

# Michelle Teran

## –SELECTED WORKS–



Banner intervention, *Reclaiming Workshop*, 2016

The following examples situate my research, teaching, and artistic work within a genealogy of social practice and at the intersection of arts, activism, pedagogy, and community-engaged work.

They span film, publications, performances, installations, public readings, participatory events, pedagogy experiments, research groups, seminars, lectures, workshops, and interventions in public space.

## Promiscuous Infrastructures: Practicing Care

Book, 2024

How do we care for each other in our living, learning and working lives? The manual *Promiscuous Infrastructures Practicing Care* calls for an ethics of care and attentiveness to one another, re-imagines the making and the use of infrastructures, and situates care within a genealogy of artistic and social practice.

*Promiscuous Infrastructures* brings together more than twenty contributors—art and social practitioners, researchers, and educators—including the twelve core members of the *Promiscuous Care Study Group*, who have been researching and writing about caring infrastructures and promiscuous care for several years. This project takes seriously the urgent need to imagine diverse infrastructures of care at every scale of planetary existence. The resulting interdisciplinary publication comprises essays, visual schematics and scores, personal letters, recipes, and conversations, which emerge from the work of the study group, situated around the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam.

“*Promiscuous Infrastructures* is an impressive and significant intervention into that key political struggle that has come to define our age – the struggle for care.” – The Care Collective, authors of *The Care Manifesto*.

First Edition  
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Edited by Michelle Teran, Marc Herbst, Vivian Sky Rehberg, Renée Turner and The *Promiscuous Care Study Group*.

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# Promiscuous Infrastructures

collaborative ethics, care, promiscuity, group pedagogy, slow reading, soil, social gardening, entanglement, grieving, collectivity, attention and observation, relationality, higher education, group learning, an other education, covid lockdown, unknowing and opening, burnout, aging, breathing, embodiment, vulnerability, difference, process or product, transformational horizons.



Carla Arcos  
Jacquill Basdew  
Selma Bellal  
Secum Cheung  
Cooking Something Up  
Yoeri Guépin  
Marc Herbst

Czar Kristoff P.  
Pablo Lerma  
Judith Leijdekkers  
Carmen José  
Edwin Mingard  
Skye Maule-O'Brien  
Yusser al Obaidi

Lola Olufemi  
Laurence Rassel  
Vivian Sky Rehberg  
Kari Robertson  
Michelle Teran  
Renée Turner  
Julia Wilhelm



practicing care



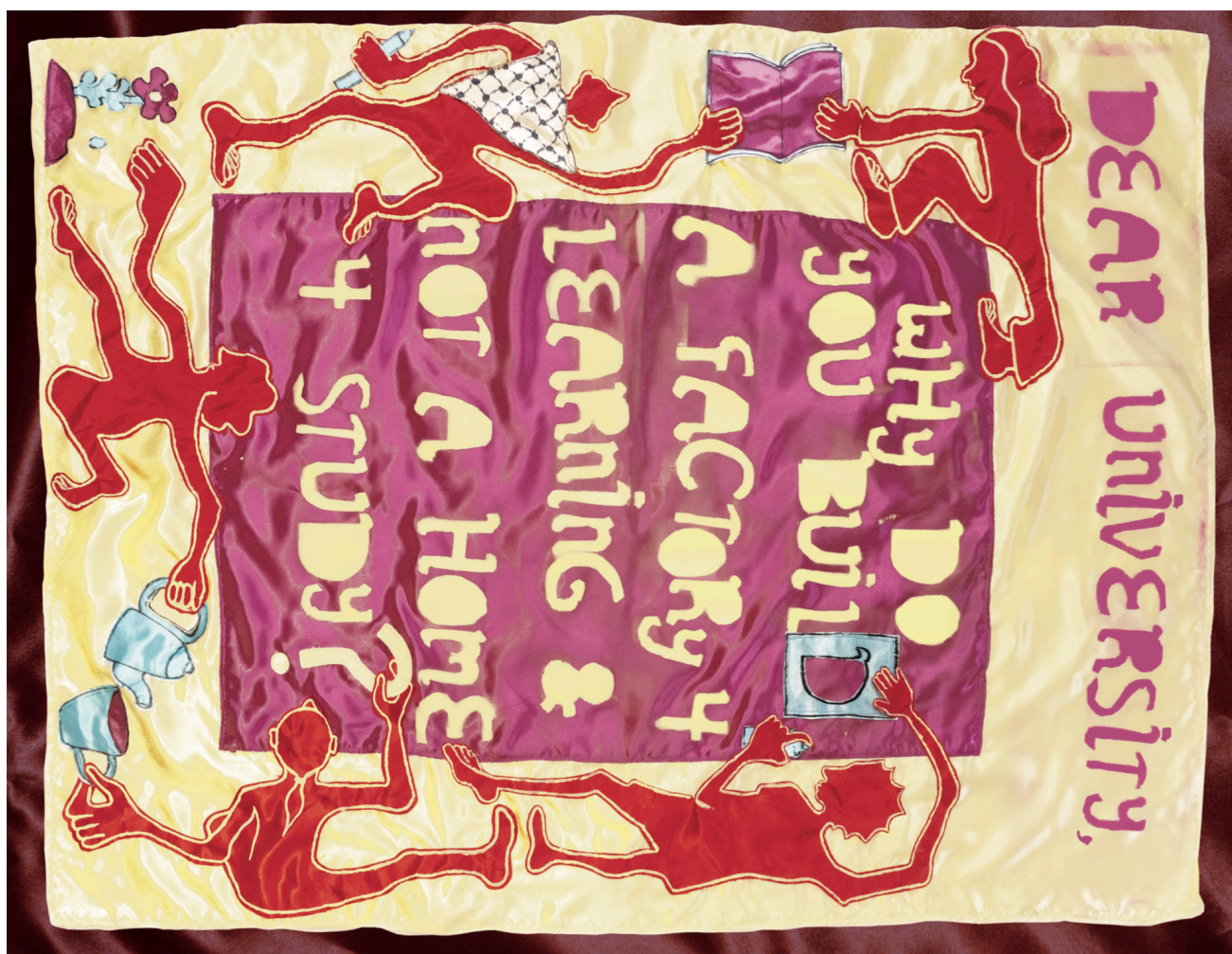
In society at large, the adjective “promiscuous” is commonly understood as a derogatory term, but it originally referred to people or things that “mingled confusedly or indiscriminately.”

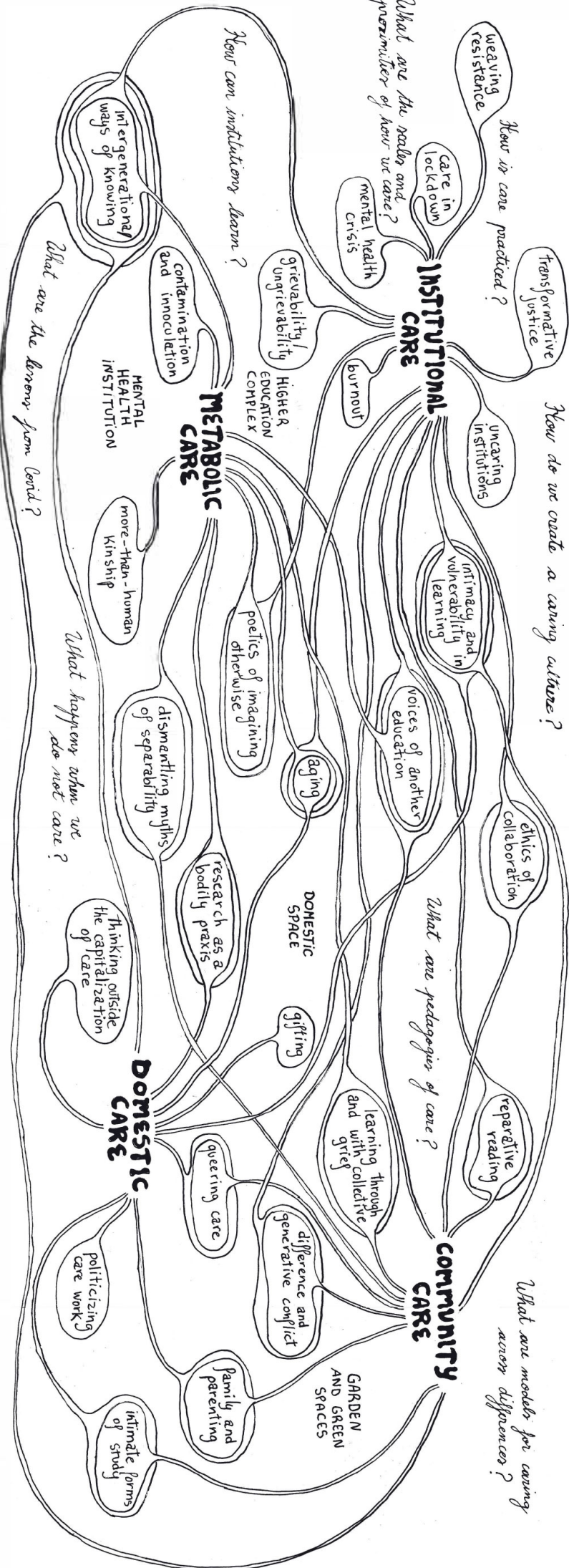
The promiscuity the title explores is defined by a clear and collective refusal of efficiency, and favors generosity, care, love, and attention. Together, the group and their interlocutors situate their own collective care practice within a genealogy of artistic and general social practice. Adopting the UK-based Care Collective’s understanding of promiscuous, which aims toward multiplying and experimenting with caring practices beyond the shriveled forms that prevail today, Promiscuous Infrastructures addresses the following themes: institutional change, communal responsibility and accountability practices, mental health and collective care, hospitality and hosting, soil, counter-histories, intergenerational learning, joy and collective grief, and the poetics of imagining otherwise. These themes nurture a practice of multiplying and experimenting in diverse and expansive ways.

In this publication being promiscuous means taking agency within and beyond the shared context of structurally dispassionate cultural and educational institutions that require innovation, expediency, and measurable results above all.

Contributors: Carla Arcos, Jacquill Basdew, Selma Bellal, Seecum Cheung, Cooking Something Up, Yoeri Guépin, Marc Herbst, Czar Kristoff P., Pablo Lerma, Judith Leijdekkers, Carmen José, Edwin Mingard, Skye Maule-O’Brien, Lola Olufemi, Laurence Rassel, Vivian Sky Rehberg, Reading Room Rotterdam, Kari Robertson, Yusser al Obaidi, Michelle Teran, Renée Turner, and Julia Wilhelm.

Dust jacket poster by Carla Arcos.





Promiscuous Infrastructures: forging words for a study of care infrastructure

Map illustration by Carla Arcos



# The Meal is Language and This is a Dinner Party

## INVITATION

You are cordially invited to attend \_\_\_\_\_The\_Meal\_is\_  
Language\_\_\_\_\_ planned for \_\_\_\_\_SEPT\_20\_2023\_\_\_\_\_. It  
will be wonderful to have \_\_\_\_\_INSERT\_YOUR\_NAME\_\_\_\_\_  
among us! The\_Promiscuous\_Care\_Study\_Group\_  
and\_Reading\_Room\_Rotterdam\_\_\_\_\_ will host  
\_\_\_\_\_INSERT\_YOUR\_NAME\_\_\_\_\_ and Lola\_Olufemi\_ and  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
along \_\_\_\_\_Yusser\_al\_Obaidi's\_Sofreh\_Daimh\_\_\_\_\_ at our  
lovely location \_\_\_\_\_TENT\_Rotterdam\_\_\_\_\_. We are seeking  
your presence to make it memorable!

*This is a gathering for the delusional, for the imaginative, the ones in this world but not of this world. Taking inspiration from Lola Olufemi's work, we will open up a space for thinking otherwise. Otherwise as in, the political horizon awaits, as in the firm embrace of the unknowable, as in refusing the structures that confine*

while thinking of other ways of existing. Join us and sit down in conversation as we ask ourselves: What else is possible when we start to imagine another world?

We met each other at the *Sofreh Daimh*, a spatial poem by Yusser al Obaidi; a metaphorical yet real space of hosting otherwise. Here, surrounding the plastic sofreh, we hosted a collective conversation—a metaphorical meal of words, if you will. The documentation of this conversation opened with a dialogue between sections from Lola Olufemi's *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*, and from notes from Yusser al Obaidi's unpublished *Dear Barzakhiya* (excerpts of which are published as the text *Let Us Meet in the Margins* [Barzakh] also contained within this publication). After the event's brief conversation between Lola Olufemi and Yusser al Obaidi, the space opened up for attendees to join as guests at the sofreh, hungry with questions.

For the sake of brevity, we have only transcribed the initial conversation between Lola Olufemi and Yusser al Obaidi. Please come hungry with questions and full of wishes. We hope you can catch up and join the conversation too. We're looking to exchange strategies to cook up an other future.

Yusser al Obaidi



All photographs are by Steven Maybury.

# It Doesn't Stop at Images

## A Preface for An Ongoing Conversation on Generational Queer Joy, Care, and Visibility

*During the Summer of 2023, I asked a few collaborators to join me for a conversation about generational queer joy, care and visibility. I invited them to browse through hundreds of images sourced for my project It Doesn't Stop at Images at IHLIA Heritage. The intention was to engage in a conversation with words that departed from images and experienced. That conversation never happened due to an intense Storm Ciarán which shut down train travels and prevented our guests from reaching WdKA.*

*The following pages are the results of reenacting that possible conversation, that never happened, via digital meetings and email exchanges.*

Pablo Lerma

*The institution will always keep you busy, which keeps you away from the actual work.*

## Czar Kristoff P.

All images used in this visual essay are from Pablo Lerma's research project *It Doesn't Stop at Images*. *It Doesn't Stop at Images* is a research-based project using printed matter—magazines and daily publications—archived at the IHLIA (International Homo/Lesbisch Informatiecentrum en Archief) Heritage depot in Amsterdam. Pablo Lerma, 2021.

1. Barbara Whitmer, *The Violence Mythos* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 48.



In my culture, touch is highly practiced when an infant is born, through carrying, feeding, cleaning and protecting them until the child reaches that stage that they learn how to groom, feed themselves, etc. Then, for some reason it disappears when the child finally becomes a teenager, a stage where their body is changing.

My parents separated when I was four years old so that means my journey to touch as a language is quite different from others. It abruptly stopped. This particular moment in my life is the beginning of my intimacy conflicts. Intimacy conflicts<sup>1</sup> occur when the symptoms of PTSD prevent the establishment or maintenance of trusting interpersonal relations. Anger toward a loved one often is accompanied by anxiety about the attachment, as these feelings are elicited in the same circumstances. Purposeful distancing allows the individual to control the degree of emotional attachment by partially numbing feelings and by not permitting personal disclosure that would lead to the formation of friendship or deeper levels of caring for others.

This behavior has affected me when it comes to establishing relationships in the past, whether when I am looking for friendship, a romantic or sexual partner. There are many layers of walls that the other person has to go through in order to figure out what I really feel or think. And I can't imagine what it is like to be on the other side but I am sure it can be exhausting.

In the past few years, through the help of friends, family and books, I allowed myself to trust people once again. As well as accepting every rejection as a form of new beginnings.



# Learning and Dreaming Together through Social Uncertainty

## Intro

We feel the uncertainty of these times. We wonder about ways of learning that are centered upon uncertainty, that do not hide from challenges we face. Institutions of higher learning have promised never-ending progress based on reason and science, but today we are unsure if this is real, or desirable. Rather than modeling education around a heroic narrative of individuals overcoming challenges, towards unquestioning progress, we think about how learning can be oriented towards learning together in difference. By facing it, we wonder how uncertainty can be embraced, or, at worst, how we can avoid panic around uncertainty. For this reason, we created an experiment, "Learning and Dreaming Together through Uncertainty." The experiment of "Learning and Dreaming..." was to host a collective overnight dream-in that asked its participants to focus on the emotional fragility of uncertainty and how experimental social and education practices could deal differently with this uncertainty.

When we get into the matter of uncertainty, we think about several aspects of it. On the one hand, there is the individual feeling and thinking self that may feel constitutionally fraught by self doubts and a sense of personal uncertainties. Then we have external impulses that normally help us orient ourselves within the world regardless of our own constitution, that because of the state of our world may or may not be stable. It is this second kind of uncertainty that we think about when we ask about living and dreaming through uncertain times. Among these uncertain things are social relations between people that are mundane and overarching, which constitute social and cultural

Sorry, I am making a cup of tea.

assumptions around how we should individually and collectively be—despite the actual state of ecological, economic, psychological affairs.

Turning toward education, we see how learning is evermore oriented toward a unipolar notion of "progress" or "development," determined by individual mastery, market competition and profit. This is not what the world needs right now. The educational model that holds sway within most schools replicates a business as usual attitude, perpetuating the individual and systemic that brought us to this point of severe uncertainty. We ask instead if higher education could make space for collective practices of critical generosity, reciprocity, respect, and togetherness? Can it hold space for social learning around how to hold each other through uncertainty?

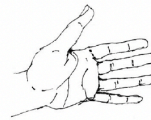
In preparing for this pedagogical experiment, some of the question that we considered were:

How might we collaboratively deal with uncertainties, as a prerequisite for any kind of learning process?

What is social practice for, if it does not actually help us socially work through and care for our collective dreams?



How would we like it to feel in the learning and caring space we share?



How do we develop capacities for sitting with discomfort, of feeling overwhelmed, anxious or rudderless—when facing uncertain times?

What are our commitments to ourselves and others through uncertainty? That is, what are our ideals for our being human despite the difficulties that we may face?

Illustrations:  
Marc Herbst

# COOKING SOMETHING UP



— What is today's topic?  
— Revolution

## Sharing Dinners

### Utensil(s)

First and foremost, sharing dinners is a tool to make friends, strengthen existing friendships and take care of each other. It makes people come together and enables a different kind of connection based on the joy and comfort that good food creates. Conversations that arise are situated within the sensual experience of tasting, smelling, sitting together. Sharing dinners with friends is also a way to share a part of yourself and introduce friends to what matters to you, be it food from your cultural background, food that you connect with specific memories or associations, or a new recipe you want to try out. Cooking is also part of the reproductive work associated with the private sphere of the kitchen. Opening up this private space to a collective, embodied experience, can offer ways to politicize and collectively handle reproductive work and personal experience and bring politics (back) into the kitchen. Silvia Federici writes: 'If the house is the oikos on which the economy is built, then it is women, historically the house workers and house prisoners, who must take the initiative to reclaim the house as a center of collective life, one traversed by multiple people and forms of cooperation, providing safety without isolation and fixation, allowing for the sharing and circulation of community possessions, and, above all, providing the foundation for collective forms of reproduction.'

