DESIRE LINES:
Inventing Attentive, Disorganised and Posthuman Curatorial Models

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I have started my PhD in Advanced Practices in January 2020, leaving Istanbul to embark on this long-term academic journey. When Covid 19 hit in March 2020, I found myself moving back to Istanbul and since then completed a large percentage of my PhD online. The year after, I learned about the illness of my supervisor Bridget Crone and witnessed her process through our online meetings in her turquoise-wallpapered room. I would like to dedicate this thesis to my supervisor Bridget Crone, who sadly passed away in 2023 after a long fight. I have learned so much from Bridget; from her calm, grounded, yet passionate nature. Even in those last months of online meetings, she always continued to inspire me, push me and be there for me. Over the years, she has contributed to my thesis tremendously and has lent me so many terminologies. I will be forever thankful for her presence and insights.

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Abstract

"DESIRE LINES: Inventing Attentive, Disorganised and Posthuman Curatorial Models" is a practice-based PhD dissertation that turns to the material human body to explore what the curatorial can learn from the molecular to create further desire lines. How can curatorial practices challenge existing structures of knowledge by claiming knowledge outside of the mind and present an openness to other-than-human possibilities? The study calls to be attentive towards existing collaborations with the other-than-human, particularly within the body, and open up to multiple entangled desire lines. It posits the gut as a methodological site of collaboration where non-human cells largely outnumber human cells. It argues that attentivity as such can provide a methodology for arriving at knowledges differently. The project frames friendship as a curatorial methodology and performs it in writing through embodied forms of writing and storytelling.

The dissertation presents two collaborative curatorial projects; Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies. Garp Sessions, co-founded with artist Ayşe Idil Idil, is a summer research programme bringing together an international community of artists and thinkers in a fishing village, Babakale in Turkey. The programme prioritizes collective thinking and digesting through reading sessions, workshops, and collective meals. Experimental Pedagogies, conducted by the curatorial and research collective topsoil, co-founded with Sofia Villena Araya and Amelie Wedel, is a long-term research project which explores how we learn from various others, including the other-than-human. The methodology in practice is cultivating an openness for alterity and plurality; creating conditions for learning encounters to happen through disorganisation.

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Introduction

Desire Lines

This project is about creating desire lines and doing the curatorial differently. Desire lines (or paths), a term borrowed from landscape architecture[1], are initially unplanned and informal routes that emerge as alternatives to designated pathways. They are preferred for various reasons to established ones and are created through their usage, sometimes deliberately for the sake of functionality, but often, more so intuitively. They resist built design and establish a different relation with the landscape.[2] Desire lines allow me to visualise doing things differently, as inventions of new ways for getting somewhere. For a project that attempts to invent alternative curatorial models, this imagery of taking a path that is not yet existent is helpful. Being driven by one's constantly changing desires and moving towards that which is desired is a movement of movement itself towards differentiation. One reaches their destination using desire lines differently. And desire lines, eventually, generate the possibility of there being different ways to get somewhere, offering alternatives to dominant paths as well as what one presumes to be their final destination. They express a desire for multiplicities.

The imagery of desire lines enables me to engage with and be attentive to diverse voices and narratives while immediately prompting the question: Whose desire are we following? Desire

[1] Landscape Architects Association, https://www.landscapearchitecture.org.uk/

[2] Even though the concept of desire lines comes from landscape architecture, it has also been addressed in the social sciences. Laura Nichols, in her article "Social Desire Paths: An Applied Sociology of Interests," suggests that being attentive to constant changes and understanding why and what kinds of desire lines emerge is crucial for improving social structures. As such, she presents a different sociology of interests which is a desire line on its own or a way to rethink the concept of interest. Desire lines demonstrate the need for flexibility and adaptation to changing needs. It implies that choices led by multiple desires may provide alternatives to existing structures.

lines are emergent phenomena; they are not given or taken for granted and they can be informative and emancipatory. They reveal one's wishes and needs. I argue that we need to attune to and create more desire lines, or new modelisations of desire; I explore curatorial models that aim to operate outside of existing dominant institutional sets of values and modes of working.

The motivation for inventing worlds often stems from the desire to imagine other worlds in which we might work, live, care for and learn from each other differently.[3] This inherently suggests a multitude of desire lines and urges us to perceive difference as constantly evolving processes of relationality. It is not a stable condition that we inhabit but a continual movement towards, against, with and through our desires.

In response to the climate crisis we are facing as an entire living world as well as global viral pandemics; wildfires in California, Australia and increasingly Southeast Europe; wars in Ukraine and Palestine; nuclear threats posed by countries like Russia, North Korea and Iran; deadly earthquakes in my home country of Turkey and neighbouring Syria; animal extinction; systems of oppression, capitalism run on attention economy; institutions that have turned into constant production machines; endless polarisation; increasing nationalism and racism in Europe and North America; authoritarian governments like that of China; and an overall hatred towards that which is different and difficult to comprehend, it is not only significant but crucial to find or establish new ways to be with the other differently as well as notice, cherish, learn from and

[3] See, for instance, writings of Donna Haraway, Lola Olufemi and Arturo Escobar.

exercise already existing ways of being with the living world. It is a necessity to produce knowledges and work, not against but with other beings, because the stakes are currently high.[4]

In the neoliberal system that has become an almost global culture especially in the Global North and the Western world, our desires are controlled, manipulated, and oriented towards societal norms and values. Therefore, even desire lines can become captured and commodified by neoliberal value judgement systems. We are constantly being pulled towards despair, apathy, and social division. It requires tremendous energy and dedication to resist these dominant paths. However, this is exactly what art and specifically in the context of this project, the curatorial, has great potential to effect, making worlds, creating new knowledges and tells stories that imagine other possibilities. Emancipatory art practices, in conversation with debates in fields such as ecology, posthumanism, postcolonial and critical theory, underline that alternatives to the current ways of existing on the planet are not just possible but urgent.[5] Therefore, I align myself with theorists, writers and artists from various fields in this endeavour and observe how the curatorial can contribute to these ongoing discourses.

For contemplating different ways of being in the world, doing and knowing differently, a shift from the dominant paths of Euro-Western and anthropocentric discourses is necessary. In many aspects of life and practice, both in academia and the arts, our capitalist societies must strive towards plurality and dialogue in difference rather than intolerance, isolation and hierarchisation,

[4] As Donna Haraway writes in *When Species Meet*; "To knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where *who and what are* is precisely what is at stake."
[5] Here I would like to give some examples of theorists and writers who have been engaging with these topics in various forms and through different lenses to give a broad overview of the field. This list does not in any way attempt to cover all thinkers but refers to a few that I place my research alongside. See for example Tim Ingold, Marisol de la Cadena, Merlin Sheldrake, Sibel Yardimci, Eduardo Kohn, Donna Haraway, Elvia Wilk, Daisy Hildyard and Michael Marder.

which has been the prevalent attitude in the West since the beginning of Western modernity. We are increasingly witnessing cross-pollination in academia between disciplines, tools and approaches. The writings of Elizabeth Povinelli, Katherine McKittrick, Robin Wall Kimmerer and Anna Tsing are timely and important examples of this kind of bringing together elements of various disciplines and fields such as anthropology, ecology and postcolonial and Indigineous studies in ways that have not been thought in tandem before. Art practices are becoming informed by scientific and forensic knowledges; for instance, Susan Schuppli, Forensic Architecture, Kerem Ozan Bayraktar, Jorgge Menna Baretto and Miriam Simun are among artists whose works borrow scientific methodologies while constantly seeking for strong visual and aesthetic languages to communicate their engagement with these fields. Likewise, positivist sciences are starting to acknowledge the significance of social sciences, behavioural psychology and cultural practices in their investigations.

Collaboration as the way

Collaboration in artistic and curatorial practices may help to challenge highly professionalised and institutionalised mentalities, tending to blur boundaries between roles and defy clear cut definitions of authorship.[6] At times, it can disrupt the mainstream model of individualised, competitive, and obsessive production in the arts. It is rather difficult to quantify and monetise collective intellectual and artistic work which itself presents an institutional critique, since notions of individuation have long fed into the figure of artistic genius that the art market relies on. However, we have seen how collaborative practices may also reaffirm roles, modes and

[6] See, for instance, "Multiple Authorship" by Boris Groys.

desires of neoliberal values artistic work is evaluated with.[7] Current desire lines presented in prevalent discourses of the Western art world include a slow and slippery shift from mainstream individual modes of work towards an opening to collectivity. For example, we see large-scale projects like documenta 15 being curated by the Indonesian curatorial collective ruangrupa, titled *lumbung*.[8] Documenta 15 centred on modes of emerging from and working with local communities, developing a caring and inclusive ethos, with an emphasis on encounters, gathering, and the allocation of resources to communities that formed its collective body. This demonstrates how a societal shift towards collective modes of operating is mirrored even at the level of highly institutionalised and commercialised art events.

However, the controversial public reaction to documenta 15 reveals more layered complexities surrounding this outlook. Firstly, the 100-day exhibition which was preoccupied with active practices rather than passive display stirred a lot of criticism in terms of its aesthetic concerns. In addition, there were a series of antisemitism allegations against documenta 15, which resulted in a banner by Indonesian collective Taring Padi displaying antisemitic imagery being removed from the exhibition.[9] Similarly, the Palestinian collective The Question of Funding was accused of being anti-Semitic, and their space was scandalously vandalised before the opening. The entire situation, which could have led to very fruitful discussions around the ideas that the exhibition was attempting to address, was unfortunately censored, and badly handled. These issues were not transparently presented to the public, and neither was reasoning behind the

[7] As major events are curated by collectives and the word collectivity pops up in various institutional projects, we also see that the notion is being emptied out and exploited by the institutional and neoliberal mindset for higher value and relevance without actually aiming to foster genuine collective values.
[8] https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/
[9] You, Mi. "What Politics? What Aesthetics?: Reflections on documenta fifteen." e-flux. November, 2022.

decisions to remove work and refraining their curatorial position from this debate.[10] Despite all these conflicts, shortcomings and problematics, documenta 15 will remain a very significant experiment and a strong indication of what dominant art ecosystems will come to grapple with in years to come. It also proves that this turn to collective practices does not necessarily imply less polarisation and a unifying, harmonious and inclusive way of operating. Documenta 15 goes against the notion of sole genius curators and artists, instead building an ecosystem formed of small and medium sized social and art initiatives which brings a non-Western model of operating into an internationally renowned curatorial event within such a recognised and controversial institution. It is a noteworthy example of how the resources, attention and voice that the curatorial body is granted can be distributed throughout a community despite, for instance, the restrictions on how funding (a shocking €2.2 million) can be spent only towards tangible outcomes.[11] However, this instance also demonstrates how such collective endeavours can become popularised and capitalised on. This is exactly how the curatorial I am proposing through this project differs from existing attempts and models, proving the necessity of alternatives to large-scale and heavily funded international curatorial events. This project thus assumes a promiscuous understanding of collaboration that is, as put forward in the title, attentive, posthuman and disorganised.

Turning to the material body and the other-than-human as methodologies

As part of my efforts to create desire lines and alternatives to existing curatorial models as well as the mainstream and institutionalised interest in collective practices, I turn to the material body and the other-than-human.

[11] Ibid.

Many philosophical and feminist discourses have long disregarded the body, perceiving it as a burden, a reason for the suppression of women, and as leading the way to essentialism - as Elizabeth Grosz has criticised in *Volatile Bodies*.[12] From the philosophers of Ancient Greece, who approached mind as superior to the body and emotion,[13] through to the Enlightenment,[14] rational thinking has been centralised and idealised. Cartesian thinking made a clear separation between mind and body, with knowledge being thought as a merely cerebral process.[15] Since the beginning of Western modernity, scientific knowledge has been prioritised and accepted as the ultimate truth in dominant discourses; humans have been anthropocentrically positioned as the sole master of nature, whilst Euro-Western narratives have been accepted and circulated as the dominant discourse, and female bodies objectified and suppressed.[16]

However, theoretical frameworks like new materialism and material feminisms have brought the body back into intellectual discourse, calling for us to revert our attention to the material.[17] We, as humans, have started to notice that it is crucial to rethink our understanding of ourselves as relational beings, in connection with nature and other-than-human agencies, thought not as a background or instrument but as significant actors in our becoming. Artists like Anicka Yi, Inland, Jenna Sutela, Cooking Sections, Robert Zhao Renhui and Ane Graff have been collaborating with scientists, biologists and anthropologists to produce works that aim to extend collaboration into more-than-human encounters and worlds. We are seeing an ever-growing body

[12] Grosz, Elizabeth A. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. p.7. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2011.
[13] See writings of Plato and Aristotle.
[14] See writings of Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant.
[15] See *Meditations on First Philosophy* by Rene Descartes.
[16] Earlier waves of feminism have been tackling particularly how female bodies have been suppressed. See writings of Judith Butler as well as works by Barbara Kruger, Judy Chicago, Cindy Sherman and Louise Bourgeois to name a few.
[17] See, for example, books like Material Feminisms, Volatile Bodies and Undutiful Daughters.

of work from posthuman theories as well as embodied forms of writing.[18] These demonstrate that a shift in thinking and a committed questioning of the existent dominant modes of thinking is necessary and already happening. I turn to the curatorial in order to work through desire lines that emerge as a response to these urgencies, arguing that the curatorial produces arenas for creating new knowledges through encounters, exploring various worldmaking practices and proposing connections and friction points between various positions, tools, practices, discourses and fields. It expands the field of operation of artistic practices which encourage us to imagine and build alternative ways of living. I also question the extent to which curatorial practices have caught up to these ongoing shifts in theory and art practice.

This project looks at posthuman collaborations waiting to be noticed within the material human body and draws attention to the worldmaking potential of looking at the molecular. It does so because imagining alternative ways of living requires an understanding of our entanglements with the living world as well as of the stakes that surround the establishment of an ethics of coexistence. The material human body provides an accessible starting point and allows me to work from my embodied and situated experience as well as a lived site of collaboration with the other-than-human. It also opens to possibilities for bodily practices of attuning such as meditation, deep listening, breathing, as well as eating and digesting, which have become central in the curatorial projects that I have developed.

The first research question that the thesis asks is: What can the molecular provide to the curatorial? Within that endeavour, it situates the gut as the site in the material human body for

[18] See, for example, *Death by Landscape* by Elvia Wilk and *The Second Body* by Daisy Hildyard.

thinking through our existing collaborations with other-than-human agents. It does so because the gut is a unique organ in the human body, in which there is a diverse ecosystem of bacteria, viruses and fungi. It allows me to focus on a particular site in the human body through which we are able to observe the human body as a site of collaboration which can't be easily contained in itself. The formation of the human microbiome, its openness and porosity, its connection to both internal and external processes, and its being an ecosystem of millions of bacteria hosted within the material human body, presents different ways of being in the world and narratives for approaching collaboration and learning from the other differently.

Therefore, another central research question of this thesis is: How can these practices challenge existing structures of knowledge by claiming knowledge outside of the human mind that presents an openness to other-than-human possibilities? For this, I highlight the material status of the world, embodied experience, and our entanglements with other living beings within a curatorial framework, fielded as an arena for creating encounters and building new knowledges as well as subjectivities. Therefore, the project presents attentivity as a methodology and calls for us to be attentive towards other-than-human possibilities. This requires building new understandings of collaboration and the proposition of new socialities.

Doing the curatorial differently

Inventing new curatorial models for doing things differently is urgently needed as we find ourselves in the midst of many crises which urge us to rethink our agency, relational existence, and relationship to the other-than-human world. Contemplating what the curatorial does or might do can be emancipatory as a worldmaking practice, understanding how we learn from various

others, and creating encounters and spaces for experimenting with different ways of doing. Developing methods to get to alternative ways of being is a crossroads where theory, practice, and life come together.

Mainstream modes of curating are heavily geared towards constant production and the organisation of events and exhibitions in service to the attention economy, profiting established art centres and their institutions as well as the dominant structures of knowledge they support, along with the Western understanding of knowledge itself as singular and exclusively cerebral. In the context of Turkey, most art foundations, galleries, and funding bodies are privately owned by a small number of collectors, without almost any governmental support for contemporary art. This results in an abundance of censorship, gatekeeping as well as a sterile commercial art world that is patronising, exploitative, patriarchal, and oppressive. However, it also makes it abundantly clear that there is great need for alternatives and in fact, a strong drive for things to be done differently.[19]

The preface of *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* edited by Jean Paul Martinon addresses the necessity of differentiating the *curatorial* from *curating*, which also laid the foundations of the Curatorial/Knowledge (now called Advanced Practices) programme at Goldsmiths University. Curating is defined as a series of professional practices concerned with setting up exhibitions and modes of display, whereas the curatorial extends this staging of an event towards

[19] Towards the end of finishing this thesis, in late 2023 and early 2024, there are significant institutional changes happening in Turkey's major art institutions. Driven by the controversies around the selection process of the curator for the 18th Istanbul Biennial, organised by Istanbul Culture and Arts Foundation (IKSV), there is collective action led by independent initiatives which calls to hold these institutions accountable in their ways of operating. The open letter to IKSV has resulted in the postponement of the biennial, resignation of the director of the biennial and of the selected curator who had also been sitting on the board at the time.

understanding it as an event of knowledge production.[20] Curating is about making a promise and the curatorial about causing a disturbance that encourages different ways of thinking about the world.[21] Preoccupied with this notion of the curatorial, the book presents various perspectives surrounding what the curatorial is and can be. However, as the book came out in 2013, the notion of the curatorial has since been adapted and exploited in different ways. In many of the definitions of the curatorial, including in Martinon's introduction and Nora Sternfeld's brilliant proposal, even though there is a divergence from current mainstream understandings of the curatorial regarding what kinds of spaces the curatorial can take place in, what it activates and how, there is a consistent emphasis on its organisational capacities.

The curatorial can hardly be completely freed from acts of curating. Therefore, I would like to affirm the idea of the curatorial as disruption and suggest that we, as curators, *disorganise* spaces for negotiation, deliberately losing control in contradictory yet collaborative endeavours, and finally, acknowledge the value of unpredictability and indiscernibility. Disorganising implies a disruption to the regular functioning and organisation of things. A collective disorganisation would require existing in difference with others, understanding our shared stakes, and acknowledging our inability to gather everything in a concise, consistent, ordered manner. In turn, we open up to learn from our entangled ways of knowing in difference as well as disorganisation as a mode of doing difference itself differently.

My understanding of the curatorial tends to the conditions of possibility for the emergence of new knowledges through creating encounters with others including people, materials, artworks

[20] Martinon, Jean-Paul. *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.
[21] Ibid.

and other-than-human collaborators. I ask how the curatorial can be practiced differently, whilst taking up the awareness that its definition varies greatly for many and is, in fact, constantly becoming. With this project, I also propose a curatorial which is attentive and open to other-than-human possibilities that are embodied, placing the material human body at the centre of our questioning, sensing, feeling and relating to others.[22] This curatorial methodology opens to and holds space for alterity and plurality. It is not solely focused on the production and display of artworks but the creation of encounters. It calls us to be attentive to our existing collaborations with a world beyond the human as it disorganises the curatorial.

The notion of disorganisation and therefore, disruption, may often imply a conflictual situation or perhaps even a crisis. I suggest that friction in our collaborations and in the emergence of desire lines is important. In fact, this is why I prioritise friendship as a methodology. I argue for the necessity of building affective reciprocal relationships with others and forming strong support structures. Working without rigid organisational structures where humans are fully in control, turning to socialities that suggest otherwise entanglements that also recognise the participation of other beings provides an alternative methodology. Therefore, being attentive to the material in order to notice our entanglements with a more-than-human world, whilst adopting a methodology of disorganisation where we, the humans, let go of absolute control and turn to working from friendship, provides tools for moving towards a beyond the human sociality.

[22] This centering of the material human body does not affirm anthropomorphism because it understands the human body as already a site where human and other-than-human beings co-exist in. Echoing Stacy Alaimo and her notion of transcorporeality, it argues for "an understanding of the material interchanges between bodies (both human and nonhuman) and the wider environment."

Our need for a different kind of sociality has political and ecological implications. However, it does not call for an activist approach but rather addresses a set of shared conditions staked in imagining and forming a different kind of sociality. Our desires get captured by capitalism, mainstream culture, and the dominant narratives that script ways of living and dying. Through my curatorial practice, almost always with multiple collaborators, we create the conditions for exploring collectivity and encountering one another differently: using different tools, responding to and operating from different urgencies, prioritising and making visible different ways of knowing, relating, and sensing. Being attentive to what is beyond our own capacities and capture is a strategy for responding to the existing state of the world engulfed in ecological and political tumult.

Turning to the molecular and looking at the material through embodied practices and writing is another strategy. The "material turns" in the social sciences have emerged in response to the "neglect and diminishment of matter in the dominant Euro-Western tradition as a passive substance intrinsically devoid of meaning."[23] Performative new materialism, sketched out by Gamble, Hanan & Nail, follows physicist Karen Barad's ontoepistemological account of reality, in terms of an "agential realism" whereby "humans (like everything else) always partly constitute and are partly constituted by that which they observe."[24] Unlike previous materialisms, their approach perceives matter as "a fundamentally indeterminate performance or process-in-motion."[25] Matter is not fixed and passive but rather an agent in the constant becoming of the world. I argue that paying close attention to the material body is a way of encountering the other

[23] Gamble, Christopher N., Hanan, Joshua S. & Nail, Thomas (2019) WHAT IS NEW MATERIALISM?, Angelaki, 24:6, p.111.
[24] Ibid., p.122.
[25] Ibid., p.125.

differently and, therefore, this thesis strives to be an ongoing project of noticing the materiality of our encounters.

This project challenges the dominant story and mode of the curatorial to tell multiple stories. As Lola Olufemi described in *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*, this project is my attempt at answering the question: "What to do with this world and its institutions?"[26] The institutions this project addresses are indeed art institutions but also various political institutions within systems of oppression, academic and learning institutions, instituted societal violence; the institutions which determine how we interact as humans, that govern our bodies and our microbial states. This thesis argues that, working across various scales, there is great potential in turning away from systemic and political analysis to a world beyond the human because this provides the necessary tools for responding to and working against these institutions.

Another question this project explores relates to whether friendship can become a research and curatorial methodology. It approaches friendship as a becoming of inhabitations in the moment and, for this project, a condition for work. It also points to the potential of entering into complex relations with other beings and fostering dialogue across difference.

The two models I have been developing with my collaborators, friends, and companions Ayşe Idil Idil, Amelie Wedel, and Sofia Villena Araya, namely Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies, operate from disparate conditions with distinct approaches and sets of priorities. Although, they are united in attempts to contemplate how we learn through encounters that are not anthropocentric but attentive to our entanglements and differences. They are both driven by

[26] Olufemi, Lola. *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise*, Hajar Press, 2021.

inventing ways of coming together to get to knowledge differently. They require rethinking practices and communities of knowledge as well as undoing existing assumptions about what knowledge can be and can do. They problematise how and what we know as knowledge, as something that is neither static nor solely human.

Garp Sessions

Garp Sessions is a summer research programme which I co-founded in 2019 along with artist Ayşe Idil Idil, which yearly brings an international community of artists and thinkers together in a fishing village called Babakale in North Aegean Turkey for the duration of ten days. It prioritises collective thinking and digesting among participants through reading sessions, workshops, and collective meals. It has emerged as a response to our need for alternative spaces of contemplation and gathering between artists and thinkers.

We decided to start Garp Sessions in Babakale, outside of a cultural centre and in a so-called periphery, because we wanted to facilitate less production-driven spaces and less of a focus on final products. Additionally, we saw the sessions as an opportunity to direct alternate desire lines that reached people outside of the highly institutionalised spaces and coded contexts of art in Turkey. At the time in Turkey, there was a resurgent interest in research and educational programmes that operated out of museums and art institutions, such as Arter's Learning Programme, SAHA Studio and The Istanbul Biennial Production and Research Programme initiated by Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV). Nevertheless, these mostly focussed on well-known artists already exhibiting internationally, with ambitious production expectations considering the resources they were allocated and a lot of institutional oversight.

Most of the time, artists had to regularly present their process to stakeholders, produce a new work commissioned by the institution and had to bring credibility to the institutions' efforts at catalysing further production. In a country where there is extreme censorship, operating under structures belonging to private companies or foundations that are owned by well-known families and individuals (such as the Eczacibasi family which is largely in charge of both SAHA and IKSV), always requires operating within a certain internal web of political relations, refraining from being overtly critical of such bodies and the larger structures that they serve. In the local reality where miners working in sites that are owned the same families who run these private art institutions release a call to action addressing arts and cultural workers associated with these institutions to boycott them to support their strike, it is difficult to truly question and challenge the existing structures.[27] This also leads to high competition between artists and curators who depend on the existing structures for very limited opportunities available for gaining international visibility and so inclusion in a wider community of peers.

As an alternative to the limited existing spaces, which mostly scaffold around the established centre, where artists and thinkers can gather, we wanted to form our own communities and address our own needs as cultural workers in Turkey operating under such profit-driven and oppressive systems. In this sense, Garp Sessions is a reaction against existing structures, where we prioritise building a different structure that is open to transformation, as our needs along with the conditions and urgencies we are responding to are also in a constant state of change.

[27] In 2022, miners who had been working in but had just been let go from ESAN, a company in Balikesir that is part of Eczacibasi Holding, called artists and cultural workers to stand in solidarity with them.

Therefore, our project has, from the beginning, been improvised and experimental in nature, seeking to present an alternative setting, structure and mode of meeting one another. We wanted to make use of our existing international networks and connections to create alternative possibilities for artists and thinkers, not depending on the same structures that we are critical of and seeking more ways to support our community in Turkey without willing self-exploitation. We followed a shared gut feeling, assuming that if we felt the need for this kind of space, others would also. Additionally, we tried to remain open to the needs of others that we did not necessarily share with, relate to or anticipate.

Experimental Pedagogies

Experimental Pedagogies is a long-term research project conducted by topsoil, a curatorial and research collective I formed in 2017 with Sofia Villena Araya and Amelie Wedel in London. Initiated in the spring of 2020, Experimental Pedagogies is a collective contemplation on how we can learn from the various others (including the other-than-human), which approaches forms of friendship and intimate relationships as a research and curatorial methodology. I refer to it as 'friendship-work' since the research comes out of a very particular relationship. There are no distinctions between our positions as researchers and friends, being rather intertwined in complex ways. We largely work without a physical space or fixed structure, but rather from a friendship which undermined the fixedness of organisational structures as it is necessitated different motivations, needs and sensitivities in our collective work. In that sense, there is not a rigid structure that circumvents the work from the outside but the friendship. The project intuitively resists following a set methodology that is directed towards producing curatorial research or content, which allows us to further explore different ways of disorganising.

Experimental Pedagogies have so far conducted exercises around regular brief inputs and impulses, meditation, dream sessions, deep listening, glossaries, workshops with invited collaborators and intensive sessions which occasionally resulted in processual maps and diagrams. These exercises have allowed us to tune into our bodies and our environments, establish a meeting ground, share elements form our respective contexts and create a working rhythm for ourselves. These more tangible outcomes that come out of Experimental Pedagogies are not necessarily intended to be presented or displayed for a particular audience but are rather integral to our attempts at understanding why we do what we do.

By looking at the implicit, often invisible strategies and methodologies of care inherent in friendships, we want to explore how they can be transformed into accountable, involved and affective learning spaces with others. Finally, friendship is a condition for our work and for our thinking together, in the co-constitution of desire lines that diverge the straight and narrow paths of institutionalised cultural work. Since friendship is often thought of as being outside modes of material production, working through friendship may resist the logics of productivity that dominate work practices.

Fostering attentivity

This PhD project frames attentivity as a methodology. Here, I use the term "to be attentive" rather than "to pay attention" to emphasise a kind of attentivity which challenges the attention economy. The attentivity I propose is close to Luce Irigaray and Michael Marder's concept presented in *Through Vegetal Being* as well as Anna Tsing's 'arts of noticing' outlined in her

renowned book *The Mushroom at the End of the World.*[28] This is not a simple call; being attentive is not always an easy task. This is especially the case in a globalised world and in the context of an established capitalist system that continuously distracts and pushes us, as cultural workers and neoliberal subjects, towards constant action and productivity.

