a second! A delay that makes you stay in touch. Is

this a paradox or the possibility to extend the connection? The delay in the score enables performing the gap between distance and intimacy and doesn't let the mediating devices somehow smooth over the space between the me and the you. A delay that hopes and transforms the experience of the other not as an image but as a person, somewhere there. Somewhere with a body. Somewhere with feelings and thoughts besides the computer. The correspondence acted like a side effect, a metabolic experience of life. A form of resilience that could be sustained softly.

Just keep writing in whatever way. Just keep an addressee on the horizon. You are not alone.

Can we see the curatorial approach in pandemic times as the production of delays? No fast solutions, no pre-digested arguments, no statements, no filling the void, no certainties, no looking for good strategies, no guilt, no accusations, no sellable goods and goals. But maybe correspondence with a delay in the response, intimacy in the distance, while you go. The time of digestion, the care for the other, the other we don't know at all. The time to hangout with the doubt of not knowing but trying. To let the time of the delay affect our logics of production and attachment. Corresponding.

We know at this very moment that the world is collapsing. That the neoliberal forces that are, at this moment, directing movements are the ones that are most surely leading to collapse. We know that we need new forms of governance that propose resilience on a global level. We know that we don't know what is going to happen. We know that we need each other. We know that art can't solve this in a global manner at all.

I think it's important to take curation literally as an act of care. To take care. But to take care of what? Maybe to take care of what we ask for. To take care of the singularity of each artist. To take care of the conditions in which the work is done. To take care of art as a form of openness and questioning. To take care of each individual work as singular and attached. To take care of poetics. To take care of the paradoxes, conflicts, the estrangement that art can offer. To take care of the environment of exchange. To take care of the audience.

To let in that difference that calls for solidarity.

What do we want to experience when we engage with the world through art? I'm aware that this is a very big question and I think we want to experience many different things since we are many different people. Nevertheless – and in my opinion this is an important question to keep in our minds in all situations – what do we expect from artistic practice?

Covid-19 raised the question of sickness and general burn out as a symptom of the general distress the world is carrying. Time appeared amidst the pandemic as a fundamental lack to care for each other. Suddenly there was no feeling guilty about not being able to attend or assess a certain task in an immediate manner but to engage in thinking about systemic economic and social equity. Suddenly there was an understanding of tiredness, emotional distress, understanding of the time one needs to make sense. The time one needs to make sense of the world. A confrontational reality check that could put in perspective the urgency of collaboration. How many solidarity moments appeared in the past months? Many.

Here I wonder: what is the responsibility of the institution with such a gesture? I want to mention a long term collaborator and a.pass co-curator Vladimir Miller, who has been working for many years on a spatial practice titled Settlement. Vladimir invites the participants and collaborators of the Settlement to share their processes instead of their products in a self-organized, DIY, co-working space to research, amongst other things, a different mode of attention and participation. In this last version, happening at the moment at a.pass, Vladimir introduced the question of The Unconditional Institution as his contribution to the 3 week co-working environment of the Settlement. He asks the following questions: Can we imagine institutions with unconditional access? How would that work within a society where conditional access is the very foundation of social and economic life? Can we create a utopian imperative for institutions to give unconditional access to their resources like space, time, materials as part of their structural organization?

These questions make me think about a non-curatorial collaboration between the Beursschouwburg, a theater in the center of Brussels and Globe Aroma, a platform that hosts refugees and asylum seekers through artistic practice. These institutions together opened up the entrance of the theater, a large area often unused, to support homeless people and people in great distress throughout the confinement. This kind of collaboration made a difference. Or an initiative taken by State of the Arts (SOTA), an open platform to reimagine the conditions that shape the art world today. This artist-run organization connected people with financial stability to people facing precarity as a result of the COVID-19 crisis in Belgium through a direct donation tool.

I call for Artificial Friendship

I call for – Artificial Friendship – and here you are. I open up the potential of friendship with you, in order to make myself available to write to you. I call for – Artificial Friendship – as a form of dedication to the unknown. A form of care for the ones we don't know. A form of practice to engage with the precarious, the vulnerable, the alien ... Dear stranger, how are you? How do you feel? What do you do? I've been thinking about Artificial Friendship as a concept for a long time. By creating scores as an infrastructure of encounter I can observe and experiment with a relational shift in my approach to others. A mode of relation that is based on taking seriously what doesn't correspond directly to my understanding of the world as a valuable companion in life. To take into consideration, not the symbiotic but the intra-dependent relationships, the close and the far at the same time. The known and the unknown and the in between.

I've been asking myself, how can friendship and artificiality be partners towards an infrastructure of care for the other. Paradoxical at first instance, both these concepts, if allied, can create the conditions for a sociability of commitment, dedication, attention, patience and inclusion. I have been working with scores, in their artificiality, to set a series of scheduled moments

in time and space with clear constraints, where one can perform what friendship does, and even become art friends, without having to have a friendship in the first place.