### Poetry

Poetry is a utensil that allows you to perceive, study, and embrace the world beyond what is deemed rational and objective. As a tool it gives space to feelings and hunches which cannot be expressed through a language that conveys meaning alone. Expressing oneself, alone or together, through poetry, is a way of palpating language, of playing with the possibilities it offers to find different ways of communication. Poetry embraces the personal and subjective, the tentative, the blurry. It helps to re-imagining what knowing can mean from a feminist point of view that takes into account and aims to dismantle the oppressive structures that generate the framework for knowledge-production. A framework which devalues intuition and emotional ways of knowing, traditionally attributed to women. Poetry as a tool allows to exceed this framework, to venture into, as Audre Lord puts it, the 'dark, hidden places'.



## Utterances: Composing a Care-Informed Artistic Research Practices in the Cracks

Book, 2024

Utterances: Composing a Care-Informed Artistic Research Practices in the Cracks is a humble offering towards an alternative artistic research practice that is guided by an ethics of care. It is an offering coaxed out of the side notes and the whispers of the Promiscuous Care Study Group, a collective formed within the cracks of the Willem de Kooning (art and design) Academy in Rotterdam. Utterances proposes the 'check in' as an invitation, a structure, as reality, and as a dialogue that begins with the lived experience of the body and the visceral experiences of sharing intimate spaces together. This approach opens space for collecting impressions, allowing tensions and gaps, speaking and being silent, presence and non-presence, note taking and taking note, as an ongoing process of caring and coalition building.

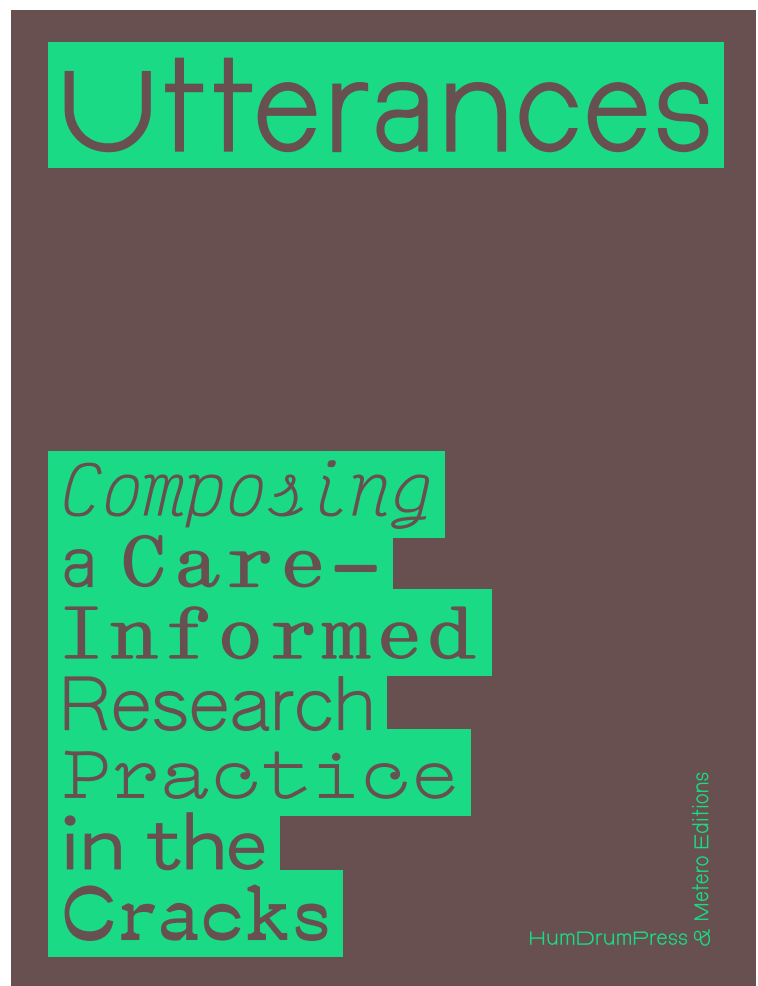
This intimate publication's collective research and utterances encompass a way of working, the rhythms and the breaks and the intimacy, an ethos of being in 'right relation'. With respect to right relation, seemingly separate lines of inquiry become interwoven, generate emergent interrelationships, bring together the collective imagination, pursue unpredictable pathways, and honour the marginalia of research by centering the side notes and whispers.

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Contributors: The Promiscuous Care Study Group

Book Design by HumdrumPress



How  
you?  
have a  
round,  
want to

are  
Let's  
listening  
do you  
begin?

*How to build a  
support  
network?*

*What are the  
tools  
required?*

*Setting up the  
environment*

I'm not one of those people  
who are very good  
at asking for things.

It's been a long time  
feeling this way.  
Right?

I'm interested in the sensorial aesthetic  
qualities for  
building intimacy as a  
form of practice.

To be suddenly  
left alone. What are our needs  
that should be met in relation  
to questions of safety?

We always talk about the sinking ship,  
and there are many holes.

*How to externalise  
insecurity  
both with work ethics  
and individual needs?*



# How does that moment of reconnection happen?

## The [in]frastructure of the environment

I have thought  
a lot about  
the role of rage  
as a constructive force.

On the outside,  
these check ins  
are really good.

How does one  
steal joy and healing?  
Interesting survival mechanism.

*I was thinking  
how nice  
it would be  
if I can hug you now,  
give you another hug.*

Involving the sweat and the non-sterile.

*Maybe in my stress,  
I produce more stress.*

*What I am taking from this group is the  
acknowledged space for doubts and  
insecurities.*

It is hard not to be consumed by  
thinking about care  
infrastructures when people  
seem to no longer care.

I'll totally hug you.

I've been thinking a lot about grief  
and uncertainty in  
education and  
realising that there's no  
space for grief and  
uncertainty in education.

How does that  
moment of  
reconnection happen?

Sometimes I think we  
just need to be kinder  
to ourselves.

*Infrastructures  
that actually facilitate  
networks of  
trust.*

## Situationer Workbook/Cookbook

Book, 2021

Situationer Workbook/Cookbook, edited by Michelle Teran with Johanna Monk, Teana Boston-Mammah, is a book in two volumes on transformative pedagogy and teaching in times of crisis. How can times of crisis – or of crises, in their many forms – inform and influence the pedagogies needed to situate ourselves in a troubled world? How can one tune in to the conditions, concerns and difficulties of these complex times, by cultivating new and necessary forms of humility, attentiveness and recognition toward other knowledges, other value systems, other frameworks of understanding? The essays, interviews, and other creative and critical interventions in this book offer a wide variety of reflections upon these fundamental questions.

This publication connects to emergent research around transformative pedagogy in socially engaged art and art education. It comes from the impetus to go back to the drawing board, in order to imagine other possible perspectives on learning and education. It is a body of research that continually writes and enacts itself into existence, cultivated by engaged practitioners within the Willem de Kooning Academy and Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam and beyond.

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# The Pedagogies of my Kitchen

Dear Michelle,  
I hope you're doing well in Berlin, and you've been able to return to your gardening. Now more than ever, it's essential to touch (and smell!) the dirt and generally just plant things. With so much screen time during this COVID-19 quarantine, I keep thinking about Anni Albers's insistence on the importance of touch. I've printed out a quote from her book *On Weaving* and taped it by my computer screen as a reminder. It says:

We touch things to assure ourselves of reality. We touch the objects of our love. We touch the things we form. Our tactile experiences are elemental. If we reduce their range, as we do when we reduce the necessity to form things ourselves, we grow lopsided.

It's like muscles that without stretching and moving become weak and floppy. Where ripping out for a walk or gardening felt like a break, now it's an indispensable lifeline.

I wanted to write and apologize for missing the deadline for the publication. I just couldn't get my essay finished. It's not that I didn't want to write it, but somehow, with everything going on, the binding didn't bind. My lack of concentration has left me with only notes and fragments of thoughts. Initially, I planned to submit something about the pedagogies of the kitchen. Riffing off of Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, I wondered what such a domestic space with all its quotidian rituals could teach me or be teaching me. Being sequestered at home and cooking, I've been thinking about how my hands re-enact my grandmother's gestures when I make cornbread. As I whisk eggs, milk, oil, and baking powder into cornmeal, I perform a kind of séance summoning her spirit with my body. No doubt, these movements are also connected to my great-grandmother, who was married off at the age of thirteen to my great-grandfather who was thirty-three. And I assume her gestures were inherited from countless other forgotten women who came before her. All those anonymous women, most of whom could neither read nor write and whose recipes were relayed only through spoken word. They were not chefs but spent their lives practicing the art of care with very little to no fanfare.

Their unwritten biographies are folded into the batter of my cornbread. And although I may add a little less sugar, I recently discovered it is the same recipe Maya Angelou published in her cookbook, *Hallelujah! The Welcome Table*. I guess it shouldn't be too surprising because she spent part of her childhood in Stamps, Arkansas, which is not too far from where I was born. It was there that her grandmother prepared cornbread along with other



# Renée Turner

dishes familiar to me, like biscuits, collard greens, and fried chicken. Food that feeds the soul or soul food, that complexly rich culinary tradition that emerged out of the histories of Africa, slavery, and Native American traditions. These legacies fill my pantry, and I wanted to write about how, depending on the cook, specific pasts are evoked and how we might listen more attentively to these divergent histories.

The food historian Michael W. Twitty talks about this when he traces his family's roots and routes in *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South and his Southern Discomfort Tour*. While we may share a love of cornbread and though our culinary traditions intersect, Twitty is quick to highlight that these traditions are inherited, experienced, and embodied in radically different ways. To set the same table does not automatically mean to be at the same table. He writes:

It is not enough to be white at the table. It is not enough to be black at the table. It is not enough to be "just human" at the table. Complexity must come with us - in fact, it will invite itself to the feast whether we like it or not.

Being explicit about these differences is where the political and the personal are intimately, inextricably, and at times, painfully intertwined. Besides the kitchen being a space of hospitality, nourishment, nostalgia, and warmth, it is also a place of unreconciled and traumatic pasts yet to be digested in the present. When I cook, I am obliged to acknowledge and bear witness to these histories in their deepest sense.

And these are not the only lessons my kitchen teaches to me. There was more I wanted to write about. Ingesting and digesting, I've also been thinking about fermentation. What does it mean to let things ferment, and what is it as a transformative process? As I'm sitting here writing to you, I'm surrounded by my ferments. Although the smallest room in the house, my kitchen is a menagerie of organisms. A yeasty ginger bug bubbles on the counter, my sourdough starter rises and falls according to its rhythm, milk gradually turns into yogurt, kombucha with its jellylike cap releases a vinegary smell, and under my table water kefir with lemon and hibiscus fizzes in flip-top bottles. All of these are in the making, but none of them are wholly of my making. I tip the ingredients in a particular direction and nudge them by adding just enough salt for an anaerobic environment or supplying the right amount of sugar for yeast to thrive. Many of these ferments are equally influenced and dependent upon the air. That invisible force surrounding and sustaining us is filled with living organisms that

feed my ferments. I think about an observation that Sandoz Katz made. Do you know him? He wrote an amazing book called *The Art of Fermentation*. After being diagnosed with HIV in the early nineties, he moved from New York City to a queer commune in Tennessee, and that's where he was introduced to fermentation. In reflecting on his fascination with these processes, he writes:

As my exploration of fermentation unfolds, I keep coming back to the profound significance of the fact that we use the same word "culture" to describe the community of bacteria that transforms milk into yogurt, as well as the practice of subsistence itself, language, music, art, literature, science, spiritual practices, belief systems and all that human beings seek to perpetuate in our varied and overlapping collective existence.

Maybe in tending to my ferments, as well as my garden for that matter, I'm reminded that we are all in this together - me, the bacteria, the plants, and the planet. To come back to the Albers quote, if one of us gets out of balance, we grow lopsided, and I would add, run the risk of collapsing.

I guess this is why the notion of tending to has become so important to me. It happens when I stir the beans to keep them from sticking, it's when I press down the dough for a second rise, and it's when I quickly prepare a snack for my son who is hungry. As this pandemic has brought into focus, it happens when the needs of the ill are cared for or when the food is stocked on the grocery store shelves. Unlike heroic gestures, tending to is quiet and essential, but rarely held in high regard - think of street cleaners, concierges, child carers, and the many others who provide for us daily. The act of tending to is a revolution that moves at a slower pace, only gaining critical mass through an accumulation of more subtle actions executed over an extended period of time. This kind of attention is about persistence, perseverance and routine. As in every kitchen, mine is the scene where cycles repeat themselves - breakfast, lunch, and dinner. If nature has its seasons, I can assure you, my kitchen has its bewitching hours and counts upon the erasure of the previous cycle before the next one begins. Isn't it interesting to think about all the invisible labor that surrounds us - that work which is only rendered visible when things cannot be tended to?

Next to the flows of rhythm and attention in my kitchen, there's all the stuff I'm not talking about fancy gadgets, but just bits and bobs. I don't know if you remember from the last time you stayed with us, but hanging next to the stove are two potholders made by my mother-in-law. She's sewn them from

# Complaint: Body of Knowledge

"I want to make being stricken an opportunity for thought."  
- Sara Ahmed. "Complaint as Diversity Work". 2017

## FOREWORD

I have always been fascinated about the stories of others, as a way to increase my understanding of our world, our society, other people, and myself. Stories that I find relatable, that I want to share, and that might even have the power to inspire change within myself. But also stories that are still hidden, still unexplored, and that question my own sense of reality, of what I know and believe.

The people I have admired were often those who "owned" their narrative, challenged the norm, or expressed their ideas and views with confidence. Reading and experiencing their struggle, their bliss, their journey, often helped me to forget the feeling I had of being trapped in a cage.

In the binary system of how we put the things around us in boxes, I often find myself left out, unmentioned. Not smart, not dumb, not the youngest, not the oldest, not a boy but uncomfortably labelled a girl, not white, not black, not Dutch, not Filipino. The only word in which I could find power and meaning, that summed up my complex identity, was the word *alloctoon* - the Dutch word commonly used to designate immigrants, literally meaning "coming from another soil". Always somewhere in between, average, halfway and unnoticed - or, as the title of my artist statement makes clear: I don't matter.

## INTRODUCTION

**THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS**  
Families play a key role in the socialisation processes of one's individuality. My mother had a big influence on how I look, feel and treat myself, bringing Filipino culture inside Western society. Growing up, it often felt that being myself wasn't always appreciated, and I would feel ashamed of who I was. My mother voiced her opinions daily whenever I didn't fit into her belief of how "a woman" should behave. She constantly compared me to the daughters of friends and families, who she took as an example for me to follow: "Girls shouldn't climb trees. Girls shouldn't play with boys. Act more feminine. Dress more feminine. Dress more like so-and-so, act more like so-and-so."

Religion was another important element that shaped me. Growing up Catholic meant that the Bible became my source of knowledge, of how I should understand everything and everyone around me. Starting with the creation of the world, and the banishment out of paradise caused by a woman (of course) who opposed God by eating the apple of the forbidden tree. I felt it was expected of me to never question the authority of the Bible and the church,

even though I had my doubts. What was considered morally good and bad in the church and the Bible didn't always feel morally good and bad within myself. Restricted for being a woman, with growing sexual desires, feeling a need to rebel against social expectations, all made me believe I would be banished to hell if I didn't learn to suppress my own voice. Putting my faith in others, believing they knew what was best for me, made me unable to cope with the need to stand up for myself whenever I was confronted by society. I learned to take everything as truth, never questioning those who stood higher up in the hierarchy.

**THE ART SCHOOL EXPERIENCE**  
As a student at the Willem de Kooning Academy (WdKA), coming in contact with a creative industry, an art world and an institute that had always seemed accessible only to an educated and talented elite, made me feel increasingly dissociated from myself - from where I came from, and from certain aspects of my identity. The expected sense of unfolding individuality, the entitlement of feeling "better" than people outside the academy felt foreign to me - in contrast to how I had felt during my prior education at the Grafisch Lyceum Rotterdam, a mid-level vocational school for media-oriented professions. To survive the new environment I found myself in, I tried to adapt myself, to seem more intelligent, creative and authentic, so I wouldn't remind others and especially myself of my "lower" educational background.

Looking back at my experience within the academy, I find it painful to remember how naive I was at first, believing the academy would be a safe and playful environment for me to be in. Being an outsider among a majority of students coming from a higher class, dominant white Dutch culture - and also mostly from outside of Rotterdam - made me believe I was inferior to them, since there was such a lack of representation, at times even a misrepresentation, of people I could identify with. The life experience and knowledge I had gained up to that point seemed of no value from the moment I entered the academy, since this was presumably "unworthy knowledge" better left outside the building. I was constantly blaming myself for not reading more books, not going to enough museums, not making enough use of the academy's workstations - all because I felt a constant fear of rejection or of being a bother, while at the same time never feeling good enough. And so, this pattern of behaviour, of always blaming and being disappointed with myself, which I had already learned early in life, only increased during my time at the academy.

## RESEARCH

For this thesis, I will be using my own experience as a case study for analysing the role of the Dutch cultural archive, the Dutch self-image, and the notion of double consciousness within the WdKA.

During the second semester of my third year at the academy, I travelled to the Philippines, staying in my mother's hometown in a rural region of the country. Having just gone through a distressful period, I now became conflicted by the generational and cultural

# Alona van Rosmalen



gap that I was experiencing. It made me aware of how my own values did not fully align with where I was, which in turn made me feel I did not belong there - a familiar feeling that I had also often experienced growing up in the Netherlands.

Working through this newfound realisation, I started putting in place what I would need in order to navigate this turning point in my life. The WdKA's minor programme Cultural Diversity became a safe space that helped me develop and cultivate new ways of expressing myself through my work. With the guidance of teachers who introduced me to relevant theoretical tools, I was able to filter the problematic recurring patterns in both my personal and my academic life.

One of my goals in writing these words is to generate social awareness of the problem of oppression and marginalisation towards students of colour, and how this affects them during their time at the academy. At the same time, I wish to empower myself in taking ownership of my own identity and position as an artist within the academy, where I have too often neglected my own stories - those of my culture, history, and complexity.

I am aware that the problem I am addressing here is very complex in how it is rooted in today's society, and that many people have already addressed this same problem in many different ways. For me personally, however, the problem became visible during my studies at the WdKA, and this is why I have chosen the WdKA as the context in which I will address these topics. Looking beyond my private and personal struggles, I can see that the problem is larger and more political than myself. I am not writing this text for my own personal autobiography,

but rather to apply it within the public debate. My experience at the academy stands as a model for what I have been through, and what I can expect again in the future. What happens on a small scale is also happening on a larger scale, and what has been a learning experience to me can become a learning experience for us all.

The concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989, p. 140) has further led me to realise that there are partially overlapping common interests among diverse students, but that these interests can suddenly diverge when class and colour are also taken into account. Since I am using my own perspective as my starting point - a woman of colour with a migration background - I am aware that I have experiences that can be similar or different to those of both white people and people of colour, and that what I have to say in my thesis may not necessarily resonate with everyone.

Inspired by two blog posts by Sara Ahmed titled "Diversity Work as Complaint" and "Complaint as Diversity Work" (Ahmed 2017a, 2017b), I want to make use of my own complaint as a way of teaching us something about how the academy functions in the context of diversity. In building my case, I will discuss the following topics in order to provide a perspective on the problem I am addressing.