To challenge the modes of knowledge through which the body has long been repressed, this project approaches knowing as a bodily process and turns to the material body as a methodology. It considers how our bodies produce information and contribute to processes and practices of knowing, as biological, hormonal, and other physiological conditions and fluctuations have an impact on the ways in which we think, feel, and react. To echo books including *Everybody* by Olivia Laing and *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kork, the body stores and remembers the conditions that have shaped, conditioned, and suppressed it. In that regard, this project defies the Cartesian dualism of mind and body (as well as nature and culture) as separate entities. My thinking is aligned with theories of material feminisms and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological idea that one does not have a body but rather, one is a body.[29] Therefore, resisting the Western humanist conception of bodies as isolated and fixed entities, this project perceives the body as a nexus of relationality in itself. The material human body, in this thesis, is centred not as a tool to frame individual subjective experience but as a site of knowledge creation and as an ecosystem of multiple more-than-human collaborations. The human body, consisting of other-than-human microbial ecosystems including bacteria, viruses, and fungi, and whose nonhuman cells outnumber its human cells, is not fully human. I argue that

[28] Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton University Press, 2017.
[29] See *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945 and *The Visible and the Invisible*, 1968.

many of the notions approached throughout this thesis, such as community, curatorial, learning, friendship and encounters are, at the same time, embodied processes and incorporeal phenomena.

Working with the other-than-human

Another methodology that is central to this project, and which balances its beginning from the material human body, is an opening up to other-than-human possibilities. I find it intriguing that many of the alternative names for desire lines contain a reference to the animal, as in cow paths, elephant trails and donkey paths. The formation of desire lines is indeed not just a human behaviour, resulting from of a tendency that we share with other beings. In that sense, desire lines are already an other-than-human concept. Approaching this research within the scope of more-than-human collaborations leads to questioning, what happens when multiple desire lines don't align? This requires addressing the notion of friction from the outset when thinking about collaboration; collaboration not as a romanticised concept promoting constant harmony and inherently peaceful co-existence but as messy and difficult entanglements which at times crossover and contradict. Friendship is also a notion that is closely linked to conflict and the negotiation of differences. Through all of this, desire lines provide a disorganising way of mapping out such collaborations.

Within this research, theory has informed the starting point and methodologies for answering the question of what the curatorial can be when it centres on the material body. I begin with theory as theory undoes and transforms me, pointing to different worlds out there or in here and to fields of potentiality. Practice followed, necessary to contemplate how these rather abstract ideas can be practised, challenged and performed through my body and my curatorial work. They became

practices of attending, of finding ways into the material complexities of being a situated body, engaged in collaborative work and writing from a situated personal experience.

This is a practice-based PhD project in which the practice is a methodology that engages my embodied and curatorial practices in dialogue, having informed my initial research questions and allowed new questions to emerge. For example, it has only been by practising and working through friendships that the question of whether friendship itself can become a curatorial methodology has emerged. It was only through encountering multiple beings to create new knowledges together at the kitchen table in Babakale that I noticed the potential for further digestive threads and working across scales in practices of collaborative cooking and eating. A central methodology across these practices opens and holds a space for alterity and plurality. The question of how to cultivate openness has become the focus of the two curatorial models developed with my collaborators. We prioritise messiness as potentialities through theory and practice as companions.

Storytelling

In this dissertation, I employ storytelling as a methodology because storytelling allows me to speculate across scales and to tell multiple narratives without sticking to a singular voice or perspective. This engages with various worldmaking practices towards imagining alternative world versions. Theory is one mode of telling a story but there are also instances surrounding the body and its relationships with multiple others, as narrations of practices for listening to other beings' stories. I suggest that we also need friends and companions whose voices accompany us. And storytelling can become an attempt at capturing (albeit always partially) what is at other

times uncapturable. Considering the elusive nature of the types of practices this project presents, storytelling provides an entry point into becoming attentive towards various narratives across scales.

Contact zones appear again in the relation between theoretical investigation and the short stories or fictional vignettes that thread anecdotally across these pages. Engaging with embodied experiences, stories, and theory at the same time, life and practice forms the centre of this thesis. The writing stylistically allows room for such fragmentation, experimentation, and diversity in terms of the narratives and stories it activates. I attempt to experiment with a method of theory-making or writing that emerges from the body, understood already as a collective that emerges from collective embodied experiences. In the thesis and through my writing, I emphasise this embodied aspect to the things we produce, the theories we engage with, and the alternatives we might collectively imagine.

In terms of documentation in this thesis, I have decided not to include photographs from the sessions in Babakale as well as from our various gatherings as topsoil because I felt the images would merely serve as representations of these encounters and a too simplistic way to document the two process-based projects. It would also potentially contradict their ephemeral nature. Rather, I attempted at documenting the projects through storytelling and autoethnography, recounting my embodied experience and relational practices. The vignettes and the stories spread across the dissertation, therefore, also serve as documentation of the project, activating various voices and encounters. In this endeavour, I have used autoethnographic tools and also autotheory. Lauren Fournier, in *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism,*

describes autotheory as "flourish[ing] in liminal spaces between categories" (intro) instead of "maintaining illusory separations between art and life, theory and practice, work and the self, research and motivation."[30] Autotheory, which mainly takes off in 2010s, is "tied to a politics of radical self-reflection, embodied knowledge, and sustained, literary nonfictional writing through the self that has been, and continues to be, suppressed and repressed by certain patriarchal and colonial contexts."[31] I find it to be a way of engaging with theory from a particular position which resists a frontal approach and instead presents embodied lived experience alongside theoretical discourse.

Writing is where I gather, analyse and reflect on notions and questions that arise from both theory and practice. It is where I continue to try to remain attentive. As mentioned above, storytelling functions as an extremely useful methodology, especially for working across scales. The question of scale is pressing for a research project such as this, in its engagement with the molecular and the planetary. Zooming into the molecular to contemplate ecological, social and collective phenomena, storytelling from a situated position through historical traditions, working across temporalities and spatialities while talking from here and looking to various cosmologies, are among my tools. Indigenous cosmologies have been extremely influential for writing about particular relationships and encounters rather than abstract generalisations of our reciprocal entanglements with the other-than-human. For instance, practices of attentivity are already very much present in Indigenous as well as eastern practices and they point at ways to foster

[30] Fournier, Lauren**.** *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism.* MIT Press, 2021. p.2-3.
[31] Ibid. p.38.

attentivity to a world beyond the human through habits and rituals.[32] I have made an effort at applying these learnings from such practices that are directed towards storytelling as a way to learn, teach and connect in my writing throughout the dissertation.

Opening to the other-than-human is a recurring style of narration across this dissertation; in Chapter 1 and 2, appearing through short vignettes addressed to multiple others, in Chapter 3, through stories of relationships with particular other-than-human collaborators involved in my two projects, and in Chapter 4, through exercises of attentivity borrowed from our meetings and workshops as topsoil and experimented with during Garp Sessions.

Furthermore, I attempt to continue practising friendship in writing and through storytelling. I argue that the abstract ideas that theory allows me to engage with and learn from can only be activated through practice and in writing, through storying. We need stories to open up space for pluralities and multiple narratives.

Conclusion

The curatorial practices I will present in this dissertation are grounded in collective work. Another challenge for this project that I'm mindful of concerns the careful translation of all this collective work into an individual PhD thesis that is written by me, from my own positionality and perspective. The dissertation does revolve around the two collaborative projects discussed above, but my version of understanding them is only one thread among many other possible

[32] For example, according to the call for papers of the panel "Uywaña: attentionality and relational practices in the Andes and beyond" the Aymara and Quechua concept-practice uywaña focuses on how people learn through ritual and everyday practices to be attentive to the 'relationality' between different lines of life in Andean contexts and beyond, highlighting the idea of attentionality.

threads. It is representative of my own situated experience, observations, connections and learning from these practices. I don't want to assume that this is the same for everyone involved. At the same time, I do turn to my own story and experiences as an expression of my entanglements with others.

What makes these practices novel is mainly the local specificities they stem from. This is relatively easy to observe with Garp Sessions as the structure and the programme responds to and work from a very particular locality in the North Aegean. Thus, the practice itself can't be considered separately from the local context which is a significant contributor to the curatorial process. Though slightly more tacit, our curatorial practice as topsoil has also come to being as a response to a particular space and time. Since then, it has been evolving through the specific localities we operate from and through being attentive to the conditions that inform our being in our given contexts. Therefore, these projects which might share similarities with other curatorial and artistic projects around the globe that adopt common motivations and approaches, don't claim to be different from these other projects but instead they approach difference differently. They are novel contributions to the curatorial field because of this rootedness in specific localities and contexts as well as sharing a mutual approach to doing difference differently. It is also through the connections between these two projects int he sense of methodologies of conviviality, open-endedness and disorganization that have been developed collectively in London and other various international contexts to this very particular locality.

Here, I would also like to stress that throughout this thesis the voices of my colleagues and collaborators are reflected in various ways, through words borrowed from them, things I have

learned and adapted from them over the years and terms that we came up with together and which are therefore coined collectively by us. Their voices echo throughout the writing and I believe this text is a personal reflection and contemplation on what is and will continue to be our collective efforts. Therefore, I would like to credit them by saying this work is also in part theirs, despite the individualistic nature of academic writing. They have been extremely supportive throughout my PhD process, providing their feedback and giving consent for our work to be shared with the readers of this academic writing.

I have been careful not to share their personal data or attempt to describe their own experiences of doing the collective work. I have made special effort not to be biased towards any person or their ideas, acknowledging that this thesis presents my subjective and partial narration of plural collective practices. It also works through a lack in curatorial academic writing and presents an example of embodied modes of storytelling as an alternative definition of what the curatorial can be. I acknowledge that it is somehow ironic to write about alternative learning systems within the institutional context of a PhD. However, I aim to critically situate this project against such structures and value judgements, offering different ways to integrate collective, situated and embodied models and methods into academic work.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that this project remains one of potential. All of these attempts at inventing new curatorial models, new kinds of socialities and noticing our posthuman collaborations remain ongoing; they are always in the making, becoming, and transforming. I

don’t know whether they will continue for a long time or what other kinds of desire lines they will diverge into. I am choosing to simply write from the middle.[33]

[33] This is a reference to “Starting from the Middle” as suggested by Erin Manning in her “10 Propositions for a Radical Pedagogy, or How to Rethink Value.”

CHAPTER 1: The Body as a Site of Collaboration with the Other-than-Human

"Everything material is not always seen. Everything unseen is also material."

Hypatia Vourloumis and Sandra Ruiz, *Formless Formation*

"Sometimes when we are still, everything else moves."

Bayo Akomolafe, "How I'm learning to trust in my failure"

Starting things has always been difficult for me and this difficulty physically manifests itself in my belly. I feel hesitation and fear rising from the belly outwards. I check in first with my belly when any new ideas arise. How does my stomach feel? Are there informative noises coming from my intestines? Do I feel nauseous? Are there tiny butterflies or is there a rock sitting there sunken to the bottom of my torso? Right now, I am nervous trying to bring together everything that does not come together smoothly but I insist on thinking from my belly. Especially at the very beginning of things, following my gut feeling helps. I take a deep breath to release my clenched abdominal muscles and I let go of my breath and my fear of the unknown. I know you already knew this because you are part of it, you are also there.

1.1. Introduction

The chapter starts by explicating the stakes surrounding this project, in terms of the urgent need for prioritising collaboration in contemporary art practices and developing modes of thinking that challenge the highly individualistic, market-driven as well as production and progress-oriented mainstream curatorial models in the West. It frames the material human body and particularly

the gut as a site of collaboration between human and other-than-human agencies who participate in our knowledge production and worldmaking practices, asking how other ways of being in the world can provide other ways of arriving at alternate knowledges. This section lays the ground for such questioning by turning to theoretical thinking around material feminisms, gut and microbiome studies and posthumanist theories.

In this project, I situate myself, living, practising and writing from my body. Therefore, this provides a view from a very particular body. Rather than trying to give a supposedly objective narration of these practices, I tell my own particular story. I observe how talking from here and now, in fact, touches many other things. However, I acknowledge that it is important to situate my body and engage with various temporalities, namely historical, contemporary and relating to a future, to work across scales through looking at the microbial as well as the planetary. The self is my starting point whilst I understand the self as fundamentally in relation to the other. Therefore, this method is not an auto-referential way of approaching the argument, but rather a way of starting from my own embodied experience in order to be attentive to entanglements that exceed me.

Material feminisms is a critical starting point for the theoretical framework of this project, recentring notions of subjectivity, material agency, difference and collaboration around the acknowledgement of matter as an agent in the constant becoming of the world. This proposes looking at biological data and material bodies from a critical feminist standpoint whilst working

in dialogue with other fields and scientific discourses.[34] Such conversations are important for realising a relational understanding of corporeality which facilitates the emergence and recognition of new subjectivities and socialities.

The chapter questions the limits of who or what can become a part of our communities of knowing and undoing knowledge which engages the curatorial as a mode of creating encounters for building collective knowledges. Throughout the chapter, vulnerability is foregrounded as a shared condition that enables us to enter into relationships with other bodies. Material vulnerability is first and foremost a condition of being a body, not just human but any kind of body. For this, I turn to the gut as a unique organ which is strongly linked to our psychological processes,[35] hormonal states[36] and our relationships with multiple others; bacteria and viruses that coexist with us in the microbiome and other living beings we interact with. Through looking at the workings of the gut, in terms of its porous structure that operates between the inside and outside of the body, vulnerability can be approached as a precondition of being a body and therefore grounds for many encounters and practices of knowing. Approaching vulnerability across scales, namely molecular, personal, collective and planetary, the chapter begins to address the question of scale especially in discussion of the gut ecosystem as a model for thinking attentivity, interdependence, care and collaboration with the other-than-human.

[34] Here I would like to highlight the thought of Donna Haraway who will repeatedly be referred in this dissertation but is is also important to acknowledge other feminist Science and Technology Studies thinkers such as Claude S. Fischer, Carol Gilligan and Wendy Faulkner.
[35] See, for example, writings of Giulia Enders, Emeran Mayer and Elizabeth A. Wilson.
[36] Baker, James M; Al-Nakkash, Layla; Herbst-Kralovetz, Melissa M. "Estrogen–gut microbiome axis: Physiological and clinical implications." In *Maturitas* Vol 103: 2017.

I am interested in pursuing the possibility and potential of trying to trace collaborations that are difficult to notice across scales. Throughout the chapter, I would like to attempt to answer a main research question: What would a collective curatorial practice, that is grounded in learnings from the molecular and that allows room for such indiscernible narratives look like? Can we think of a curatorial which asks how such knowledges can be enacted in attentive encounters for an alternative sociality beyond the human?

1.2. A Multiplicity of Desire Lines

In this thesis, I am wary of following any and every line of desire, as desire is often destructive, manipulated and imposed. Desire isn't always equitable with flourishing, and it does not always move one to a better version of themselves.[37] Rather, it invites us to be attentive to various desire lines, including or microbial ones, and poses the question of how this openness to various desire lines can provide a different understanding of desire. This would require us to acknowledge that the definition of desire or particular desire lines change across different scales and systems. Capitalism is based on endless accumulation and promises the subject an object which would satisfy their desire.[38] However, this promise that the subject continuously seeks is never realised.[39] Such desire, therefore, is a distorted one. The individual's desire is also very much connected to what one assumes to be the other's desire, or what Jacques Lacan calls the desire of the Other.[40] According to Lacan, desire is always the desire of the Other. Todd McGowan, the author of *Capitalism and Desire*, states that capitalism appropriates desire and, drawing on

[37]Philosophers have widely varying views on desire; Aristotle believed desire is beyond reason whereas Spinoza argued desire is the essence of humankind. We also see that how desires are thought as divided into two categories: reasonable or rational and unreasonable or unnecessary desires.
[38] McGowan, Todd. *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.
[39] As can be found, for instance, in the writings of sociologist and political economist Max Weber.
[40] Ibid.

Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, further describes how we fail to realise that desire can be deceptive.[41] Deleuze and Guattari, according to McGowan, believe that desire can transcend its failures and barriers, however, this constitutes another desire itself and the real barrier is what we desire.[42] My understanding of this statement is that as long as the desire exists, the object of desire is only replaceable and open to appropriation by the neoliberal system. Daniel M. Bell, then, introduce the notion of an economics of desire, which suggests that our desire is primed by certain technologies.[43] Desire is constructed and accentuated by practices and institutions, and therefore, it is important to consider these structures that shape our desires.

In Buddhism, desire is the reason for all suffering, and it is very much connected to our attachments with people, things and mental representations. Buddhism suggests non-attachment is needed for genuine happiness.[44] It does not promote the idea of security that, for instance, modern attachment theory in Western psychology centres on, because nothing is fixed and permanent and is rather always changing. It is therefore not tenable to speak of a secure zone or safe haven.[45] Desire is not static or stable either; it does not exist in isolation. And to be truly happy one needs to practise non-attachment and release themselves from their fixations. Buddhism emphasises that everything is an ever-changing phenomenon, including the self that is not a solid or permanent entity, and therefore shouldn't seek to attach itself to anything in order to be free.

[41] Ibid, p.49.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Bell, Daniel M. *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World.* 2012.
[44] Sahdra, Baljinder K. and Shaver, Phillip R. "Comparing Attachment Theory and Buddhist Psychology." *In The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 23:282–293, 2013.
[45] Ibid.

Desire is not only identified with the sphere of sexuality and eroticism. In fact, in the digital age and especially facing the absence of bodies wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic, we witness a disappearance of desire, or as Franco "Bifo" Berardi suggests, a "de-sexualization of desire."[46] According to him, desire is still what drives collective subjectification but in different forms such as anxiety and aggression which manifests at the social level as disengagement and unmotivated for collective action. However, this is exactly why following desires and allowing room for multiple desires to coexist and contradict can be an act of resistance to exploitative neo-liberal systems. Multiple ways of thinking desire are crucial because unlike modernist progress-oriented thought, this thinking argues that there is not one singular universal goal or common definition of happiness across humanity. It resists colonial Western thinking that perceives certain cultures or ways of being as more "advanced" than others. It cherishes heterogeneity against homogeneity, very much aligning with a notion of the pluriverse or of many worlds.[47]

Desire lines, a term borrowed from landscape architecture, are unplanned paths that emerge through people's divergence from designated routes. They arise from people's desire to move about in certain ways, to take a path that optimises their experience of getting to a destination. One may assume that desire lines are simply shortcuts. However, this is not always the case, and it is certainly not the focus of my interest in employing this term. There are many possible reasons and motivations to take an alternative path or walk differently without the obligation to arrive at a destination. Perhaps one simply wants to avoid something on the designated path, or they desire to encounter something other along a different path.

[47] Escobar, Arturo. *Sentipensar con la tierra. Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diffe- rencia*. Medellín: Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana UNAULA, 2014.

Desire lines allow me to contemplate and visualise doing things differently. This is about inventing new ways of getting somewhere, which guide this project in its attempts to get at knowledges differently and therefore, approach the curatorial differently. Creating a multiplicity of desire lines and noticing those already existing, however indiscernible, becomes a strategy and priority of the curatorial practices that I propose through this project and in the two curatorial models it presents. The concept, even when the narratives it reveals are not easily nameable, definable or traceable, enables me to navigate across scales through speculation and invite multiplicity into discussion. The inability to always move between scales smoothly has become an important approach for me to the curatorial rather than an obstacle to overcome. Therefore, not sticking to a coherent and fixed form nor seeking ultimate harmony, I work through and from disorganisation; disorganising relationality, knowing, seeing, and writing.

The motivations and stakes that surround the kind of worldmaking[48] that this project is concerned with is driven by the desire to do things differently, to imagine worlds in which we care for and learn from the other differently. However, the challenge this choice of word implies comes with a question: "Whose desire lines?" It requires asking "How can we be attentive to the desires of others whose presence and agency are often unnoticed?" It also takes into consideration those other desire lines that can only be discerned at times through engaging with the molecular, which can provide us with ideas regarding other possible socialities, joys, learnings, modes of communicating, ways of being and knowing. What are the desire lines of the microbial? What do they do for the unfriendly figures, namely bacteria that disturb the flora, that

[48] My understanding of worldmaking follows the thinking of Marisol de la Cadena who claims that knowledges are worldmaking practices. Because there is a plethora of ways to arrive at knowledges, there are many worlds side by side which can be summarized in her use of the term 'pluriverse.'

exist in the gut? Looking at the desire lines of the other-than-humans that compose our microbiome, for instance, can point to alternative gut-worlds or microbe-worlds.[49] These worlds create alternative narratives which can inform our ways of thinking and how communities of knowing are formed, signalling other possible convivialities.

We had written each other love letters as part of a game that we all played together. This consisted of 36 questions that we asked each other, with the aim of falling in love at the end. As you go through the questions, you stare into each other's eyes for a few minutes. Our love letters were so similar that they merged into one another like the butter and olive oil we cook our eggs in. I don't mean we aren't different because we are, and I love and appreciate our differences. Yet, our sentences somehow created a narrative, a coherent story, our story.

London-based artist Adham Faramawy's 2019 video *Skin Flick* questions the boundaries of skin, offering a porous image of it.[50] Placing desire at the centre, he locates skin, like soil, as a site of multispecies collaboration. "I wish my desires were more vegetal, fungal" says Faramawy.[51] What I mean by desire lines is quite different from the often erotic and libidinal desire that is represented in *Skin Flick.* My use of the term desire lines is a more metaphorical one. Yet, how Faramawy pursues a multiplicity of ways of being through the skin is an example of the pluralistic and multispecies kinds of desire lines I am looking for. Liquidity and the sharing of bodily fluids as well as a diversity of other liquid materials (foaming face wash, caramel, oil,

[49] I also argue that desire is very much linked to the microbial processes as the dissatisfaction of desires have representations or manifestations in bodily reactions or symptoms. For instance, depression or anxiety often leads to digestive problems.
[50] Adham Faramawy, *Skin Flick*, 2019.
[51] Adham Faramawy, *Skin Flick*, 2019.

soap) dominate the video. Faramawy consults liquidity as a resistance to categorisation in stressing how various bodies always interact and contaminate one another.

The video portrays the eroticism of human bodies but also of plants represented through a green slimy mix of liquids, suggestive of various microorganisms contaminating or passing through different bodies which brings together different worlds. As we hear Faramawy talk about the changes his body is going through and his struggles in adjusting to these changes, we see multiple other bodies on the screen, metabolic changes, faces stretching and melting, as well as more liquids and digital images of fungi growing on skin. At one point, there's nothing solid on screen to hold onto. Everything melts into a soup. In his openness to transformation and the convergence of desires and bodies, how Faramawy visualises his own corporeal and multispecies body and his approach to imagining the desire lines of multiple others influences me. It suggests how else we might be attentive to desires, and how desire lines can be traced and speculated through.

Laura Nichols, in "Social Desire Paths: An Applied Sociology of Interests," suggests a new concept of social desire paths, whilst recognising their value in providing a frame for sociological research to shape policy.[52] She brings social desire path analysis into sociological consideration and presents an applied approach which works toward organisational and policy change. For Nichols, being attentive to constant changes and understanding why and what kinds of desire lines emerge is crucial for improving social structures. As such, she presents a different sociology of interests, which becomes a desire line of its own, or a way to approach the concept

[52] Nichols, Laura. "Social Desire Paths: An Applied Sociology of Interests." *Social Currents*, 2014, Vol. 1(2) p.166.

of interests differently. Desire lines, by their creation, imply a tension between the natural and the built world, and test our relation to it. Nichols also recognises social desire paths "as reflective of both structures and the values that drive emergent paths in the course of individual agency" which requires us to "better articulate the interplay of structure and agency."[53]

Nichols states that social desire path analysis can help to understand "independent but patterned" behaviour, pointing to the limitations of existing structures as well as the potentiality of alternative ones. I agree with her that desire lines can provide important information for understanding the needs of people who establish and follow them. I argue that desire lines should be taken into account and influence the future landscape designs. In that sense, desire lines may have a large impact or put pressure on the planning of alternative paths, which is exactly why I insist that creating desire lines, unearthing existing desires and acknowledging their multiplicity is important for building alternative futures.

Rem Koolhaas, the renowned Dutch architect, designed the McCormick Tribune Campus Center at Illinois Institute of Technology through observing the desire lines of its students. In 1997, OMA (The Office for Metropolitan Architecture), founded by Koolhaas, mapped the student foot traffic across the campus and maintained their diagonal paths throughout the Campus Centre in its redesign, reflecting a multiplicity of activities.[54] Letting the desires of the students determine the organisation of the learning space they occupied is a significant strategy for designing an educational institution. It allows room for the agency and desires of the students, who engage with the space daily. Adopting a similar approach, Rachel Fendler, in "Desire Paths: A

[53] Nichols, Laura. "Social Desire Paths: An Applied Sociology of Interests." *Social Currents*, 2014, Vol. 1(2) p.168.
[54] Architonic. https://www.architonic.com/en/project/oma-the-mccormick-tribune-campus-center/5100219.

Reflection with Preservice Students in the Eventful Space of Learning," discusses a project that asked a cohort of students to reflect on their own desire paths. This focussed on allowing the students to think differently about their learning in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's notions of desire as well as assemblage and nomadic thought.[55] It invited students to think of positive learning scenarios and catalogue their desire paths on campus. Through this endeavour, driven by desire, "the desire path suddenly became different, deterritorializing our knowledge of learning and reassembling or re-territorializing it into something new."[56]

Desire lines demonstrate the need for flexibility and an adaptation to changing needs. Although at first, they seem to be about individual choices or desires, desire lines that are trodden by one are often traced by many other bodies which suggests that the divergent desire lines of multiple bodies ultimately converge and find routes in common. Therefore, as collectively chosen paths, they show the choice of a group of people who demanded alternatives to existing structures. This idea is very relevant to the forms of noticing that I write about, in terms of being attentive to what has previously been indiscernible. What needs to be taken into account is that noticing or revealing such interests will almost always result in some friction, as the interests do not entirely intersect. Working through these kinds of tension and conflict within this project, I would like to use the notion of desire lines as a metaphor and strategy for curatorial practices that prioritise and experiment with doing things differently.

[55] Fendler, Rachel. "Desire Paths: A Reflection With Preservice Students in the Eventful Space of Learning." *Studies in Art Education*, 60:4.
[56] Ibid., p.280.

The concept of desire lines emerged rather later on in the process of writing this dissertation mainly through the locality of Babakale. Focusing on our effort to do things differently and create alternative curatorial models, it was clear that these models wanted to open up space for multiplicities and work through various ways of being in the world which meant these different beings would have their diverse worlds. However, the term desire lines came to me mostly through my movements and reflections in Babakale. The rocky terrain of Babakale makes it difficult to go from one point to another following a straight clear line. One always needs to go up and down the rocks, find flat surfaces to step on and create their own path moving about in the village. As I was trying to find my way in the village as well as in these projects, I came up with the concept of desire lines by being attentive to my bodily movements. I argue this is an important point to mention to further situate to project and elaborate on how bodily knowledge plays a significant part in these projects. This bodily element and the concept of desire lines is further explored through the act of diagramming which is a central element in our projects as topsoil. The maps we create, which are in fact diagrams, mostly consist of crooked lines and axes disrupted by irregular shapes. This carries great semblance to how moving around feels like in Babakale and how desire lines are formed, disrupting the established routes, or lines. Diagramming allows us to remain disorganised even when we try to apply an extremely organised template and to basically categorise our layered ways of knowing and relating to collectively built knowledges. I will elaborate on our methodology of diagramming and mapping which is a speculative practice in the later chapters, but it is important to draw on this connection between the two curatorial projects and to explain how desire lines is a concept that holds them together.

1.3. Beginning with Bodies and Collaboration

My perception of collaboration is a promiscuous one because it claims that one is already a collaboration. To demonstrate this, I turn to the material human body and place it at the centre of my thinking around collaboration since the body itself present a site of collaboration. The human body, composed of human and far more other-than-human cells in number (namely fungi, bacteria, and viruses) is already constantly collaborating with countless others.[57] These collaborations are integral to one's thinking, feeling, and being in the world as a relational being. If matter is neither fixed nor passive but creative and regenerative, as physicist Karen Barad and other material feminists have come to suggest, especially in the last decade, we need to start perceiving matter as actively collaborating in intellectual and creative processes.[58]

Acknowledging that human language is not the sole means of communication and there are yet countless other ways to be, know, and communicate in the world, we need to actively build tools for noticing multispecies collaborations that we operate within. A self is a constellation, compilation, or an assemblage of multiplicities that make up one. Following a Deleuzian thought, one is never just one.[59] How can we bring forward these existing collaborations, be they invisible and unconventional? What if they resist capture and remain in their indiscernibility as potential? Firstly, I assert that the curatorial can pose these questions and direct the attention (as well as the gaze) towards other ways of being in the world and therefore, other ways of producing knowledges. The practices that this project presents place great emphasis on learning

[57] Enders, Giulia. *Gut: The inside Story of Our Body's Most Underrated Organ*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2016.
[58] See, for example, the writings of Stacy Alaimo, Susan Hekman, Elizabeth A. Wilson, Elizabeth Grosz and Vicki Kirby.
[59] See, for example, *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Kafka:Toward a Minor Literature*.

from material bodies and metabolic processes. This directs our being attentive to digestive threads that point to larger systems of knowing, working from the idea that there are shared conditions that establish affective bonds between the various agencies involved in collaborations.