This is an invitation to spend time together. To meet in a place of availability that can engage with the moment of being present to each other. The sort of agreement one can commit to when visiting a friend. I would like to propose we think seriously about this when we think about curatorial and performing approaches in times of halting and transformation. About the spaces and the conditions that want to propose forms of attendance that are not consumeristic but that involve the vulnerability of coming together as a form of co-constituting care for the other. A form of care to the complex societal ecosystem that can embrace change.

In the current conditions of work, which have become more and more precarious, I also have to think about several projects that use the epistolary. The use of this practice became dear to me because it claims a space for attention in simple ways. I see it being of help to other forms of curating or performing.

"Letter to an unknown person" by Kaya Freeman, my daughter, in a project she did with her friend Victor Guezennec not so long ago. Kaya is now 21-years-old and I'm quite impressed by the will of these young people to create spaces for hosting the audience in an intimate manner. They turned a gallery into a crossing place between private and public, and the letter functioned as an invitation to enter the space of their project "La maison des poems" which in English is "The house of poems". This letter described the situation the performers were inhabiting inside the gallery, and the reader could witness it through the window. At a certain point, the letter invited the audience to take the place of the writer inside and to be part of their temporary form of life.

Another project that comes to mind is "Letter addressed to the audience as an attempt to construct spectatorship otherwise". This letter was written by choreographer Adriano W. Jensen and sent by post to many people. In this letter Adriano addresses practice-based spectatorship as a form to stay

entangled with what we see. This entanglement being a constitutive part of the performance. This letter invites the reader for further correspondence and co-thinking of spectatorship.

And to finish this letter, I would like to make reference to a beautiful letter that Bojana Kunst wrote in the beginning of the confinement, "Lockdown Theatre (2): Beyond the time of the right care: A letter to the performance artist". She writes: "The attendance is also care, but, as the notion of care itself, has many articulations. Marder writes about the difference between the forms of attending, like attending as mere presence (visiting an event, observing, standing by, etc.) and as attending to other, presence to other. This presence, attending to other, you know well, is crucial to theater in whatever way it happens. It should be put in the focus, but maybe in a different way as it was done until now. How would a performance change for all, if we attended it as a rich web of practices? The performance as a mesh of environments and processes, ecological correspondences, a mesh of articulations and imaginations, which would enable life to all its players, a field of caring with. No particular projects and interests, but the knitting of the environments and correspondences, a web of co-survival and support, a continuation through the time as the balls of wool."

And with this, I stay with the delay of possible responses. I stay with the desire to be part of a community of strangers that through the arts stays within the complexity of life to imagine forms of co-existence as a contribution to the world.

Warm greetings,
Lilia

*Performance Curators Initiatives (PCI) is the first network of curators, dramaturg, practitioners, researchers, managers, organisers and community workers working on the emerging and expansive field of "performance curation" in the Philippines. https://performancecuratorsinitiatives.wordpress.com/pci-symposium-2020-conversations-on-curation-and-performance/about-pci-symposium-2020/

This text was first recorded and sent to some friends before it was read in the symposium "Conversations on Curation and Performance in the Time of Halting and Transformation", 8th October 2020. The written version has been copyedited by Chloe Chignell.

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Brandon LaBelle is an artist, writer and theorist focusing on questions of agency, community, pirate culture, and poetics. He is artistic director of The Listening Biennial and Academy, as well as editor of Errant Bodies Press. His publications include: *Acoustic Justice* (2021), *The Other Citizen* (2020), *Sonic Agency* (2018), *Lexicon of the Mouth* (2014), *Acoustic Territories* (2010, 2019), and *Background Noise* (2006, 2015).

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Michelle-Marie Letelier is an artist based in Berlin. She obtained her BA from the Universidad Católica de Chile (2000). Her work has been shown internationally, including: Tabakalera (San Sebastián); Or Gallery (Vancouver); Kunstmuseum Bonn; GropiusBau (Berlin); Screen City Biennial 2019 (Stavanger, Norway); Villa Romana (Florence); Bienal Sur 2017 (Buenos Aires); Kunsthall 3,14 (Bergen); Museum of Contemporary Arts (Santiago).

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Margarida Mendes is an hydrosonic researcher, curator and ecologist. She creates transdisciplinary forums, exhibitions and experiential works where alternative modes of education and sensing practices may catalyse political imagination and restorative action. She has been long involved in anti-extraction activism and ecopedagogy, collaborating with marine NGOs, Universities and institutions of the art world.

Lilia Mestre is a performing artist, dramaturge and researcher living and working in Brussels. She works with scores, inter-subjective set-ups and other chance-induced processes as emancipatory artistic and pedagogical tools, which have been documented in various publications. She is interested in forms of organisation created by and for artistic practice as alternative study processes for social political reflection. She is the artistic coordinator of a.pass (advanced performance and scenography studies) since 2017.

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Pirate Care

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All three authors are convenors of Pirate Care (https://pirate.care), a translocal research process focusing on collective learning and disobedient responses to the current care crisis.

Radical Sympathy