Part 1: Dutchness focuses on the influence of the Dutch cultural archive - the product of our Dutch history of imperialism and colonisation that has formed the Dutch self-image (Wekker 2016). It is a self-image that exists in people born and raised in the Netherlands, particularly white people, and is based on historical Dutch achievements that fuel the self-image of Dutch white culture with pride, while



# A Conversation on Sport



NvdH: Thank you for inviting me to talk about the sport education tool *Multiform* in the context of queer pedagogies. Could you tell me a bit more about your motivations in choosing a conversational format for this publication?

GF: Firstly, I think it's important to mention that I never consider *Multiform* and its research on sport and queer pedagogy to be my work alone. I established this performative research by developing bodily experiences that directly include the experiences of others. Therefore, I see the reflection process not only as mine, but as real collective work. Moreover, beyond including the experience and voices of the players, the project always has been positioned at the intersection of different fields that exceed my own expertise as a designer. For example, the fields of sport, philosophy, education, and politics. In that sense, I see my role as a social designer as a 'connector' who facilitates the exchange of

knowledge and practices between experts from very different domains.

Therefore, having been asked to write and reflect upon this research, it's important to me that my contribution to the publication will take the form of a dialogue as well. And so, almost as if re-enacting our usual dialogue between theory and practice, I wanted to invite you to tell us a little bit about the background of the project, in terms of both philosophy and design. One of the most interesting things about the project for me is that it's not only based on theory but also involves dialogue, so that practice comes to feed back on the theory itself by producing further knowledge.

GF: Could you say a few words about your background and your interest in the philosophy of sport and play?

NvdH: I have a master's degree in literary studies and another in philosophy. Currently, I work as a Ph.D. researcher and lecturer at Leiden University,

# and Queer Pedagogies

where I conduct research and teach in the fields of postmodern philosophy, feminist theory, aesthetics, and the philosophy of sports. An important realisation to me today is that we can no longer consider sport as a microcosm of society, but rather that we should understand our society as being modelled after sports. With this I mean that our lives seem to have become fully subjected to the workings of the market, the logics of scarcity and competition – intersecting with the normalising of discourses related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, physical ability and so on. Following the logic of sport, we have come to believe that we can only become who we really are when we strive to excel and continuously improve our performance. But

what it means to excel is not something we determine ourselves. By contrast, in order to find our true selves, we subject ourselves to the knowledge of countless experts, whether in the context of health, beauty or work. As this knowledge imposes all sorts of norms on us, our current way of relating to ourselves – for example in terms of self-improvement – will eventually only induce feelings of self-loathing and self-doubt. And so, the question that I am really interested in is the possibility of a different ethical relationship to ourselves.

It is from this perspective that my contribution to the social study of sport should be understood. The central thesis of existing frameworks in social sport studies is that there is nothing in or about individuals that escapes the workings of power and discourse – in short, of ideology. To put it differently, the way a sports practitioner experiences the world is an effect of language, discourse and power. Yet, in so far as every thing we think and feel is fully predetermined, the question arises: how can we think in terms of resistance and social change? This is where my interest in the philosophy of play should be situated. What precisely interests me in the philosophy of play is the notion of the freedom it brings forth. More particularly, what the philosophy of play adds is that even though we are subjected to normalising discourses, there is always something in our experience that is indifferent to the workings of power and discourse. This experience is best described as an experience of autotelicity – of doing something for the sake of the activity as such – and this is precisely what we experience when we play. I believe this attitude of taking the experience of play seriously has important ethical and political consequences, as it means that we can find a certain form of freedom in play, and that subsequently play

may offer for a different ethical self-relation, and thus could become a vector for social change.

NvdH: When we first met, you described your practice as being positioned in the field of social design. How does this field relate to your current research with *Multiform*?

GF: I graduated from the Social Design master programme at the Design Academy Eindhoven. However, the field of social design was never really defined by the curriculum, and we were expected to come up with our own definition of the discipline and its practice. For me, social design has come to mean questioning the interplay between the material and social forms that constitute society. For example, it's about interrogating how our material environment impacts social interaction and reinforces specific power structures. Coming from this perspective, I started to question how systems, norms, ideologies and assumptions are encoded and reproduced through the design of sport.

was thinking about how sport and physical education (PE) play an important role in constructing identity and in defining how we learn and reproduce social norms and values.

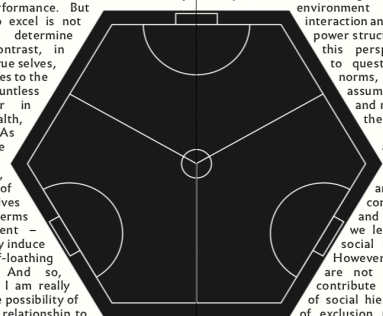
However, these values are not neutral, and they contribute to the production of social hierarchies and forms of exclusion related to gender, sexism, racism and ableism.

These ideologies continue to affect our bodies, our modes of thinking and our interactions with others throughout our lives, defining our responses to concepts such as binary oppositions, competitiveness and hyper-masculinity. And so, in response to how sport systems impact our modes of thinking and social interaction, starting from a young age, I started to experiment and propose, with *Multiform*, modes of design that question and destabilise this old rigid system.

Therefore, in considering the body and sport as important sites of knowledge, *Multiform* became an ongoing research through which I constantly ask myself: How can we design new pedagogies and activities to imagine and foster alternative value systems? And what kinds of practices can help us reframe reality, allowing us to imagine, enact and rehearse new modes of being together?

NvdH: How do you investigate that? Which research methods do you use to deconstruct the system of sport?

GF: By considering the practice of sport as a performance of broader social structures, I wanted to place the human body within the research as a central perspective from which the social world is not only experienced and reproduced, but can actually also be challenged. Therefore, I established



# Decolonizing and Re-gendering

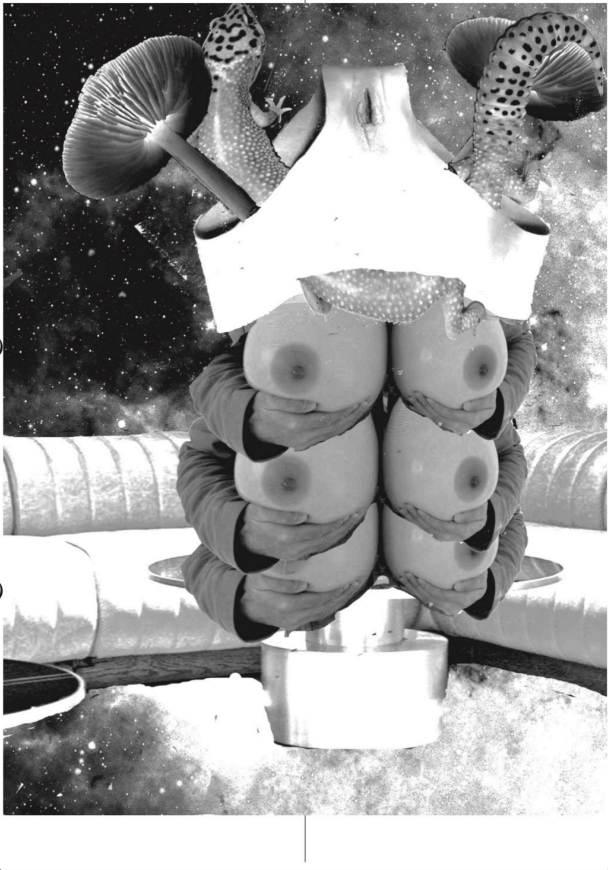


# Our Curricula: A Workshop





# of Earthly Survival



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Situationer

# Dieuwke Boersma

creating a spirograph of multiple becomings. At one point, I hope to be able to say: "Darling, look at you go! And me... Hah!" In order to have such critical pedagogical moments in our coming together, whether in text or in "real life", I believe we must both incorporate a kind of childish way of fooling around. Improvisation in body and soul. Since the aim of us coming together is that we are making other worlds happen, rather than merely describing these worlds. I know that it is easier said than done. Because pre-accelerating energy in a classroom must be felt, before actual bodies can start moving. Before we can experience that glimpse of undisciplined ecstasy in a classroom.

The starting point of such a classroom is therefore that we deeply respect the bodies that are engaged, always with an acceptance that nothing can be forced. There are only creative propositions. Propositions allow us to bring things into movement, to take a leap into the imagination. Propositions invite others to participate.<sup>1</sup> It is always a question: do you want to boogie with me? Never an imperative: dance with me! Second, laughter is crucial. If tension is the soul of our dance, then we need to also have its counterpart in there. But not as a form of relief, that we cannot take the tension anymore. Laughter is not for stupid people. It is a way to refuse seriousness from taking over our business of knowledge production. We laugh at the idea that we actually know something. Through laughing, we are implicated in the messiness of research. You laugh, therefore you are responsible and accountable. Darling, I feel your hesitation, when I tell you this. I feel your cramped body. But why so serious? Yes, these are serious times, that is why I urge you, in order to survive: chuckle and shake your body. It can transcend times and feelings in immanent ways.

So... Let's dance? You can't? Then let me sit with you.

### CLASS DISMISSED

Darling, just like you, I find myself in this fucked-up place. Here and now, we are forced – on the one hand, to think less hard in order to survive in a world you wished you were not a part of, or to endure with great difficulties the miserable conditions of our society, and of its educational institutions, through which it is becomes hard to think; and on the other hand, to still learn to think hard. Darling, I know. People find it impossible to think together with you. That is why you are here. You seem voiceless, not because you do not speak, but because your language is perceived as too gaga and too blabla. Dangerous even! They wonder: how to think with you, when you are not able to use words as your vehicle of thought? Your work looks like a big mess. Your thoughts are unclear and/or your critical thinking can be taken as an insult to Knowledge. But I am aware that your capacities for thinking have gone unrecognized. You know, it is nothing new that

"Let us not then make the future our project, let us improvise."  
- Fred Moten

Darling, what happens to our research and teaching practices when we start killing our darlings in the name of those who are yet to be born or may never live, rather than in the name of the Future, Knowledge and Reason? How to channel those voices, bodies and histories that are traditionally lost to narratives of modernity and progress? What kind of educational practices could then come into being? What new concepts and narratives for earthly survival could unfold? With what dance of attention will we tango together? As a transdisciplinary<sup>1</sup> researcher and teacher, who combines imagining alternative futures with a personal love for the deep superficialities of "guilty pleasures", these are the kind of questions that occupy my mind and that result in another way of dealing with tensions in the classroom. First of all, it is no surprise that tensions arise. Transdisciplinary research is an experimental, speculative cross-cutting boundary practice that cannot be predicted or determined in advance. Consequently, one of the main differences with a monodisciplinary classroom is that tensions are not seen as a "bad thing" that might get in the way of fruitful collaboration. Tension in a transdisciplinary classroom is the soul of our dance. It is how we fall into one another – and (un)learning how we can fall into one another in new ways in turn enables us to constitute new worlds.

Darling, this means that I try to operate the classroom as a work of art, and that I love taking the risk of not being taken seriously. We – all human and non-human participants – follow each other, not entirely clearly, but rather intuitively. In our dance of attention, we are close, but never controlling. We allow each other to take a spin. Together, but also alone. Around, around and around. Sensing and

<sup>1</sup> Within this approach, disciplines and fields are deconstructed and recombined (S.W. Abolafia et al., 2007; B.A. Wilson & C. Kueffer, 2008). This generates spaces for considering more concerns and issues in a completely new way, for instance, not only not primarily as "problems" that require "solutions", but as concerns that are ongoing objects of care and recombination.

<sup>2</sup> Isabelle Stengers, based on Alfred North Whitehead  
<sup>3</sup> Donna Haraway

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# Mending as a Practice

concerns me is when does mending become over-mending? Over-caring can be asphyxiating and stifling, too.

### TYING UP LOOSE THREADS

At the most basic understanding, to mend is the gesture of gluing, stitching, connecting and bonding of damaged threads. These threads may have been broken due to violence – be it psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, political, institutional or environmental. The way I understand it, mending can be a method and metaphor to reweave the ruptured connections to our senses and body, friends and family, to the material, social or ecological. It is the practice of care and interdependency within our collective condition of vulnerability. Mending is a form of creating that decenters cognitive knowledge by working with tacit knowledge that is craft. Mending doesn't have to mean "starting from scratch"; in fact it proposes that to mend is to make. The aesthetics of mending can help to interrogate aesthetic values set by institutional powers that uphold certain legitimising visual languages as forms of gatekeeping power. In the best-case scenario, mending aesthetics might be a small step in the larger process to decolonise, de-modernise and decenter patriarchal notions of wholeness and brokenness, and beauty and ugliness.

### AUXILIARY ATTACHMENTS

### MENDING ACTIONS

Foucault once spoke of the etymological relationship between curiosity and care.<sup>27</sup> Curious comes from the Latin word *curiosus*, which means careful, diligent, thoughtful, to inquire eagerly, akin to *cura*, which means care, concern, worry. Curiosity is about "the care one takes of what exists and what might exist".<sup>28</sup> To be curious is to be concerned. For me it is important to be curious as a teacher but also to nurture a sense of curiosity within students, to be concerned about what's going on around them and within them. bell hooks writes that if we are to teach deeply and intimately, we need to care for the souls of our students.<sup>29</sup>

María Puig de la Bellacasa writes that "to value care is to recognize the inevitable interdependency essential to the existence of reliant and vulnerable beings. Interdependencies not contract, nor amoral ideal – it is a condition."<sup>30</sup> The acknowledgment of this very interconnectedness of vulnerable living as a fundamental condition is the beginning of care. But what does care look like within an educational context, and what actions does this entail? How are we relating to one another? What are some overlooked and underestimated values that we need to reconsider? Below are some things that I'm learning how to put into practice; it is by no means exhaustive.

Trust is essential to nurture within the classroom; it is vital that a relatively safe space is established for



Mum in her shop with her employee

students to engage in open conversation without fear of condemnation, shame, judgement or failure.

**Reciprocity** – the exchange of energy, actions or stories – is necessary in building a community within the classroom so that interdependency can take place.<sup>31</sup>

**Active listening** is the practice of being present, it is to witness the presence of oneself and to the presence of others without presumption and judgment. It is the act of allowing others to speak freely while one listens with empathy and understanding. The Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh calls this compassionate listening, while the American experimental composer Pauline Oliveros calls this Deep Listening. Only when people feel like they've been seen and heard can sincere

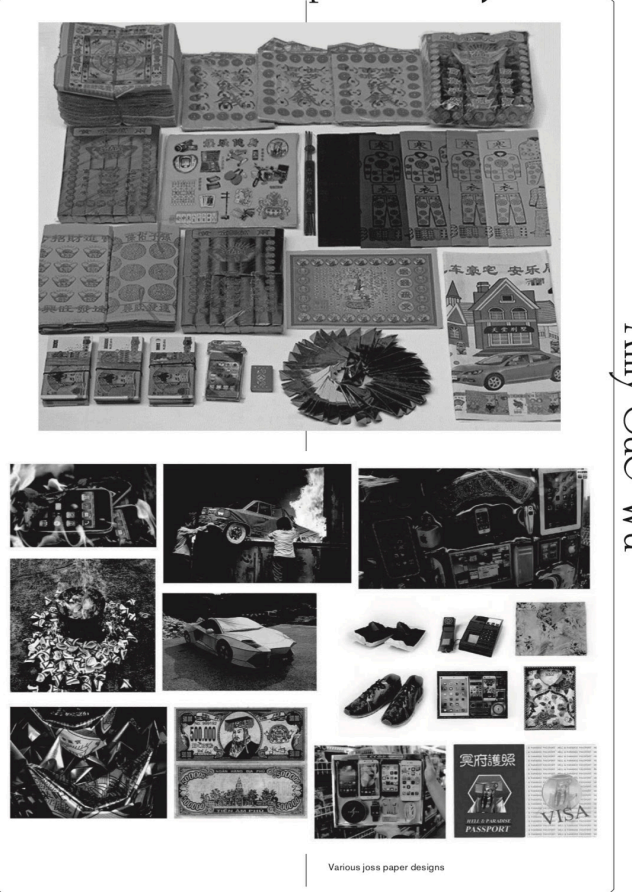
<sup>27</sup> Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*, 92.  
<sup>28</sup> Foucault, quoted in Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*, 92.  
<sup>29</sup> hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 13.  
<sup>30</sup> Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*, 70.

<sup>31</sup> A theme explored in the Beyond Social event "Queering Not Just the Bodies but the Game itself", a public lecture and activity program on queering sports and teamwork hosted by Gabriel Fortuna, Jay Tan and Z. Biac, 03 Apr 2019, Wilton de Rooying Academy.

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Situationer

# of Interdependency



Various joss paper designs

Workbook

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## Everything Gardens! Growing from the Ruins of Modernity

Book, 2020

Everything Gardens! Learning the Ruins of our Collective Disaster outlines a pedagogical model that is intended to remain useful throughout Berlin's next 99 years, through the ravages of climate change and social upheaval. This model is centred in Berlin's Prinzessinnengarten at Moritzplatz and developed under the moniker of Nachbarschaftsakademie (The Neighborhood Academy). The Nachbarschaftsakademie (NAK) was created in 2015 as a self-organized platform for collective learning, bringing together critical artistic practices and urban and rural activism. The NAK is an educational project bound up with an ecosystem of other projects that share similar goals in Berlin's Prinzessinnengarten – guiding an eco-social practice over time.

Informed by the concept of “staying with the trouble,” it names key issues, while seeking an ethno-poetic approach that energizes, orients and sustains the project for the duration. The book serves to document the conflicts that inform the garden project today. At the same time, while cataloging the 2019 summer course offerings.