It is crucial to address how the body poses a problem and a question as well. How we think about what a body is has changed immensely over the past decades and is still changing. However, we also live through times where reproductive rights are being restricted or rolled back in countries like Poland, Nicaragua, El Salvador or United States.[60] The body, in this research, is approached as becoming; it is a transcorporeal body to use Stacy Alaimo's term.[61]

In the disembodied information age, Katherine N. Hayles argues the term 'posthuman' doesn't imply literal cyborgs but an altered human subjectivity.[62] She writes; "just because information [has] lost its body [this] does not mean that humans and the world have lost theirs."[63] Similarly, Donna Haraway suggests that we no longer "inhabit a solitary body of flesh and bone but are ourselves the intersection of a multiplicity of bodies, with life itself as a fluid intersection of humans and plants and animals and minerals."[64] Bodies in constant collaboration are complex, hybrid and entangled, always in more ways than one.

I also acknowledge that we need to engage with scientific processes and practices of scientific knowledge production, perhaps more than ever in light of a global pandemic that put bodies at

[60] Center for Reproductive Rights: https://reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws.
[61] Alaimo, Stacy. Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self. Bloomington (Ind.): Indiana University Press, 2010.
[62] Hayles, Nancy Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics*. p.244. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010. p.4.
[63] Ibid. p.244.
[64] Kroker, Arthur. *Body Drift: Butler, Hayles, Haraway*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. p.15.

the centre of our attentions as vulnerable, leaky and potentially contaminated/ing. This project turns to the body as a theoretical methodology and attempts to think from the body outwards and inwards at the same time in multiple directions. It places the "human" body in relation to others. The microbiome, which I will delve into later in this chapter, provides a model for molecular thinking and suggests how the molecular maps an approach to collective knowledges. However, in this, it is important to understand that conflict and an inability to coexist are also a part of this relationality. Another body or another other-than-human agent such as a virus can pose a threat to our own boundaries and needs, which disrupts the body. As such, conflict is an inevitable element of all collaborations since relationality is a constant process of negotiating differences that don't always align. I suggest approaching the other-than-human that composes and simultaneously challenges us through the notion of familiarity as a productive tool. Familiarity allows room for noticing multispecies stories and the human body as a landscape we are well familiar with; it is thus a very fruitful site for entering into posthumanist discussions on collaboration.

Here, I would like to elaborate on my use of the molecular in relation to social organisation.[65] In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe the difference between the molecular and the molar when they write: "There are two kinds of segmentarity, one molar and the other molecular. The first is defined by strong, rigid lines, the second by fine, flexible lines that are molecular. [...] Molar lines are those that structure our social world in terms of macro-political organizations, institutions, and identities. Molecular

[65] Even though my discussion prefers the use of the term molecular, I would also like to acknowledge many important contributions in the field around the microbial. For instance, *With Microbes*, edited by Charlotte Brives, Matthäus Rest, and Salla Sariola, explores the complex and reciprocal relationalities between humans, animals, plants and microbes as well as suggesting alternative ways to study the microbes to then apply these relations to a broader context.

lines, on the other hand, are the flows and micro-political becomings that traverse and disrupt these structures."[66] The molecular is always in flux, challenging and transforming the existing rigid structures. Here, their use of the word disruption is also important as it is connected to the notion of disorganisation I'm engaging with in this thesis.

Furthermore, in *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, Guattari argues that real change happens at the molecular level and rethinking how we organise socially is a big part of that as structures and models that provide alternatives to existing rigid structures are examples of the molecular. He writes, "It is the entire semiotic and material production of subjectivity that needs to be revolutionized. The molecular revolution does not replace the revolution of structures, but it reveals the necessity of intervening at all levels of social production, including the most imperceptible movements of desire."[67] Creating new socialities outside of existing structures, models and ways of being with can be understood as molecular revolutions following Guattari's thinking. Molecular transformations imply shifts in desires, and I would like to stress the bodily aspect of this which is limited in Deleuze and Guattari's exploration. This understanding of shifting desires also relates to the multiplistic view of desire lines or possible alternative routes in accordance with these diverse desires.

1.4. The Gut: A Site of Multispecies Collaboration

I am a body, currently one that feels rather hot. The sole of my feet, the back of my neck, the top of my lips and potentially the creases between my fingers are moist with sweat. I have travelled

[66] Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Translated by Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 216.
[67] Guattari, Félix. *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics.* Translated by Rosemary Sheed, Penguin Books, 1984, p. 19.

about six hours in a car and apart from the last half-hour of the ride by the sea, with the windows down, breeze in my hair and the sun about to set in my eyes, it was otherwise rather hot inside this car. You are sitting in the back, sleeping most of the time, at times exhaling deeply as if you're annoyed about something, or feeling gutted. It's probably just that you're feeling hotter than I am. Moments pass, we have now arrived in Babakale, the most western point of Asia connected to land, and I am lying down on a wooden chair bed which leaves horizontal marks on the back of my legs, making them slightly red. The bottom of my feet, not yet black from walking bare feet for ten days, and my skin and hair, relatively well moisturised, haven't been long exposed to the Mediterranean summer sun. It is so silent here I can hear your stomach growl. After being in the city, the silence is almost unnerving; but thankfully you break that silence. I'm feeling butterflies in my stomach with the anticipation of the next ten days to come, encountering new people, plants, food, thoughts, readings and sensations. I'm assuming you might be hungry or as excited as I am to roam the village freely.

Elizabeth A. Wilson, in her influential book *Gut Feminism*, describes the gut as "an organ of mind: it ruminates, deliberates, comprehends."[68] Often referred to as the second brain in the body, the gut is very much linked to internal psychological processes as well as being strongly attuned to the outside world and our relation with others.[69] I argue that biological data and physiological processes produce bodily knowledges, and that the body's inner other-than-human ecosystem is a part of our communities with which we co-produce knowledges. This is important as it acknowledges this kind of bodily knowledge to be a significant aspect of our artistic, creative and intellectual processes as well as claiming that it is not only produced by humans.

[68] Wilson, Elizabeth A. *Gut Feminism*. p.5. Durham: Duke, 2015.
[69] Ibid.

Everyone has a unique network of microbiota which is determined by their DNA, mostly inherited at birth when passing through the birth canal, by making skin-to-skin contact and being introduced to the mother's breast milk. Then, throughout one's life, the network of microbiota can slightly change due to environmental and dietary factors. Containing healthy and harmful microbes, the microbiome is an organ that is inherently conflictual, but it is also marks a site of negotiation. A hospitable organ, the gut is unique for its bacterial diversity and richness. Microbes existing in the gut play an important role in the body's metabolism, our overall physical health and psychological wellbeing. In turn, they influence our intellectual and creative processes. The gut microbiome, weighing about 1.5 kg and carrying at least 150 times more genes than the human, is a symbiotic relationship between the host and bacteria, viruses, phages, yeast and fungi which largely outnumber the human cells within.[70]

The gastrointestinal (GI) tract is a complex organ that has specialised in "region-specific anatomical, histological, and functional diversities that are controlled by a complex interaction between neuronal, hormonal, and paracrine elements."[71] Its major functions are motility, secretion, absorption and acting as a barrier. Small and large intestinal motility comes under multiple levels of control including the enteric nervous system (ENS) and central nervous system (CNS), as well as GI hormones and paracrine agents.[72] The enteric nervous system extends along the entire digestive tract and therefore our gut, as the second brain that communicates with our brains, plays a pivotal role in our mental health. In such, it is a key organ that facilitates the daily

[70] *Lee CJ, Sears CL, Maruthur N. Gut microbiome and its role in obesity and insulin resistance.* Ann.N.Y.Acad.Sci 1461: 37-52. 2020.
[71] Beverly Greenwood-Van Meerveld, et.al. *Handbook of Experimental Pharmacology, Springer International Publishing;* 2017.p.118-133.
[72] Sanders KM, Kito Y, Hwang SJ, Ward SM. *Regulation of gastrointestinal smooth muscle function by interstitial cells. Physiology (Bethesda),* 2016. *31:316–326.*

functioning mechanisms of the body and supports our physiological processes as well as social relations. With this unique connection to the outside of the body and others that cohabit in our body, the gut challenges our understanding of boundaries through its porosity and openness. Therefore, it is a very productive site to contemplate how the body does not form such rigid boundaries between the self and a world full of others, but rather what we deem to be outside or separate from our human selves can both pass through and be hosted by our own bodies. Wilson refers to the infant who does not distinguish mind and body as two distinct entities. Therefore, developing a stomach-mind, the infant is, from the beginning, in intensive relations with others and relationally constituted.[73]

The gut is a vulnerable organ as the microbiome is highly susceptible to invasion from other viruses or bacteria and is drastically affected by environmental and behavioural changes. For example, gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms such as diarrhoea and inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) with colitis have been reported symptoms of Covid-19, following from dysbiosis occurring during infection.[74] The microbiome, when confronted with a foreign virus, responds to the new viral load in the body. This provides an example of the vulnerability of the gut to unfamiliar intruders, but at the same time it can lead to the organ's resilience: "researchers assume that the inclusion of studies to investigate gut microbiome and subsequent therapies such as probiotics might help decrease the inflammatory response of viral pathogenesis and respiratory symptoms by strengthening the host immune system, amelioration of gut microbiome, and improvement of gut barrier function."[75] Diarrhoea is the common condition of

[73] Wilson, Elizabeth A. Gut Feminism. p.39 Durham: Duke, 2015.
[74]Ud Din A, Mazhar M, Waseem M et.el., "SARS-CoV-2 microbiome dysbiosis linked disorders and possible probiotics role." In *Biomedicine & Pharmacotherapy* 133: 110947. 2020.
[75]Ud Din A, Mazhar M, Waseem M et.el., "SARS-CoV-2 microbiome dysbiosis linked disorders and possible probiotics role." In *Biomedicine & Pharmacotherapy* 133: 110947. 2020.

loose, watery and irregularly frequent bowel movement.[76] Among many usual causes of diarrhoea are viruses, bacteria, and parasites that can pass through contaminated food or water. Constipation, its mighty opposite, happens when there is infrequent bowel movement; waste moves too slowly through the digestive tract and can't be eliminated effectively.[77] Many studies suggest that constipation is more likely when there is an imbalance of gut bacteria or when intestinal flora becomes interrupted.[78] Constipation can have a large variety of causes including one's diet, dehydration, lack of exercise and other habits. It can also be affected by one's psychological well-being and factors like anxiety, stress and depression. Dysbiosis, simply an imbalance in the gut microbiota, can occur due to the loss of beneficial bacteria, an increase in harmful bacteria and the decline of bacterial diversity. When the balance is compromised, gut flora becomes more vulnerable to potentially pathogenic microbes and further harmful microorganisms. A peptic ulcer occurs when open sores form in the lining of the stomach or the first part of the small intestine, and has been attributed to a range of factors including the frequent use of certain painkillers and also stress.[79] The protective layer of the stomach may break down due to inflammations often caused by the *H.pylori* bacteria and stomach acid can burn the cell tissue. All these are examples of collaborative, reciprocal relationships in the gut between multiple other-than-humans. The gut often adapts and develops new behaviours when it is confronted with intruders or unexpected others. It is a site in the body where the desire lines of bacteria and viruses in the gut come into contact with the desire lines of humans that play host; if they were to be aligned, we might talk of gut/human happiness. Vulnerability, conflict and

[76]https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diarrhea/symptoms-causes.
[77]https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/constipation/symptoms-causes.
[78] Zhang, Shengsheng; Wang, Ruixin; Li, Danyan; Zhao, Luqing; and Zhu, Lixin. "Role of gut microbiota in functional constipation" In *Gastroenterology Report*, Volume 9, Issue 5, October 2021, Pages 392-401.
[79] https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/10350-peptic-ulcer-disease

negotiation are inherent characteristics of its functioning mechanism while at the same time being integral to all collaborations.

1.5. Viscous Socialities

Resistance started here. We are together, resisting in letting go. Perhaps one thing that we let go of are our tears. The rest is trapped within extended borders of what we call ourselves. A body. Things have been coming in but the lower left part of the abdominal, where we have gathered, is now a site of resistance. Someone had once told me that loss is not just a lack but also abundance. The body is abundant at the moment. There are manifold muscles that won't relax because relaxing would necessitate a separation. We are cramped, we are as uncomfortable as the rest, but this is what years of learned defence mechanisms have excelled at. At clenching, at holding tight, at not letting go. We are here to make noise. What needs to be done is clear. But do we have the courage to immerse in that sea of emotions? Grief can only be lived through, resistance won't last, although this is what we have known to be the best for us for a long time; grief requires change. It is time to change. Are you ready to be flooded?

According to feminist philosopher Nancy Tuana, we need to rematerialise the social. Her prominent essay "Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina," addresses Hurricane Katrina as evidence that an interactional ontology is urgently needed. Tuana proposes that an interactional ontology is one that rematerializes the social and takes seriously the agency of the natural.[80] It dissolves dualistic divisions between nature/culture or mind/body. Interactionism, a term she has

[80] Tuana, Nancy. "Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina." In *Material Feminisms*, edited by Alaimo, Stacy and Hekman, Susan Jean. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp.323-333. 2008.

coined, "acknowledges both the agency of materiality and the porosity of entities."[81] In that thinking, the basis of everything is phenomena emerging from interaction and relationality. There is a gap in knowledge, Tuana argues; the gap sits at the intersection between things and people, experiences and bodies. A natural disaster, a hurricane like Katrina, renders visible the viscous porosity between these categories. It shows that what is natural and what is human-induced and, at the same time, driven by social structures and systems, cannot be separated. It underlines that such phenomena are not fixed but are rather things in the making. She urges us to think of our viscous differences in relation to how we experience and are affected by these phenomena. Knowing, she argues, involves "articulations of differences" however fluid, unfolding and situated.[82] Therefore, we have to be attentive towards what our distinctions enact, reveal and limit, so that we can respond in turn.[83] Tuana's text allows me to contemplate the co-presence of multiple layers of phenomena through their inevitable entanglements, also recognising material bodies as embedded within the dynamic forces that shape our being, thinking, culture and politics.

Tuana's use of the term 'viscosity' is intriguing. She employs it instead of fluidity, which is the term that I prefer to use in this thesis to describe the relations between bodies and boundaries. She elaborates on her reasons for focussing on viscosity, claiming that the notion of fluidity which is "too likely to promote open possibilities" whilst overlooking resistances, complexities, and oppositions.[84] Viscous porosity is neither liquid nor solid. Here, I think of Astrida Neimanis' book *Bodies of Water,* in which she describes how humans are both embodied and composed of

[81] Ibid., p.323.
[82] Ibid., p. 324
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.

water, and in this sense, both liquid and solid.[85] With her suggestion in mind, I stay with the wording of fluidity in relation to material bodies throughout this thesis as this helps to create an image of openness and lack of a rigid form that accentuates the fields of possibilities that I refer to. However, I use viscous in the title of this subsection to underlines socialities and encounters that are sensitive to resistances and conflicts, as this constitutes an important aspect of my engagement with collaboration in my curatorial practice.

Tuana's 'interactionism' presents a technology through which I would like to address the interplay between theory and practice in my thinking and writing. It is always something in the making. The collaborative curatorial practices of this project are part of a larger and fragmented endeavour at approaching entanglements and relationality as the driving force of practice. Therefore, this project aims to explore whether a practice aimed at experimenting with different ways of encountering the other can contribute to building other kinds of sociality. I agree with Tuana that we need a new rematerialized sociality, exploring the potential of turning to matter in our complex and diverse relationships as an active agent in the constant becoming of the world. I also claim that collaboration allows us to bring together distinct ways of being in the world which is important for imagining and constructing different kinds of sociality.

Collaboration compels us to question how we think of the human, individuality, and agency in acknowledgement of our entanglements with the world, at a time that requires us to rethink our relation to others and larger planetary ecosystems. We find ourselves at an ecological threshold due to the effects of the Anthropocene, compelling us to consider that, perhaps, our way of

[85]Sahdra, Baljinder K. and Shaver, Phillip R. "Comparing Attachment Theory and Buddhist Psychology." *In The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 23:282–293, 2013.

thinking about collectivity and what a discernible collaboration can be is insufficient. Thresholds call for shifts in thinking. In the face of increasing uncertainty, they necessitate more "*what if*"s. We need to readdress our approach to collaboration as a vast array of beings operating under shared conditions, for instance, in the vulnerability that carries across bodies and scales of relation.

The material body where multispecies agents coexist and collaborate evokes James Clifford and Mary Louise Pratt's term 'contact zone' which in turn calls for an expanded definition of what a contact zone can be. They use the term contact zones in order to refer to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."[86] Having difference and, potentially, conflict intrinsic to them, contact zones bring up sensations and reactions most of which prove to be highly productive despite the discomfort. The contact zone is where different agencies come into contact and act.[87] What is in contact does not merge together but collaborates across differences under the influence and pressure of their shared conditions. These types of contact zones are porous in the sense that their differences and boundaries are not fixed but viscous with various points of resistance and opposition. This is how I approach collaboration and the kind of sociality I would like to strive towards in this project. Collaboration underlies all our relations and as. Neimanis emphasizes it is always "a more-than-human endeavour."[88] The question, then, is the contributions of who or

[86] Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." In *Profession 1991*, p.33. New York: Modern Language Association P, 1991.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Neimanis, Astrida. "On Collaboration (for Barbara Godard)." *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 20, no. 3 (2012): p.217.

what gets acknowledged in these collaborations and who or what agencies can go onto form further contact zones.

How to Turn to Stone is a play by Chilean author and theatre maker Manuela Infante that aims to propose a mineral understanding of life by asking "What would a play that behaves like a stone look like?"[89] It brilliantly signals the relationality between stones and humans through portraying a mineral representation of their co-existence. It asks whether life should always be progress and growth-oriented since this version of life is also oppressive and exploitative. It investigates similarities as well as differences between "working bodies" and "geological formations" and tells stories of erosion, corruption and exploitation. Through using techniques such as looping, repetition and language games, it brings together various narratives that are layered like geological rock formations. *How to Turn to Stone* is funny and anxiety-inducing at the same time, through its intentional use of sound and lighting. Overall, it offers a contemplation on what posthuman theatre could be as it takes our human realities and examines how they would look to stone. And in this endeavour, it suggests how our human processes and experiences are, in fact, observable in and through other organic and inorganic materials. Although it does not attempt to make this relation seem smooth; instead, it is full of tension, conflict and friction. As Tuana would put it, this is as viscous as stone gets.

1.6. Turning to Materiality

[89] https://kaaitheater.be/en/agenda/how-to-turn-to-stone

I am sitting on a broken chair in my unnecessarily warm home office in Istanbul. The wooden chair has six rectangular pieces of wood held together by two pieces on its sides. One of the rectangular pieces has become loose and when I sit on it for too long, it comes off and falls. Though I don't fall, the wood makes a loud sound and I get distracted. This is not the reason, however, that I despise long Zoom calls. I have done so many of them in different parts of this flat. I miss my body. And I miss yours too.

A key methodology that I employ in this dissertation is the turn to matter. The theoretical foundation I work through heavily relies on theories that understand matter not as fixed and passive but rather as an agent in the constant becoming of the world. In her highly renowned book *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett emphasises the agency and active role of matter and other-than-human subjectivities in everyday life. For her, agency cannot be solely attributed to humans just as politics is not an exclusively human affair.[90] This attentiveness to the material status of things and invitation to think beyond a certain life-matter binary serves to demonstrate how all things and bodies are enmeshed in relationality and kinship. Taking up this thinking as methodology allows me to extend "agentic capacities," to use Diana Coole's terminology, to things or beings that are not necessarily human but nonetheless share in a material basis.[91]

[90] Bennett, Jane, 1957. *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*. Durham :Duke University Press, 2010.p.30.
[91] Coole, Diana. "Rethinking Agency: A Phenomenological Approach to Embodiment and Agentic Capacities." *Political Studies*, vol. 53, no. 1, Mar. 2005, pp. 124–142.

Elizabeth Grosz, one of the key thinkers for material feminisms, in the introduction of *Volatile Bodies*, states that feminists have long ignored the body or deemed it irrelevant in accounts of subjectivity.[92] Reverting attention back to corporeality and engaging with the materiality of bodies as Stacy Alaimo suggests, puts the material body in conversation with other materials, discourses, and knowledges.[93] This defies a separation between the human and the other-than-human world, as between human-produced culture and a *nature* that is out there. It requires resisting reductionist and determinist criticisms that surround bringing material bodies into feminist discourses for bodies are presumed subordinate. The material basis of the human body, meaning its physiology and functioning, is perceived as a site of knowledge production, a place of potentiality for entering into relationships with multiple others and through an understanding of how we are always-already collaborating with other-than-human communities, specifically the microbes including bacteria, virus and fungi that we host within our bodies.

The gut and the microbiome mark the particular site of multispecies collaboration through which I explore other-than-human communities within our bodies. The vulnerable and open formation of the gut colonised by the other and its operating between inside and outside reveals that the body is, in fact, porous. It is not a closed container but rather always spilling out or allowing the outside world in through processes of ingestion, digestion, and defecation. The microbiome reveals that the body is already a host to many other-than-human communities in itself. I situate the material human body at the very centre of research and think through relations from the body as this allows me to embrace and work through my situated and embodied experience. Therefore,

[92] Grosz, Elizabeth A. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. p.7. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2011.
[93] Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. p.3. Bloomington (Ind.): Indiana University Press, 2010.

the material body is the site through which I approach constantly evolving processes that unfold through relations and discuss the blurry boundaries between self and other. This blurriness has become a lens through which to approach notions of subjectivity, agency and collaboration. Furthermore, I argue, it can also provide a generative methodology for creating new knowledges and ways of knowing across differences informed by modes of being in the world differently. This can point to indiscernible or so far unrecognised collective processes of worldmaking and creating knowledges as well as unnoticed communities that we co-constitute knowledges with. My engagement with theory has shown me that reframing the material body in this way is a social and political gesture as well as a tool to create possibilities, spaces, and encounters for the curatorial and for living, practising and theorising differently.

Otomy, stemming from the dialogue between artist Ekin Kano and I between October 2020 and the beginning of 2022, materialises our long conversations around bodies - insides and outsides, boundaries, materiality, decay, leakage, and morphing – which constitutes the backbone of both of our practices as well as our shared interest in painting as a medium, form, and material. The visual elements and all of the writings in the book are conceptualised and fictionalised as a shared body. The book itself invites the reader to explore various bodies, revealing various layers of bodies, and approaching this as a space for knowledge production, collaboration, and relationality. We put together the book as an autopsy where one sneaks into the layers of a body and contemplates alternative understandings of what a body is and what a body can do. The first text is a more theoretical text followed by an interpretation of a glossary, which we called the

fascia. Fascia is the fibrous connective tissue that wraps around the body. As such, we wanted this middle section to provide further entry points into the two texts, challenging what a definition or explanation is. Finally, the third text presents a short story about a person's experience of their own physical death in significant detail. The book's form was meant to parallel the conceptual and theoretical framework of the narrative. The pages are in various changing colours that refer to bodies; fleshy pinks, watery blues and murky browns. There is a hole pierced through the entire book and a hand-poured silicone piece that fits into the hole. This piece can be removed to reveal the hole in the middle of the book and can exist on its own as an object to be touched, played with, caressed and experienced. When we commissioned a craftsman in Istanbul to create these silicone pieces, the inability to work with someone who did not have the same diligence and care hit us. At times, it is more difficult to communicate one's desires than to act on them, actualize them. When the silicone pieces completely failed and were delivered in different sizes and with major errors, we took up on the opportunity to make the silicone covers ourselves. This opened another opportunity for learning through making. While creating a book that invites touch, it would be a shame to not handle the material itself before it became the final product. Therefore, the process of mixing the colours, pouring the silicone, drying and then removing them from the glass surface became a way of caring for the different parts of this body with immense care, compelling us to constitute the materiality of our fictionalised body.

1.7. Alternative Cosmologies

There was a little boy who had been separated from his parents when he was two years-old; a more than reasonable separation anxiety resurfaced in the form of his inability to go to the bathroom. He was afraid of defecation because of the implied separation. A part of his body, of his insides, leaving him to drown in the murky waters of the toilet. "Where does it go when I let it go?" he asked. "Just follow the smell" said a girl who was unable to navigate her powerful emotions every time the boy was around. "I wouldn't want it to go to waste, where does it end up?" he continued. He liked to imagine that it actually never really went away but, travelling the world over, came back to him in the form of his food. Back into his body where it belonged. Back to the beginning of it all, made by and making him. Without that part of him, he was feeling lonely, his world incomplete. He liked to imagine his poop had the same feelings for him. He was curious about its feelings, its world. I wish I could talk to it, he thought. It was bizarre that a part of his own was so unknown. It had a different way of being, one that he had made but had to let go of in the creation of its own world. His only hope being it would return to him one day. This is why, unlike his peers obsessed with junk food, he never ate chocolate, candy, crisps or anything that came in packages. They were made in factories where his poop would not be allowed in. He only ate vegetables and animals hoping to someday reunite with his lost part.

Even though feminist new materialism is relatively new in occidental philosophical, theoretical and curatorial discourses, they have long existed in various cosmologies at different times and places. However, Western ontologies have been maintained as the hegemonic thought, with their view being imposed onto other ontologies such as indigenous knowledges, which approach the body, community and nature as intertwined with one another. Arturo Escobar, a Colombian-

American anthropologist, stresses that we must acknowledge the pluriverse and move from one world to another, rather than merely focus on changing the world.[94] Many other worlds already coexist even though silenced, extracted, appropriated and erased by hegemonic discourse. Nevertheless, these excluded cosmologies greatly contribute and point at new possibilities for our communities of knowing. Escobar's thinking is very much aligned with a reciprocal and relational understanding of being in the world and knowing which I would like to add the co-existence of multiple desire lines which decentre dominant understandings of knowledge. His thinking asserts that many indigenous knowledges don't make rigid separations between thoughts, emotions, sensations and feelings, which he calls "sensible or sensing-thinking," and that this deserves as much attention as Western scientific epistemologies.[95] His book, originally titled "Sentipensar con la tierra. Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y differencia" studies the links between ontologies and multiple worlds as well as their interactions and consequences. Escobar proposes a political ontology.[96] The pluriverse, or the idea that a world contains many worlds that can't be reduced to a single way of living, is proposed as a "work tool" which compels us to engage with the myriad ways in which different relationalities operate. As "historical and culturally situated beings that dwell within it [nature]" we produce different ontologies through our "particular anchoring" and this can be a "condition of knowledge."[97] This idea already collapses the dualist thinking between knowing and believing, nature and culture as well as thought and sensation. He understands cosmologies as existing together without any

[94] Escobar, Arturo. *Sentipensar con la tierra. Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y differencia*. Medellín: Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana UNAULA, 2014.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

hierarchies between them, which might present a contradiction to the predominant hierarchical ways of thinking for the Western world, philosophy and contemporary art practices.

Knowledges that are recognised and placed in the centre define what 'worlds' will be made. Marisol de la Cadena points to this when she states that what is not recognised by a community of knowers as knowledge is discarded and therefore those worlds associated with it foregone.[98] Similar to Escobar, her notion of "pluriverses" also suggests an encounter of heterogeneous worldings that are created and recreated side by side. They remain different, not striving to appropriate while existing within one another but negotiate through their inherent difference. De la Cadena's concept of the 'anthropo-not-seen' refers to how other-than-human worlds and practices are ontologically separated from human worlds and therefore, through hegemonic conditions, have become not-seen, not-heard, not-felt and not-known. However, she also asserts that proposals for survival in the Anthropocene requires clear divides between worlds and between views of one world and multiple worlds; rather, it should work with what it is not, what it omits.[99] This is exactly why such worlds that are indiscernible to the human or not-known within an anthropocentric viewpoint warrant our attention.[100] The harder I think about what it means to be a 'we,' the more complex and layered it becomes. We are being hypocritical when we refer to a 'we' whose agency we haven't put much effort into noticing and acknowledge. I argue for a 'we' that includes all materialities as collectivity is intrinsic to matter. The current ecological moment, where the impacts of the Anthropocene materialise in different parts of the

[98] De La Cadena, Marisol and Blaser, Mario. *A World of Many Worlds*, 2018.
[99] Ibid. p.15.
[100] De la Cadena, Marisol. "An Invitation to Live Together: Making the "Complex We"" In *Environmental Humanities.* 1 November 2019; 11 (2): 477–484.

world in different ways, urges us to realise our immersion and being in nature and therefore puts an emphasis on forming new communities with other beings that are equally immersed in this reality. Forming communities with other-than-human agents also helps us reimagine our relationships with one another as humans. Overall, this approach to a broader rematerialised sociality prioritises finding ethical ways of being with, reframing knowledge and learning not as a relationship of rigid roles and hierarchies but as an open, posthuman and multidirectional endeavour.