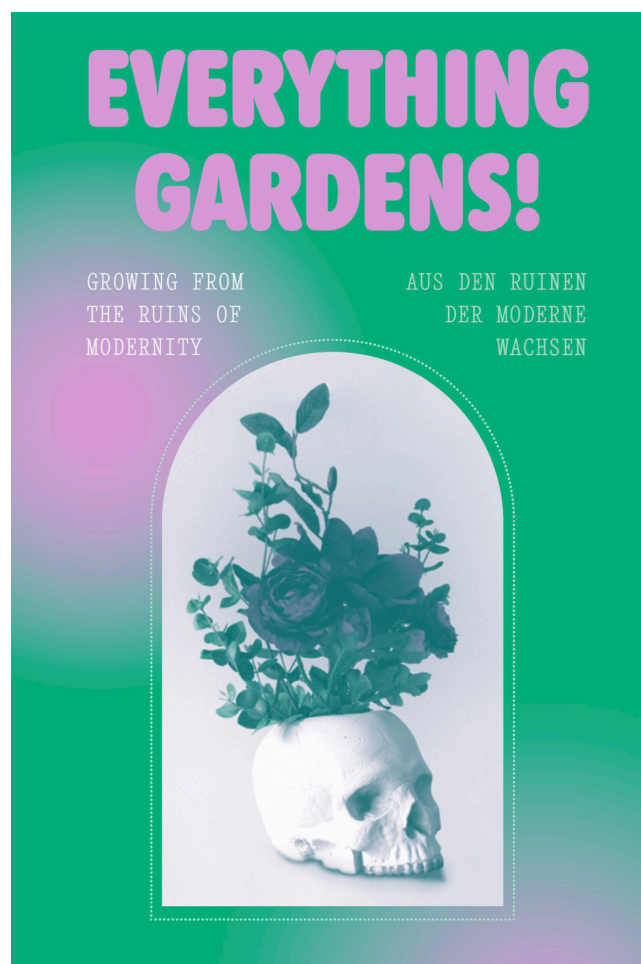
PAGES: 144

EDITORS: Marc Herbst and Michelle Teran

ISBN: 978-3-943253-33-7

DESIGNER: Luca Bogoni

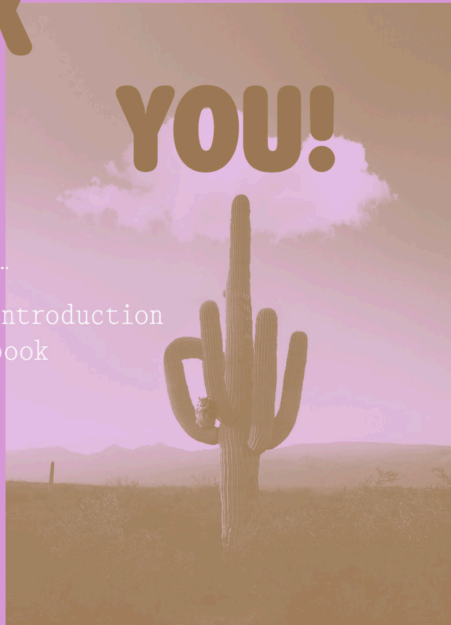
PUBLISHER: adocs Verlag



# EVERYTHING GARDENS, FUCK

# YOU!

A brief introduction to this book



By the time you read this, the Prinzessinnengarten will have its 99-year occupation clarified by the city. Our political desire to claim this fact is built upon our understanding that to meaningfully curtail capitalism's ecological and social violence, there must be a total spatio-temporal rearrangement of things, here and everywhere. EVERYTHING GARDENS! FUCK YOU.

Here, collectively, it is as though we have allowed ourselves to be suspended in time. And the ether that affords and organizes this suspension is that mix of our individual personal economies, the organizations we are staggering to put in place and our collective political desires for many different things to come to pass. The Prinzessinnengarten's occupation is one of these things. It is also that time-traveling geographic fact that manages to contain all this suspension.

This book, focusing on the garden, was intended to be written in stone and be authored between time. Within the folds of this binding are analysis, documents and the luxury of errors we allow ourselves to make because, though the contours of the future are unknown, we do know ways we'd like to get there.

We enter the Prinzessinnengarten through one of its several gates, whose vistas seem perpetually blocked by people or the lazy branches of hanging vines of wild hops. People drink beer in this garden. The education projects that this book mostly concerns itself with, primarily the Nachbarschaftsakademie (the NAK) but also our more praxis-based Abendschule, shake loose ideas and practices here in this improbable forest. Like any school, these schools are political and cultural projects created to maneuver and reorient logistical, social and poetic relations. These schools attend to the 99-year window of communal luxury we have allowed ourselves.

An awareness of the climactic and capitalist disasters both here and coming has released a subtle air panic— but the luxury folded into our binding and 99 years is the manageable political garden space we have claimed as an urban, open commons.

This book you hold in your hand is something like a stone and is authored between time. It has been ascribed to until at least the year 2118 when the Prinzessinnengarten contract will be renegotiated for a second time. The open green commons that the garden remains as will have been utilized as a place to commonly work through the problems and opportunities afforded the least and most marginal among us.

This book documents the efforts of the Prinzessinnengarten's 2019 Nachbarschaftsakademie.



have a chance to practice both the nature and culture of this transition, and of to build a necessary creative refuge.

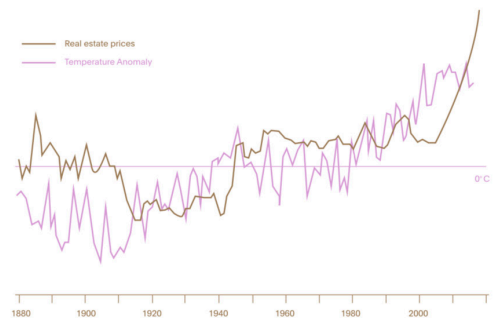
[3] One of the many demands made during the April 6th 2019 housing demonstrations was that "We want a city; that is not a business model but a living space for all, regardless of their origins, language, age or capabilities; where houses are built for people to live in and not for profit; where nobody is forced to live in camps, shelters or on the streets; where housing, land and nature belong to the commons".

Our eco-social pedagogy concerns itself with what has been classically understood as 'human affairs' as much as with what has been understood as 'nature'. To progressively live together in the many ways that reflect our own ways of being unique and becoming commonly different through this changing climate, we attend to the social and cultural forces that flow through this city as well as the changing landscapes above, below and beyond.<sup>[3]</sup> Our city is a sponge that contends with the effects of heat and cold and transitions. If permaculture asks us to attend to patterns and flows, in order to studiously utilize them in our transitions, we recognize that our 99 years asks us to attend to human and beyond-human powers.<sup>[4]</sup>

Our teachers attend to both climate and agricultural questions, that help nourish us in one way, as well as political and activist knowledge that can help organize common thought, funding and land tenancy projects, as well as connect with the new environmental margins and marginal people created by all these changes.

[4] Heather Jo Flores & Lucy Bardos (2018) *Permaculture Principles Coloring Book for All Ages*. Bradford: Permaculture Women's Guild.

Within this climate of change, everything that flows through our city has a knowledge that is needed to help collectively co-organize our lives together. Whether you have years of practice with the flows and forces of Berlin, or have just arrived from elsewhere to contribute to being other, together, our changed future will have demonstrated why we have joyously studied through this ruined future for something other than the ruins.









## SECTION TWO

# SYLLABI

Licht Luft Scheisse

### EVERYTHING GARDENS!

### AUS DEN RUINEN DER MODERNE WACHSEN

### OUR WORLD IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN MONEY

- Develop and present creative work-in-progress material to each other.
- Offer each other supportive feedback.
- Critically self/reflect.
- Speculatively imagine what Prinzessinnengarten could become in the future
- Respond to the needs and desires of the participants.
- Evaluate our work as we go along and at the end, through a variety of approaches including talking, image-making and writing that draw on Permaculture approaches.

#### LEARNING AIMS :

- To learn about Permaculture in theory and practice (TECHNICAL)
- To learn about Theatre of the Oppressed in theory and practice (TECHNICAL, SOCIAL, COMMUNICATIVE)
- To integrate and experiment collaboratively with Permaculture and Theatre of the Oppressed (TECHNICAL, SOCIAL)
- To engage with Prinzessinnengarten and its local environment and climates (EMOTIONAL)
- To respond to climate injustice (COMMUNICATIVE, EMOTIONAL)

#### COMPETENCIES :

- Listening skills (SOCIAL/COMMUNICATIVE)
- Multi-sensory observation skills: How do we perceive ourselves and each other in multi-species environments? How do we perceive ourselves and each other otherwise in an already familiar environment? (SOCIAL, TECHNICAL)
- Attunement to climate injustice and racism (SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL)
- Self-reflection vis-à-vis the above (SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL)
- Collaborative skills through group exercises (SOCIAL)
- Problem-solving skills through exercises & techniques (TECHNICAL)
- Artistic skills (TECHNICAL, EMOTIONAL)
- Bodily awareness (TECHNICAL, EMOTIONAL)
- Working from attunement to environmental, social and political climates to imagining beyond what we know and habitually enact (SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, TECHNICAL)

#### ASSESSMENT :

- To know whether or not this workshop was a success, we will:
- Invite and listen to verbal feedback from participants.
  - Integrate creative methods of feedback such as physical image-making, spatial and anonymous responses to evaluative questions, metaphorical responses in words and writing, etc.
  - Ask participants to complete evaluation forms.
  - De-brief as facilitators, read and respond to the above

- and reflect on how far we have achieved our aims.
- Consider what we learned that we did not expect to learn.
  - Invite feedback and responses from others engaged in imaging and planning possible futures for Prinzessinnengarten after the workshop.



## To Sleep Together in Comfort (Which is Politics)

Workshop, 2021

Together with Marc Herbst

A workshop on generative conflict and difference within collective, socially-engaged projects. This workshop was a semi-closed event, and embedded within the 2021 version of the Climate Care festival, curated by Soft Agency for the Floating University in Berlin. Participants invited to spend the night in the basin at the Floating University campus were members of the floating e.V and invited guests.

### Workshop description

How can we create and maintain a generative space where not everybody agrees but manages to nourish comfort? Can we recognize difference and disagreement as abundance? Where does disagreement not mean failure? What is the feeling of the individual in the differentiated collective? These are affective and grounding questions.

Together in difference. Over 24 hours, including an overnight stay, we intend to write and rewrite, based on collective experience, rules, and poetics around our common being together. The event's focus will be on experiencing conviviality and reflections upon it through speaking and listening practices, writing, sleeping, and late-night dreaming. The politics of the event are based around the understanding that to sleep with each other in mind comfortably is a conscious project of collective organization. The inclusion of dreaming in this event is key, as dreams are understood here to be an accelerator/magnifier of time and openness to the world. What vulnerabilities and entanglements are further manifest when dreams are utilized as a tool through which collective articulation is consciously composed?

Making our own bed.





Workshop detail



For us, “rewilding” refers to a horizontal return to the commons, to the entangled social relations that are. In our changing post-Holocenic world, living through the ruins of modernity, we think about rewilding only to the extent that it helps us conceptualize how productive social difference has been repressed by more patriarchal and singular forms of order. In the name of helping us to envisage how wild the common social sphere already is, we appreciate the term.

To sleep? Surely dream.

Sleeping together in the city – divided by our homes, our individual jobs, and plans and possibilities for them, and also commonly united in the modern state of difference under the order of capitalism and the modern state. What also unites us here in this gathering is some shared language, affection or desire to work together, and perhaps some positive affinity for what we might be able to do together. Capitalism is already present to provide a system to account for our ordering, and the state can provide some law. As modern cosmopolitans we have left common symbolic order that does not simply normalize profit or the violence of the quicker and stronger towards the weaker and the slower. Thus are initially bereft of commonly meaningful ways to coordinate between the individual and the collective desires besides patriarchal and profit-oriented ordering. Perhaps, learning to listen to others and our common and different grounds and how they appear over different temporalities might prove meaningful.



# to sleep comfortably in common (which is politics)

## 24 hr score

- 17:00** Arrival and introduction round with name and pronouns. Introduction to the schedule. 10 minute partner-work: How do we want it to feel in the space between us? Each finds their sleeping spot by what they desire, taking into account the limits of available spaces. A tour of our chosen sleeping spots.
- 18:20** Organize a meal based on the ingredients that each person brought for the common meal.
- 19:45** A writing experiment around an autonomous eating commune.
- 20:00** Listening rounds of speaking about setting up the overnight together. Each person is given a full 5 minutes to speak or be silent.
- 22:00** Short writing, describing rules for sleeping together, dreaming and living overnight. Do we agree to a set of caring rules? What is the proper angle of the head on the pillow to call in the right kind of dream? How shall we all sleep? Reading of selected texts as bedtime stories.
- 23:00** Bedtime Dream writing: Each person keeps journal and pen by their sleeping spot to write down dreams as they occur during the night.

### Introduction

How can we create and maintain a generative space where not everybody agrees but manages to nourish comfort? Can we recognize difference and disagreement as abundance? Where does disagreement not mean failure? What is the feeling of the individual in the differentiated collective? These are affective and grounding questions.

Together in difference. Over 24 hours, including an overnight stay at the Floating University campus, we intend to write and rewrite, based on collective experience, rules, and poetics around our common being together. The event's focus will be on experiencing both corporeality and the understanding that to sleep with each other in mind comfortably is practices, writing, sleeping, and late-night dreaming. The politics of the event are based around the understanding that to sleep with each other in mind comfortably is a conscious project of collective organization. The inclusion of dreaming in this event is key, as dreams are understood here to be an accelerator/magnifier of time and openness to the world. What vulnerabilities and entanglements are further manifest when dreams are utilized as a tool through which collective articulation is consciously composed?

Making our own bed.

For us, "re(w)ilding" refers to a horizontal return to the commons, to the entangled social relations that are. In our changing post-political world, living through the ruins of modernity, we think about rewilding only to the extent that it helps us conceptualize how productive social difference has been repressed by more patriarchal and singular forms of order. In the name of helping us to envisage how wild the common social sphere already is, we appreciate the term.

To sleep? Surely dream.

Sleeping together in the city - divided by our homes, our individual jobs and plans and possibilities for them, and also commonly united in this modern state of difference under the order of capitalism and the modern state. What also unites us here in this gathering is some shared language, reflection or desire to work together, and perhaps some positive affinity for what we might be able to do together. Capitalism is already present to provide a system to account for our ordering, and the state can provide some law. As modern cosmopolitans we have left common symbolic order that does not simply normalize profit or the violence of the quicker and stronger towards the weaker and slower. Thus are initially bereft of commonly meaningful ways to coordinate between the individual and the collective desires besides patriarchal and profit-oriented rendering. Perhaps, learning to listen to ourselves and others - and our common and different grounds and how they appear over different temporalities might prove meaningful.

Que soñaste?

This durational workshop is socially grounded in personal experiences of difference, internal group conflicts and convivialities, and exterior group boundaries in social practice work. The workshop's practice is based on experiences in early net art performance jams, communing, and informed by Dean Spade's writings on organizing, adrienne maree brown's emergence strategy, disability and restorative justice, feminist science fiction, and decolonial theory on other poetics. Active listening is a key method in an effort to hear the least articulate of thoughts and wishes as loudly as those most articulate. And to recognize extant practices within our common lives that nevertheless escape public notice.

The workshop will be a semi-closed event embedded within the 2021 version of Climate Care. Participants invited to spend the night in the basin will be members of the floating e.v. and invited guests. Artifacts from the sleepover will be made public once the group resumes their normal daytime activities.

This document includes:  
workshop schedule- introduction- glossary of terms- bibliographies- biographies- poetics for dreaming

**8:00** Morning coffee and 5 minutes of cacophonous listening/talking. 10 minute dream conversation with partner over coffee.

**8:30** Establish a morning cooking practice based on what it is we learned overnight.

**9:00** Breakfast.

**9:45** Morning listening round. Each person is given a full 5 minutes to speak or be silent. Group, listening prompts will be introduced.

**11:00** See if there are plans and working groups established for a day of working. Readings on generative conflict, consensus-building, and listening exercises will be made available for short training sessions.

**15:00** An opportunity for a check-in.

**16:45** Closing possibilities.

**17:00** Close camp.

**Glossary:** Words anchor, bridge and are magnets for the opacity of dreams and social margins.

**essence:** in western thought, the core of any matter, proper to its unique more individual being, but also separable from the thing itself. Rocks, flowers, people and concepts have essences.

**embodied:** where thought and action seem to seamlessly flow.

**dissociative:** where the individual consciousness is seemingly removed from the immediate context.

**diffraction:** object that stands in for something else.

**symbolic:** in the psycho-linguistic sense, things around which meanings, ideas and drives coalesce.

**Terra:** to mean both the soil and planet. (see LeGuin)

**diffraction:** a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. Diffraction does not produce "the same" displaced, as reflection and refraction do. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of differences appear. (see Haraway)

**divergent:**

**difference:** things that are not alike are different.

**disensus:** not assigned to the immediate social mythology of the status quo. The fact that there is more than one way to handle or understand events. (see hooks)

**solidarity:** a radical form of interdependence where the WE is more important than the ME (see Piepza-Samarasinha and many others for more)

**preguntando caminamos:** "walking at the pace of the slowest". (from the Zapatistas)

**caracoli:** a living entity where community, history and time continually interact. (Zapatista origins)

**crip time:** to discard notions of productivity and guilt, to listen to the rhythms of our bodies. (see Raghavan)

**circular time:** a way of keeping time that recognizes the circularity of change, and also the different but similar ways that things return.

**project time:** the time strategy for building complex patterns and systems of change through relatively small interactions. Adding a WE to the I - towards a holistic way of flowing. The patriarchal model is how to get the WE to flow towards my ends. (see maree brown)

**emergence:** how complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions, with embodiment vs. critically. (see maree brown)

**emergent strategy:** a strategy for building complex patterns and systems of change through relatively small interactions. Adding a WE to the I - towards a holistic way of flowing. The patriarchal model is how to get the WE to flow towards my ends. (see maree brown)

**development:** here understood as the normative collaborative order where somebody's project goals determine outcomes rather than individual capacities and other contingencies.

**levying question:** refers to questioning's potential as a dynamic process of opening up other-as-yet-determined horizons. Rather than thinking of questions as leading to a result of some form of resolution, the power of questions and questioning as means for keeping within the flow of life. (see Wa Kamonji)

**ethical attunement:** a collective process of experimentation. The willingness to experiment, make mistakes and let others make mistakes as well. Based on concepts of emergent trust, deep listening and attunement to the capacity and abundance of the collective. (see bergman & Montgomery)

**entanglements:** the known and unknown contingent relations that facilitate and define, inform and limit our capacities to act, feel, do and dream.

**systems and complexity thinking:** understanding context and intersectionality. Seeing patterns, holding contradictory thoughts and feelings simultaneously.

**community & collectivism:** working together, working from a movement lens. Understanding interdependence of all struggles.

**transformational relationships:** building relationships internally and externally that are based on trust, understanding and shared commitments. Space to appropriately be in one's majesty, and share in each other's cultural bounty.

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### Biographies

Workshop hosts Marc Herbst and Michelle Teran are not leaders or therapists. Marc and Michelle represent **Nachbarschaftsakademie** (ارتوبيا) a project founded in Kreuzberg's Prinzessinnengarten who are articulating an eco-social pedagogy capable of structuring situated but cosmopolitical learning for the coming 98 years in Berlin.

**Marc Herbst** is an editor and artist-researcher, co-editor of the *Journal of Aesthetics & Protest*, and advisor at the TransArt Institute.

**Michelle Teran** is an artist, researcher and educator. She is practice-oriented Research Professor at Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam.