According to Nigerian Yoruba author Baya Akomolafe, despite our tendency to parse the world into categories, things are not discrete and don't have predetermined and pre-relational properties.[101] Akomolafe asserts that phenomena arise from particular configurations of humans, other-than-humans, national boundaries, scientific discourse, the media, technology and more.[102] Through practices like Koru[103] which prioritise movement through narratives and stories, he suggests that small changes in how we relate to one another can lead to great shifts in our thinking.

In another text, Akomolafe asks 'what would a mountain do?' in order to undo our assumptions about the world and notions of agency.[104] I find this question quite significant as it connects to

[101] Akomolafe, Bayo. "Do our bodies matter?" Bayo Akomolafe. https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/post/do-our-bodies-matter.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Koru is a trans-local network of re-enchantment through disenchantment, named after the Maori saying "life is playful, reality is multiple, there are no facts…only stories – come to a field of magic!" and emerged as a response or reaction to the existing cultural crisis and "the industrial-academic-consumerist complex."
[104] Akomolafe, Bayo. "What would a Mountain do? Activism in an Age of Entanglement." Bayo Akomolafe, November 5, 2015. https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/post/what-would-a-mountain-do-activism-in-an-age-of-entanglement.

the notion of desire lines; it asks us to consider the desires of a mountain (as well as multiple others), challenge our thinking of epistemological power and learn to listen to the wisdom of a mountain. Thinking about what a mountain does in terms of its desires leads us contemplate what is needed for understanding and respecting desires, while questioning the roots, motivations and aspirations of our own desires and the concept of desiring itself. It compels us to redefine what desire is beyond the human. It also challenges the hegemonic opinion that perceiving mountains or animals as other-than-human persons is a cultural belief, as does Marisol de la Cadena also criticises her aforementioned text.[105] This produces uncertainty, unknowing and paradoxes in thinking, which is exactly its strength. Akomolafe suggests it is this attuning to "the wisdom of soil" and "the peace of wild things" or "queering of our habitual modes of thought" that will "usher us gently into new continents too wild and creative for words and answers to accommodate."[106] When one is attentive to the ways in which a mountain exists and functions with all the beings that co-habitate on it, an ecosystem that just continue to be, one can learn how to just be in harmony with one's desires, embracing their often queerness and unprecedentedness.

In November 2023, I was invited to facilitate Take I of Around the Shelf, a series of monthly gatherings intended to bring together various practitioners across disciplines as facilitators for collective reading processes, curated by Eirini Fountedaki at Tavros in Athens. The programme was an invitation to *Slow down fast or 'A toda raja'* as articulated by Camila Marabio and

[105] De La Cadena, Marisol and Blaser, Mario. *A World of Many Worlds*, 2018. p.2.
[106] Ibid.

Cecilia Vicuña.[107] It suggested that the labour of reading could be shared, acting as a catalyst for creating communities and building alliances, especially in troubling times.[108] For my initial sessions, I focused on attentivity as a grounding for collective explorations of the "arts of noticing", as articulated by anthropologist Anna Tsing. We developed a slow reading methodology to delve into excerpts from Bayo Akomolafe's writings, which call us to attune to the "wisdom of soil." It strived to ask: drawing inspiration from alternative narratives, how can we challenge our entanglements with the all-living world, and challenge epistemological power? I am always struck by the difference between reading a text in solitude versus reading it aloud, sentence by sentence, with a group of people who have differing needs in terms of stopping, taking a break and rereading a sentence or paragraph. The diverse group of people, sitting on cushions on the ground and taking the initiative to jump in to reading out loud, changed my experience of reading the Akomolafe text which I had been familiar with for a while.

It is important to consider that this session took place in the midst of the occupation of Gaza and we had a participant from Palestine. At times, engaging with theoretical texts, I am overwhelmed by our inability to immediately understand how these theories and speculative models can be applied to pressing urgencies. And most of the time, they might not be able to, at least immediately or in comprehensible ways. I have long felt a strong frustration towards this impracticality of theory, especially as it's developed in the midst of conditions that create an urgency which the theory itself becomes informed by. Although it can't necessarily be applied or present a resolution, such theorisations create room for encounters that speculate on solutions

[107] Vicuña, Cecilia and Marambio, Camila. *Slow Down Fast, A Toda Raja*. Berlin, Germany; Errant Bodies Press, 2019.
[108] Around the Shelf. https://tavros.space/projects/around-the-shelf/

and give hope by showing that alternatives are possible because they are being speculated, discussed and dreamed in certain contexts. Therefore, the very timing of this reading session, the communal feeling we shared and the feedback I received from participants made me notice once again that attentivity, even if it falls short of leading to immediate results and change around pressing issues, still points at potential responses, speculations and, therefore, itself a valid form of political action.

In "The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories of Non-Human Agency: Making the Case for Respectful Anti-Colonial Engagement," Rosiek, Snyder and Pratt address the relatively recent turn to realism and materialism in the social sciences. Barad's agential realism, a significant term within this approach, "refers to the idea that agency is not just a human capacity but a quality manifest in all aspects of reality."[109] Therefore, these new academic disciplines strive to assert how the material world exceeds our human perception and representations, whilst also acknowledging that we have a responsibility in how we represent the world. The article states that indigenous conceptualisations of agency have been doing just this, though they've not been addressed or cited within new feminist materialisms. Rosiek, Snyder and Pratt criticise the lack of engagement between indigenous and Eurocentric literatures, highlighting the necessity of putting them in contact so that they will inform one another. They claim that new materialists have failed to engage with indigenous theorisations which is problematic considering the subject matter and attitude that new materialisms employ. It "involves a performative contradiction with the emphasis on the ethics and politics of social inquiry claimed as a promise of new materialist

[109] Rosiek, Jerry, Pratt, Scott and Snyder, Jimmy. "The New Materialisms and Indigenous Theories of Non-Human Agency: Making the Case for Respectful Anti-Colonial Engagement." *Qualitative Inquiry*. 2019. p.332.

philosophy."[110] However, indigenous literatures differ from new materialist literature in not being so focussed on justifying the agency of the other-than-human, which is instead understood as already given and whose pervasive existence is acknowledged. Rather than handling general abstract concepts and their justifications, indigenous literatures emphasise "the formation of relations with particular other-than-human agents."[111] Instead of talking or thinking about it, they live it through relational entanglement and stories. Stories, for instance, are considered to be agents with which we are companions. This is why in this project, stories are companions through which I write and that allow to weave across a wide range of questions, sensations and theories throughout the chapters to put into action a generation of multiple desire lines that map pathways to knowledge between bodies.

Many indigenous literatures, according to Rosiek, Snyder and Pratt, take into account the agency and sentience of a place and therefore their theories are never distinct from place but attentive and sensitive to it. Indigenous literatures prioritise building personal and reciprocal ethical relationships with the other-than-human; a process which includes the researcher or the subject who engages in theorisations. The subject transforms through relational entanglements with agents they are co-constituted with; they have a certain ethical responsibility towards the other-than-human agents that they pay close attention to. Indigenous cosmologies offer ways to move beyond transformations of the object of inquiry alone, integrating the subject into "an ethic of reciprocity" through the "practice of attending to the way our existence is interdependent with networks of relations of other humans and non-humans."[112]

[110] Ibid., p.332-3.
[111] Ibid., p.337.
[112] Ibid., p.340.

I find Rosiek, Snyder and Pratt's contribution to and critique of the existing Eurocentric literature to be highly important; my approach to relational entanglements with other-than-human learns and learns from indigenous cosmologies in theory, practice, and writing. This thesis strives to present particular relationships built and cherished as part of the curatorial practices it revolves around. It also centralises storytelling as a worldmaking[113] practice and as a method of addressing the question of scale. It does so by acknowledging and being attentive to the agency of these stories and that stories, or multiple narratives have long existed, especially in Indigenous cultures, even when they are not noticed or told by humans.

1.8. Attentivity as a Methodology

I'm thinking of our first encounter, you were standing upright in the middle of a crowd of vases similar to your own. I couldn't help but think of the politics and aesthetics of order and display for florists. And then, out of the blue, I thought of your microbiome. I remember reading an article stating the plant microbiome is a key determinant of plant health and productivity.[114] Flowers are displayed in a certain way for consumption purposes. Vases aligned horizontally, the allure of designed order. This is making me think of the grid. When I tried to map you (which feels weird to say), the textile grid and the act of weaving felt messy and entangled. It was easier to make loose looms, or mistakes if you may. Weaving allowed room for organic knots, forgivable mistakes, miscalculated encounters and unexpected crossings. Things that the vases did not permit. Our encounter was designed, planned, calculated. It was closer to the grid.

[113] See, for instance, writings of Isabelle Stengers, Lola Olufemi and Martin Savransky.
[114] Turner, Thomas R.; James, Euan K and Poole, Philip S. "The Plant Microbiome." In *Genome Biology* 14: 209, 2013.

The quest to include the other-than-human in communities of knowing and trace already existing collaborations towards different ways of knowing is one of attentivity. Attentivity towards that which is not easily discernible but nevertheless part of the composition of our entangled existences suggests a shift in thinking about how our "human" gatherings or practices of undoing knowledges might unfold. It is a tool to rethink how we produce knowledges as part of a constantly becoming relational world. Being attentive as such gestures to something beyond one's capture. Through creating the required set of conditions and setting an intention for our attentivity, we might begin to partly notice. Therefore, attentivity is another important methodology this project employs.

In "Multispecies Studies: Cultivating the Art of Attentiveness," the authors Van Doren, Kirksey and Münster examine the important stakes surrounding being attentive to different ways of living and cultivating "arts of attentiveness: modes of both paying attention to others and crafting meaningful response."[115] Multispecies studies brings diverse bodies of knowledges together, engaged in various histories of relationality, field observation and I argue, lived experience. This lends to an investigation into our entangled relationships with others, eventually providing perspectives for re-evaluating one's understanding of what a human can be. Van Doren, Kirksey and Münster argue for a transformation of noticing into attentiveness and responsivity, working towards building an ethics of how we might come to know others and find modes of living with them.[116]

[115] Van Dooren, Thom, Kirksey, Eben and Münster, Ursula. "Multispecies Studies: Cultivating the Art of Attentiveness." In: *Environmental Humanities*, 2016. p.1.
[116] Van Dooren, Thom, Kirksey, Eben and Münster, Ursula. "Multispecies Studies: Cultivating the Art of Attentiveness." In: *Environmental Humanities*, 2016. p.6.

Such kinds of attention to how others create worlds is an immersive way of being with others. It asks us to be curious about the differences of the other and opens up to being affected and affecting. Being attentive and caring for these different ways of being in the world allows us to rethink our understanding of being human in terms of the dynamic collaborations we share in with many others that shape our world. It is crucial to tell multiple stories and call on anecdotes as they allow us "to move outside a narrow space of species-typical behaviours to recognise individual or social diversity and creative capacity within other modes of life."[117] It matters what stories are told[118] and I would like to stress the potentiality of multiple narratives across scales for being attentive to different ways of being in the world as well as to particular relationships and encounters with others. Telling multiple stories as such and finding ways to cultivate attentivity or 'arts of noticing' as Anna Tsing puts it, is important for building new ethical relationalities and approaching agentic capacities differently. Van Doren, Kirksey and Münster also assert that attentiveness is both "a practice of getting to know another in their intimate particularity" and "a practice of learning how one might better respond to another, might work to cultivate worlds of mutual flourishing."[119] Through practicing attentivity, we start to learn from other ways of being, our entanglements with them and understand why we need better possibilities for shared life.[120]

American anthropologist Anna Tsing, in her renowned book *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, defines precarity as the condition of our time and asks: "what if our time is ripe for

[117] Ibid., p.8.
[118] Haraway, Donna J. "It Matters What Stories Tell Stories." Auto/Biography Studies. 2019: p.565-575.
[119] Ibid., p.17.
[120] Ibid.

sensing precarity?"[121] Our current time of precarity, she goes on, is highly unpredictable and cannot be controlled or stabilised, being rather always in flux, vulnerable and remade. This indeterminacy "is frightening, but thinking through precarity makes it evident that indeterminacy also makes life possible."[122] She responds to this by suggesting we need new tools for noticing worlds not made by humans. This means developing arts of noticing through "watching the interplay of temporal rhythms and scales in the divergent lifeways to gather."[123]

How can we be more attentive in our lives and practices to other bodies which we live and act together with? How can we foster practices of attentivity in a highly distracting world where attention is a commodity? Should we develop the capacity to attend and how do we know what to attend to? Through both curatorial practices presented in this project, we have been trying to attend to our bodies, surroundings and the conditions that we operate from, working towards other worlds that we are entangled with. This work has drawn on practices such as meditation, deep listening, movement, silent walks, games, and an overall slowing down. For instance, Babakale is a location that forces one to pay attention to its surroundings; there are much less distractions than in larger cities and its structure compels us to be present in the here and now. Being isolated from our routines and the set of structures imposed by the art world, which otherwise determine our relations between one another as artists and cultural producers, we attune to ourselves and to each other differently. Every year, through the diverse practices of the facilitators and participants of Garp Sessions, we explore different practices of attending, of

[121] Tsing, Anna L. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. , 2015. p.20.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., p.23.

finding a way into the material complexities of a situated town, our bodies and shared food. As such, the programme directs the attention to possibilities of embodied sensing.

Garp Sessions explores attentivity both structurally and conceptually, in theory and in practice. The routines and rhythm that get built as well as the encounters created in this new setting are always constitutive of a practice of attentivity, of an opening not just to one another but to worlds beyond the human. Different rhythms of daily life come across each other to produce contact zones. Guided by readings of Elizabeth Grosz, Alexis Shotwell, Donna Haraway and Dipesh Chakrabarty, to name a few, we practise attuning to our surroundings through: somatic movement workshops; deep listening sessions; games; foraging activities; long walks and swims; and unexpected encounters with various other-than-human beings such as cacti, lichens and various sea animals. For instance, taking up Pauline Oliveros's suggestion that how we listen creates our life, and through her quantum listening theory which "leads back to practise practice," we have made a habit of collectively listening together.[124] Deep listening compels us to notice (or listen to) our own listening, focusing in and going below the surface. This kind of slowing down and being attentive to the practice of attentivity itself is what, I understand by Oliveros' definition of practising practice. One's attention is directed to a certain point which consequently transforms that point itself.[125] One listens and senses constant change and transformation, of the listener but also of the field and their relationship to it. Oliveros points out that the skin and the entire body engages in deep listening.[126] Her description of what quantum listening allows one to experience is very applicable to the kinds of attentivity that collaborative

[124] Oliveros, Pauline. *Quantum Listening*. London: Ignota Books, 2022.
[125] Ibid, 51.
[126] Ibid, 54.

practices call for; it transforms practice as it completely overturns *how* it is practiced and with what intentions.

In *When Species Meet*, Haraway is critical of Derrida for failing to be curious in not asking what his cat might have been feeling or thinking upon seeing him naked in the bathroom. Despite his insightful analysis, Derrida is not attentive to the ways in which the cat might have been responding to this encounter. It is this kind of curiosity and attention, which Derrida fails to hold up according to Haraway, which I try to cultivate in every encounter. Because being attentive allows us to be open to learning from a plethora of others. These practices of attentivity teach us how to enter into relations, speculating on and through collaboration which unfolds across scales and understands the stakes in how we look at other-than-humans and how they look back at us.

1.9. Agentic Capacities Waiting to be Noticed

After ten intense days in Babakale, I realise I couldn't reflect on the process while I was there, still in it, living it. I had to get out, back to the city and another rhythm in order to understand what had happened there. I made a list of questions that reflected on my time there and resonated with my facilitation of the pilot program with Ayşe Idil. They constitute the alternative guidelines I built while there, working in line with the programme's theme: Alternative Guidelines. The list was shared with you, so here it is: How to hide from the sun? Which sea shoes to go for that will protect you from sea urchins? How to wear your swimming goggles properly? How to avoid having three meals in Babakale? What to wear when going to the market? How to breathe when walking past the smelly trash can? How not to forget the beginning of my never-ending sentences? When to swim? What are the best hours to walk to the

other side of the village? How to socialise with the outside world? How to spread the astrological chart readings and coffee fortune telling sessions across many days? Which days did I not wake up to the sound of the muezzin? Which swimsuit to wear based on your tan lines? When to wash my hair? How to deal with the demanding cats? What is the ideal number of photos to take every day? To go to sleep early or to enjoy each other's company? Will all these supplies last us for our remaining days? How to make peace with the fact that you are not able to record/document everything? How not to miss the sunset? (20:27?) Is it too windy to eat outside? How to collectively decide the night before whether we want to eat fish the next evening? How to hide your excitement for other people's recipes? How not to consume the other? How to sit in silence?

Agency is traditionally defined in philosophy as the capacity to act or to do things. From an anthropocentric perspective, it implies the human capacity to make choices. For instance, John Locke, who can be considered the thinker behind liberal thought, promoted freedom of action and of will. Hegel and Marx, on the other hand, understood agency as a collective and historical dynamic, but still merely human. However, relational thinking maintains that everything is made up of relationships which fundamentally compels us to rethink the notion of agency as not being limited to humans.

What are some of the agencies waiting to be noticed? Why is it crucial to notice these agencies? What does it mean to make an effort to be noticed and where does the effort come from? Firstly, I would like to stress that the waiting this entails is an active waiting, just as the other-than-human world should be understood beyond its human construction as fixed and passive, instead

involved in a constant becoming with the relational world. Therefore, such waiting is rather concerned with encounters that have not yet taken place and which carry great potential for making further connections and inventions. It implies a *not yet*. Thinking through the potential of relations, I'd like to point out that what is easily discernible is often something that is already active or happening. In our lives and practices, how can we address this dormant potential within our relations while still acknowledging that certain things must remain as potential?

Brian Massumi, in "The Autonomy of Affect," designates the body "as immediately virtual as it is actual" and the virtual as a "realm of potential."[127] In the virtual, opposites coexist and what cannot be experienced is somehow felt.[128] As such, unlived potential can't be left out and thought separately from the actual lived experiences of bodies. It is still to a certain degree sensed. Affect is exactly this simultaneous playing out of the actual and the virtual.

Massumi's understanding of the abstractness of the body is important for my thinking as he describes the play between the abstract and the concrete, writing: "The body is as immediately abstract as it is concrete; its activity and expressivity extend, as on their underside, into an incorporeal, yet perfectly real, dimension of pressing potential."[129] My close attention to materiality, in fact, aims to contribute to making more room for speculations surrounding its abstract potential. Even though it may seem contradictory, this level of abstractness can at the same time become a tool for working through the molecular, moving across scales, shifting

[127] Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." In *Cultural Critique*, No. 31, The Politics of Systems and Environments, Part II. (Autumn, 1995), p.91.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., p.92

orientations and learning from indiscernible narratives. This abstraction is what activates potentiality.

In the actuality of the body, something always remains unactualized. This is what Massumi calls 'excess,' 'the remainder' or that which escapes capture.[130] Perhaps it can also be designated as *not yet*, not in terms of what has not happened yet in a futuristic sense, but as remaining a potentiality. *Not yet* is something without a defined structure and fixed boundaries, being rather constituted of thresholds, which provide a viscous field of potentiality. This is how I approach bodies, but also the indiscernible curatorial practices which I will elaborate later in this chapter. There is a *not yet* in these practices because they are embedded in the constant dynamic shifting of thresholds. According to Massumi, this excess is what creates potential; things live through "that which escapes them" and their autonomy is "the autonomy of affect."[131] The autonomy of affect is linked to the virtual, the openness of the abstract to potential and its constant escape from capture.

Then, how can we get to different ways of seeing that are beyond visibility or beyond our capture? How can we trace attentivity? In light of the political and social hierarchization of what or who is rendered visible (which indeed is a curatorial question as well), I find it important to invite more voices into the conversation. The emergence and recognition of new subjectivities, some already existing, some fictional or speculative, may create further encounters and dialogues and, as such, create potentiality.

[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.

Expanding our understanding of agency is highly linked to challenging the boundaries and exclusivity of our communities. Acknowledging one's agency comes with noticing one's responsibilities and active contribution in the current moment. My understanding of agency parallels Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen Walker's, which is "best described as responsivity (and thus is intimately connected to the ethics we also call for): the capacity to engage with other agents and respond by doing (or not doing, as the case may be) something."[132] I argue that we need more contact zones or encounters where different agents come into contact, remaining vulnerable and porous. This requires a certain openness to collaboration and pushes for plurality, hybridity, and in-betweenness.

Diana Coole's term 'agentic capacities' can be helpful instead of 'agency' as it implies a spectrum. Coole writes: "Foregrounding the body means recognising the corporeality of thinkers and hence their situatedness."[133] This already suggests that agentic capacities are not fixed but highly subjective and constantly shifting. Coole stresses the corporeal agentic qualities of agency and asserts; "Phenomenological investigations show that the body is never merely a passive transmitter of messages but plays an active role in the generation of perceptual meaning."[134] Embodied knowing allows one to make meaning with the things, structures and beings that disparately cohabit and surround the body. By actively engaging with everything that is in and around itself, the body comes to comprehend and participate in the constantly changing world it is immersed in.

[132] Neimanis, Astrida and Walker, Rachel Loewen. "Weathering: Climate Change and the 'Thick Time' of Transcorporeality." Hypatia: Journal of Feminist Philosophy (Special Issue on Climate Change), Volume 29, Issue 3, Summer 2014: p.563.
[133] Coole, Diana. "Rethinking Agency: A Phenomenological Approach to Embodiment and Agentic Capacities." *Political Studies*, vol. 53, no. 1, Mar. 2005, pp. 124–142.
[134] Ibid., p.128

Bodies remind agents of their vulnerability and mortality, by situating them "firmly within material and affective worlds, where economic and emotional structures mediate the satisfaction of somatic needs and violence assaults the flesh with raw immediacy."[135] To be a body is to be vulnerable and open. Understanding this openness can shift our thinking around our responsibilities, agentic capacities and constantly evolving processes of relationality. At the same time, material vulnerability can be a shared condition for all relational beings involved in collaborations, which presents an entry point into dialogue concerning the relationship between human and other-than-human worlds. Vulnerability across scales, which I will further elaborate on in the next chapter provides a contact (as well as conflict) zone.

The notion of bodies always crossing the boundaries of the flesh, as subjectivities are always leaking into one another and becoming in collaboration with multiple species, points to potential definitions of agency through corporeality. Agency is not a solely human and cognitive phenomenon but is rather spread around, promiscuous, corporeal and generative. Therefore, situated thinking from the body and looking at the molecular provides a methodology for contemplating our larger communities and networks in the creation of knowledges. Thinking of subjectivities that are waiting to be noticed as active agents in the becoming of the world is a key theoretical claim that this project makes. In this thesis, communities do not solely include those formed by humans as their main agents but are expanded to include various posthuman communities, mainly those habituating with and in our human bodies. This suggests rethinking dualities such as active/passive, body/mind and human/non-human, as my understanding of subjectivity is not restricted to the sphere of the rational mind but implies different forms of

[135] Ibid., p.129-30.

responsivity that contribute to practices of knowledge creation. This distinction, in my curatorial practice, creates room for more inclusive communities built on/of difference.

The two collaborative curatorial practices presented in this project, Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies, both suggest that creating new knowledges is a worldmaking practice. I propose a curatorial that aims to expand our worlds, recognise our interdependence and prioritise caring and affective bonds as well as friendship and vulnerability, in order to challenge the structures and boundaries of prevailing communities of knowledges. Our existing definitions of knowledges often exclude such potentialities for worldmaking and therefore do not fully serve us anymore. How can we build practices and communities that strive to distinguish between knowledges that are prioritised, rendered visible, and acknowledged against those that are unnoticed, suppressed, rendered invisible and secondary? What are the power structures and politics that underly and determine these distinctions?

1.10. The Story of Our Garden or Indiscernible Narratives

The Story of Our Garden

In our garden, there are cacti. This a plant that I'm not used to seeing much in Turkey, but the cacti somehow thrive in the wind and heat of Babakale. When we come here back every year, I check to see how much they have grown and how much greener they are. In our garden, there are some wild fennels. They are hidden among the cacti but someone always points them out, yet we still manage to forget to add them into the meals we cook. In our garden, someone started a compost pile as a present to us. In our garden, there are two graves. One belongs to Refik karisi Ayşe (Ayşe, the wife of Refik), the other one to Mustafa karisi Nimet (Nimet, the wife of Mustafa).

It has taken some of us a while to get used to this idea and not be spooked by it. One of us used to lie on the graves at night to watch the stars. In our garden, at times, there are shameless cats that come from the nearby rubbish bins. They are locals here, jumping in, digging, falling out of and just pacing up and down. It can be difficult to protect our food when they decide to spend dinner time in our garden. I once tried a tactic that caused some of the participants to be intimidated by me. I took them on a walk and had a conversation with them. It wasn't always through words, but we still remained in dialogue. They didn't come back that evening, which worried some and impressed others. In our garden, there are often people we don't know. This is because the house sits on the cliff that the locals use to throw their litter into the sea from. Their regular walks to dispose of their household waste have caused a pathway to be carved out of the dusty earth, which mixes with the liquids that leak from their rubbish bags. I have once followed this moist desire line and found a few bottles of Coca Cola floating on top of the sea. I guess that the newly designated refuse area in the village is more often frequented by the stray cats than human inhabitants. Old habits and animalistic instincts die hard.

The word "discernible" is a notable one. Discernible means that which can be separated from others, or one that is taken apart.[136] This makes me think of a mesh, things that shape one another and become together, and of moments of being able to see a specific thing through the entangled mesh, when a thing becomes visible or temporarily noticeable, becoming in that exact moment, manifesting itself in an act or will. It makes itself felt. It does not mean that a thing can ever stand alone as something that is wholly separate from the rest of this mesh but that the conditions

[136] Dictionary.com. dictionary.com/browse/discernible.

of the moment allow for a fragment of it to be seen, felt, or heard as a becoming within that mesh. It becomes, for a split second, discernible.

Visceral experience is hardly visible. Certain sensations arising from the "internal" body or the ecosystems of the organs are more than often invisible to the human eye. They tend to be more visible, felt, discernible, or noticeable when something is not right, when something breaks down, stops working or becomes dysfunctional. In those moments, we situate "the body as the very absence of a desired or ordinary state" and are confronted with the phenomenological significance of absence.[137] Certain technologies that allow us to cast a look inside bodies (ie. colonoscopy, endoscopy, tomography) make clear the gap between what's perceivable and what is not. Making a reference to Melody Jue's writing on medium specificity, I would like to ask, would ways of speaking about what's inside of the body change if we were to displace or transport ourselves to a different environmental context outside of the body? How can we think from the body outwards while also looking at the body inwards? How can we benefit from this two-directionality? In order to start answering these questions, I work through the invisible and the indiscernible.

What Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls "the problem of the body" in *Phenomenology of Perception* is worth taking a closer look at.[138] Here, he introduces the concept of positionality and asserts that to see is always to see from somewhere.[139] According to a positivist conception of being, when the eye concentrates on an object, its surroundings tend to blur. Therefore, to plunge into

[137] Leder, Drew. *The Absent Body*. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990.
[138] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 1908-1961. Phenomenology of Perception. London: New York: Routledge & K. Paul; Humanities Press, 1974.
[139] Ibid.

an object of seeing is for the background to fade away to a certain degree. Things other than the object of seeing "become dormant, while, however, not ceasing to be there."[140] The seer disappears from the field of seeing and the eyes are invisible. However, this is where the other and the other's gaze comes in. "Any seeing of an object by me is instantaneously reiterated among all those objects in the world which are apprehended as co-existent, because each of them is all that the others 'see' of it."[141] When vision is understood "as a gaze at grips with a visible world…there can be another's gaze."[142] This acknowledgement of the other's consciousness (although here only concerning other human beings) places vision in relationality. Merleau-Ponty states in relation to our positionality: "to be situated within a certain point of view necessarily involves not seeing that point of view itself."[143] I find this significant for two reasons; first, it points to how internal processes and communities inside the human body remain unnoticed because of their invisibility according to our gaze, and second, it relates to how knowledge is always partial and situated. Therefore, a frontal[144] approach to knowledge, being positioned as a body whose sight is blind to itself, is flawed and inconsistent. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body as the object and the lived "I" are not separate from one another; there is no void or gap. The flesh is "a seer and of being a visibility."[145] This thinking perceives the body as both phenomenal and objective. Phenomenological emphases on lived intercorporeality, subjective basis and positionality allows me to think of the body as a path of access beyond the

[140] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 1908-1961. Phenomenology of Perception. London: New York: Routledge & K. Paul; Humanities Press, 1974. p.78
[141] Ibid., p.80.
[142] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 1908-1961. Phenomenology of Perception. London: New York: Routledge & K. Paul; Humanities Press, 1974. p.409.
[143] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, Alphonso Lingis, and Claude Lefort. *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, 1968.
[144] Frontality has been introduced and elaborated on by Irit Rogoff in our discussions at Advanced Practices seminars. It suggests an all-encompassing, all-knowing, and all-given understanding of knowledge which we are critical of.
[145] Merleau-Ponty Maurice et al. *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*. Northwestern University Press, 1968.

visible and knowable. When we pay heed to the body and its workings, it renders it sensible, if not visible. When attention is withdrawn, things tend to disappear. A certain attentiveness to the material body can allow us to contemplate other invisible systems and structures.

We are always touched by many others, some human, some other-than-human. Merleau-Ponty's elaboration on intercorporeality and 'the reversible touch' proves helpful in thinking through such an ability to touch and be touched.[146] Merleau-Ponty reflects on the example of one of his hands touching the other; it is possible to feel both the touching and the being touched.[147] And even though both hands belong to the same body, they have different tactile and sensible experiences. Here, touch is perceived not only as a physical gesture but also as an affective one. This ability comes from a certain openness to sensibility which I suggest comes close to a vulnerability, and an embrace of that vulnerability. Embracing and existing in difference rather than seeking familiarity or sameness, one can begin to appreciate this vulnerability. The curatorial is highly intertwined with notions of visibility and invisibility. By engaging with artistic discourses and holding a position of power in terms of what voices, works and narratives achieve visibility, it assumes responsibility for what gets seen. As such, it also holds great potential for creating ruptures that can render what has been waiting to be noticed, as an invisible that calls for visibility. Moments of crisis or catastrophe are slits in time where practices of looking swiftly change as the urgency of the moment creates a necessity for things to be noticed.

[146] Merleau-Ponty Maurice et al. *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*. Northwestern University Press, 1968.
[147] Ibid.

Our bodily and sensual experiences define our relations with things and beings around us, which we constantly leak into, storying alternative narratives together. Invisibility and indiscernibility call for multiple narratives to emerge, rather than a simple, often frontal one. Moving between and making connections across scales, from the molecular to the planetary, through diverse narratives and speculative practices, is generative of worldmaking and is in itself political. Although the molecular and the planetary seem to be very distinct, they are entangled. Turning to the molecular urges me to think that indiscernible boundaries can perhaps only be approached through indiscernible practices. A challenge for this project is how to present various narratives without assuming a frontal story of multispecies collaboration, instead tracing multiple indiscernible narratives between species and across scales. This will be tackled in the next chapter.

Engaging with new materialist theories points to an urgency in recognising our entanglements with the living world given the impacts of the current climate crisis. There is no rigid separation between personal and public or human agency and the often-indiscernible agentic capacities of the other-than-human. The indiscernibility of something, just like the invisibility of the insides of bodies, renders noticeable what's at stake in such phenomena. The question of scale, then, necessitates thinking about what agencies or relations are indiscernible, what understandings of interdependence are lacking and how, as humans, we're struggling to understand the scope and urgency of the climate crisis. The increasing necessity to tackle these questions proves that it is time to rethink what practices or modes of thinking have become somehow justified as the dominant paths. These need to be rethought or replaced by more speculative practices that at least allow room for imaginary relations across scales. What seems to be working when observed

or lived at one scale, for which the parameters and systems are set, can be completely invisible and almost impossible to detect on another scale. Operating at some scales with a given specific question, curiosity, or condition might be more difficult than in others, which concern different types of relations or assemblages. We thus need tools for addressing these complex dynamics and methods for making the indiscernible more discernible.

Here, there remains a challenge: how can we trace the sociality of the other-than-human within themselves through languages, modes or qualities unknown to humans, which are unfamiliar or indiscernible. Reverting our attention to at experiences and moments in our lives where indiscernibility can be somehow accessed can open up further possibilities for worldmaking. For instance, the indiscernibility of clear boundaries between a self and others, between a body and its surroundings, can become a learning experience and a tool for building alternative models and inventing a curatorial that is indiscernible.

1.11. Forming Alliances and Being With

What do we mean when we say ‘we’? What does this ‘we’ include or exclude? Do we need a new vocabulary in order to be able to address this ‘we’? Does the ‘we’ imply participants that aren’t necessarily discernible or visible? Making visible what is invisible, the indiscernible felt or heard and rendering what is not immediately available to our capacities of knowing and seeing, are important aspects of my understanding of the curatorial. This posits a practice of opening up space for multiplicities: multiple ways of being and knowing as well as multiple narratives, stories, temporalities, geographies and cosmologies. It is a way to address the urgencies of our

times, attempting to work from these conditions and imagine other ways of being in front of a horizon we collectively face.

Remember that one time we were on that long table, eating with a bunch of people. A middle-aged man was dominating the conversation as he was chewing the chicken leg and making slurping noises. His mouth was loud. And worse, some of his claims were not factual. A glimpse at his vulnerable self-esteem, becoming hearable in his voice as his mouth gets even larger and larger with his bold words. His stomach swelling underneath his buttoned shirt. My eyes met yours. We both hated his guts. We agreed on a shared feeling we experienced in that moment. I felt warmth around my chest, above my stomach. And I used this moment of connection as a soft blanket to lie underneath with my legs curled.

Forming alliances with beings that we don't necessarily share the same traits or experiences with carries a lot of political potential which goes beyond niche posthuman debates in academia, as do notions of commoning[148] with the other-than-human. Through their term *weathering*, which refers simply to how bodies respond to climate change, Astrida Neimanis and Jennifer Mae Hamilton ask how different beings and bodies experience climate change, or are weathered, differently. Weathering marks "a situated phenomenon embedded in social and political worlds" that is based on difference.[149] Weathering is about learning to live not just in ecological conditions but also our many shared social and political conditions; as such, it "requires interrupting our existing patterns of weathermaking, broadly construed."[150] Because of the

[148] See, for instance, writings of Antonio Negri and Michael Hard and Stefano Harney and Fred Moten.
[149] Neimanis, Astrida and Hamilton, Jennifer Mae. "Open Space Weathering" In *Feminist Review.* 2018;118(1):p.81.
[150] Ibid., p.82.

changing processes of intra-action, things can't be handled as separate entities on their own, existing independently of the conditions and beings that inform and constantly transform their being. Therefore, one thing can be observed in or through another, though they represent different manifestations or responses.[151] Through understanding being weathered together and how it is conveyed, a potentially stress-induced peptic ulcer can become an opportune moment for a certain type of bacteria to thrive, or an unusual human presence can mean the termination of a certain insect in the house. Time differences can become a cause for productive misunderstandings, as a lack of certain species in a particular climate constitutes a pressing reason to fear. This is also because phenomena are lived, traced, and matter at different scales.

In the co-authored "'Weathering': Climate Change and the 'Thick Time' of Transcorporeality," Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen Walker propose "a politics of possibility and an ethics of responsivity."[152] The first part of this proposal, a politics of possibility, refers me back to Massumi. As previously stated, affect, for Massumi, is simply what remains from potential. It is "vaguely but directly experienced, as something more, a more to come, a life overspilling as it gathers itself up to move on."[153] Affect happens across various scales and it "could be extended to any or every level, providing that the uniqueness of its functioning on that level is taken into account."[154] How we come into relation with the other-than-human world is lived out across multiple scales, for instance, in the material human body, through our encounters with other humans and other-than-humans, and on a less immediate and perhaps less visible planetary scale.

[151] See, for instance, Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self by Stacey Alaimo.
[152] Neimanis, Astrida and Walker, Rachel Loewen. "Weathering: Climate Change and the 'Thick Time' of Transcorporeality." Hypatia: Journal of Feminist Philosophy (Special Issue on Climate Change), Volume 29, Issue 3, Summer 2014: p.561.
[153] Massumi, Brian. "Supplement II: Keywords for Affect." In *The Power at the End of Economy*. Duke University Press, 2015.
[154] Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." In *Cultural Critique*, No. 31, The Politics of Systems and Environments, Part II. (Autumn, 1995), p.99.

Most of these encounters involve spatial and temporal elements. In these encounters, I approach the material body as a space and realm of potentiality. But how does this potentiality operate according to modes specific to each scale of relation; namely, the molecular, personal, collective and planetary?

Numerous theorists including but not limited to Anna Tsing, Melody Jue, Elizabeth Povinelli, Stacy Alaimo and Astrida Neimanis have addressed the notion of relational scale through exploring various tools, media, and contexts. I try to understand what can be learned from how relationality takes place on the molecular scale in order to speculate and work towards a curatorial that would adopt specific enactive abilities from the molecular. In such, the research question for me becomes: "What can the curatorial learn from the molecular?" This approach retains the play between the actual and the virtual that Massumi introduces; "it the edge of virtual, where it leaks into actual, that counts. For that seeping edge is where potential, actually, is found."[155]

I familiarised myself with Bianca Hlywa's practice through her solo exhibition, titled "Residual Yeast," that took place at Gossamer Fog in London in September 2022. The exhibition presented a large-scale installation titled *Thermaloop* alongside a nine-minute video titled *Orbital Shakes*. *Thermaloop* is an installation consisting of a two-hundred-kilo, three-metre symbiotic culture of bacterial yeast, SCOBY, made using 1,493 tea bags and approximately sixty-six kilograms of sugar. It sits in a glass tank and continuously moves up and down in its starter fluid via a custom-made motorised mechanism. From our conversation, I learned that Hlywa has been working with

[155] Ibid., p.105.

SCOBY and growing them in different types of spaces across London. This has gotten her into trouble several times as people tend to have strong assumptions about unfamiliar organic materials being handled indoors.[156] An unknowing causes fear and resistance. Hlywa, by displaying the organic material at such scale through her SCOBY-based works, aims to provoke a feeling somewhere between amazement and repulsion in the viewer. Confronting *Thermaloop* indeed does that, as it also suspends one's perception of self and other. Through various sensual layers, namely the pungent smell, the humming and dripping sounds and the sight of its folds and creases, the SCOBY stands there as a vulnerable living being. In my review of her exhibition, I stressed the strong ongoing collaboration between Hlywa, the SCOBY and the machine it is connected to, since they are all entangled.[157] As I stated in that text, the SCOBY's "act of becoming is part of its own steady nature, but also depends upon the display techniques and interventions of its creator. [158]

Her video *Orbital Shakes*, filmed at the Bird Garden in Scotland, shows chickens, geese, and turkeys pecking piles of SCOBY. The scale and methods of display changes here, moving from a majestic installation to small pieces of SCOBY scattered onto grass and ingested by other-than-humans. This has an impact on how we approach the specific relation between two other-than-human actors; the SCOBY and the chicken. I perceive Hlywa's work to be a tremendous effort at exploring, tracing, and expanding on our often-invisible collaborations with the other-than-human, which opens up a field of potentiality to complex questions concerning how we can learn from and work with the other to produce new knowledges collectively.

[156] Zoom call with Bianca Hlywa, September 2022.
[157] Kirkali, Deniz. "Bianca Hlywa, "Residual Yeast" at Gossamer Fog / London." 7 October 2022. https://flash---art.com/2022/10/bianca-hlywa/.
[158] Ibid.

1.12. Conclusion

This chapter elaborates on the need for and implications of turning our attentions to the material body, offering an argument that attentivity is the chosen and relevant methodology for such work. It strives to look at alternative ways of being in the world through artworks alongside posthuman theories and stories, taking inspiration from moments of encounter with various others via the curatorial projects this thesis addresses. This frames our reciprocal relationships with other-the-human communities that have agentic capacities themselves, and which inform and shape our socialities. I argue that the curatorial can benefit from this approach and learn from these other ways of knowing. This takes significant effort as it seeks to defy existing Western understandings of knowledge as anthropocentric, progress-oriented and limited to the sphere of the mind. Additionally, the chapter argues for contemplating desire differently and allows room for acknowledging multiple posthuman desire lines, which co-exist despite the supposed contradictory nature of such co-existence.

I am wary of the difficulties faced throughout this process in trying to trace and map a set of relations, to an extent abstracting them. However, allowing room for multiple narratives which demonstrate diverse and at times, conflicting desire lines has served me immensely in developing my curatorial approach. This has led me to engage with alternative cosmologies and various cultures that already do this kind of work, and which have a lot to offer to posthuman discourses mostly developed in the Western world. This move is crucial in order to challenge the longstanding hegemony of modern ontology and a colonialist approach to knowing which has led to multiple other ontologies being silenced or even disappearing. Through the vignettes and

drawing on my embodied experiences, whilst also looking to the practices of artists such as Bianca Hlywa and Adham Faramawy as well as indigenous lifeworlds, I have threaded my own desire lines which move through various ontologies and ways of knowing.

The next chapter continues to map out desire lines and extends my attempts to practice attentivity by turning to storytelling as a methodology for making alternative narratives heard.

CHAPTER 2: Storytelling Across Scales

2.1. Introduction

In addressing the question of scale and approaching relationality, a key methodology I adopt is telling stories, which are not necessarily human but still remain staked in the human. I argue that this kind of writing about ecology and the other-than-human worlds that is grounded in my embodied and situated experience, poses open-ended questions, demonstrating that certain conditions are shared across the entire world. This attends to the ways in which the other-than-human is entangled with issues that we deem merely human and invites us to care for these other worlds.

This chapter elaborates on situated storytelling practices. I suggest that telling stories across scales and complex systems may point to our shared material vulnerability as bodies. This is significant for the curatorial practices proposed through this project as it aims to involve narratives and ways of knowing that are often not involved in curatorial discourses. Therefore, the curatorial practices informed by these theoretical perspectives and modes of storytelling become disorganised and attentive to what has been long unnoticed in the domain of mainstream Western curatorial discourse. I argue that collaboration with a world and agentic capacities beyond the human, when perceived as integral actors within the curatorial, points to new desire lines that redirect what the curatorial can do.

The chapter also presents readings of the notion of study proposed by Fred Moten and Stefano Harney as well as the theories of Brian Massumi, Erin Manning, and Ivan Illich. This leads to

contemplations on what else knowledge can be, outside of dominant discourses and without a static structure.

I highlight the significance of speculative practices through various examples and approaches in order to tackle the question of scale, working through the worldmaking potential of creating room for multiple narratives beyond the institution, beyond the dominant paths and beyond the human. Through bringing the attention back to the material body, this writing begins to show how that which is indiscernible, at times invisible and formerly unnoticed can prompt speculative shifts in our thinking, inviting us to enter into relationalities with other vulnerable bodies. It aims to navigate different scales of relationality through the material body by both analysing how different complex systems work and telling multispecies stories through vignettes of creative writing. Starting from the human body, systems and narratives can be mapped across flat ecologies.[159]

2.2. The Question of Scale

I was once swallowed by the sun here. Sitting by the little lake where I had been dancing with the tiny grey fish that were circling my pale legs, slowly drying out now. I had been inside the sun. At first, I was mesmerised by the little polka dots and the shimmers but then I saw the door. The green door was ajar, I had to gather my strength to peek at what was behind it. When I finally did, without knowing I was falling into the core of the sun. Green, yellow and red. I'm not sure

[159] Marston, A. Sallie, Jones III, Jean Paul, and Woodward, Keith. "Human Geography Without Scale." In *New Series*, Vol.30. No.4, 2005.

whether the sound I heard was my own or the gigantic creature who had led me to the lake in the first place and was possibly waiting for me to come back down to there. It was too late. Travelling into depths of the sun, I was now dry, and the creature was a long fading memory.

The question of scale is central to this project, becoming apparent in its attempts to look at the molecular and discuss attentivity through material bodies as well as collective practices in order to contemplate their societal and planetary implications. Erik Swyngedouw, in "Scaled Geographies: Nature, Place, and the Politics of Scale," argues that "nature and society are constituted as networks of interwoven processes that are human and natural, real and fictional, mechanical and organic."[160] Since social life is constantly transformed through a dynamic set of relations, scale is where "socio-spatial power choreographies are enacted and performed."[161] Thus, scale is socially constructed and highly politicised, whilst scalar narratives carry the potential for emancipatory politics. In "Human Geography without Scale" authors Sallie A. Marston, Jean Paul Jones III and Keith Woodward are critical towards hierarchical constructions of scale, including the network models of social processes. In turn, they call for a complete abandonment of hierarchical scale.[162] Hierarchical models of scale are "bound to reproduce a small–large imaginary and with that, pre-configured accounts of social life that hierarchise spaces of economy and culture, structure and agency, objectivity and subjectivity, and cosmopolitanism and parochialism; and it cannot deliver engaged and self-reflexive accounts of

[160] Swyngedouw, Erik. "Scaled Geographies: Nature, Place, and the Politics of Scale." In: *Scale and Geographic Inquiry: Nature, Society, and Method*. Blackwell Publishing, 2004.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Marston, A. Sallie, Jones III, Jean Paul, and Woodward, Keith. "Human Geography Without Scale." In *New Series*, Vol.30. No.4, 2005.

social life."[163] Instead of a hierarchical spatial ontology, they suggest "a flat alternative, one that does not rely on the concept of scale."[164] They argue that flat ontologies consist of complex systems of material relationalities which can generate new creative events:

> "Leaving room for systemic orders avoids the problems attendant to imagining a world of utter openness and fluidity that inevitably dissolves into problematic idealism. Further, this approach allows us to avoid falling into the trap of naïve voluntarism by embedding individuals within *milieux* of force relations unfolding within the context of orders that constrict and practices that normativize."[165]

I find this discussion and criticism of absolute fluidity compelling, especially when thought in resonance with Tuana's use of the term viscosity. Fluidity, for Tuana, tends to overlook tensions and points of resistance that are present in material relationalities. Therefore, I would like to approach the question of scale in my research via a flattened and viscous understanding that is situated[166] and rather messy.

Building tools to observe and move viscously across scales and through narratives can help us develop an approach to the problem of navigating through scales in ecology. Looking closely at the molecular to contemplate communities and curatorial practices, implies thinking about scale but also the specificities of the different milieus. Melody Jue, in "From the Goddess Ganga to a Teacup: On Amitav Ghosh's Novel The Hungry Tide" asks: "How to navigate different scales of relation through the medium of water?" I take up and reformulate this question as: "How to navigate different scales of relation through the material human body?" Jue approaches scale as a

[163] Ibid., p. 422.
[164] Ibid., p.417.
[165] Ibid., p. 424.
[166] Haraway, Donna J. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.

matter of phenomenology and orientation. She writes; "Narrative provides the conditions of possibility for seeing how water signifies differently across scales, such that sensing scale depends on the orientation(s) of the subject and the layers of mediation and culture that enable the subject to observe phenomena."[167] A question of orientation within the theoretical framework of this project is the paradox between thinking from the body outwards and zooming into the molecular body in order to contemplate larger phenomena. This question is interlaced with the question of whether we approach the body as an entity with such clearly defined borders which end at the skin or whether we can approach this entity as if we are outside of it. Since we are a body, we can't investigate the body from the outside but observe the body from our situated position by being of it. Therefore, I suggest that molecular narratives can be discerned only from a positionality embedded deeply within the body.

I learned how to breathe in order to learn to deal better with my anxiety. In my late 20s. When I didn't know whether to fight or flight. Before that, I didn't know anything about belly breathing. I didn't know how to send the breath into my belly or that I even had to send it to my belly in the first place. I learned all this from your body. Whenever you were moving, in your summery clothes, your stomach would swell with air. Your tiny waist would temporarily expand. It was very easy to observe in your body and I mimicked it. Then, I came to teach it in my teaching session for the first year of Garp Sessions. We were all sat in a circle. I wore a beige jumpsuit and took belly breaths, exhibiting my large belly. I taught or, my body taught people how and where the air moves when you practice different breathing techniques. This was a couple of

[167] Jue, Melody. "From the Goddess Ganga to a Teacup: On Amitav Ghosh's Novel The Hungry Tide." In *Scale in Literature and Culture*. 2017. p.205.

months before the pandemic hit; we had no idea of the further implications that breath would have in near future.

Thinking from the body already establishes a scale: the molecular. Yet, at the same time, understanding material vulnerability as a shared condition that we think from, allows for certain things to remain when shifting between scales. So, it's not about jumping from one isolated body to another but it already sets up contact zones which calls us to observe bodies in relationality. We participate simultaneously in multiple scales "even though the nature of this participation might be opaque" which means we might not always perceive, discern or notice our involvement or impact on some of these scales.[168] It is also closely linked to questions of invisibility raised in the previous chapter. This thinking of multiple scales that are relational can provide us with tools for accounting for indiscernible narratives and unfixed boundaries.

Finally, I would like to add that this question of scale can be explored in compelling ways through modelling of desire lines through this project. This is because modelling makes it possible to address different scales in respect to different questions, feelings, and sensitivities. Models can enable each of these scales to stand next to one another without blending together but consulting and informing several other scales. It is not an abstract merger of the various scales and their conditions. Instead, through modelling, they are able to manifest different ways of knowing and doing difference differently.[169]

[168] Ibid., p.220.
[169] See, *A World of Many Worlds*, edited by Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser.

2.3. Vulnerability across Scales

The fact that we cohabit these walls makes you feel uncomfortable. I am the oppressed and you're the master. You believe you are better than I am. You have no idea how much I pity you for being unable to appreciate what makes me unique, unable to appreciate who I am. We are inherently different, so different that we could not even imagine becoming more alike. I'm scared of your heel, which isn't aware of its own strength, and that you often use for destruction and pain. I embrace my vulnerability in the face of your heel. Yet, despite all the tools you have for accessing your vulnerability, communicating it and growing through it, you can't stand facing it. What's more, you know deep down of my resilience and perhaps this exposes your own vulnerability. I have long believed that this is why you despise me so vehemently.

I understand vulnerability as material vulnerability. Vulnerability is always of bodies and between bodies, human and other-than-human, since bodies can be hurt, penetrated, colonised, threatened or infected. I argue that this shared material vulnerability can be a point of contact from which we enter into relations differently. It can also serve as a strategy for building an expanded ethics of vulnerable openings to a world beyond our perception of self. Vulnerability, rather than being negatively defined as one's susceptibility to danger or harm, may find positive and anticipatory definitions. Living with the constant possibility of being hurt and developing a resilience to this vulnerability represents a powerful aspect of co-existence. Knowing that we are with the other in this shared vulnerability can instigate dialogue between bodies.

Petra Tschakert and Nancy Tuana define vulnerability as "an openness to the other through which each being's uniqueness emerges."[170] As a shared condition of being a body and co-existing with various others, reciprocal vulnerability provides a basis for an ethics of care, interdependence and responsibility. Tschakert and Tuana introduce their conceptualisation of a situated resilience which is "partial and positioned, always resilience for a particular collection of entities in a particular context."[171] Therefore, it is "never final, but always emergent from webs of relationships."[172] Here, resilience is not opposed to vulnerability but draws attention to the dynamic forces that impact multiple phenomena.

The microbiome is a site in the material human body which proves that bodies are always colonised by the other, hosting approximately 30 trillion microbial cells including bacteria, viruses and fungi.[173] The gut, with its porous structure in which the boundaries of bodies as well as internal and external ecosystems disappear, serves as a fruitful starting point for contemplating material vulnerability. Throughout life, the body is introduced to certain microbes and develops an immunity (or even dependency) for them. In such co-habitation, the inherent vulnerability of the body might create resistance, diligence and potential growth. What was once a potentially dangerous outsider which could be threatening our existence can become a beneficial guest or a collaborator within the body.[174]

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[170] Tschakert, Petra & Tuana, Nancy. "Situated Resilience: Reframing Vulnerability and Security in the Context of Climate Change." In *Climate Talk: Rights, Poverty and Justice,* edited by *Dugard J., Clair A. L. S., & Gloppe S.* Juta and Company: p.86. 2013.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid., p.88.
[173] See, for example, *Gut: The Inside Story of Our Body's Most Underrated Organ* by Giulia Enders and *The Mind-Gut Connection: How the Hidden Conversation Within Our Bodies Impacts Our Mood, Our Choices, and Our Overall Health* by Emeran Mayer.
[174] Multiple viral and bacterial infections and perhaps the latest Coronavirus pandemic would be a good example of this.

Judith Butler situates vulnerability in the experiences of thee self whose borders and boundaries are clearly defined, being distinguished from an other which thus creates a logic of defence, threat and violence. This thinking contradicts how I perceive the "self" and the opposite can often be observed in many human and other-than-human communities.[175] Therefore, her views on vulnerability, I argue, can and should be applied to a world beyond the human.

Butler suggests that grief might be a force to notice our interdependence with others and our increasingly pressing ethical responsibilities towards them. Her question of what a grievable life is leads us to notice lives that have previously not been considered "worthy." This realisation can then become a starting point for turning such lives into grievable ones that are agencies in the becoming of the world.[176] Butler, stressing the relational ties that constitute subjects, states that when grieving another life, we also experience that loss in ourselves; losing someone also implies losing an aspect of the relational ties that constitute us.[177]

We are interdependent, relying on other bodies for our existence, always becoming in relation with others and therefore, fully exposed to others. Our vulnerability compels us to reflect on what it means to be vulnerable and how this understanding is unevenly distributed across borders, bodies, spaces, times and species. Through this vulnerability, we are not bounded and isolated beings, but rather in a constant process of becoming undone. And this is not necessarily a weakness but a prerequisite of being an agent. I am careful not to romanticise vulnerability; not

[175] The material human body as a site where the human and other-than-human mix together is a strong example of that. Also, pastoral and indigenous traditions that were presented in the previous chapter shows that there are alternative definitions of a self and a community.
[176] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Justice*, Verso, 2004.
[177] Ibid., p.22.

everyone is equally vulnerable or has the same privileged position in being able to embrace their vulnerability. The conditions through which we live our own vulnerability can't be disregarded in this situated understanding of vulnerability.

Butler argues that it is the recognition of vulnerability that defines what vulnerability means as well as the norms that dictate its being recognised. This is important, as recognising the inherent vulnerability of lives that might not have been classified as such so far also requires challenging how being vulnerable has long been defined. The unknown and foreign others that cohabit in us can be a source for "an ethical connection with the other" as it reveals our entangled co-existence.[178] Cultivating an openness to learn from these relations and creating room to express or live out our vulnerabilities, we can learn to listen to indiscernible narratives.

For Butler, vulnerability is still only "a feature of social relations" and not an "attribute of the subject" nor "an identity."[179] Therefore, it is a societal condition. However, I argue for a more radical conception of vulnerability, which maintains that by being a body we are inherently vulnerable. Butler, on the other hand, claims; "We are never simply vulnerable, but always vulnerable to a situation, a person, a social structure, something upon which we rely and in relation to which we are exposed."[180] Indeed, the precarity of our conditions, the social structures we depend on and the oppressive political and racial agendas they support have a significant impact on how certain lives are lived under constant threat. It is also true that these conditions and structures determine how our vulnerabilities are enacted and lived. However, I approach

[178] Ibid., p.46.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.

material vulnerability as a vital ground that serves as a contact zone, where we can come into contact despite inherent and systematically produced differences.

Butler suggests that further collaboration can be opened up only by changing the relation between what is recognisable and what is not.[181] I want to extend her arguments around embodied plural performativity and political potential in the gathering of (human) bodies towards a posthuman conversation, in which not only human bodies carry such potential but the entangled networks of collaboration that humans and other-than-humans make up together. Butler notes that what gathers physical bodies together through demonstrations or protests are shared conditions, very often of precarity and vulnerability. Despite varying aims and demands, they often presume a shared responsibility. Through the gathering, which is an expressive act, the shared set of conditions are made visible and heard. They reveal our shared vulnerability and inescapable interdependence with a world that extends beyond the human. Nevertheless, Butler's question persists: "What does it mean to act together when the conditions for acting together are devastated or falling away?"[182]

Addressing nonviolence as an ongoing struggle, Butler also asserts that an attack on any people is an attack on the bonds between us all due to our social interdependence. Therefore, she underlines the necessity of an insistent but attentive and compassionate form of nonviolence. In this way of thinking, I add that what we mean by "all lives" needs to be extended beyond merely human life. This marks a limitation to Butler's thinking; even though there are moments in her

[181] Butler, Judith. *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015. 248 pp.
[182] Ibid., p.23

writing where she addresses relationality and interdependency, it is mainly restricted to humans and the anthropocentric. However, I am interested in applying Butler's thinking through a posthuman framework. For instance, she asks; "So, what and who is part of the self that you are, and what relations are included under the rubric of the "self" to be defended?"[183] This question, for me, creates an opening towards other-than-human entanglements, as no life can be thought independently from other lives.