### Poetics (ways of feeling and sounding through this)

For the highland Maya, the transition from waking to sleep represents a basic shift in the boundaries of the self. During the day, the focus of awareness and interaction lies on "the surface of the earth" (ta sba banamil). As one enters into sleep, consciousness is carried to "the other earth, the other sky" (yan banamil, yan v'iajal) in the form of the essential soul, the physical realm of bodies and the essential space of souls. In this space, the soul comes into contact with - and is acted on by - the essential selves of others as well as the various deities and sachanams that animate the material world. The transition from sleep to waking represents a literal "return of consciousness," a movement of the soul from outside the body back to its home in the dreamer's head or heart. This newly returned component or extension of self carries with it the memory of its experiences, which (at least in the telling) has a quality of revelation, of just-arrived news. - **Groark, 2009**

Recently, I was on a work call when everyone (a group of disabled women) was only communicating through text. Text read out by screen readers. Time slowed down. We all typed one after the other. Waiting for the other to complete their thought. Waiting for others to read. Waiting for others to type. The entire process had patience embedded in it, but also a challenge to "normalize" ideas of discussion time and pace. No one impatiently typed over others or wanted to "move things along". The time was well spent in engaging with each other at our own pace. - **Raghavan 2020**

«La historia que te voy a contar no me la contó nadie. Bueno, me la contó mi abuelo pero él me advirtió que sólo la entendería cuando la soñara. Así que le entiendo la historia que soñó y no la que me contó mi abuelo - el viejo Antonio estira sus piernas y se frota las rodillas cansadas. Suelta una lanzada de humo que opaca el reflejo de la luna en la acerada hoja que reposa sobre sus piernas, y continúa...

«En cada surco te piel que se nace en el rostro de los grandes abuelos se guardan y se viven los dioses nuestros. Es el tiempo de lejos que se llega hasta nosotros. Por el tiempo camina la razón de nuestros antepasados. En los viejos más viejos hablan los grandes dioses, nosotros escuchamos. Cuando las nubes se acuestan sobre la tierra, apenas agarradas con sus mantas de los cerros, entonces se bajan los dioses primeros a jugar con los hombres y mujeres, cosas verdaderas les enseñan. Poco se muestran los dioses primeros, traen cara de noche y nube. Sueños son que soñamos para ser mejores.

«Por los sueños nos hablan y enseñan los dioses primeros. El hombre que no se sabe soñar muy solo se queda y escondo su ignorancia en el miedo. Para que pudiera hablar, para que pudiera saber y saberse, los primeros dioses enseñaron a los hombres y mujeres de maíz a soñar, y nauhales les dieron para que con ellos caminaran la vida.

«Los nauhales de los hombres y mujeres verdaderos son el jaguar, el águila y el coyote. El jaguar para pelear, el águila para volar los sueños, el coyote para pensar y no hacer caso del engaño del poderoso.

«En el mundo de los dioses primeros, los que formaron el mundo, todo es sueño. Es la tierra que vivimos y morimos un gran espejo del sueño que es el que ven los dioses. Viven todos juntos los grandes dioses. Parejos están. No hay quienes arriba y quién abajo. Es la injusticia que se hace porque la que descomponen el mundo y pone a unos pocos arriba y a unos muchos abajo. No así en el mundo. El mundo verdadero, el gran espejo del sueño de los dioses primeros, los que nacieron el mundo, es muy grande y todos se caben parejos: No es como el mundo de ahora que chiquito lo hacen para que los pocos se estén arriba y los muchos se estén abajo. El mundo de ahora no es cabal, no es un buen espejo que refleje el mundo de sueños donde viven los dioses primeros.

- **Zapatistas 1995**

As a daughter of immigrant insomniacs who sleeps with one ear open, I think this question of sleep is crucial. As Black women artists, from Almah LaVon Rice-Faina to Shelley Davis Roberts to Patrissa Khan-Cullors to The Nap Ministry, are making abundantly clear, real is resistances and sleep is political. Systemic night-mares threaten our sleep.

Could we, the restless, the overworked, the underslept, the one-eye-open weary sleepers, activate kinship through the dolphin? Could we have already learned in order not to drown here? Could we imagine a world where we are all safe enough to sleep held in the arms of the river, in her mothering flow, supported by the boundaries we need to fully rest? - **Gumbs 2020**

To help participants experience in real time the primary reasons groups who attempt to use consensus and fail, do so: unattended assumption and unacknowledged differences in worldview. Whereas the dominant ideology of group process would have us assume that fissures arise in groups primarily from differences in opinion, or the process taking too long, or people not knowing how to be in conflict, the real problem is so much simpler and also so much harder to see: we think we agree because we think we mean the same things with our words, but we don't. The fissure is there long before the conflict arises.

Be in Principled Silence: Know that you cannot meaningfully agree until you have meaningfully disagreed, and that disagreement requires honest assessment of ourselves and our conditions. Principled stance with and towards one another requires us to have an honest assessment, to disagree and then find alignment from that place. Then we know we can agree, and that it means something. - **Brown 2021**

Dreaming is not only a necessary political act, but also a connotation of men and women's social-historical form of being. It is part of human nature, which finds itself within history, in a permanent process of becoming.... There is no change without dreams just as there are no dreams without hope....

The understanding of history as possibility rather than determinism... would be unintelligible without dreams, just as a deterministic view feels incompatible with them and, therefore, negates them. - **Freire 1992**

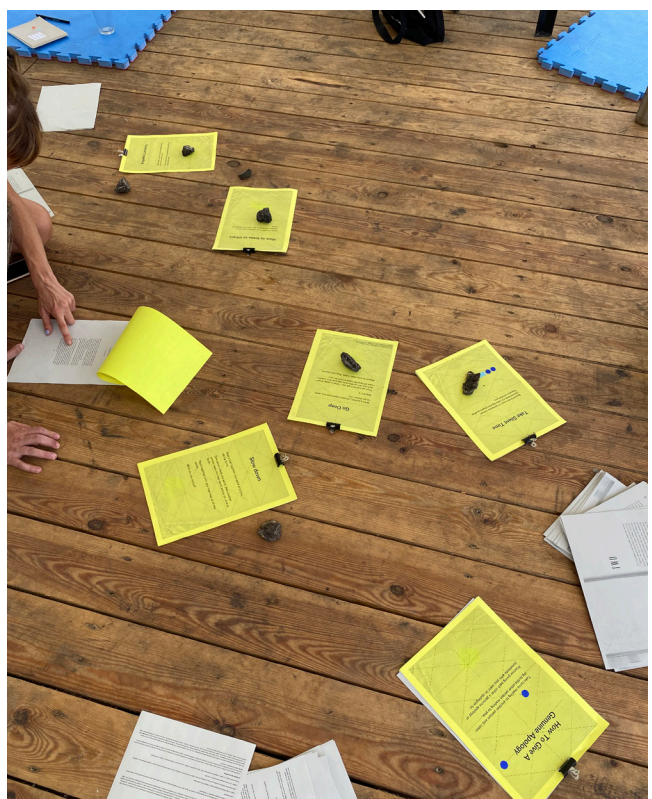


Our relatives, self-regulating



## Que soñaste?

This durational workshop is socially grounded in personal experiences of difference, internal group conflicts and convivialities, and exterior group boundaries in social practice work. The workshop's practice is based on experiences in early net art performance jams, commoning, and informed by Dean Spade's writings on organizing, adrienne maree brown's emergent strategy, disability and restorative justice, feminist science fiction, and decolonial theory on other poetics. Active listening is a key method in an effort to hear the least articulate of thoughts and wishes as loudly as those most articulate. And to recognize extant practices within our common lives that nevertheless escape public notice.





## Dignity / Dignidad

film, 88 min, 2016

*Dignity / Dignidad* is a film about strategies of reclaiming in times of crisis.

The film focuses on “La Dignidad,” a residential building in Mostoles, a suburb of Madrid. The building was constructed during the real-estate boom but never occupied after the property market collapsed following the Spanish financial crisis starting in 2008. Housing activists from *Stop Desahucios* (Stop Evictions) in Mostoles took over the building in June 2014, and christened it “La Dignidad.” The activists made the decision to take over the building when they realized that more and more people coming to the weekly housing assemblies were either already homeless or were about to be evicted the following week. There are currently fifty people living in “La Dignidad,” 18 are children under the ages of 10.

The building “La Dignidad” is part *La Obra Social* (Social Work), a nation-wide campaign initiated by the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) which targets the hundreds of thousands of empty apartment buildings constructed during the Spanish housing bubble. The banks are the current owners of these buildings: they took over possession of the property from bankrupt developers who defaulted on their investment loans. The banks received massive government bailouts, while, at the same time, people were being evicted from their homes at unprecedented levels. The activists use these buildings, to relocate families and individuals with housing difficulties. The logic of the action is thus: if the banks belong to the public, then the houses do as well.





Most of the events and encounters portrayed in Dignity / Dignidad occur between Mostoles and Madrid, Spring / Summer 2015, during the post-election environment of new city governments lead by 'rebel' mayors, and the Greek bailout referendum.

Dull Janiell Hernández, a Cuban filmmaker and one of the occupants of La Dignidad, acts as editor for the film.







Accompanying the film is the English version of *La Obra Social Manual*, a translation project initiated by Michelle Teran and published by The Journal of Aesthetics & Protest.

*The Obra Social Manual*, a 25-page manual of civil disobedience on the tactics of recuperating houses- a direct action how-to. It offers a step-by-step guide for reinstating the social use of empty housing owned by banks, by putting them in the hands of evicted individuals and families.

The original Spanish version was released by the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) in 2013.









## Reclaiming Workshop

public intervention, 2016

The *Reclaiming Workshop* is an exchange of models and strategies on the relations between places, materials and performative actions that are produced in the context of reclaiming.

The workshop was initially developed for the Neighborhood Academy program of 2016, which focused on forms of collective learning. Located in the Prinzessinnengarten – a community garden located around Moritzplatz, Kreuzberg – the Neighborhood Academy is a self-organized open platform for urban and rural knowledge sharing, cultural practice and activism. “Die Laube,” a three-story experimental ‘treehouse’ is the headquarters for the academy, and which provides a space for self-organized, community-oriented and future-oriented learning. The *Reclaiming Workshop* took place with the participation of various grassroots initiatives and affinity groups operating with Berlin, connected by the fight for the right to the city, and strategies for reclaiming. We officially launched the event by hanging protest banners used by each of the participating groups on the façade of “Die Laube,” thereby designating it as a space for collective learning.





During the workshop, we introduced participatory models and methodologies for collective learning developed inside and outside of Berlin (Paris, Madrid) which exercise the collective power to reshape the process of urbanization (Harvey 2008), by using community toolkits that combine online and physical interactions.

The focus was an exchange and discussion of practical case studies, which provided the basis for the production of knowledge and ideological positions for grassroots political and social movements against property speculation and privatization of public space. We elaborated further on the case studies introduced within the workshop by collectively reading through manuals, manifestos, open letters, pamphlets and other materials produced by workshop participants in their ongoing fight for the right to the city, and strategies for reclaiming.

The public act of reading was the act of making public the physical artifacts of current activities, many times the only traces of a constant flow of activity that often goes undocumented. This event proposed that the public reading and exchange of these materials created a bridge for dialogue and collective knowledge, building up a public archive through the circulation of instructions and recipes for living.









## Mortgaged Lives

film, 42 min, 2014

Mortgaged Lives examines the experience of rupture, through the loss of a home, within the Spanish eviction crisis. The film analyses the psychosocial experience of eviction from three perspectives: psychological analysis, personal testimony and an actual event.



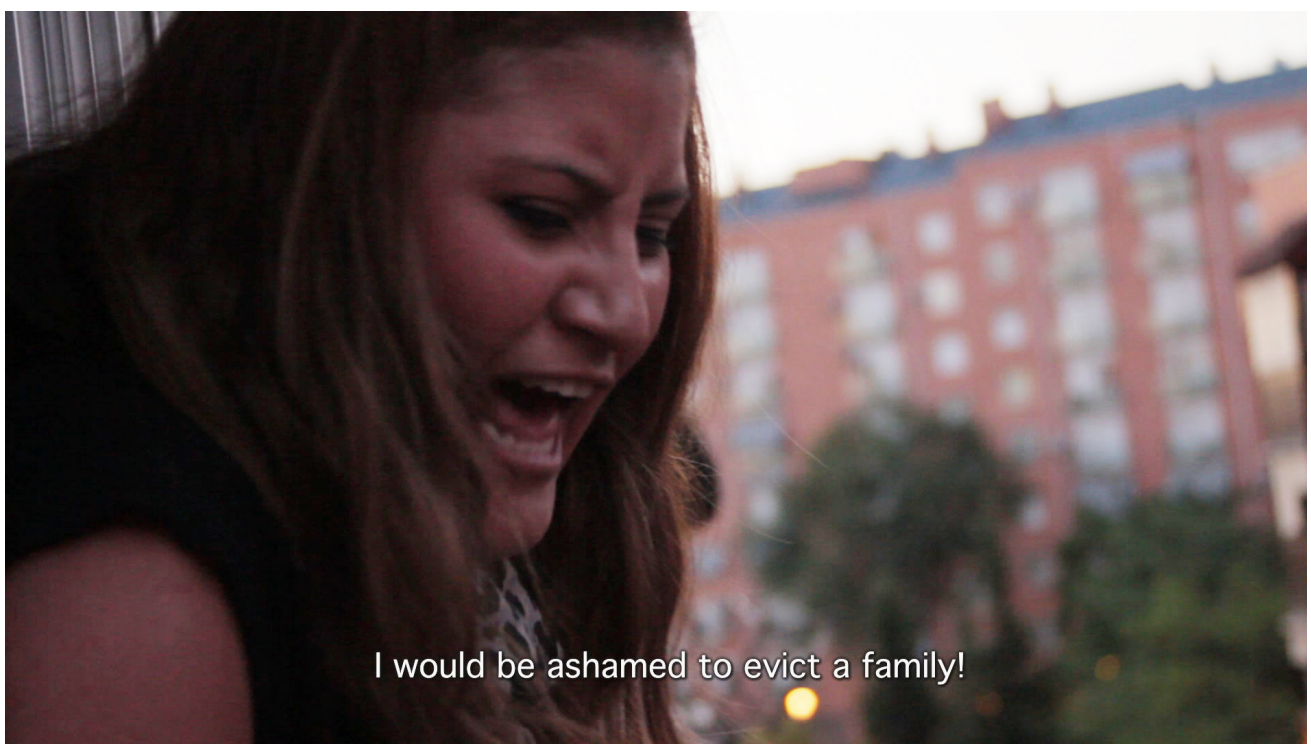


In July 2013 in Madrid, a small group of women travel on a metro towards a home on the other side of the city where they try to prevent the eviction of a young family. They are activists in the PAH, a right to housing movement in Spain, as well as being personally affected by the current eviction crisis happening throughout the country.

The film maps out the psycho-social trauma of homelessness, social estrangement, and the fight against injustice by those who are suffering the consequences of the economic crisis within the global economy.

Within the era of a global financial crisis, everyday reality is defined by destabilization, particularly felt around the home. In Spain, the onset of the financial crisis resulted in an increase in unemployment and surge in evictions of citizens who were able to pay their mortgages. In 2009, the PAH, a right to housing movement operating throughout Spain, was established to fill a gap in insufficient measures within government for dealing with the housing crisis and an unfair mortgage system and to make visible the abuses of power by the financial systems.

This film documents the everyday realities of contemporary crisis on individual lives. It shows the growing needs and inspiring strategies for fighting injustice produced by a neo-liberal economy. What are the ways that we can understand and describe contemporary crisis? How can the transformation of societies be perceived?



I would be ashamed to evict a family!

film stills





Accompanying the film is the English translation of *Vidas Hipotecadas* (Mortgaged Lives).

Written by two of the founders of the PAH, *Mortgaged Lives* explains the causes of and points towards those responsible for the Spanish mortgage crisis and the broader situation. Ada Colau and Adrià Alemany analyze the role of the public administration, reveal the fights carried out by the PAH through first-person accounts and offer advice and useful resources for defending the right to housing and avoiding abuses of power by banks and financial institutions.

Translation by Michelle Teran, published by the Journal of Aesthetics & Protest with help by Traficantes de Sueños.

224 pages, b/w, soft cover.

Officially launched by Michelle Teran, Traficantes de Sueños, Journal of Aesthetics & Protest and the Radical Housing Network during the Anarchist Book Fair, London, 2014.





### The role of the government: *buy, buy, you cursed ones!*

The Spanish transition from Franco to a Democracy, far from marking a breakpoint, gave continuity to the housing policies of the previous era. Gradually, the newly formed democratic government strengthened reforms that transformed renting into an unstable, expensive and even disgraceful option, pushing most of the population into taking on a debt in order to obtain housing.

#### THE PRIVATIZATION OF THE BANKS AND THE OUTSOURCING OF ECONOMIC POLICY

The privatization of the banks not only meant the loss of one of the most important economic policy tools within the hands of the state, such as the creation of money, but also meant the loss of a basic tool for designing a production model on which our economy would be based. Suddenly, the savings of millions of citizens were being managed by private enterprises. With a much higher volume of private deposits than public budgets, the large investments being made within the banking industry were those that were determining the productive fabric of the country. It was the bank, from that moment on, who started to decide which national project to invest in and in which not, which activity to finance and which not. Why strategically bet on a certain sector and why not. Privatization left decisions in the hands of private interests, which until then had been taken up within the public sphere. Accordingly, they told us that the privatization within the financial sector ensured the most efficient use of resources. The market would take care in directing our savings into the most productive activities and everybody would win. But it turned out that boards of directors of banks were more interested in obtaining short-term benefits than ensuring the sustainability of their investments. Thus billions of euros of savings from the accounts of millions of depositors went towards the real estate sector, where the highest yield could be obtained within the shortest time.

If the State wanted to straighten out the economy, it had to make use of fiscal policy to develop a model that would get it back on course. But instead of setting limits, the fiscal policy did nothing but reinforce the tendency towards rewarding speculation.

In this way they were solidifying the foundations for an insufficiently diversified economy. An economy that operated more like a pyramid scheme that needed more and more capital in order to propagate itself. When all resources had finally depleted themselves at home, they went looking for more outside of the country. The Spanish economy became more dependent on international capital and thereby increasingly more exposed to the cyclical swings of the global economy. For years, this model, based on the housing market and cheap labor, seemed to work. The real estate market had been converted into a hen with golden eggs. But everybody knows that it is very risky to put all the eggs into one basket, as all of them would break if the basket were to fall. And the basket did break the moment that Lehman Brothers fell and international capital stopped flowing, a collapsing house of cards that turned the Spanish miracle into a distant mirage.

#### THE DEREGULATION OF THE CREDIT MARKET AND ITS EFFECT ON PRICES

The privatization of the banking sector during the 1980s followed a progressive deregulation of the financial market, which completely did away with any credit control mechanisms that had existed before. This deregulation encouraged a policy based on credit and facilitated debt within families, which went from 55 to 130% of all disposable income from 1997 to 2007. The State defended these reforms saying that a flexible financial market would benefit society and would allow more people to buy a home through mortgage loans. Of every three euros of debt, two are attributed to mortgage debt. Therefore, for years they made us believe that democratizing access to credit was the most efficient way of guaranteeing the right to housing. The reality was, however, that this policy of easy credit contributed in a straightforward manner to the rise in housing prices, multiplying the effort that people had to make in order to access housing. While in 1997 a family needed the equivalent of 3.8 times its average gross annual salary in order to buy a flat, by 2007 this had climbed to 7.6. If we use another measurement, we could say that for the average family the average proportion of its monthly income that had to be destined to pay the mortgage went up in the same period from 37.6% to 51.2%.

Given the capacity that real estate vendors had in fixing housing



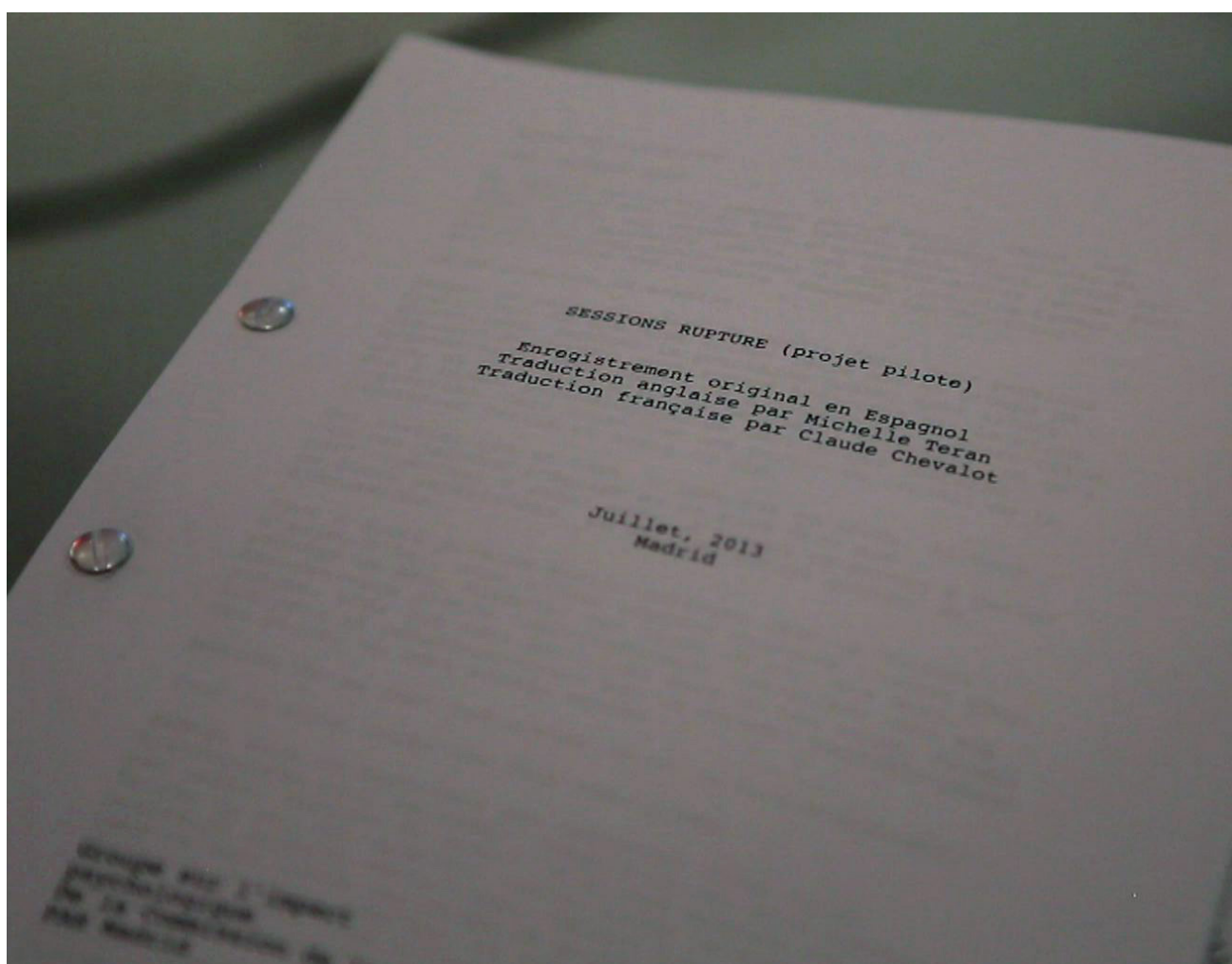


## Rupture Sessions

public reading, 2014

*Rupture Sessions* is a performative re-enactment of a conversation between a psychologist and four women living in Madrid about their personal experiences with eviction. The conversation took place as part of a research of the psychosocial impacts of eviction carried out by PAH Madrid.

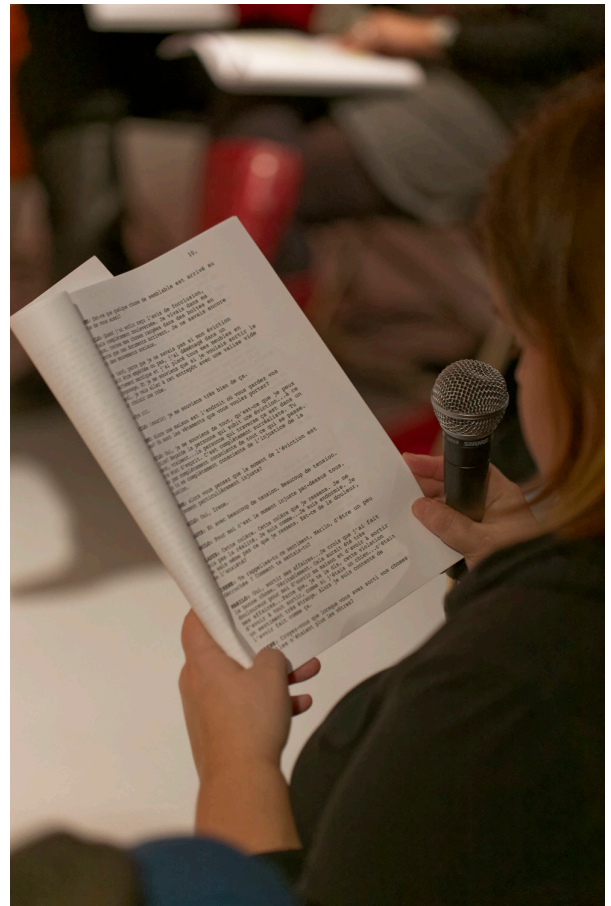
Translated from the original recordings in Spanish into other languages (to date English and French), the transcript is a testimony to the everyday realities of contemporary crisis, bringing personal experiences into universal issues around social rupture and the disintegration of the home. The public reading of the text is a discussion and analysis of the conversation through aesthetic reflection. The circulation and introduction of the translated text into other configurations and conversations give impetus for reflection on issues, around contemporary crisis and its impacts on the home, a cross-pollination of ideas which takes place within a dialogical situation.



Public event,

Text read by five individuals from community organizations working on issues of the right-to-housing in Québec City.

Gallery La Chambre Blanche  
Québec City, 2015









## Folgen

Transmedia storytelling project, 2011-2012



*Folgen* is a transmedia storytelling project that looks at the publication of personal archives and the tension between the public and private experience. It explores the personal experience of what it is like to follow somebody, first by monitoring the videos people put online, then following this information to actual physical addresses within the city where these videos were produced.

*Folgen* draws on the existing narratives of amateur video makers found on YouTube to build a multi-layered media landscape of Berlin. A subjective approach combines fragments of images and sound from the videos with my own narration, using the traces video makers have left in the public sphere of the internet to follow people throughout the city. The videos are self-representative acts, performances, and depictions of the everyday, which together form a relation with the city spaces where they transpire. The geographic locations encoded in the videos become waypoints for traversing an unofficial, unintentional map of Berlin. Through this process, the city becomes a place to be inhabited and experienced through an other's narrative — stepping into somebody else's shoes.

The German word 'Folgen' has several meanings. As a verb it means 'to follow', while as a noun it refers to episodes, consequences, implications or effects. The project draws on several meanings of the word. The act of following someone or something builds up a collection of stories, pieced together in different orders and variations. At the same time, both the disclosure and the act of following personal information towards its source has unanticipated effects and consequences.

The research material from *Folgen* resulted in the production of different cultural forms: a table installation, lecture performance and limited edition artist book.



## Table installation

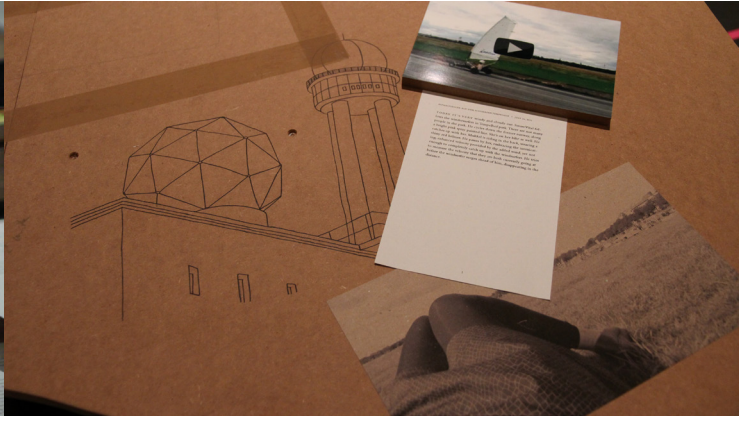
wooden table, photographs, printed text, illustrations, live performance. 2011

Produced for *Tracing Mobility: Cartography and Migration in Networked Space*, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. Trampoline, curators.

A large table, roughly shaped like the city of Berlin is covered with drawings, texts and photographs. The table, which functions as a storytelling environment, addresses issues of life in the virtual world mediated through images, which become re-materialized within the spaces of the personal and the urban where the images originated. It emerges as a temporary tactile media archive and becomes a physical environment for the re-playing of personal histories.







installation details



lecture performance, 50 min, two screens, novel, video, 2012

During a 50-minute lecture performance, I explore the performative act of reading as a live event, which becomes of polyphonic re-enactment of different mapping systems, voices, events and locations. The performance is a deliberate mixing between reality and fiction, an interweaving narrative about desire.

SELECTED STORIES

A woman on a bicycle follows the traces that people have left in the public sphere of the internet, which lead her to different places around the city.

A performance of her "city-novel", a multiperspectival portrait of Berlin, drawn from voyceuring public YouTube videos  
—@cityofsound

Michelle Teran's "Folgen" at Manchester Art Gallery. Insane storybook lecture set in Berlin based on YouTube clips  
—@anthonymobile

It's difficult to articulate just how special Michelle Teran's Folgen is. Uncomfortable, thoughtful, utterly moving - a masterpiece. #futr  
—@honorharger

What a bizarre, creepy, beautiful performance of folgen by Michelle Teran tonight @FuturEverything @mcartgallery  
<http://www.ubermatic.org/?p=2060>  
—@SonicAffective

@SonicAffective @futureeverything @mcartgallery I loved it. Strangely gripping and extremely memorable.  
—@Anne\_L\_Kershaw

The lives of others: Michelle Teran (awardee #VIDA8.0) explores in Folgen the tension between public and private  
<http://ow.ly/pMdzf>  
—@VIDAAwards

MICHELLE TERAN

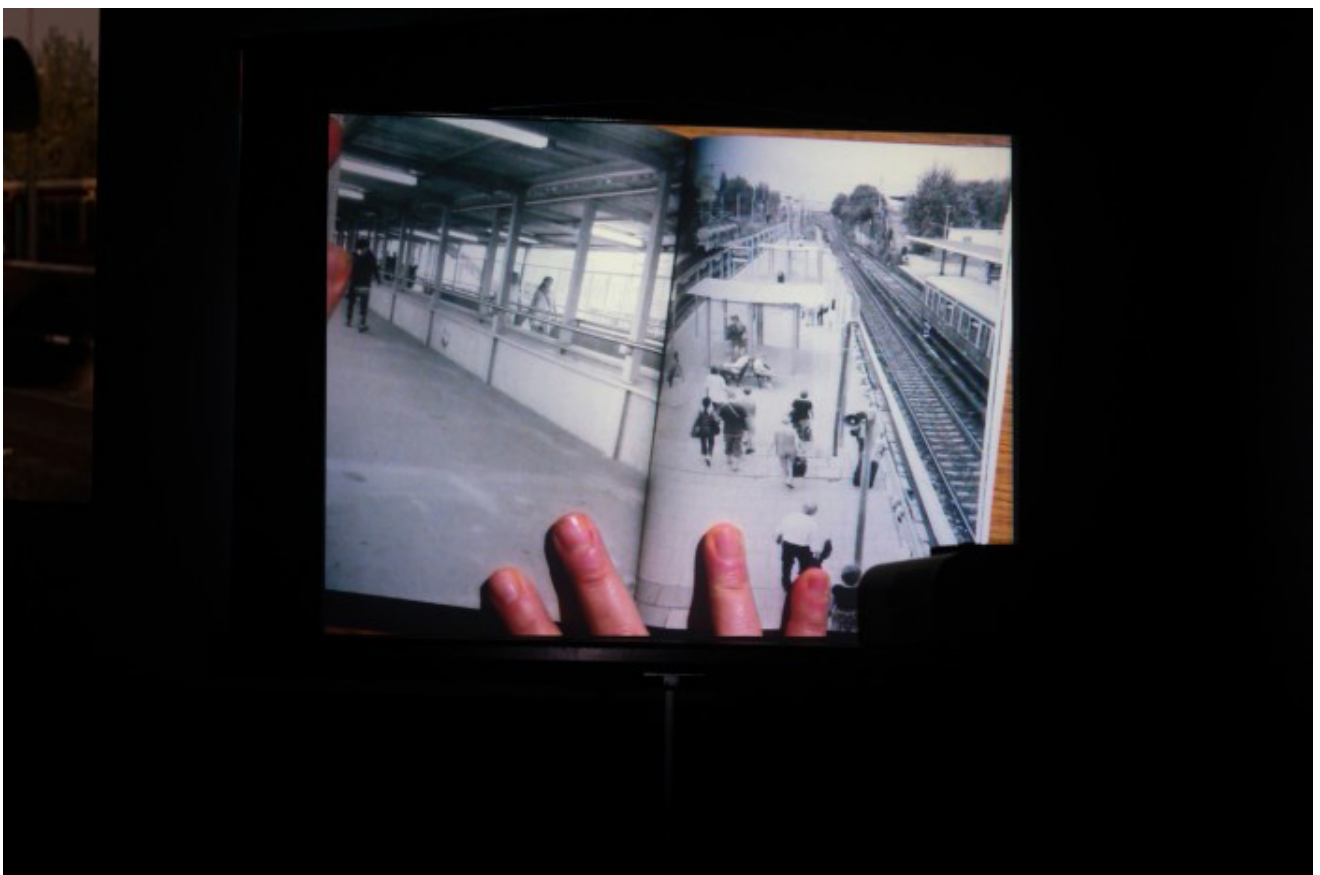
# Folgen



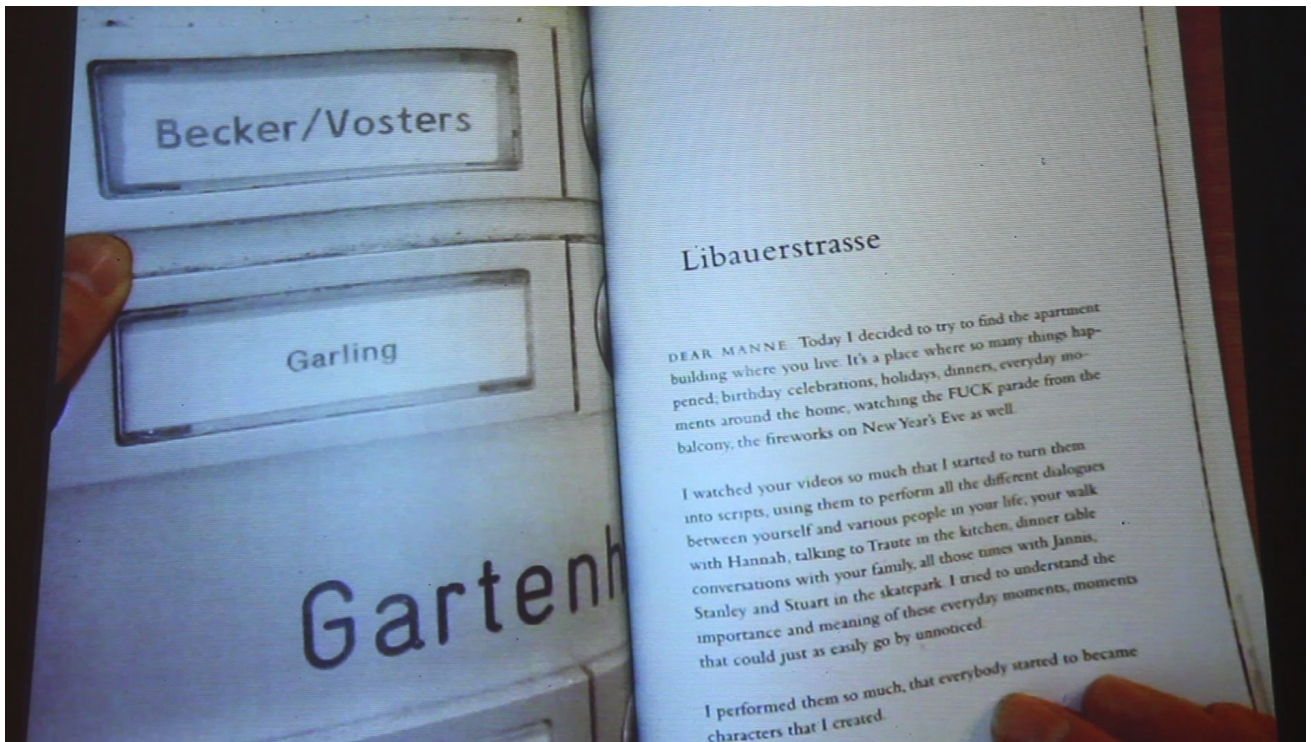
A CITY NOVEL



Performance setting at KinoKino, Stavanger, 2013







Performance setting at Telemuseet, Oslo, 2013.

## Co miasto może zrobić dla Ciebie? (What can the City do for you?)

installation and urban intervention.  
Photographs, printed material, social action. 2010

commissioned by the Mediations Biennale in Poznan, Poland

Branding the terms "Biennale" and "European Capital of Culture" promotes a certain legitimacy to local cultural events in an attempt to make them attractive for corporate sponsorship (and city development) tying them to economic and political agendas. Art and culture are part of the larger political and economic issues that shape the daily life of any city. Invited artists are implicated in these structures. As such, these officially sanctioned spaces for art provide a rich ground for artists to address the conditions that define how and for whom their work is produced and displayed.

My own work addresses the overlapping relations that create social space in both the real and virtual sense. To generate a critical reflection on the complicated conditions of artistic production and social space, I wanted to give visibility to two creative currents not sanctioned by the city. Rozbrat, a sixteen year old squat and autonomous space for various political, social and cultural activity was in a precarious position with the threat of closure and "Poznan: To nie Firma!" (Poznan: Not a Company) a counter campaign to the official city campaign "Poznan: Miasto know-how (Poznan: City of know-how) that become visible in the city in June, 2010 in the form of an illegal stencil campaign that appeared throughout the city. Both Rozbrat and "Poznan: To nie Firma!" played a critical role in creating alternative narratives into how urban spaces should be constructed as well as the rights of its citizens to decide about the life of the city.