Biological systems present a productive entry point into social and planetary scales, revealing how vulnerability is experienced at varying intensities and through distinct conditions. Spanning across various scales, biology provides a ground for approaching material vulnerability as a shared condition across all bodies. This helps us begin to understand how vulnerability is lived across different social systems as well as for different populations of organisms. A posthuman and more inclusive approach towards vulnerability is that of Anna Tsing's. Determining precarity as the condition of our time in which we are vulnerable to others, in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, Tsing writes: "Unpredictable encounters transform us; we are not in control, even of ourselves. Unable to rely on a stable structure of community, we are thrown into shifting assemblages, which remake us as well as our others…Indeterminacy also makes life possible."[184] She approaches worldmaking not as a process that is solely human but that is shared by all beings, through various assemblages, rhythms and scales. Worldmaking itself is the practice of inventing new tools for noticing this shared condition as well as our interdependency.

[183] Butler, Judith. *The Force of Non-Violence: An Ethico-Political Bind*, Verso, 2020. p.52
[184] Tsing, Anna L. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*., 2015. p.20.

2.4. On Multiscalar Curatorial Practices

In contemporary curatorial practices, it is noteworthy that there seems to be a lot of scaling up taking place, whilst there is little scaling down. A lot of larger notions tend to be addressed without really grounding it in a particular location or specificity, or only doing that through the works in the exhibition rather than building the curatorial around such nuances. In the past decade, artistic practices have expanded to be multiscalar with artists working closely through biology, chemistry, physics, astrophysics, cosmology, although curatorial practices are still relatively behind on these developments. There are indeed noteworthy curators who have been working through intersections of culture and ecology as well as opening up to other-than-human worlds, such as Lucia Pietrousti, a curator and the Head of Ecologies at Serpentine Galleries, London. Since 2018, she has been conducting a festival, podcast and research project titled "The Shape of a Circle in the Mind of a Fish" with writer and editor Filipa Ramos[185], which explores theories of mind in relation to other-than-humans.[186] The project, in different parts that involved symposiums, performances, and film screenings, had addressed the notions of language, plant intelligence, erotics of botany, the ground and the underground, and co-habitation among others.[187] Pietrousti has curated exhibitions, including the Golden Lion winner Lithuanian Pavilion titled "Sun & Sea (Marina)" at the 58th Venice Biennale, and started long term programmes within Serpentine and beyond about climate and ecology in art and culture.

[185] Filipa Ramos, a writer, lecturer, and curator, has a practice which moves away from anthropocentric approaches in arts, working at the intersections between nature, culture and technology. As the founding curator of Vdrome, she looks particularly at artists' films and videos which address ecologies and interspecies relationships.
[186] Serpentine Galleries. https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/shape-circle-mind-fish/
[187] Lucia Pietrousti, https://luciapietroiusti.earth/all/the-shape-of-a-circle-in-the-mind-of-a-fish.

Chus Martínez, head of the Institute of Art at the FHNW Academy of Art and Design in Basel, Switzerland and artistic director of Ocean Space, Venice, is another curator whose practice predominantly centres on models of co-creation and ways that art spaces ca be co-habited by communities involving both human and non-human agents.[188] Her practice is very much devoted to making the museum and the art university more flexible, relatable and collaborative. For instance, at Der Tank, she aims to build an art institution that is innovative and experimental while attentive to our experience of the world, sensitive and pleasant.[189] I find her practice especially compelling as she brings together a posthuman lens with curatorial practices (I would extend this to consider interdependent and disorganised curatorial models) toward inventing new ways of relating that cross the boundaries of art institutional spaces.

Manuela Moscoso is a curator from Ecuador and the Executive Director of Centre for Art, Research and Alliances (CARA) in New York, whose practice deals with notions of ecology and bodies. In 2021, she curated the Liverpool Biennial, titled "The Stomach and the Port" which began with "an understanding of bodies as fluid, porous and interdependent organisms - continuously shaping and shaped by their environments." The exhibition programme provided three points of entry: stomach, porosity and kin.[190] Centring the body and assumptions of it, Moscoso's curatorial concept suggests thinking of the human stomach and the port as relational sites of connection and exchange. It invites contemplation on entanglements through paying attention to the fluidity and porosity of bodies. What the biennial promises is very close to my

[188] Chus Martínez, cimam.org/general-information/board-members-20232025/chus-martinez.
[189] Der Tank, https://dertank.ch/we-are/.
[190] Liverpool Biennial Guide, 2021.

theoretical engagement with the body and how it can provide new ways of thinking about political agency, infrastructures and institutions, and resistance. Additionally, the reader that accompanied the biennial, a series of conversations between Moscoso and Keyna Eleison which began from their reading together and conversing during lockdown, is an unprecedented model for booklets attached to exhibitions of such scale. The reader, a book "without conclusions" that opens up their shared intimate process to the reader, prioritising "playing," raises important questions such as "How do we make a vulnerable book?"[191] It feels like entering a conversation between two friends who pass on the invitation to become friends with them, occupying this vulnerable and intimate space. As such, it is a biennial that approaches the curatorial and relational differently. Despite the institutional setting and the challenges of the pandemic, the biennial thrived in finding alternative ways to display, produce, and circulate knowledges.

These examples of curatorial practices show that there are curators who place a lot of emphasis on engaging with the posthuman and relationality, bringing these notions into the gallery or museum space, organising programmes (podcasts, screenings, talks) around these topics as well as working closely with artists whose practices address these ideas. As I have demonstrated, there are also strong efforts in the curatorial to engage with alternative schooling and educational models. I do not want to disregard these important endeavours; however, I also argue that they remain limited compared to academic discourses and artistic practices around the same subjects in the past decades. This might be because these notions tend to be rather abstract and difficult to trace across different scales, and perhaps because the tools and languages available to the

[191] Ibid.

curatorial don't allow for as much space as artistic practice. This is where I realise the potential of storytelling, which enables such notions to come alive in practice rather than being rooted in theory or instrumentalising a mainstream curatorial language. Despite the challenges and limitations, I deem it urgent to make more room in curatorial practices for actively engaging with and working through these posthuman concepts beyond the level of theory.

2.5. Situated Storytelling and Asking Whose Stories are Told

Telling a situated story, I would like to introduce Donna Haraway's thoughts on situatedness and her terms such as 'sympoiesis' and 'symbiography' that allow me to tell a story with a particular understanding of scale. Haraway's sympoiesis means '*making-with'* and it is a "word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems."[192] Haraway refers to biologist and evolutionary theorist Lynn Margulis who introduced the theory of symbiogenesis which highlights relationships rather than individual units. Through "the long-lasting intimacy of strangers," new cells, tissues, organs and species evolve.[193] Archaea and bacteria invented the cell through their constant interaction. We don't precede our relations and are rather 'holobionts' which are "symbiotic assemblages, at whatever scale of space or time, which are more like knots of diverse intra-active relatings in dynamic complex systems than like the entities of a biology made up of preexisting bounded units (genes, cells, organisms, etc.) in interactions that can be conceived only as competitive or cooperative."[194] Haraway asserts that we are not guests or hosts but symbionts to each other, in symbiosis and forming holobionts. Rather than thinking through autonomous units and their often-competitive relations, Haraway stresses the significance of

[192] Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble*. Duke University Press, 2016.
[193] Ibid
[194] Ibid.

sympoiesis and the potential of "multispecies becoming-with" for staying with the trouble since it is this ambiguity and frustration which can lead to breakthroughs.[195] We need new models of relationality. Haraway touches upon this when she writes:

> "A model is a work object; a model is not the same *kind* of thing as a metaphor or analogy. A model is worked, and it does work. A model is like a miniature cosmos, in which a biologically curious Alice in Wonderland can have tea with the Red Queen and ask how this world works, even as she is worked by the complex-enough, simple-enough world."[196]

Haraway's thought is highly influential for building a theory of ecological relationality which acknowledges that we are always entangled and engaged in telling stories through and with others. Haraway uses the term 'compost writing' for this kind of storytelling, instead of life writing. Her symbiography "is like sympoiesis—that is, making-with and telling-with unruly companions whom which are necessary to becoming at all."[197] Haraway's thinking encourages me to tell stories of microbiotics, working with the various other-than-human assemblages that I am part of and through my diverse curatorial collaborations. These stories are not always harmonious, highlighting the conflictual and destructive dynamics of such relationships, whilst they also problematise storytelling from the position of the individual human narrator. However, I argue that storytelling is a technology that mediates and transforms the human narrator into something that is not completely human; stories don't belong to her, rather she weaves them together from a situated, sensual and bodily viewpoint that is already collaborative.

[195] Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble*. Duke University Press, 2016.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Haraway, Donna J. "It Matters What Stories Tell Stories." In Auto/Biography Studies. 2019: p. 565.

A conversation between writer Daisy Hildyard and marine microbiologist Karen Lloyd frames storytelling between scientific practices and fiction.[198] Lloyd's scientific investigation attempts to give stories to microbes that don't yet have human mythologies. Although scientific processes are often very collaborative, historically, microbiology has only looked at "microbes in a pack" since it is difficult to individually measure such small microbes.[199] Therefore, thinking of them as individuals is a very foreign concept, which is what drives Lloyd's new scientific mission. Hildyard makes a comparison between microbiology and fiction, in that the latter does not think about groups or packs but rather often tells stories of individuals. I find this distinction very informative for my methodology as I would like to use the capacities of storytelling in order to tell particular stories and put these stories in conversation with other stories across scales. It is so because such an approach help dissolve the dichotomy between the so-called individual and the collective by perceiving these stories as already being entangled and opens up to multiplicities.

Shuffling between relational scales makes room for new methods and tools that approach both the molecular and the planetary as part of the material world in its becoming despite their at-times opaque, invisibility and indiscernible nature. It also takes into account our inherent partiality and situatedness. In the introduction of her 2020 book *Wild Blue Media: Thinking Through Seawater*, Jue, this time, inquires "How would ways of speaking about (x) change if you were to displace or transport it to a different environmental context, like the ocean?"[200] This question that guides Jue's thinking also helps me frame my own thinking around the material body as a site or a context from which I ask questions and explore ways of speaking about

[198] Hildyard, Daisy and Lloyd, Karen. "Existing Between." Undead Matter, https://undeadmatter.com/podcasts/existing-between/.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Jue, Melody. *Wild Blue Media: Thinking Through Seawater*. Duke University Press, 2020.

collaboration, intimacy, and learning from the others. It also allows me to approach the materiality of knowledge by bringing the body into processes of learning whilst thinking the materiality of physical bodies through theories of knowledges.

The question of whose stories are told and by who is a significant one to consider when thinking about scale. Whose desires are the lines of relation formed after? Whose desires reveal or necessitate new desire lines to be formed? What other narratives are possible? Since desiring characters is a key element of presenting a story, desire is an integral part of storytelling. This thesis does not argue that it is able to move through scales smoothly or make claims across scales, rather it tries to notice different narratives that already allows us to engage with a question of scale which can then inform our thinking from the body about planetary conditions. The inability to move fluidly between scales (thinking back to Tuana's viscous porosity) or trace certain narratives arising from the molecular is also part of this quest. As Jue suggests, one can get stuck, in a specific environment, at a given scale, or, for instance, at the level of water.[201]

What needs to be centred is work that obverses what's happening in one specific environment or how the conditions of one scale are enacted, then speculating how this might overlap or interact with what's happening on another scale. The coexistence of different phenomena at different scales creates this kind of opacity or the inability to fully discern or translate. As Jue remarks, "every scale leaves something out."[202] There is always excess and moments of impossible movement across scales, along with points of becoming stuck in one which "leads towards an

[201] Jue, Melody. "From the Goddess Ganga to a Teacup: On Amitav Ghosh's Novel The Hungry Tide." In *Scale in Literature and Culture*. 2017. p.203
[202] Ibid., p.218.

epistemic humility."[203] Can we learn from this epistemic humility and understand it to be a key principle for more indiscernible curatorial narratives that are attuned to multiple knowledges?

Our relationship has shifted. First, I was intimidated by your presence. We were new, and off to an unfortunate start. What I knew about you and all that I would never get to learn about you made me hesitant to make an effort in our relationship. I tried to protect myself from you and initially, I succeeded. Perhaps this is what allowed me to put my guard down a little bit. Then, I started enjoying what I believed to be the privileged position of knowing you. I remember talking to others about this several times braggingly. I think it was only after having noticed that I started fantasising about ingesting you. I really wanted to eat you. More so, I got enamoured by the idea of being someone who got to eat you. I was sure that I would devour you. At that time, I still had no desire to touch you. But I really wanted to know your taste. The timing was off, you had other desires. Mating season went on until September and after then, things changed; we weren't together anymore, and I had no burning desire left in me to devour you. It has now been a couple of months and I barely think about you. I still hope to never touch you.

2.6. Unknowability in Situated and Embodied Practices

Unknowing is integral to posthuman discourses; I argue that a significant potential of posthuman approaches is in their emphasis on the inability to fully know, since the languages or desires of the other-than-human are mostly unknown or unfamiliar to the human. They therefore force us to acknowledge and accept not knowing as a part of our entanglements. This underlines onto-

[203] Ibid.

epistemological uncertainty as a component of collaboration and coexistence, exploring the role of the unknowable as always a part of us in our social, political and ecological relationships. It is, therefore, tricky to speculate on posthuman models or futures only from the situated positionality of the human. However, I argue that this is in fact a good starting point, which directs attention to the variety and richness of other-than-human worlds whilst we are compelled to accept and work their particular situated perspectives. This makes space for kinds of imagining which already places the human in dialogue with other-than-human worlds and calls us to face the limitations of our knowledges. Therefore, I claim that movement towards multispecies engagement needs to start from our situated experience of being a human or being a body.

Astrida Neimanis's thinking helps me situate the body as a generative force and helpful tool for thinking through notions of openness, porosity, fluidity, and sociality. Approaching bodies as bodies of water and acknowledging water as a force that connects but at the same time differentiates all things, Neimanis puts forward: "Given that we humans are composed mostly of water, it seems imperative to ask how our theories of embodiment might foster (or hinder) care, concern and responsibility toward the diverse planetary bodies of water that sustain us."[204] Defining membranes as "zones and processes of differentiation," she refers to Luce Irigaray's thinking on difference and otherness, which I will delve into in the following chapters.[205] Even though her thinking often fails to address the kind of posthuman sociality I'm introducing and remains largely anthropocentric, echoing heteronormative essentialism, Irigaray's thinking is very influential for approaching 'unknowability.' My understanding of water's unknowability,

[204] Neimanis, Astrida. "Thinking with Matter Rethinking Irigaray: A 'Liquid Ground' for a Planetary Feminism." 2016. p.13.
[205] Ibid.

similar to Irigaray's assertions regarding the impossibility of fully knowing the other, aims to create an epistemology of unknowability.[206] This also invites us to contemplate the unknownness of becoming bodies as a field of potentiality. The indiscernible nature of bodies and their encounters with others coupled with indiscernible practices create room for storytelling and speculation. This is significant for approaching different ways of being, encountering and contextualising that are outside of existing pre-dominant structures, methods and modes of knowing in the Western neoliberal world. I further argue that creating and following new desire lines entails a strong commitment and tolerance to not knowing. Working from a subjective and situated position is by necessity a limited perspective. Therefore, it *a priori* hints at unknowability as a condition that must be worked through as well as "a key dimension of matter's mattering.[207] As Neimanis argues, this unknowability, which is integral to Irigaray's thinking is essential to all life and all watery bodies.[208]

Neimanis acknowledges the presence of membranes separating the gestational body from the body it proliferates and calls this an "interval of passage" which is both solid and permeable.[209] This reading of membranes or boundaries of bodies that are bound to be challenged points to a certain openness and vulnerability, but also to a potentiality based on difference. The situated body allows us to think of specificity in terms of our embeddedness as localised and at once globalised subjects, as yet another body of water in (and of) the planetary hydrocommons.[210]

[206] See, for instance, *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History.*
[207] Neimanis, Astrida. "Thinking with Matter Rethinking Irigaray: A 'Liquid Ground' for a Planetary Feminism." 2016. p.24.
[208] Ibid. p.1.
[209] Ibid., p.21.
[210] See, for example, B*odies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* and "Hydrofeminism: Or, On becoming a Body of Water."

Neimanis announces that we are all bodies of water.[211] This notion of watery embodiment challenges the notion of autonomous bodies, separated by the boundaries of the flesh and composing individual subjectivities. One is never contained within the membranes that separate an inside from an outside but we rather "leak and seethe, our borders always vulnerable to rupture and renegotiation."[212] Water, as being of and between bodies, defines the becoming of other bodies: "As themselves milieus for other bodies and other lives that they will become as they relinquish their own, our bodies enter complex relations of gift, theft, and debt with all other watery life."[213] These complex relations require an ethics of relationality which formulates certain definitions around what constitutes a self and an other. How can we form alternative communities with all other watery life? Can our watery composition with other bodies be another shared condition that already puts the human and other-than-human in contact? Why is this so urgent? And how can the curatorial benefit from this to create alternative knowledges?

Neimanis further stresses that, like any other intellectual labour, one's body is also always a citation, meaning a reference or understand in relationality to other bodies of water.[214] Here, the notion of bodies refers to a much more inclusive commonality. This expanded understanding realises that bodies of water are interdependent and rely on "networks of care, and material and affective patternings of bodies, subjects, communities, and worlds."[215] Turning to the movement of bodies as a mode of certain "in-betweenness", Neimanis examines how the body knows the world through thinking, perceiving, feeling, and moving.[216] The body as moving through space

[211] Neimanis, Astrida. *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. p.4.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid., p.5.
[214] Ibid., p.13.
[215] Ibid., p.21.
[216] Neimanis, Astrida. "Commuting Bodies Move, Creatively." 2008.

suggests a sensory way of being that relies on the collaborative interaction of all senses. Therefore, the self exists through its embodied experience.

We are in a kitchen in the house in Babakale. This is the kitchen where we read, discuss, write and cook as well as occasionally eat, when it's too windy outside or we become too annoyed by the numerous cats trying to steal our food. This is the kitchen where all sessions happen. It is the heart of Garp Sessions; a space where we do the curatorial differently. We cook for one another every evening at sunset, timing things to make sure we don't miss the second the sun touches the horizon and melts into the sea (except when it's unusually cloudy). Our hands touch all the ingredients, we might sneeze or spread droplets in the potato salad, we rarely wash the cutting boards and I'm pretty sure uncooked seafood has touched almost every knife we lick yoghourt from. This goes on for ten days. Yet, you choose me as your symbiont? And off we go to the tiny bathroom where I constantly have to remind myself (as I always remind everyone at the beginning of each session) not to throw toilet paper in the toilets. They get clogged and then the whole village knows what you've done.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of embodied phenomenology places the body at the centre of the experiential world as he writes, "we can only begin from a situated politics of location."[217] Thinking from a body requires addressing one's own positionality. As such, this thesis experiments with situated writing practices and autotheory as being a body requires operating from certain positioning and conditions.[218] Relying on phenomenological experience or looking

[217] Neimanis, Astrida. Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. p.31.
[218] My reading of autotheory has been mostly informed by *Autotheory as Feminist Practice in Art, Writing, and Criticism* by Lauren Fournier as well as books by Maggie Nelson, McKenzie Wark and Chris Kraus.

closely at the human body might be seen as risking a return to human-centred approaches and opinions about the world. However, I argue that taking into consideration the corporeality of a subject is to acknowledge its situatedness and partiality. Being located in a particular place, one possesses a field of vision which encompasses that what falls beyond what we can see. Therefore, looking at relationships from the body outwards, takes into account such partiality whilst suggesting that the corporeal body is itself always already a site of collaboration. Neither fixed nor singular, the body contains multiple subjectivities and communities that provide their own ways of knowing. Working from human experience and realising that such experience is, in fact, not completely human, we may arrive at other worlds, understandings and methods of working through relationality.

I curated a group exhibition titled "Reciprocity Muscles" with Amelie Wedel at Cala, Berlin, in the spring of 2023, which brought together works by Becky Lyon, Lottie Sebes, Adrien Missika, Alanna Lynch, Lottie Sebes, and Maud Canisius and Paloma Llambías. In an effort to extend the question of reciprocity to artists, we asked the contributors: How can we use our bodily senses to enter reciprocal relations with the environment? Driven by attentivity to our senses - smelling, listening, touching, observing and tasting - we were interested in practices of eco-somatics and invited artists whose works address bodily senses as a site for intricate exchange with other-than-human ecologies. The works in the exhibition invited us to sniff out complex nuances, attend to our footsteps, ponder how the soil feels, take notes, trace water and listen to alien voices. For instance, Adrien Missika's compost barter invited the audience to leave something to be consumed in exchange for a jar of his compost. Alanna Lynch created a setup that invited visitors to lie down under her 'anxiety blankets' filled with soil and seeds, and to listen to a

recurring nightmare that centred on the artist forgetting to feed her cats. Becky Lyon asked viewers to trace local bodies of water that we live close to, whilst Lottie Sebes encouraged practices of listening to voices that are familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. Inspired by a theoretical background in material feminisms and by books such as *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer and *The Mushroom at the End of the World* by Anna Tsing, we asked: How can we practise eco-somatics in our everyday lives? Can we learn from these artistic practices in order to pay closer attention to our daily sensual encounters? The term 'reciprocity muscles' implied such a need to be attentive towards our habits and daily practices as a way of entering into reciprocal relationships with other-than-humans. My use of the word suggests a relationality that is responsive to each other, that transforms and become together. Additionally, the choice of the word muscles aims to stress the bodily aspect of these encounters as well as its habitual, consistent and activated nature. As such, we proposed the need to pay attention to our sensual experiences and daily practices in order to build and maintain reciprocity muscles.

The exhibition allowed me to carry a major question and, in fact, challenge of this current project into the realm of curatorial practice, to be explored with multiple collaborators. It is difficult, if not near impossible, to trace the conditions and specificities of our reciprocal relationships with the other-than-human. Any attempt carries the risk of falling short. Especially when working from a theoretical perspective, the risk of reducing an argument to abstract notions is prevalent. However, starting from a simple habit, a gesture or a daily exercise, can help to locate our thinking as already part of our lives and beings. Therefore, we felt it was important to pass this question onto artists, who are able to access different tools which concentrate on their daily practices. In turn, the artists helped to visualise our thinking and work towards tangible

manifestations of our existing relationships. This made space for respecting unknowability while still trying to work through aspects of reciprocal relationships in the production of artwork.

2.7. Curatorial Bodily Narratives

There is no one fixed definition of the curatorial but rather various different approaches to it, which I will elaborate on in the next chapter. I am proposing a curatorial that is attentive and open to other-than-human possibilities, which are embodied and place the material human body at the centre of its questioning, sensing, feeling and relating to others. To start thinking about the curatorial body as a collective or an assemblage that has multiple agents, participants, allegiances, hostile collaborators and affective alliances, forged with things or beings that interact, intra-act and cohabit, we can focus on the multiple agencies that exist within the body. The curatorial body, a collective of human and other-than-human agencies, is not a totalitarian entity but a fragmented, messy, crowded, and unconfined body of multiple agents. Then, if bodies, materials and discourses are of the same world, how can we notice corporeality as an agentic factor or a contributor to intellectual and discursive practices? How does the gut microbiome provide the conditions to bring together different worlds and create knowledges that are indiscernible or unavailable to human perception? What does the molecular offer to the curatorial? In what ways does bodily knowledge inform how we think through our positioning within a project?

On that early summer afternoon, when it was too early for many things but especially to claim to know my boundaries, I realised that what I was missing was conflict. Not being heard and not being understood, a strong feeling of frustration, is located between my shoulder blades and the

middle of the front of my torso. The more frustrated I get, the burning sensation at the back of my nose intensifies. I start feeling the soles of my feet more, for some reason, as I become agitated. "Agitated" is a word my partner had banned me from using at the time. He found it condescending. Yet, I have no better word to use, which expresses my precise emotions at times like this. I get agitated, then I start attacking, going in circles, accusing the other; I bring myself to a point that I know I cannot avoid nor retreat from to stop the conflict. I become the conflict.

Creating the conditions for noticing, telling, and enacting multiple narratives is an important challenge for the kind of worldmaking practices I am interested in developing. Stories of lives lived and told differently, that do not necessarily abide by existing structures and methods of being in the world, cherish the hope that different futures are, indeed, possible. This thesis calls on different styles of writing, moving across narratives at various scales, and brings together voices and stories which are from and about many human and other-than-human agents. This second chapter attempts to move between at least two writing styles and include multiple bodily narratives. It strives to present a composition of voices that can and can't always be understood easily. Interpretation requires remaining attentive and open to alternative desire lines.

Recognising the political potential of storytelling and speculative fiction for presenting narratives that extend beyond the human imagination and our ways of being, I try to engage with speculative practices such as modelling and mapping in both practice and writing. An example of the speculative practices that this project engages with is presented in the very loose visual representations or maps of encounter that we create as topsoil in Experimental Pedagogies. We put together these maps as a way to trace and document some of our encounters with multiple

others, which challenges an idea of what mapping can be as well as asking how encounters can be mapped differently. For us, maps are very effective in sharing stories and expanding our understanding of a learning situation or scenario. Through these efforts, the speculative comes into practice and the project opens up to narratives that exceed capture and allow for diverse stories to come into contact with one another,

Storytelling enables multiple narratives; storytelling comes from an urge to represent narratives; stories are told through different perspectives and languages. This project wishes to present a series of composite voices that can be identified but cannot be so easily discerned or understood. I suggest this would be the beginning of multiple contact zones, not through imposed familiar narratives but by creating the possibility for different desire lines to emerge.

Do you remember that afternoon we walked in circles, around a gigantic building, through the almost abandoned area? Hands in our pockets, overly caffeinated and hungry, our stomach grumbling, we were talking about what went wrong. We had tried something, and it hadn't worked. We wanted an outside structure to push us to work differently. This worked and we had worked, but we weren't pleased with how we had worked and what we worked on. It was a failure, one might say. We, you and I, don't care much about failures and successes. I care more about success than you do, and I always secretly enjoy how little you care about it. I didn't know it was possible to care so little about something in a way that felt so good. In our second lap around the building in Zurich, you said; "We are a vessel." Then you corrected yourself "no, we are a stomach." You can throw something in and we will metabolise it. You also used the metaphor of a sounding board, but I liked the first two better. We agreed that what makes our

work special is not restricted to its form. I stressed that our operating mechanism is dynamic; we take shape according to our needs. As we spoke, we both felt that we needed other words for work and production, as the usual didn't serve us. We wanted to share what we do with others and we wanted new encounters. This is why we are here. And for this, we need a form. We realise that we find ourselves in a dilemma, and it's too cold outside to stay out in it. People are waiting for us inside the building. We must stop thinking together for now and go back in there, to be with others. At that moment, we didn't want this, but we had no choice. I think that walk is a summary of our relationship.

2.8. Disorganised Practices of Relationality

The theoretical framework I have set up in this chapter lays the ground for discussions around alternative models of getting together and different ways of knowing and being in the world. My tools are bodily whilst my approach is often intuitive and from the gut. Addressing these aforementioned notions and writing about a lack of fixed form, I refer to the writings of Sandra Ruiz and Hypatia Vourloumis as well as Erin Manning, alongside Harney and Moten's notion of the study. Difficult to define, study, for Harney and Moten, is a speculative practice that goes beyond the university and the modes of thinking that institutions require.[219] Ruiz and Vourloumis echo this, describing study as "a generative operation that is shiftless and aimless."[220] This concerns being open to the unknown, the unexpected and to many potential futures. According to Ruiz and Vourloumis, form is "a colonial project."[221] Therefore, their proposition of formless

[219] Moten, Fred and Harney, Stefano. The Undercommons. New York: Minor Compositions. 2013.
[220] Ruiz, Sandra and Vourloumis, Hypatia. *Formless Formation: Vignettes for the End of this World*. Autonomedia, 2021. p.13.
[221] Ibid., p. 74.

formations is resistant to colonialist, Western, neoliberal and patriarchal modes and models of operating. Formlessness is a decolonising project; formless formations points to the creation of new knowledges that can undo historical and social constructions of knowledge.

According to Ruiz and Vourloumis, formlessness does not only mean a lack of form but also functions as an active call for us to perceive form beyond the determined and fixed, being attentive to its constant becoming.[222] Instead of sticking to form, structure, order, and harmony, I would like to work through and from disorganisation; disorganising relationality, knowing, seeing and writing as a tactic. Disorganising implies a disruption to the regular function and organisation of things. Therefore, working through disorganisation emphasises our existing in difference with others, acknowledging our inability to gather everything into a concise, consistent, ordered form, and then learning from this lack of a coherent, fixed and controlled structure.

A disorganised curatorial practice requires working from the 'minor key.' Erin Manning, in the introduction of her book *The Minor Gesture*, announces that she wishes to "create a field of resonance for the minor."[223] She brings experience to the forefront, influenced by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the minor which is "the revolutionary conditions of any literature within what we call the great (or established)", namely the major.[224] For them, the minor can be characterised by "the deterritorialization of the language, the connection of the individual and the political, the collective arrangement of utterance."[225] For Manning, the minor is many things, it is

[222] Ibid.
[223] Manning, Erin. *The Minor Gesture*. Duke University Press, 2016. p.1.
[224] Deleuze, Gilles, Félix Guattari, and Robert Brinkley. "What Is a Minor Literature?" *Mississippi Review* 11, no. 3 (1983): p.18.
[225] Ibid.

"out of time, untimely, rhythmically inventing its own pulse," "never known in advance," "ungraspable," "precarious," and "never reproduces itself in its own image."[226] By seeking to express experience in different modalities, the minor signals that there are more ways of being in the world. Manning acknowledges and values the existence of multiple ways of knowing and relating to the world that can't be hierarchised by the predominant anthropocentric and neurotypical desires of neoliberal society. Therefore, she includes many bodies and subjectivities in her discussion of the event which is where experience actualises with the minor gesture acting at the heart of the event.[227] This engages in "opening up the event to its potential for a collectivity alive with difference."[228] The event, then, is also the invention of new ways of *life-living* beyond the human agent.

Questioning what knowledge is, Manning invites us to ask: "What if knowledge were not assumed to have a form already?"[229] In lieu of a set structure, knowledge is opened up to many potentials, ways of being, events, encounters and agents. Manning's minor gesture is one that creates the possibility of different ecologies of practice and one that is not fixed but always varying, transforming and "gesturing always toward a futurity present in the act, but as yet unexpressed."[230] It sets down the conditions for activating the not-yet. It opens us up to formerly unnoticed ways and relations of knowing, hinting at the more-than. It defies existing relations of knowing. Taking up Manning's proposal, I argue that art is an extremely significant site of potentiality for questioning these relations and experimenting with new ones. It allows us to develop techniques for recognising how the not-yet and the milieu in which the not-yet can

[226] Manning, Erin. *The Minor Gesture*. Duke University Press, 2016. p.2.
[227] Ibid., p.2.
[228] Ibid., p.6.
[229] Ibid., p.9.
[230] Ibid., p.23-4.

emerge might be through new modes of collaboration with the other-than-human and through various material and phenomena.[231]

Sitting on my crooked chair in the room with the glass door that is not really indoors or outdoors, I underestimate how difficult one mosquito can make life for a group of humans trying to engage with a dense theoretical text. Or for someone trying to hold a long Zoom call in the midst of a heatwave. My efforts to concentrate are pitted against their efforts to get a taste of that spot on my shoulder they have become fixated on. Waving them off is only a temporary solution. They won't stop until they get a bite of my salty sweat mixed with artificial smelling sunscreen. It wouldn't be my cup of tea, but they don't seem to be able to get enough of it. I should be flattered, yet I'm overly bothered. It might be my ego, a desire to win this buzzy war or an immature wish to exert my power as a human. But what is in it for them? A burning desire to devour that which they crave, a confusion brought about by the heatwave or a fight for their lives? It is probably a combination of all these for both of us. We keep on fighting without any clear winner in sight. Unless the dragonflies reappear out of nowhere, like they did yesterday morning. They are my current heroes; they help with the soil and this summer, with their unexpected appearance, my legs are unscarred for the first time, free of mosquito bites. I wonder how they socialise with the mosquitos. Are they friends or foes?

Attributing a fixed definition to knowledge prevents us from being attentive to other ways of being in the world. In order to know and then act in the world differently, we need a redefinition of knowledge, accompanied by a rethinking of the stakes at hand and a questioning of what

[231] Ibid., p.52.

knowledge can do. The kind of curatorial I am interested in operates through the minor, as defined by Manning, and tries to open up to potential as a method for approaching knowledge differently within communities of practice. This requires embracing the discomfort of not knowing and the absence of immediate marks, instead appreciating more minor marks.

Working from and through intuition operates across temporalities. Intuition, as an embodied gut feeling, can hint at thoughts, ways, or models that are not yet and have not been, but which could be or are perhaps already becoming. What we call intuition is a certain looking inside for information that is perhaps not fully comprehensible or discernible to our human capacities. It is a call from within to consider how to relate differently. It can also be conceived as an imminent future that moves the body in a certain way, so that something can take place. It is always already happening, only on a level that we are not able to notice or define, in ways that are beyond our capture. Inventing new alternatives to the existing individualistic, institutionalised, overly professionalised, profit-oriented, and commodified neoliberal modes of work that dominate in the arts, helps to practise theory differently and reformulate what art and knowledge can be. In turn, I argue for the potential of convivial practices. As opposed to processing and digesting work individually, a collective process lived with and through various others can change potential narratives as well as, hopefully, the conditions of existence themselves. Therefore, I frame collectivity and conviviality as my methods for encountering life.

Ivan Illich, in his book *Tools for Conviviality*, defines conviviality as the "individual freedom realised in personal interdependence" and therefore "an intrinsic ethical value."[232] Emphasising the significance of tools for social relationships, he suggests that people need tools that will

[232] Illich, Ivan. *Tools for Conviviality*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973. p.24

enhance their independent efficiencies, express their vision and allow their creative energy to flourish instead of constantly expanding industrial tools. Retooling society, we need more tools that are accessible and can be used easily by anyone. The mapping technique we are trying to build with Experimental Pedagogies through topsoil strikes me as a potential tool for conviviality. It provides a speculative way of tackling relationships, concepts, sensations, and methods through visualising processes for creating new meaning and knowledges collectively.

Illich acknowledges the urgency of the era of climate change and the necessity of retooling society, but his approach to this process and his suggestions remain highly human-centred. I would like to approach a question of what a tool can be, or for whom it is functions in rather different ways. Although the term 'tool' risks sounding anthropocentric and instrumentalising at first, for Illich, since the dominance of industrial tools can't be escaped, we need to invert them and create alternative tools for emancipation.[233] What if the environment or the other-than-human world is not deemed to be a background or worse yet, another tool, but as an integral part of the *community* to be 'retooled' in Illich's terms? How can the plant world, the oceans or the gut ecosystem retool themselves towards a more inclusive conviviality? Would these pluralistic convivialities, then, be in conflict? And how can this be taken up beyond theoretical or abstract suggestions, as a practice of attentivity?

2.9. Collaboration and the Curatorial

Within the contemporary art world, a slow shift has been happening in recent decades that sees the focus shift from the individual, inherited from the European Enlightenment in Western

[233] Ibid., p.23.

society, to a rather more collective body.[234] As Irit Rogoff stresses with her understanding of 'participation,' both the production and the experience of art has, in the past years, become less about individual prodigy and reflection but more about finding new forms of mutuality.[235] Rogoff suggests that another form of *we* is produced through processes of viewing art in spaces that are inhabited by various senses of collectivity. This evidently shifts the nature of knowledge, as meaning is not inscribed but is rather actively taking place in these spaces. Her theory of participation exerts a certain taking part in culture and in this constantly transforming *we*. Participation, then, opens up new sets of possibilities, where meaning is collectively produced and in the constant process of shifting. To further complicate this notion of participation, I would like to bring forward a posthuman notion of participation that is not anthropocentric but rather relies on attentivity to beings that might know and participate differently. The participation of other-than-humans coexisting within human bodies often goes unnoticed and yet, I argue, they are noteworthy collaborators in worldmaking practices. Rogoff asserts, with the shrinkage of the public sphere and the increasing privatisation of formerly public activity, participation allows us to search for other modalities that rethink power and, to which I add, agentic capacities.[236] Knowledges are always plural, collectively produced and therefore strongly linked to our collaborations, not just within humans but more broadly, with the material and other-than-human world that already composes our human bodies in constant encounter.

I assume it was you who brought the red rope. I know it is a material you have played with before. It is our last day here in Babakale. It's August 2020 and the second iteration of the

[234] Individualism which places individual values above collective interests, stresses the autonomy of the individual. Through thinkers such as Hegel, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, this ideal has been elaborated on throughout Western continental philosophy.
[235] Rogoff, Irit. "Looking Away-Participating Singularities, Ontological Communities. 2011.
[236] Ibid.

programme is about to come to an end. I am feeling sentimental, very proud and extremely distracted. We have never had this many people in the house and we miscalculated the time for the closing event. The sun will not go down for another hour and a half and it's extremely hot. I walk inside to the large wooden table that sits at the centre of the kitchen, of the house, of the entire programme. Here, I see the red rope pinned down, next to the pickled lemons that someone started on our arrival day. It looks like it traces a map of entanglements or encounters. Having missed your mapping process, I am unable to comprehend how it traces these encounters but the final image it has created is very powerful. It compels me to contemplate how deeply intertwined we all are, everything is. My gaze rests on the pickles.

Collaboration and collective modes of working in curatorial and artistic practice tends to blur boundaries and defy clear cut definitions of authorship, which may help to challenge highly professionalised and institutionalised mentalities. Such practices resist various categorisations and are rather more difficult to quantify or monetise in working collectively across intellectual, artistic, and academic terrains. Protesting against the notion of the author and artistic genius is an important institutional and neoliberal critique since these notions of individuation feed into the creation of single figures that the art market benefits from commercially. Prior to the shift from highly individualistic curatorial endeavours to a more collective experience, the main conflict was between authorship and mediation. However, we have increasingly witnessed practices that do not make such distinctions between an author and a mediator, which follows from delineating separate roles for the multiple agents involved in an exhibition or event.[237] An exhibition always

[237] See, for instance, "Multiple Authorship" in *Art Power* by Boris Groys.

presumes multiple authorship as it is a result of many subjectivities, processes, objects, spaces, materials, decisions, and choices that come together.

Documenta 15, titled *lumbung* and curated by the Indonesian curatorial collective ruangrupa is a timely and extremely significant example of such shifts in thinking across the contemporary art world. When I visited documenta 15 in the summer of 2022, I was thinking intensely around what else the curatorial could be beyond working with artists toward the production of new works, the display of works in an exhibition, and the creation of events around such exhibitions. Encountering the curatorial framework, structure, and programming of documenta 15 helped me to realise that this shift was also already happening in more commercialised and large-scale art exhibitions globally. This also proved that the kinds of sensitivities and curiosities that my own curatorial practice prioritises are indeed also relevant and legitimate perspectives in the broader contemporary moment. Ruangrupa and the artistic team's curatorial statement urged participants to stop making art but rather to make friends. This reflects the proposal that runs throughout this project, especially presented in connection to Experimental Pedagogies which departs from the question "Can friendship be a research methodology in itself?"[238] Such shifts in the art world demonstrate that genius curators and artists are no longer the only mode by which internationally recognised curatorial work can be done. Historical models are being challenged and slowly replaced by DIY aesthetics, emerging from and working with local places and peoples towards a more caring and inclusive ethos, with greater emphasis on encounters and gatherings and in general more collaborative modes of curating. Here, I find it especially helpful to highlight particualr projects at documenta 15 that emphasise the role of the other-than-human, such as

[238] documenta 15, *Handbook*, 2022.

"The Floating Gardens" by Slovakia-based artist, organiser and curator Ilona Németh. In this work, Németh places two objects on polypropylene that serve as floating gardens on the Fulda River, named the Future Garden and the Healing Garden. One can apply to become a gardener for this project over the course of the 100 days of documenta, which allows the audience to enter into relationships or collaborations with the plants. *The Future Garden* consists of plants that clean the soil from toxic substances whereas *The Healing Garden* consists of herbs and vegetables that are beneficial to each other and in that sense, each has "another kind of care, because the plants are different and the rules of their coexistence are not identical either."[239]

Another recent biennial that was conceived with a similar set of propositions was the 17th Istanbul Biennial; however, I deem that this failed to enact its ideas in such rich and complex ways. Curated by a team composed of Ute Meta Bauer, Amar Kanwar and David Teh, their project had neither a name nor a theme but opened with a paragraph that imagined the biennial as compost which wasn't limited to the duration of the biennial itself.[240] This presents a collective effort at making sense of our times through a composting exercise. However, rather than working towards sustaining the communities it engaged with as was the promise, the biennial merely presents outcomes and findings. In multiple moments of the exhibition the care that was so prioritised in Németh's gardens, in the case of their project at documenta, was missing and remained a conceptual concern. Instead, what remains are beautiful new venues (for instance, renovated old Turkish baths) highlighting numerous celebratory artists and yet another contribution to emptying out several concepts that are placed at the heart of this research. My

[239] *"The floating gardens" to rent for the duration of documenta fifteen*. documenta fifteen. (2022, May 6). Retrieved from https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/news/the-floating-gardens/.
[240] https://bienal.iksv.org/en/17th-istanbul-biennial/curatorial-statement

observation was that the idea that collective work cannot be constituted by a single artist engaging with disadvantaged communities was ignored by many of the contributors. Finally, it disappointingly failed to address the institutional and governmental forces behind its organisation. In doing so, it fell short of enacting the potentiality of collaboration in making demands, challenging existing structures and allocating resources from individuals in private organisations to artistic and local communities which it claimed to give voice to or render visible.

As topsoil, we were invited to the March Meeting 2024 in Sharjah, titled "Tawashujat" (meaning intertwining in Arabic), to be a part of a panel. The event brought together collectives from different parts of the world whose embodied practices intertwined with forms of art, activism and community building.[241] The panel we took part in together with Ivet Ćurlin from What, How & for Whom and Mirwan Andan from ruangrupa, titled "The Catalytic Power of Collectives," aimed to examine the spirit behind collectivity in the art world. It asked questions such as: How are collectives re-imagining self-organisation and non-competitive, horizontal approaches to creativity? How are they challenging Western-centred trends, tropes and neoliberal cultural values through art and exhibition-making while also unsettling notions of creative labour and authorship?[242] Bringing together various collectives and asking them to present how they operate, the entire event attempted to develop a shared understanding around the need and urgency for collectivity, as well as discuss the various models and approaches for achieving it.

[241] March Meeting 2024, https://sharjahart.org/march-meeting-2024.
[242] Ibid.

Why is collaboration in the arts increasingly crucial and culturally relevant? I suggest that so much emphasis on individuated practices in the arts, which follows the neoliberal system in its imposition of a belief that one needs to survive alone and protect their own interests, is misleading and, have proved to be extremely isolating. It has contributed largely into creating anxious subjects that are struggling to create their own desire lines. As anthropologist Tim Ingold puts it "the life of the intellect is carried on not in isolation but in a milieu that is intrinsically social" and "more widely ecological" as "an amateur practice" that is shaped by the entire world and therefore "a way of loving this world."[243] I argue intellectual thinking relies on posthuman socialities and there is a great need for more practices that stay with the unknown, remain partial, and cherish that which is not clearly discernible or named. Taking a closer look at many other-than-human communities demonstrates that all beings are relational and interdependent; many beings, indeed including humans, thrive when they work together, create meaning and knowledges collectively, form affective alliances and care for the other. Therefore, the notion of collaboration, both in terms of forming new collaborations and working towards noticing our already existing collaborations, is crucial for imagining and creating alternative ways of being in the world as well as alternative curatorial models for collectively building new knowledges.

My understanding of the curatorial holds potential for creating encounters that open up to different ways of knowing. It prioritises rethinking practices and communities of knowledge as well as undoing existing assumptions regarding what knowledge is and what it can do. In that sense, I am engaging in practices of undoing knowledge by observing knowledge outside of the

[243] Ingold, Tim. *In Praise of Amateurs*. Ethnos, 2021. p.160.

mind, as instead a bodily and always collaborative effort. This aims to put often intangible relations of collaboration into a rich discussion around different forms of collaboration beyond the human. I argue that this kind of curatorial holds the potential to create new socialities which respond to pressing ecological, social and political urgencies, while providing alternatives to the capitalist and individualist expectations of a contemporary art world obsessed with constant production and display. I also argue that there is a strong need for alternative understandings of the curatorial that aren't so distracting and demanding but that allow us to slow down, to produce less and come together for the sake of coming together and not in the interests of increasing productivity or profit. Fast paced and production-oriented curatorial practices as well as programmes that approach artists and thinkers as content that produce branding strategies is problematic. I stress that we should seek to get together, learn, interact and do the curatorial differently.

Collectivity is a method, a necessity and a choice that needs to be constantly affirmed. It is or it generates a way of doing things but also provides a way to be with others through constant dialogue and negotiation. For me, collaboration is a larger curatorial project that stretches across many of my activities and endeavours. It is a proposal that I put forward from a very specific set of conditions and situated positioning. Collaboration in the curatorial requires letting go of control and assumptions that humans are the sole organisers and agents of collaborative activities. An understanding of the curatorial that is specifically focused on creating encounters might often produce unpredictability. Therefore, the curatorial that I propose, which promotes a loss of control while remaining attentive, acknowledges that the world is full of complex entanglements and constantly co-evolving processes that are beyond human control mechanisms

and structures. Relinquishing human agency and being attentive to how our interactions with a world beyond human perception can take us from trying to organise towards a *dis-organising*. Disorganising in this project does not necessarily mean refusing to produce any concrete outcome or organise events and exhibitions; it rather implies an attempt at disruption, challenging mainstream modes of curation in favour of messiness, uncertainty, and indiscernibility. This kind of collectivity also works against hierarchy as it requires a sharing of the responsibility of what emerges when knowledge and decisions are not organised top-down but are generated through the many encounters created in a space. It asks whether we can approach collaboration as more disorganised and indiscernible in its methods and agencies. This prioritises forming a community that appraises intergenerational dialogue, that is attentive and that shares in responsibility through letting go of the wish to control in collaboration.

2.10. Conclusion

A practice makes one think and provides tools for this thinking that activate its potentiality. Isabelle Stengers defines an ecology of practice as "a tool for thinking through what is happening" and adds that "a tool is never neutral."[244] Tools have to be designed particularly for a given practice and the conditions this practice takes place in. It is unique to the practice, subjective, partial, and it requires one to work through it rather than sticking to certain habits and patterns that can be repeated. A practice can never be completely detached from its environment and the specificities that shape it and define its ethos. Stengers also states that one needs a cause to think.[245] And that conditions delineate this cause and its degree of urgency. Encounters we are

[244] Stengers, Isabelle. Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices. *Cultural Studies Review* 11 (1), 2005.p.185.
[245] Ibid., p.191.

committed to creating and nourishing, relationships we build and sustain, communities we form and prioritise, and simply who we choose to live or think together with, is political.

In the institutional arts context of the Western world, the body and its relations are often neglected. Therefore, this is what I would like to bring attention back to. Disorganising is only productive when it is combined with being attentive to these entanglements that have been largely ignored and bringing different ways of knowing together in order to open up the potential for learning from the other.

I would like to conclude this chapter with a question from Bayo Akomolafe's, which I believe neatly summarises my theoretical approach in this chapter in terms of engaging with multiple narratives and questioning what stories we enact: "Knowing anything is an exercise in loss, in complementary postures foregone, in sensations exchanged, in stabilities reinforced, in fools suffered. Something is always missing. The question isn't if my version or your version of the world is true; it is not if 'anything goes'; it is: what natures are we co-performing, and what worlds have had to die for them?"[246]

I have tried to demonstrate how this is, in fact, a matter of storytelling. And moreover, the importance of how and from whose perspective a story is told. Therefore, how and what we imagine can retell potential stories of our times which would allow us to model worlds and rework concepts. This kind of thinking requires curatorial models that are attentive to stories

[246] Akomolafe, Bayo. "Knowing anything is an exercise in loss." Bayo Akomolafe, April 7, 2023, https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/post/knowing-anything-is-an-exercise-in-loss.

beyond the human, stories of vulnerable bodies and stories of the non-curatable which I will introduce in the next chapter.

The curatorial practice that I'm proposing concern processes that give rise to the production of new knowledges and relationalities rather than being solely focusing on modes of display. It is driven by asking how looking at different ontological registers, learning from the molecular and staying with the question of scale can contribute to activating personal, collective and eventually, planetary scales of relation.

CHAPTER 3: Inventing New Curatorial Models

3.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces several existing definitions of the curatorial and raises a question of what else the curatorial can be. This leads to the proposal of new curatorial models that contemplate our coexistence and attend to different ways of being in the world, reworking the role of contemporary curatorial practices in response to this. The chapter addresses the need and urgency for new curatorial models, framing this task as the focus of my practice. In terms of this, I ask: What can we do when existing structures and models fail us? What can we do when some of our needs (bodily, intellectually, and emotionally) are not met by existing knowledges, tools, structures and methods of questioning what knowledge could be?

The two models this thesis presents, Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies, are interested in inventing alternative ways of coming together, as a means of arriving at knowledges differently. They require rethinking practices and communities of knowledge as well as undoing existing assumptions about what knowledge is and what it can do. They are centred around relationships with many others, including other-than-humans.

The chapter strives to elaborate on a notion of disorganising the curatorial by addressing the openness of my collaborative curatorial projects which lack a fixed structure or methodology. The notion of desire lines also follows a sense of ordered chaos, where there is a connection between the need for order, a fear of chaos but openness to messiness. Desire lines provide alternative ways which still need to have their own rationale for organising and ordering,

however, being unprecedented paths, they are also, by nature, experimental and accepting of uncertainty. Thinking through these instincts, I aim to portray how the projects favour disorganisation, are attentive to posthuman narratives and place relational encounters at their very centre.

The chapter starts to introduce friendship, which will be the focus of next chapter, as a key methodology for the two collective curatorial projects. Finally, it invites being attentive to the curatorial, demonstrating the ways in which Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies prioritise being-with rather than doing. Here, being attentive is not only interested in other-than-human possibilities but also how we can gather, think, and become together through a curatorial gesture. Throughout the chapter, I seek to continually put into question 'the who' that constitutes my companions and collaborators.

3.2. The story of Kemal or the Non-Curatable

Kemal, or Dog Kemal to be precise (differentiating them from Human Kemals in the village) is a wild soul. He does not have a house, a human or dog companion or a daily routine. He is interested in being in your company for no longer than he needs to be. He runs around the village, down by the fishing boats, for the entire day and therefore always smells of spoiled fish. He is tiny but old, the offspring of two rather different breeds. He probably should have been much bigger than he is but something unexpected happened in his gene sequence. He did not hang out much with the other dogs: Engin, the companion of Ayşe, who we witnessed grow up together and was therefore considered a significant member of the Garp Sessions community, or Kori, his enormous, clumsy brother. Kemal and I didn't know each other, and we had managed

to miss running into each other in the tiny village for years. And then, one day in the village centre, in front of our house, in front of the mosque and next to the coffee shop where only men hang out, we encountered one another for the first time. I ran to him and he to me.

He is very handsome, and his tiny dimensions trick you into thinking that you might somehow be the alpha and one in control. Yet, he made his boundaries clear very from the outset. He did not want to be touched much, picked up or directed indoors, not even with the promise of affection or delicious home cooked meals. We are quite different. I am a sucker for those things: food and love, satisfaction, and comfort. So, his attitude was hard for me to comprehend. Of course, I took all this personally and was slightly offended. But at the same time, I found Kemal charming and could not stay away from him for long. Suddenly, I had found myself following a desire line offered to me by this charismatic creature.

Days went by. I tried not to be too forward or look needy, yet still made sure to see him every day, taking one step closer towards him each time. On the last day, after the Closing Event where we had guests in the house and shared glimpses of our ten days in the village - breathing, screaming, chanting, meditating, moving our bodies, journaling, cooking, eating, swimming and occasionally weeping - I gave myself permission to lose control. Kemal was constantly stood there in front of the house, which gave me the impression that he also wanted to be close to me; perhaps he knew it was our last day together. I picked him up and laid down on the wooden bed chair, which leaves marks on the back of my legs and makes them red (now that they are tanned, hurting even more I lay here). I was so enamoured that I ignored his little bites of my fingers and his little squeaks. At one point, I put him down to socialise with our visitors who were asking all

kinds of questions about the programme and for whom I now wanted to make our now famous garlic bread. When I came back, he was still there and this time he came to sit on my lap. I know, mixed signals.

We spent the entire night roaming the village together, going to a friend's house, being briefly in a car together and he eventually escorting me home. Then, it turns out, he was in front of the house barking until dawn. It was a beautiful night, I felt free and exhilarated by many things: having completed another year of the programme, having met and shared many precious moments with amazing people, planktons, lichen, stray cats - the newbies and the old timers - fish and fresh bacteria, at the prospect of going back home where I could be alone and reflect, and finally, because of all the punch I had drunk. Did Kemal always feel like this? Free and as if anything was possible. Had I become more like him or him like me, seeking affection and comfort in my lap? I looked for him all the next morning but only got to see him in the front mirror of the car, standing in the village centre and watching us drive away, far from the sun, windows down and the morning breeze in our hair. Then, he turned around and ran away.

The curatorial is problematised by different (and at times, conflicting) desires, being always entangled and engaged with things that are 'not curatable.' The curatorial, even when it is preoccupied with concrete objects and art works, is always informed by other-than-human desires and knowledges that might be overlooked in curatorial discourses that human-centric. Not every component of our thinking and production processes are translatable to the tools of the curatorial, hence curatable. Things might get lost, understood as indiscernible, mistakenly assumed outside of the curatorial or beyond our capture. This poses an impasse which I aim to

provide alternatives to, by turning to the two curatorial models outlined through Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies. These models are based on an inability to curate in a way that is engaged with the non-curatable, which in turn requires disorganising the curatorial, letting go of anthropocentric control, being attentive to ways of being in the world beyond our human perceptions and capacities and creating the possibility for learning with and from them.

This work has a lot of precedents, for instance, in animal studies literature which has been dealing with such struggles theoretically, for instance in Haraway's outstanding text *When Species Meet*. Haraway, in her text, asserts that when companions and species encounter one another in a responsive, reciprocal and respectful way, we enter a world of being-with.[247]

These discussions have been very much present in philosophy and critical theory over the past decade and have also been extensively addressed in artistic practices. However, curatorial practices have been slow and insufficient in tackling these issues, at least in terms of practice. There are existing curatorial discourses which address the entanglements of the human and beyond-the-human world on a theoretical level, but it has been largely absent in practice. Therefore, I attempt at explaining the need for a disorganised curatorial and working through this gap in the curatorial that is connected to the non-curatable.

3.3. Disorganising the Curatorial

[247] Haraway, Donna J. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. p.19.

The curatorial, as distinct from curating, is not an easily defined term; there are endless possibilities, approaches, perspectives and ways to practise it. The more we try to render it discernible through contemporary art practices, it escapes capture. Maria Lind defines the curatorial as "a set of practices that disturbs existing power relations" and "a viral presence that strives to create friction and push new ideas" that are about "not just representing but presenting and testing."[248] In a conversation with Jens Hoffmann, Hoffmann introduces Lind as an advocate for an expanded notion of curating that goes beyond exhibition-making.[249] Hoffmann is likewise interested in the objects of curating and exhibition-making, expressing his issues with how that is being abandoned for what he calls 'the paracuratorial.' Hoffmann's paracuratorial implies lectures, screenings, events and projects that are separate from artworks and their exhibition. My understanding of Hoffmann's paracuratorial is that he perceives the curatorial as the exhibition and everything that revolves around the exhibition, put simply the programming element of the curatorial, falls under the umbrella of the paracuratorial. I don't fully agree with this distinction as I believe those activities are still part of the curatorial as much as the exhibition.

In their conversation, Lind makes a clear distinction between curating, which is a modality of making art public, and the curatorial, which is a methodology that starts with art but "then situates it in relation to specific contexts, times, and questions in order to challenge the status quo."[250] In that sense, it is a tool that enables us to question and confront the existing systems and discourses of power while still introducing new ideas. Irit Rogoff describes the curatorial as "an opportunity to 'unbound' the work from all of those categories and practices that limit its

[248] Lind, Maria. "The Curatorial." *Artforum*, vol. 48, no. 2, October 2009.
[249] Hoffmann, Jens and Lind, Maria., "To Show or Not to Show," *Mousse Magazine,* no. 31, November 2011.
[250] Ibid.

ability to explore that which we do not yet know or that which is not yet a subject in the world."[251] The curatorial, for her, produces subjects and positions that are not yet existing. Both definitions imply a yet to come, uncertainty and a future persons or set of ideas to be created.