**PROGRAM REGIONALNY**  
NARODOWA STRATEGIA SPÓJNOŚCI

WOJEWÓDZTWO WIELKOPOLSKIE

UNIA EUROPEJSKA  
EUROPEJSKI FUNDUSZ ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO

**Projekt współfinansowany przez Unię Europejską z Europejskiego Funduszu Rozwoju Regionalnego w ramach Wielkopolskiego Regionalnego Programu Operacyjnego na lata 2007-2013**

**Przebudowa ulicy Winogrady od ul. Armii Poznań do ul. Szelałgowskiej w Poznaniu**

Całkowita wartość inwestycji	37 584 601,84 zł
Kwota dofinansowania z Europejskiego Funduszu Rozwoju Regionalnego	11 743 938,44 zł
Beneficjent -	Miasto Poznań

**POZnań\*** \*Miasto know-how

**POZnań\*** \*To nie firma!

ZDM  
POZNAŃ

**FUNDUSZE EUROPEJSKIE - DLA ROZWOJU INNOWACYJNEJ WIELKOPOLSKI**



The initial proposal by Rozbrat was to stage a public event in the city centre during the Mediations Biennale that politically addressed the disparity in spending between affordable public housing and the construction of a football stadium in preparation for 2012 European Football Championships in Poznan. This proposal was rejected by the city and revised by the organizers of the Biennale in a way that would prevent visibility and its effectiveness.

I offered instead to transfer half of my artist's fee provided by the Biennale in order to support their ongoing activities. Stencils of the "Poznan: To nie Firma" campaign were produced by the Rozbrat collective for people to take away and use at their discretion. A campaign protesting the disparity of spending on the new football stadium to public housing took place several months after the Biennale.







Documentation of football stadium protest action





## The City is Creative

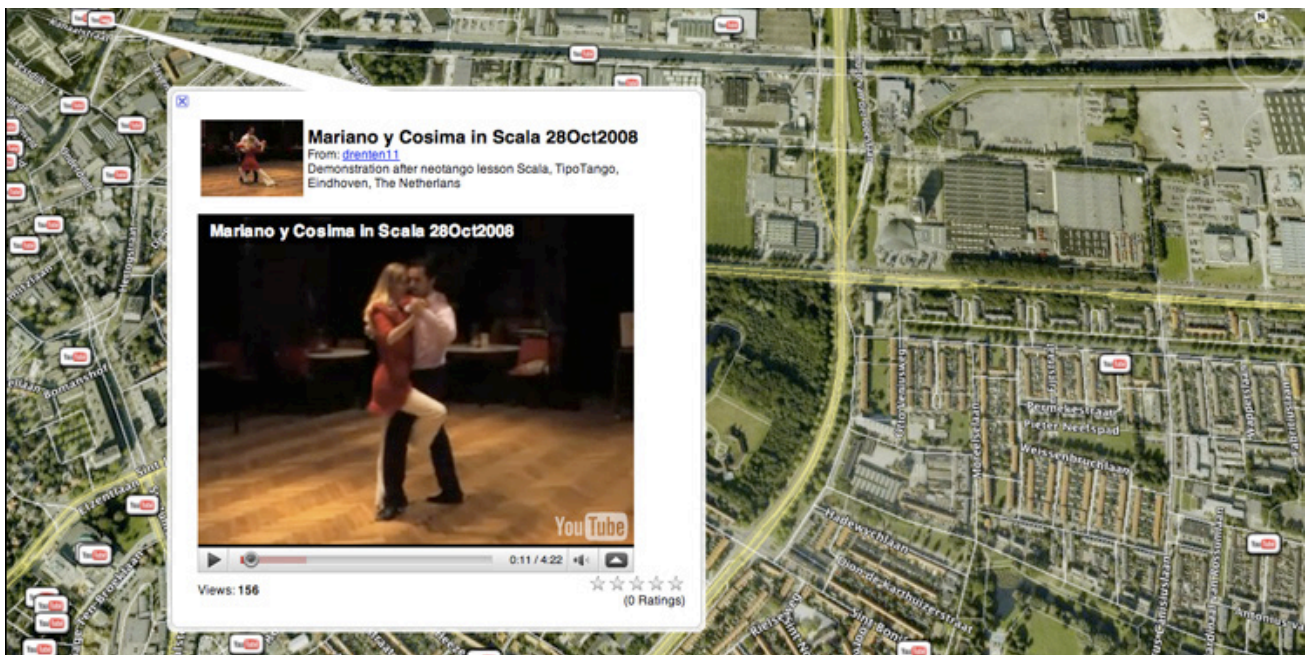
Site-specific installation. Painted mural, video, printed material, tables, infrared flashlight interface. 2009.

Commissioned by Baltan Laboratories and the flux-s Festival, Eindhoven.

performance still - *Tango Salon*



map still - original YouTube video





With a minimal play on words in the title of her interactive installation, Michelle Teran refers to the concept of *The Creative City* by the Dutch avant-garde artist Constant Nieuwenhuys. In the early 1950s, this artist started the project New Babylon, *which centred on the inherent, but still unused creative potential* of citizens. His goal was to generate a new perception and construction of the city and community, one that went beyond economic motives.

Teran has transposed this experiment into the present and, using Google Earth, has sought out people living in Eindhoven who have displayed stimulating originality via films shown on YouTube. Whether they are jugglers, dancers or science-fiction buffs, they all show unbridled creativity and curiosity coupled with the urge to share their fascination with others.

Teran invited them to re-record their videos in, and in the context of, De Hoge Rug building, located within the former Philips industrial terrain and future site of the urban development project The Creative City. In an interactive installation, the video makers and their audience can meet in a new and more intimate way. Visitors can influence the projections themselves, using infrared torches; it is up to them how much and what aspects, they want to learn about the makers. It is they who determine the frames, on their own or together with other visitors. At the same time, files displayed on the tables document the entire development process. Personal stories, visions and discoveries bear witness to a perviously invisible, unmistakably fertile, movement.

Miryam van Lier, flux-s festival catalogue text



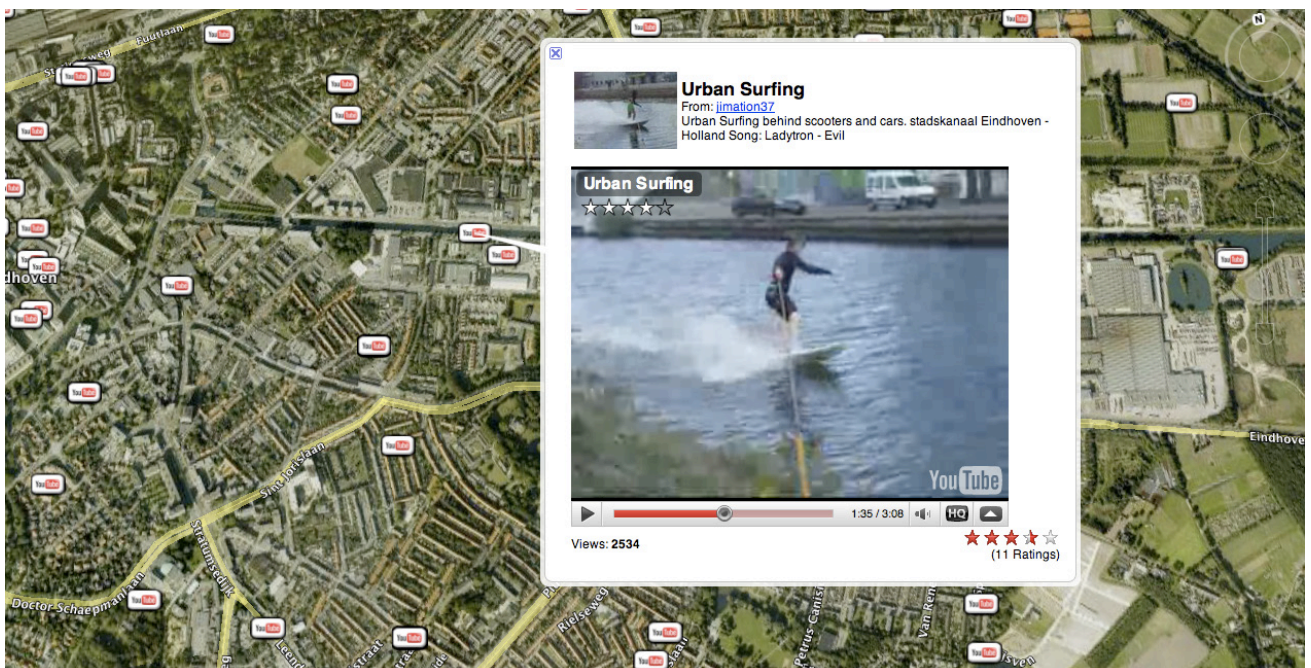
Performance still - *The Evolution of Emily*



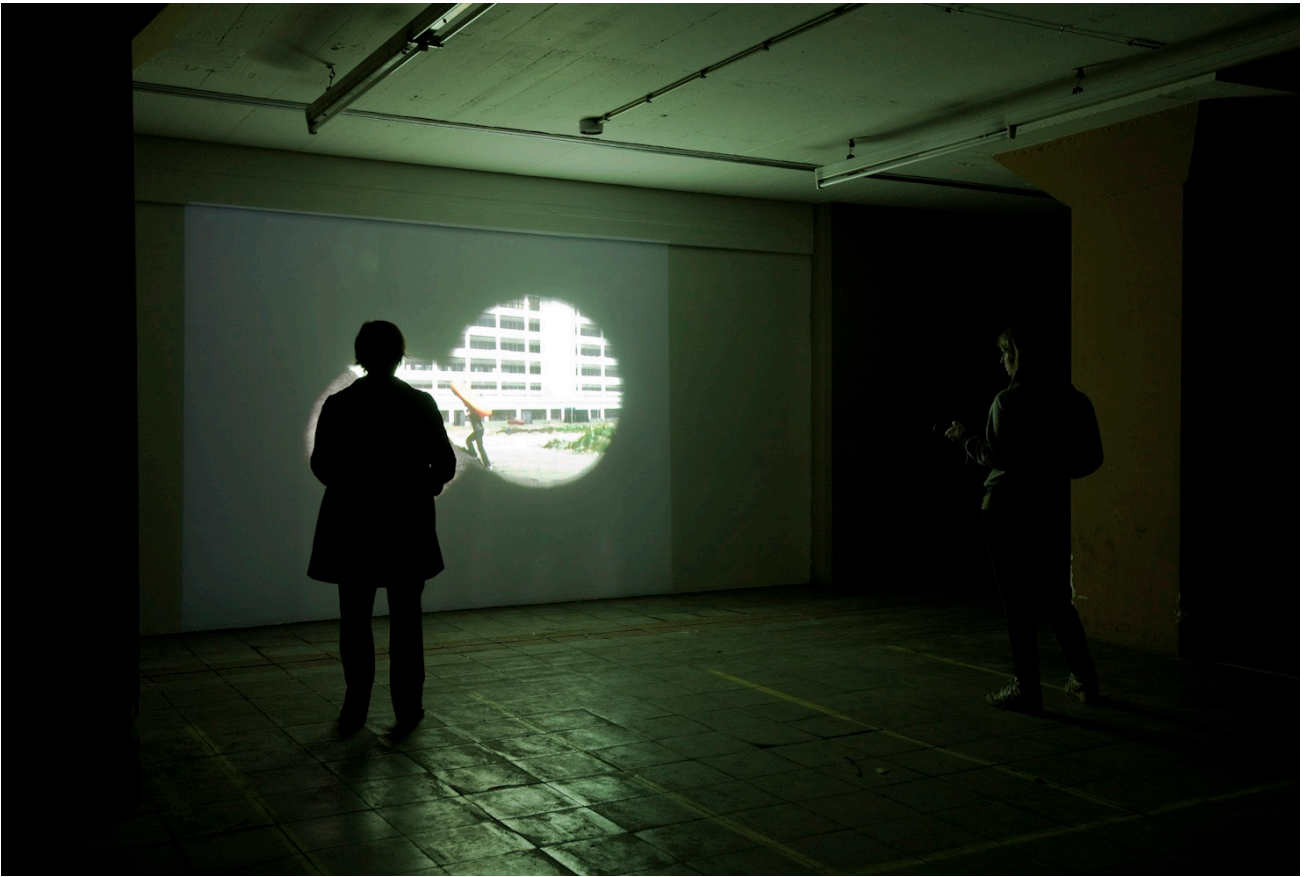
Performance still - *Urban Surfing 2*



map still - original YouTube video







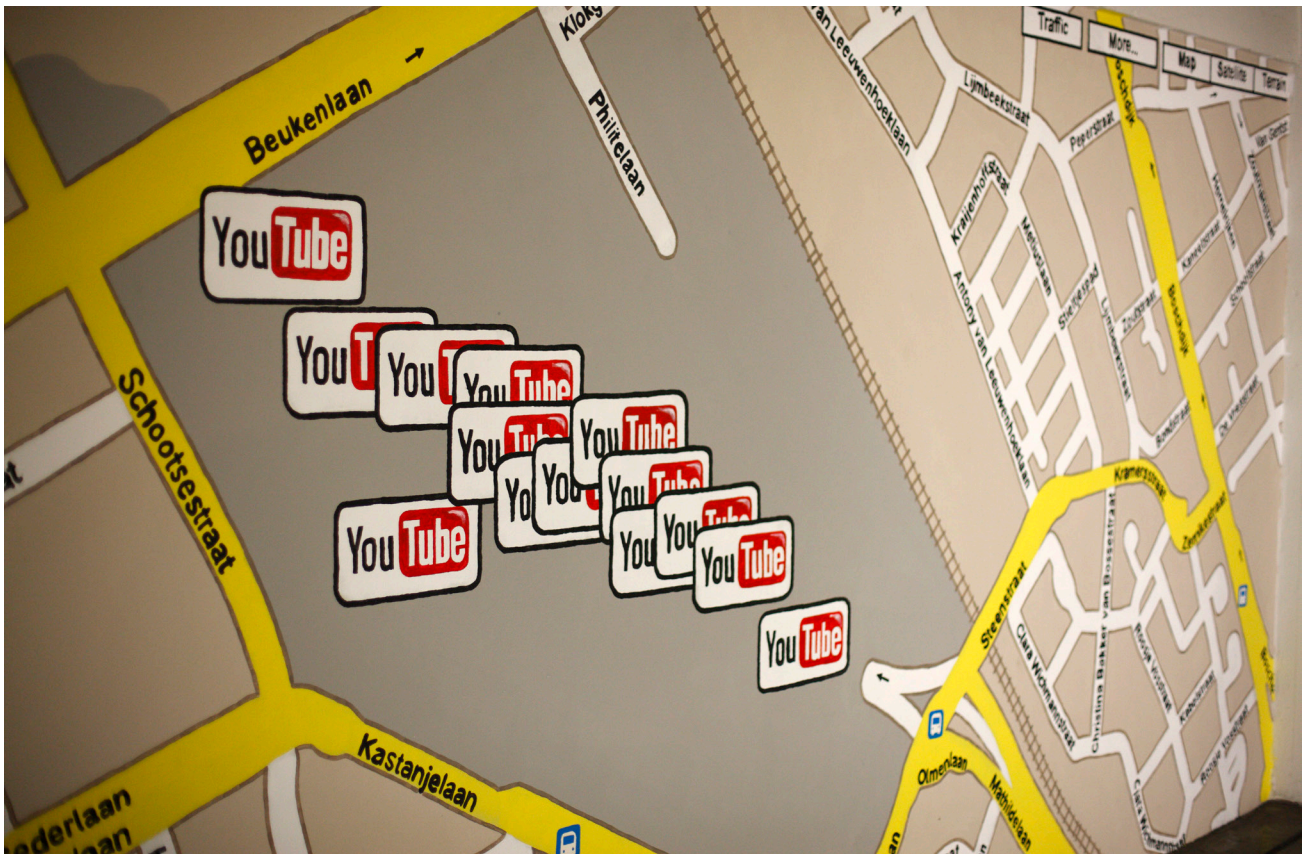
installation detail - interactive video projection







Installation detail - painted mural





installation detail - reading table





## Buscando al Sr. Goodbar

Bus tour, 2009

Winner of the 2010 Transmediale Award. Honorary Mention Prix Arts Electronica. Short-listed for the Future Everything Award. Winner of Turku2011 digital media & art grand prix award, Participative Media category.

*Buscando al Sr. Goodbar is impossible to pin down to a particular genre of networked media art. It is at once locative media, performance, social media, psychogeographical, participatory. It flows less as a result of software, interface, virtual environment, and the Internet, even though it is wholeheartedly a work in and about networks within the Web 2.0 environment; it functions more as a work proceeding from "enactive networking"... The networking in Buscando al Sr. Goodbar is dynamic—an unfolding relation that ensure via the conjoining, the enacting of city, media, inhabitants with one another... The bus tourists begin to inhabit and move through their networked city by being brought into actual conjunctions with the YouTube performers... Google Earth functions here less as a map, less as a self-enclosed world and more as the condition for the very event of networking as edging—an opening-out-onto. It sets off and is thoroughly entangled with a series of (recursive) relays that become the predicates for novel predicates—emergent socialities inflected by networks that are ecologies of performing, traversing, seeing.*

Anna Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks* (MIT Press, 2013)





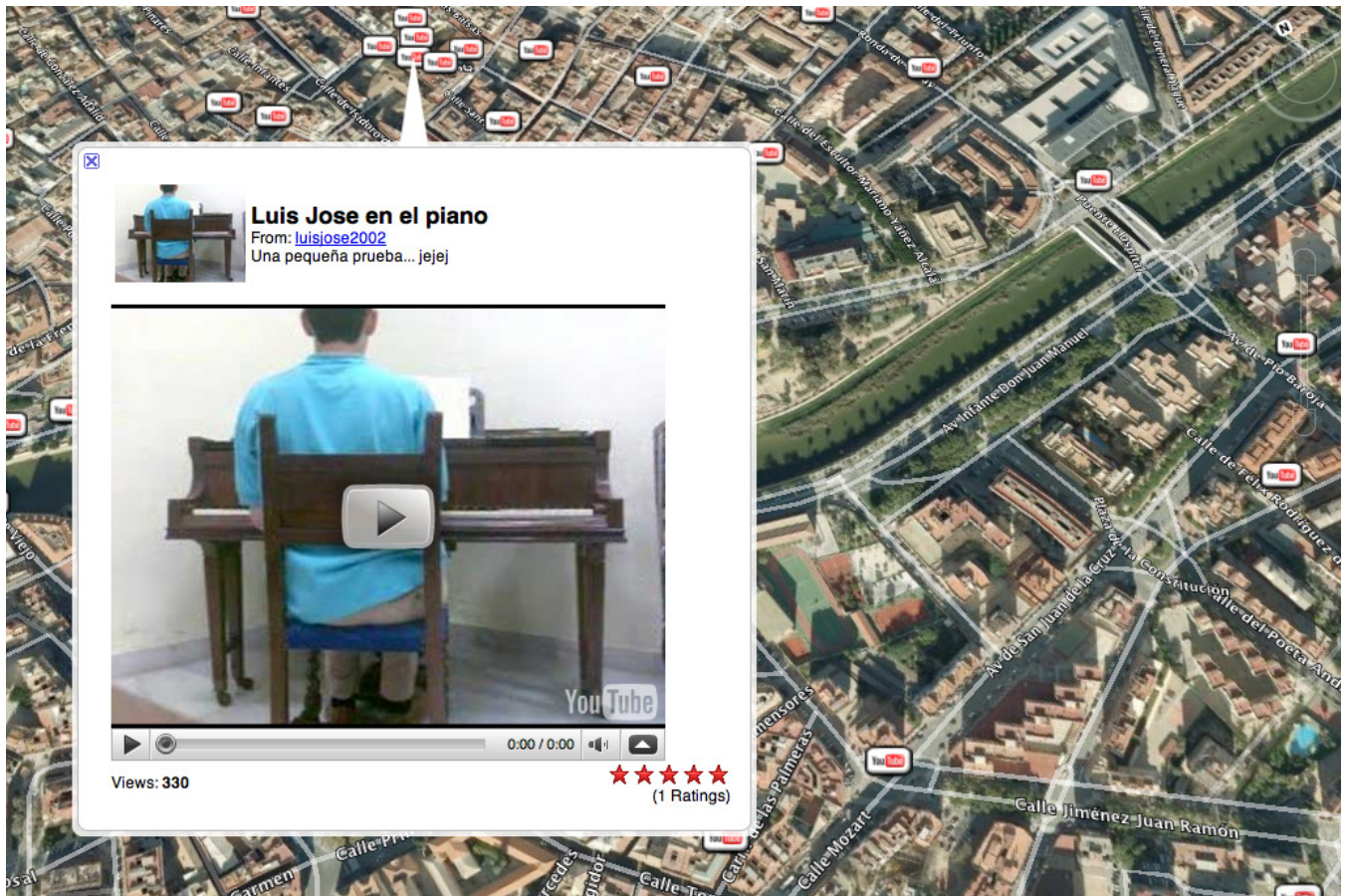


*Buscando al Sr. Goodbar* is a threefold tour which takes place simultaneously on Google Earth, YouTube and on an actual bus driving throughout the city of Murcia, Spain.

The passengers of the bus embark on a physical search for the locations and authors of various YouTube videos produced in the city. Whenever any such YouTube video discloses the geographical coordinates of where it was shot, the video becomes tagged onto Google Earth via a special software mapping system. The bus can be followed virtually on Google Earth while YouTube videos are screened on the bus itself.

At certain points the audience leaves the bus and meets some of the video authors who present them with re-enactments of their performances. By entering the spaces where videos were produced, an intimate encounter occurs between video makers and audience.





Research documentation, Google Earth/YouTube, 2009





Performance still, Murcia, 2009





Performance still, Murcia, 2009



## Life: A User's Manual

Performance. Monitor, video scanner, antenna, car battery, found object. 2003-2006

Nominated for Transmediale Award, honorary mention Interactive Arts category for Prix Ars Electronica.

*How many wireless video camera systems have been sold to monitor babies' sleep?*

*In the video of the 2005 Berlin walk, a woman in black pulls a rolling video-suitcase, on the front of which a vignette window shows an indistinct black and white image. She moves her wrist so that the device strapped to it can pick up nearby video streams: a high-angle view of a supermarket aisle is replaced by a shot of an open window seen from inside looking out. Elsewhere, the suitcase became a backpack (Montreal) or a street vendor's cart piled up with television monitors (Linz).*

*In Teran's work, activities that take place within the monitored rooms are revealed to a handful of participants as they unfold. This project questions the limits between public and private space as they are traditionally defined—inside (a home or a business) and outside (the street). These limits shift when people film their interiors and post their videos on the Web. Teran taps into private video streams by does not rebroadcast the footage she captures.*

Karen O'Rourke, *Walking and Mapping: Artists as Cartographers*  
MIT Press, 2013.



Brussels, 2003.



*Life: a user's manual* is a series of performances that exposes and examines the hidden stories captured by private wireless CCTV streams and how they are overlaid with the more tangible and perceptible spaces of the city.

During each performance, a nomadic, female character invites the public on an urban tour, where they are shown different surveillance views of the city. Using a video scanner she intercepts live surveillance from wireless security cameras within public and private spaces, and displays them on mobile public broadcasting system. Revealing hidden layers and forbidden fragments, she pieces together unseen stories from the invisible media present in the city.

A tiny fraction of the radio spectrum has been allocated for public use. Taking advantage of this unlicensed part of the spectrum, the result has been an increase in use of wireless devices that are transmitting on this narrow band. The culmination of these autonomous and synchronous acts contributes to an invisible, ad-hoc network of media overlaid upon the socially codified spaces of urban environments, the café, the home, the apartment building, the office, the store, the bar, the hallway, the entrance, the parking lot and the street.

*Life: a user's manual* focuses on the use of wireless surveillance cameras within public and private places that transmit on the unlicensed 2.4 Ghz frequency band. Whether intended or not, a person that plugs in a wireless surveillance camera becomes a broadcaster who transmits live video out into the streets. Walking through the streets and carrying a video receiver, an alternate view of the city and its inhabitants starts to unfold, created by these anonymous and unofficial broadcasts.

Curated within many festivals and exhibitions including the Transmediale Festival (Berlin) and Ars Electronica (Linz).



Berlin, 2005

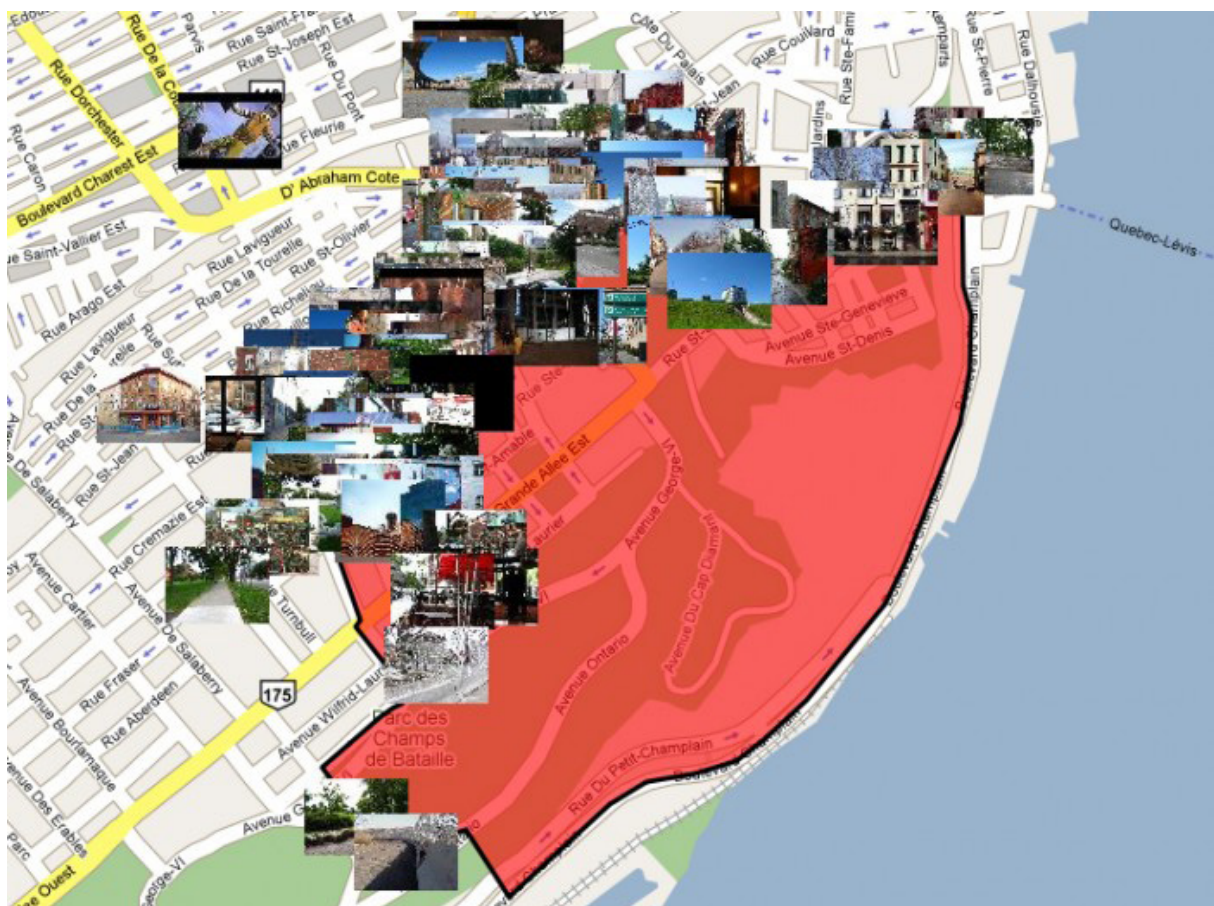


## A20 Recall

Walking performance and online map. 2006.  
Commissioned by La Chambre Blanche, Quebec City.

In April 20-22, 2001, the FTAA Summit of the Americas took place, a meeting of North, Central and South American leaders in which a proposed trade agreement to eliminate or reduce trade barriers was discussed. In anticipation of the massive anti-globalization protests that this meeting would attract, the city became extremely militarized. Of the many extensive security measures, by far what attracted the most attention was a perimeter fence, dubbed "The Wall of Shame" which enclosed a large part of the old city, government buildings and also cut through the residential neighborhood of Saint-Jean Baptiste, transforming the city into a high security fortress. The protest around the fence and the summit was violently subdued by police resulting in many arrests and the deployment of over 5,000 canisters of tear gas within a 72 hour period.

Similar security tactics have since appeared in other cities such as during the G8 summits in Genoa and Heilingendamm and APEC Summit in Sydney, where the emptying of a space creates the conditions for power to operate and where citizens become suspect.



map view



To understand psychological effects and residual traces of a violent protest within the cultural memory of an urban space, I decided make a pilgrimage to the former site of the "Wall of Shame" in which I retraced the periphery of the security fence over a series of walks that took place over a period of three weeks. During these walks, I conducted ad-hoc interviews with anybody that I might meet (in parks, private businesses, a firestation, a hotel and on sidewalks) where I asked different people to share their memories, perspectives and opinions of the protest.

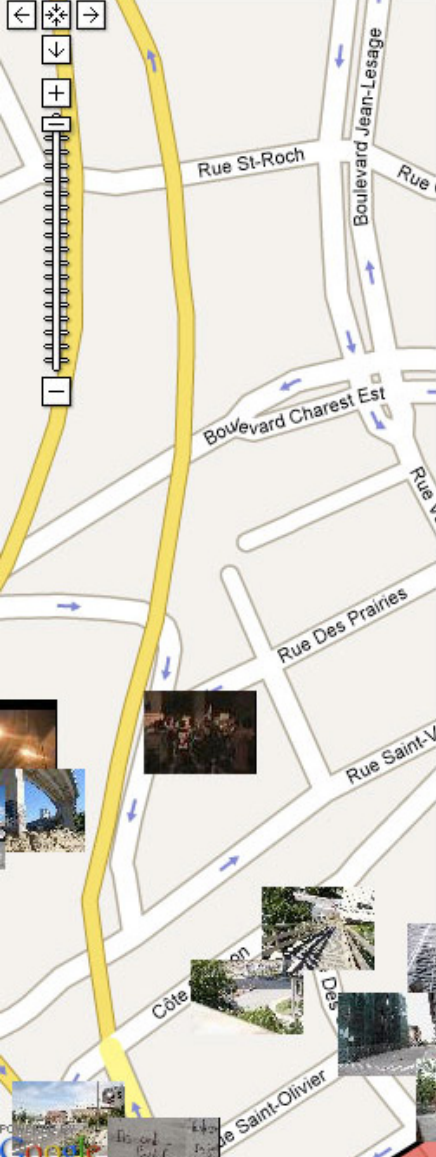
Images, text and tracings from this journey became a collaborative online map of individual perceptions, experiences and consequences of the event.



In my cooperative we had to pay for the cleanup of the left over gas residue. When we walked in the street in the days after you would encounter traces of the gas. For weeks afterwards. I have many allergies and it was a problem. It was a problem for people living in the neighbourhood. For people that were in bad health, it was a problem. Many people felt nausea when they walked along the streets for weeks after.

And in the weeks after the event, many people within my cooperative were very depressed. Had problems with dealing with what happened to them. Others were very angry. Very traumatized by the gas. There was no compensation, no help from the city. The only help came from the community. As a consequence it created a solidarity within the community as a way to deal with what happened.





First you don't see it. We started to realize that the summit was happening when we saw the fence arrive at the Saint-Jean Street, Grand Allee. And when we saw it, it was suddenly everywhere, from the Plains.

So it started very slowly.

At the last moment. I was with my nephew and we walked the wall taking pictures because it was the first day that I was not working. My shift was the next morning. The summit was starting on Thursday and I was working that morning. So the Wednesday that they closed the fences we were walking and seeing all the protesters arriving and putting stuff on the walls and a lot of policemen. And when they closed the wall along Rue Saint-Jean. I was there. When they closed the wall at 6:00 pm, I was there, like a civilian.

And I said "Oh, it's started" You have now have no rights in your city. You have to show a citizen pass. To show where you live. It was crazy.



map detail





Puis, mon balcon était face au nord. Puis le samedi, on ne pouvait pas rester assis sur le balcon, nos yeux pleuraient. Il y avait des gens dans Montcalm qui m'ont dit que leurs yeux pleuraient à cause des gaz. Il y a beaucoup de gens qui ont été Incommodés. Eux ils n'étaient pas à côté de la barricade.

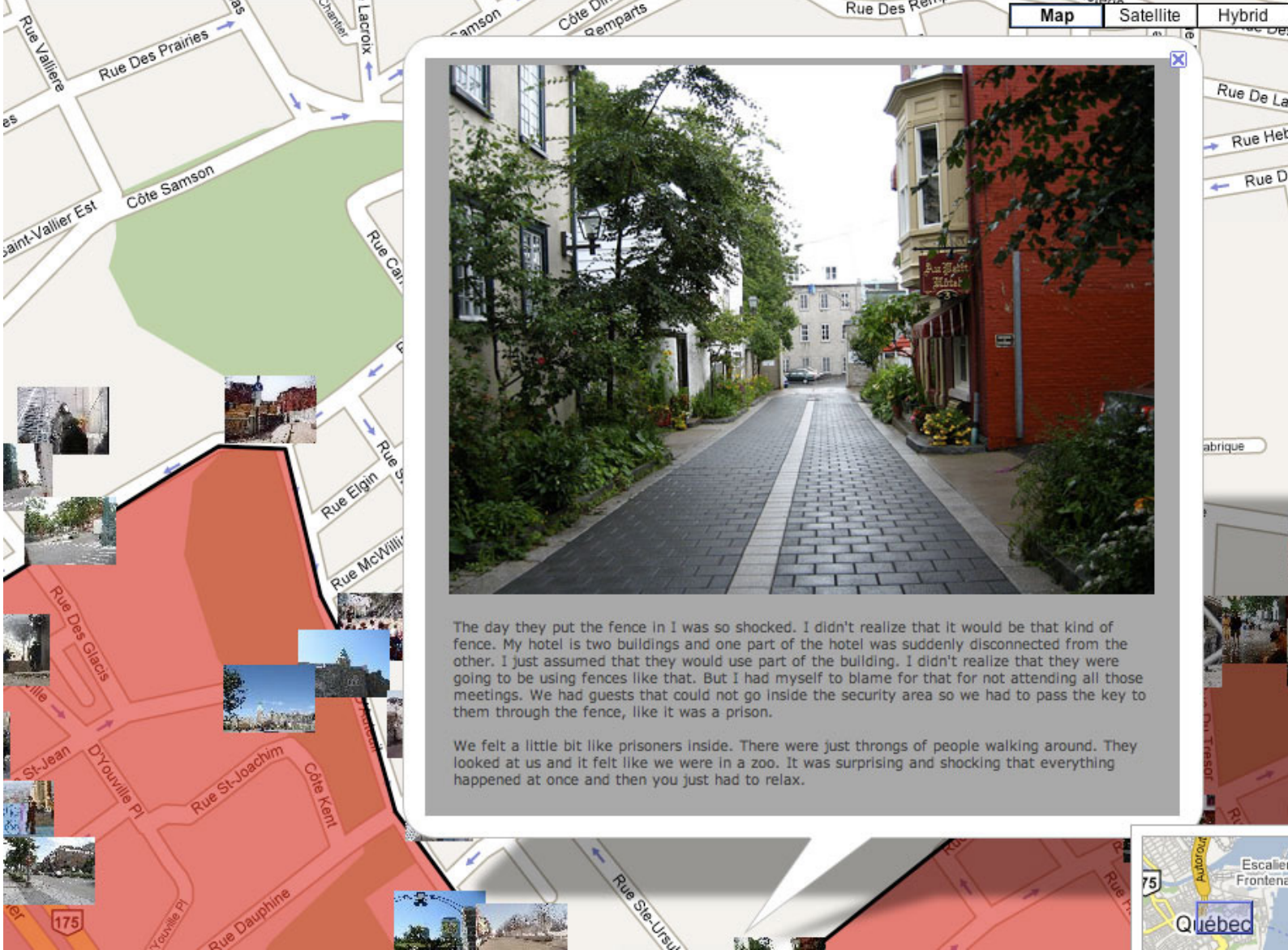
Ça m'a vraiment fait réaliser, de plus plus près, ce que peuvent vivre tous ces peuples qui sont opprimés tout le temps. Moi, le samedi, pour aller au dépanneur, je me faisais arrêter et je devais m'identifier. Pour aller au dépanneur. Puis, je me faisais demander de m'identifier en anglais. Même pas dans ma langue. Parce que c'était des gars de la GRC qui venaient de l'Alberta. Puis qu'y-en avaient rien à foutre de moi. Pis ils avaient leur gros chien, pis, si je ne coopérais pas, ils me menaçaient quasiment de me tirer les chiens dessus.

L'information qu'on nous véhicule, c'est rien. Quand on voit Israël, qu'on voit l'Afghanistan, quand moi, je voyais les nouvelles de mon quartier, cette fin de semaine là. Pis que je me disais " Mais c'est quoi, ça n'a pas de sens. C'est rien, c'est n'importe quoi se qu'ils disent".



map detail





The day they put the fence in I was so shocked. I didn't realize that it would be that kind of fence. My hotel is two buildings and one part of the hotel was suddenly disconnected from the other. I just assumed that they would use part of the building. I didn't realize that they were going to be using fences like that. But I had myself to blame for that for not attending all those meetings. We had guests that could not go inside the security area so we had to pass the key to them through the fence, like it was a prison.

We felt a little bit like prisoners inside. There were just throngs of people walking around. They looked at us and it felt like we were in a zoo. It was surprising and shocking that everything happened at once and then you just had to relax.

map detail