Beatrice von Bismarck, in *The Curatorial Condition*, directs her readers' attentions to the interplay of all factors, agents and relations of curating. Simiarly, Terry Smith suggests that the work of curators lies in "responding to the demands of contemporaneity; becoming, in a word, contemporary."[252] Similar to Lind and Rogoff's suggestions, here we also find an emphasis on the production and occupation of previously unacknowledged knowledges and subjective positions. Smith's definition of "an extended, expanded exhibition" is noteworthy:

> "work[ing], above all, to shape its spectator's experience and take its visitor through a journey of understanding that unfolds as a guided yet open-weave pattern of affective insights, each triggered by looking, that accumulates until the viewer has understood the curator's insight and, hopefully, arrived at insights previously unthought by both."[253]

Jean Paul Martinon, in his book *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, invites several thinkers and writers to offer their views on the curatorial, demonstrating a plethora of possibilities around what the curatorial means and could come to mean. In his introduction to the book, Martinon defines the curatorial as "a way of organizing thought in the encounter with the other and/or with objects."[254] Although I find this definition to be encompassing many potentialities of the curatorial, I argue that it is not solely about organising existing thought in the

[251] Rogoff, Irit. "Smuggling: An Embodied Criticality." 2006.
[252] Smith, Terry. *Thinking Contemporary Curating*. New York, Independent Curators International, 2012. p. 179.
[253] Ibid.
[254] Martinon, Jean-Paul. *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

encounter but also concerns the urgency of creating conditions for the emergence of new thought and knowledges *through* the encounter with the other and/or objects.

If art carries the potential for making new connections, gaining new perspectives and imagining different worlds, I claim it is necessary to abandon an anthropocentric perspective to create possibilities for further encounters that would otherwise go unnoticed or unrealised if not for the unique tools of art. I do not mean to solely put the weight of this challenge onto the shoulders of artistic practice, but I do maintain that the curatorial should aim to multiply such possibilities and render them visible and accessible. My understanding of the curatorial, in this sense, is more about outlining the conditions of possibility for exploration with others, including other people, objects, materials, and other-than-human collaborators.

In Martinon's book, I feel particularly touched by Nora Sternfeld's proposal of "always retaining the uncertainty or the possibility of the question (a decided 'perhaps') as the central tenet of any curatorial event."[255] The curatorial compels one to question again and again what is meant by knowing, undoing assumptions of what knowledge can be and disrupting existing knowledges. Nora Sternfeld, following James Clifford and Mary Louise Pratt's notion of the contact zone that is based on "contingency and processuality," suggests that "exhibitions can be understood as shared social spaces where different agents come together and act."[256] Practices create contact zones that allow people and ideas from different contexts to enter into the same ecologies, which eventually leads to further relationalities emerging out of these encounters. The aim with the

[255] Ibid.
[256] Ibid., p.147.

curatorial is then to create and organise "spaces for negotiation, openly addressing contradictions within seemingly symmetrical relations."[257]

The contact zone leads us to exit our comfort zones and enter a space where knowledges produced within groups of people facing similar conditions and crises can be put into conversation with other people who operate across completely different sets of conditions. This implies creating tools and languages that can share stories or perspectives with others who might lack the relative tools themselves. Pratt believes that we need pedagogical arts that reproduce contact zones including, for instance, storytelling, experimentation, collaboration and meditation.[258] The curatorial I am proposing, which revolves around contemplating how and where else learning can happen, aims to present further ways for circulating and working through pedagogical arts of the contact zone.

I would like to emphasise the element of conflict in Pratt's notion of contact toward situating exhibitions as shared social spaces and contact zones where processuality is central.[259] This marks a space where things are constantly redefined in dialogue with others, without the goal of coming to a final agreement on any definitions. Through exhibitions, we enter into processes of negotiating our differences and understandings of the world. Furthermore, the contact zone can also be understood to be "a conflict zone" where Oliver Marchart's understanding of curating as organising becomes an "organisation of conflict."[260] Conflict, an integral part of the curatorial,

[257] Ibid.
[258] Ibid, p.40.
[259] Sternfeld, Nora and Ziaja, Luisa. "What comes after the Show? On post-representational curating." On Curating 14/12.
[260] Ibid.

also needs to be organised or taken into account when thinking of the curatorial as an arena where differences are negotiated. Conflict as such can be organised and disorganised.

I'm intrigued by the repetitive use of the word 'organising' in both of Sternfeld's texts as well as Martinon's introduction in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*. In both their definitions, although there is a divergence from more traditional and mainstream understandings of the term *curatorial* regarding the kinds of spaces it takes place in, activates, and how it does this, there is still a shared emphasis on its organisational capacities. Isn't the curatorial, then, again, highly linked to acts of curating? Here, a gap between understanding the curatorial as a practice versus a set of activities emerges. The curatorial indeed involves activities of curating. However, the curatorial opens to much more than simply what is being done, since it is a constant questioning of *what* else can be done and, most importantly, *how*. I suggest directing the focus from the organisational capacities of the curatorial towards a more 'disorganised' curatorial that is focused on encounters. We need to disorganise the curatorial and recentre our negotiations with others whilst acknowledging the unpredictability and indiscernibility of them; this follows a desire line that seeks a deliberate loss of control in our contradictory and collaborative endeavours. If the curatorial is about organising connections, disorganising these connections can perhaps create an opening for new and unprecedented connections to emerge, which cannot be taken for granted.

How can we still experience coming together in disorganised spaces, making an effort to negotiate our differences even if it results in conflict? What does it mean to disorganise without dismissing the inevitable organisational nature of the curatorial? Disorganising implies a disruption of the regular functioning and organisation of things. Hence, it implies the need for

the formation of pluralistic desire lines. It is a practice that does not attempt to clarify or make understandable but can stay with the trouble and the mess. This collective disorganisation requires understanding our stakes, acknowledging our inability to gather everything in a concise, consistent, and ordered manner, and, finally, learning from this from each other's differences. In this sense, disorganisation does not mean a complete lack of organisation (as the models I'm proposing are also planned and organised to some degree) but it does enact a shift in attention and rearranges intentionalities, leaving room in the planning of encounters for unpredictability. This potential is also understood as the central outcome rather than supporting element or by-product of the curatorial. Therefore, an invented, planned, and organised event or encounter can also paradoxically be disorganised. In fact, this paradoxical coexistence and tension between organisation and disorganisation is what makes such practices fruitful in their production of a space for remapping difference, conflict, and negotiation differently, towards reciprocal and attentive relations with the other-than-human.

Disorganisation as such is also resistant to neoliberal extractivism as it doesn't aim to extract value and labour by insisting on constant production in a way that serves these neoliberal agendas. This is very different from how conviviality is instrumentalised in the corporate sphere for the purpose of value extraction. In *The Organizational Complex*, Reinhold Martin examines how the architecture of corporate spaces in post-World War 2 America serves to exert organizational control and maximize value extraction. He writes that the supposedly convivial rearranging of working spaces, in fact, merely aims to increase productivity in the face of corporate interests.[261] They seem to place an importance on fostering collaboration and building

[261] Martin, Reinhold. *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space.* MIT Press, 2003.

more open and transparent spaces of work, but they only introduce new modes of control and pressure for productivity. He focuses on spatial elements and their impact on organizational systems which places the body as serving these complex communication networks. As such, the self is "constituted through the exchange of codes (in the form of organizational patterns circulating across the network), while the network it-self that supports the circulation is constituted reflexively through those very patterns. There is no outside, or inside."[262] This organisational imperative is one of control and leaves no room for fluidity nor flexibility which is completely different than how disorganisation operates.

The curatorial I'm proposing has two main characteristics: it is disorganised and it is posthuman. It is not so much focused on production and display but rather the creation of encounters. Its contemporaneity is tackled in terms of how and with whom such encounters take place, with regards to the sensitivities and urgencies it responds to and what kinds of agents and socialities it produces. The encounters themselves reveal questions and needs that are at the centre of our contemporary being. What is suggested is an idea of the curatorial that is not limited to human agents but which works through a broader spectrum of agentic capacities. This approach to the curatorial seeks to emphasise that there is always something beyond capture.

A central pursuit of this project is the invention of models that offer alternatives to the more individualistic, institutionalised and overly professionalised modes of working in the arts. This is not only important in an arts or curatorial context but also politically and socially in the work of imagining collective futures. Therefore, this project attempts to notice and reconsider the ways in

[262] Ibid., p:26.

which we think about and gather together in the creation of knowledges. It asks how curatorial models can shift our attention to new embodied ways of encountering the other. This requires experimenting with new epistemologies through creating encounters with others to be, think and work together. Possibilities emerge from these disorganised spaces where collective knowledges can be built through encountering one another differently, being attentive to our bodies and entanglements with a world beyond human perception and centring affective relationships around care. These spaces direct our being attuned to the world around us including our own material bodies, positionalities, needs, intuitions, and gut feelings, approaching these as dis/organising principles of the curatorial. They remain curatorial projects, but less intent on curating objects or archival material and rather gesturing to manifestations of a larger quest. They don't engage with the elements of the curatorial in expected ways and furthermore they forgo expectations. This understanding of the curatorial concerns an opening up to the unknown, which could easily result in failure in the conventional sense. However, expectancy is, in fact, a very anthropocentric position, accentuated by the assumption that humans have complete access to knowledge and that they are in control of it. This leads one to claim that they can fully know, evaluate and judge what is to come. Being committed to not failing or assuming to know that things will happen in a certain way is highly anthropocentric and limiting.

I believe that learning to work from the position of not knowing and opening up to learning from other-than-human ways of knowing is crucial for the curatorial to be connected to the contemporary moment. It allows room for multiple desire lines and narratives to emerge. How can we then, through the curatorial, listen to Kemal's and other species' desires? Acknowledging that there are other ways of being and knowing, and therefore accepting our own position of not

fully knowing, brings a certain humbleness and openness to possibilities beyond the human. This is what excites me about the potential of art that hints at alternative worlds and in doing so can reflect, criticise and provide alternatives to our existing one.

A collective disorganisation would then require existing in difference with others, understanding our shared stakes, acknowledging our inability to gather everything in a concise, consistent, ordered manner and learning from this disorganisation as well as each other's differences. In a disorganised practice, one continues to practise difference. Organisation tends to reduce difference to something static; it freezes desire lines. Disorganisation, on the other hand, is a process of allowing multiple desire lines to flourish which emerge, for instance, from the gut or between other entangled beings. This is why we need to create models that allow desires to form their own lines rather than being frozen or fixed.

3.4. Modelling and worldmaking

I remember sitting on the floor of Amelie's East Dulwich flat towards the end of 2017, conversing for hours around what the exhibition we had just received financial support from Goldsmiths for would revolve around. We would circle around words but more often feelings and sensitivities that we felt were too naive to present to the critical art world, which we were so much immersed in at the time. Honestly, I feared it was too difficult to bring together all our concerns and create a framework for approaching the exhibition and contacting artists. The processes we were naturally great at together included studio visits and conversations with artists that lingered too long and at times ended in pubs around the Deptford studios. These thrilling encounters and seeing relationships develop even in a matter of hours was what drove

our practice early on. In 2018, we curated an exhibition and events programme titled "Make it Hot, Cool it Down, Turn it Over" in London, featuring works by Rafaj Zajko, Daniel Keller, Miriam Naeh, Daisy Parris and Alecs Pierce. It invited multiple collaborators to curate and organise listening sessions, a DJ performance, a soundscape, a collective lunch prepared with skipped food, a fermentation workshop, a close reading exercise and an ambitious film programme. Even though our conceptual framework was 'the exhibition as compost,' we noticed very early on that this was mainly an excuse to investigate how we work together, how we can think with one another and how we can build alternative socialities. How we came to the idea of compost cannot be thought separately from the context we were in at the time, as we were being introduced to some of the theoretical discourses prominent in London, including Donna Haraway's notion of compost. We wanted to see how a concept that we had been talking about and had studied could manifest through artistic and curatorial practices. Compost helped us to think about the process of coming together and engaging in a messy, hybrid and porous conversation. We were struck by the fact that compost is as much about composition, putting together, as it is about decomposition, and thus taking apart. During those three days, the house in Peckham was an active, living, hot compost pile where certain things worked and others did not; where we investigated how we come together with multiple others. The space was always crowded, a bit run down and smelly, somehow messy and all in all, quite intense. The works were also a part of this general feeling: Rafal Zajko had tried something new and had invited visitors to chew gum and stick them on his sculptures; there were cabbages, potatoes and leeks that were parts of other works.

Individually engaged in research areas such as material feminisms, critical ecologies, postcolonialism, and geopolitics, whilst also being based in different geographical contexts - San Jose (Costa Rica), Istanbul (Turkey) and Berlin (Germany) - we, as topsoil, seek to bring into conversation the multitude of our contextual and disciplinary perspectives. Through creating processes of prolonged conversation amongst ourselves as well as with invited others, we explore working and thinking with each other through an approach that prioritises care and sensibility in response to what drives our research and practice.

We met in London in 2017 whilst we were studying for our Master's degrees in Contemporary Art Theory at Goldsmiths University, spending that year together seeing exhibitions, meeting artists at pubs and cafes, doing visits to MFA studios, going to lectures and talks, and overall feeling extremely stimulated. We also shared in the collective feeling of being overwhelmed by the institutional setting we found ourselves in and the things we were being confronted with. It is important to note that at this time, starting in February 2018, the workers' union, UCU, called a general strike across universities in the UK. For almost half of that year, we gathered collectively outside of the university and the classroom, which proved an important learning experience and period for experimenting with forms of collectivity. We decided that we wanted to remain working together, and so the first real question we asked ourselves was: how do we work together and how do we learn from one another/others? Since then, we have been committed to initiating long-term research projects that collect methods and tools which help us move towards shared stakes and concerns while being attentive to specificities that inform our lives and practices. We develop experimental rehearsal spaces: online, offline and in print. We try to share the reflections that surface in the afterlife of an encounter. We rethink and re-work over long

periods of time, becoming attentive to the ways in which our ideas, conversations and bodies are moved, inflected and twisted differently over time and space. We don't see what gets produced at the end as an outcome or reflection of these processes but as opportunities for further encounters and worlds to be met. After the first project that we curated together as topsoil, we realised that the question of how we work together would be central to all of our projects, though appearing every time anew as the constellations, conditions, and needs of our collaborations changed. Therefore, rather than starting off with a theme or concept, we approach a constellation of inputs to continually search for new ways to work together.

When looking back at our conflicting feelings from being situated within an institutional setting, including stimulation, inspiration, imagination but also frustration and a critical response to what we thought these spaces lacked, we remember fondly how much we liked to create moments of learning from each other in talking about contemporary art and events. We kept chasing that intensity in our conversations. This search was carried onto studio visits that we had with artists, most of whom were also doing their MFAs in Goldsmiths at the time. Their openness in sharing their own experiences of working in an institution, raising their needs and hesitations, was integral to our development and figuring out what kind of convivial spaces of encounter we were interested in building. Noticing that an important portion of our learning was taking place at the pub after seminars, or in other convivial spaces that we created for ourselves beyond the university, we started to question the gap between institutional and alternative forms of knowledge production.

Experimental Pedagogies, a project we started in 2020, is the continuation of our attempts at understanding how we can learn from one another in the absence of a fixed structure or thematic guide. Some of its most compelling ideas and results have tended to come out the work we have done around our relationship itself. Therefore, through Experimental Pedagogies, we explicitly made it our focus to understand how this relationship shapes our thinking around certain questions and topics that we are individually and collectively engaged in. This is the case with the maps and infographics that we started making as Experimental Pedagogies which I will delve further into in the next chapter. Maps, simply put, are our attempt at visualising the interesting relationships and tensions between intuition and systematising or categorising; they emphasise the role of intuition and sensation in knowledge making practices. They look like graphical charts but by allowing room for bodily sensations, emotions, aspects of our multiple relationships, they afform the role of intuition in knowledge production practices. We embraced a way of creating work that was constituted by our relationships, not relying on a setting, spatio-temporal position or fixed structure to become more easily legible. There is nothing that circumvents the work from the outside but instead it intuitively resists following a fixed form or methodology. It is like water slipping through one's fingers. You sense it and try to grasp it, but it is already somewhere else or something else. It is, therefore, beyond capture.

Considering the disorganised and fluid nature of our collective curatorial practice, when we were producing our first map, we found ourselves needing a rather rigid structure for working through disorganisation. This is how the grid-like form, the horizontal and vertical lines appeared in this very first map. The horizontal line was time; it showed the six months long process of conversing online. The vertical line was the various categories or spheres in which these

conversations took place. It included space, methods, concepts but also relationships, documentation or temporal structures. It is an interesting relationship we tried to understand between intuition and systematising. It was also an attempt at creating a rigid categorisation of our various abstract processes to be able to translate what we do to others as well as to fully understand it ourselves. It acts, in that sense, as an invitation. In these maps, disogranisation persists as we never stick to the grid-like structure that we build and create bonds, connections and somehow desire lines between ourselves, materials, objects, texts, other people, knowledges and techniques. Through this intentional disorganisation of the systematic grids and graphs, we achieve a dynamic from which to rethink how we organize our research as relational diagrammes.

I would also like to acknowledge that diagramming has been widely used as a tool in artistic practices and with various motivations. There is often a need for challenging the established methodologies of ordering information and conventional narratives. Diagramming as such often presents multiple desire lines that diverge from the dominant narratives and communities. For instance, Bureau d'études is a Paris-based artist duo formed by Léonore Bonaccini and Xavier Fourt that produces intricate cartographies analyzing the contemporary moment.[263] Resulting from extensive research, these diagrammes reveal what normally remains invisible, place them in a larger narrative and "re-symbolize the unseen and hidden."[264] Furthermore, Patricio Davila's Book *Diagrams of Power: Visualizing, Mapping, and Performing Resistance* presents multiple

[263] https://bureaudetudes.org/about/
[264] Ibid.

artists and researchers who work with diagramming such as Forensic Architecture, Burak Arikan and Margaret Pearce.[265]

We were not only inspired by diagrammes as geographical tools, but also by how thinkers such as Fernand Deligny translated maps into cognitive, communicative, and pedagogical experiences. Deligny explored how maps work when verbal communication is not possible.[266] For us, maps are more of a way of going wherever we want to go with thinking, while being able to trace and retrace our steps. In this sense, we practiced inductive learning, as we don't start from a general premise but we come to an understanding as we are doing.

The word 'pedagogy' came into our practice as we wanted to open forms of learning to other ways of participating, talking, listening and sharing. We are wary of and insistently resist instrumentalising the encounter; we reject conversing with a set agenda and expectations from the encounter. We invite others to learn together, without knowing what we want to learn. Working through that openness requires us to understand and take into consideration different emotional, neurological and physical needs.

These practices raise important questions: How is value determined in the lack of a coherent structure or set of expected outcomes? How do we hierarchise knowledges or otherwise inform our motivations for doing the disorganised and structureless work that we do, between the practical, academic and theoretical? I argue that answers partly lie in approaching these different

[265] Dávila, Patricio**,** editor. *Diagrams of Power: Visualizing, Mapping, and Performing Resistance*. Onomatopee, 2019.
[266] Deligny, Fernand. *The Arachnean and Other Texts*. Translated by Drew S. Burk and Catherine Porter, Univocal Publishing, 2015.

ways of working, gathering, encountering and storytelling as potential instances of worldmaking. Worldmaking practices carry great potential especially in our current times of uncertainty, chaos and multiple crises staked across various scales; they offer alternative narratives around how to live and how to be with others that challenge and defy the existing predetermined structures. Imagining other worlds allows us to speculate on how else we might live or how others are already living, have previously lived or will potentially live in the future. Worlds have structures but acknowledging the existence of multiple worlds side by side shows how else they can be structured, organised and disorganised. It opens to room for rearranging worlds and building new ones out of them, whilst shuffling, mixing and making connections between them. This is an exercise in affirming the plurality of worlds. Isabelle Stengers calls refers to such exercise in the work of "repopulating the devastated desert of our imaginations."[267] I would like to apply Stengers's thinking to curatorial practices as I believe the curatorial has the openness for practical experimentation. Such experimental curatorial models, or desire lines, can push our imagination, allowing us to understand the limitations of our situated experiences and create tools for going beyond them.

Study, for Erin Manning, is simply what you do with other people. It rejects a fixed method. Approaching method critically as the ordering of knowledge, Manning states method prevents one from fully exploring what a process could become, which results in falling short of its actual potential. Technique, as opposed to method, is crucial in any event. I agree with the limitations of having a fixed method and applying that method to every specificity and setting. Method can be rethought as being more than the mere ordering of knowledge, as not just a tool of the major

[267] Stengers, Isabelle. In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism. 2015.

key. Methods can be invented only to be experimented with and left aside. They can be specific to a certain encounter or moment, always open to change and transformation, relational and fluid. The encounter itself dictates a method of its own. It is not about deploying any existent method but working through the conditions at hand and relationalities that point to a *how*. The method should not merely be repeated but we should always adjust it as the context of the encounter transforms. The encounter creates alternative models challenging the fixity of some existing model and lays the conditions for study to take place in Manning's understanding of the word.

Garp Sessions, for instance, follows a certain methodology. This methodology is by no means fixed, merely goal-oriented or celebratory of itself. It is just a way of doing things, which works in the specific set of conditions it operates from and is in constant transformation. It creates an encounter for different practices, agencies whose agentic capacities vary and distinct ways of being to come together, to rethink what is at stake in art and pedagogies as well as what knowledge can be. It is never given in its ultimate form but always moving towards a future version, in the process of searching for new modes of existence.

It is important to mention several projects already working around self-organised learning from different parts of the world that operate by similar approaches. For example, The Forest Curriculum is a research and learning platform that resists anthropocentric thinking towards an ecosophical mode of thinking that is rooted in the cosmologies of zomia, the forested belt that connects South and Southeast Asia.[268] Proposing "a nomadic and para(sitic) institutionality," The

[268] The Forest Curriculum Introduction. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ElzlNG_7Ahj-FDo3CeQIIO57XNqLD3Jb/view.

Forest Curriculum operate through attentivity to the matter through addressing multiple historical, political and pedagogical entanglements.[269] Second, WHW Akademija, based in Zagreb, Croatia, is "an independent, tuition-free interdisciplinary study program for emerging artists" founded in 2018 by the curatorial collective What, How and for Whom, which was formed in 1999 by Ivet Ćurlin, Ana Dević, Nataša Ilić, and Sabina Sabolović and Dejan Kršićby.[270] Over the course of several months, the programme brings together practitioners through workshops, seminars, intensives, exhibitions and performances that are usually open to the public. Finally, initiated by Noor Abed and Lara Khaldi in 2019, School of Intrusions (SOI) is an experimental educational platform in Palestine that encourages collaboration by bringing together independent practices of mutual learning. It attempts to intervene in private and public spaces through education and discussion communities.

Garp Sessions, as a 'self-disorganised' project, is thought in conversation with these other projects that strive to provide ways of learning outside traditional institutional models. Together with and encouraged by the increasing presence of such distinct practices of learning across the world, I argue we are in our unique ways forming desire lines that run parallel or across each other. Since 2021, we have been a part of Reset! Network, a European network of independent cultural and media organisations which is built to document independent structures across Europe (whilst extending the borders of Europe by involving countries like Turkey). The focus is on creating connections between the members of the network and advocating for the necessity of independent organisations in the arts.[271] It has been an enriching experience to get to know other

[269] Ibid.
[270] Whw Akademija. https://akademija.whw.hr/about.
[271] Reset! network. https://reset-network.eu/

worldmaking attempts, exploring our similarities, shared struggles and concerns as well as our conflicting limitations and that which makes each of us unique. It has been a great opportunity to learn from others and confront how things can be done differently. Operating from the isolated and under-resourced ecosystem of Turkey, it has encouraged us to connect with others who are striving to build alternative networks despite their own struggles, to feel less lonely and to create support structures in a sector that engineers competition for the same scarce resources, positions and acknowledgements. During a panel that I attended with two other Reset! network members in Guadalajara in December 2023, one of us referred to such alternative structures as 'teenagers of the art world' seeking to constantly imagine alternative worlds. I find this identification with adolescence full of potential as adolescence is a transitional stage during which one experiences a lot of growth and revelations but also challenges and resistance. It is a not yet. One is not anymore just a child but also has not reached a more rigid "adultness." It is a phase of experimentation, figuring things out, picking and dropping them while, first, familiarising with and then following one's desires. It is still open to change quickly, irregularly and remain disorganised. Therefore, this analogy resonated with my understanding of creating new desires lines through the collective models that I am presenting in this project.

The previous examples share in the ethos that Garp Sessions operates from. However, I also argue that Garp Sessions is distinct from these curatorial learning programmes because its centres the encounter itself which is not always thought of as the key activity of the curatorial. Rather, exhibitions and organised event become a site for encounters to take place. It is a form of an event from which encounters arise. Garp Sessions operates through the idea that the encounters taking place in a specific place at a specific time is already a form in itself that does

not need the institutional or formal setting. Garp Sessions focuses on building relationships with multiple others and directing attention to other ways of being in the absence of a strictly organised structure or set of clear expectations. It does not arise from a set curriculum but rather every year the structure and the routines are created in the moment by the group according to its needs. There are no pre-organised lectures or events except for the encounter itself but the group slowly builds its own programme depending on what the collective body finds relevant, which in turn informs an initial set of questions which we gather around.

How can the body be positioned in the centre of these models? I argue that practice is about the orientation which one gives to something, in my case, to the encounter. Orientation means accepting a position that is in relation to other positionalities and which one moves from there. In this project, I begin from my situated perspective and material body, working in relation with other bodies through various embodied practices and a certain attentivity to how they inform the curatorial. Embodied practices invite us to shift the attention to the material body and learn from its internal processes, information, and intuition. It provides a different way of knowing, containing an ecosystem of beings who know differently. Through being attentive to the ways it interacts with and responds to the environment or the encounter, one can begin to learn from the material body. My research thus situates the body as a source of knowledge, calling for an attentivity to existing knowledges that exist within one's material body. It also raises the question of how to activate and share these collaborative knowledges as well as learn from them.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the worldmaking potential of modelling. Modelling gestures to future projections and always possesses some speculative aspect, often operating on an

imaginative scale. It is always projective because it implies that there is something that is withheld and not fully explored or expressed. Its speculative aspect comes from the fact that there is something in it which exceeds capture, to us Massumi's terms. Thus, I suggest it is crucial to invent models that create room for and cherish this speculative nature of a practice and world that is to come.

3.5. Garp Sessions: A Model based on Encounters

Garp Sessions is a yearly summer programme that follows a theme or concept that is decided by the two facilitators of that year, and which revolves around reading, researching, cooking, and eating as collective activities. It functions as a digesting mechanism or structure that aims to collectively digest texts, artworks, and food. The seeds of Garp Sessions were first planted with my collaborator, artist Ayşe Idil Idil, in March 2019 during a weekend trip to the fishing village of Babakale in Canakkale. Idil studied photography and sculpture at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and we met through BAHAR, the Istanbul offsite project for the Sharjah Biennial 13. I was the assistant curator and she joined the team a couple of weeks prior to the opening of the exhibition as a production assistant. We then collaborated for her first solo show, *An absent door, always open*, that took place in 2017 at poşe, an artist-run art space in Istanbul. I wrote a text titled "From Deniz to Ayşe*"* which along with another text by Danny Floyd were shown in the exhibition as "borrowed works." Idil's practice has long dealt with notions of sharing, borrowing, stealing, and owning. This was our first collaboration which ignited our shared interest in further exploring what it means to think and produce with others.

Being in Babakale (which literally means “father’s castle”) for the first time was a magical experience. The village, which has approximately 400 residents, is in a very isolated location, sited on the most western piece of land that is connected to Asia - as a certificate that can be obtained from the chief of the village proves. Across from Mytilini island, one side of the village is one of the few spots in Turkey where you can see the horizon without any visible piece of land obstructing the view in front. Spending the weekend there, we had long conversations around the potential definitions and connotations of collaboration, as well as how to create alternative spaces of contemplation and gathering for artists and thinkers. We believed it was significant to physically move and go somewhere for encounters to happen. We both agreed on the necessity of the curatorial adapting to the conditions and dynamics of the society it takes place in.

We decided to start Garp Sessions in Babakale, outside of a cultural centre and in a so-called periphery, as we felt the need for spaces that were less production-oriented, with less of a focus on final products. This was driven by a pressing need to meet people outside of the highly institutionalised and coded spaces and contexts of art in Turkey. At the time, there was also a sudden desire for research and educational programmes in museums and other institutions across Turkey, such as Arter’s Learning Programme, SAHA Studio and The Istanbul Biennial Production and Research Programme initiated by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts. Nonetheless, these catered towards a group of well-known artists already exhibiting internationally, with ambitious production expectations considering the resources they were allocated and with a lot of institutional control over the content they could work on.

As an alternative to these modes of work, we wanted to form our own communities and address our own needs as cultural workers operating under the careering and oppressive systems of Turkey. In that sense, our work was a reaction to existing structures, and we prioritised building a new structure that was open to transformation as our needs, urgencies, and the conditions we were responding to would change. Therefore, Garp Sessions has from the beginning been improvised and experimental in nature whilst still directed towards producing an alternative setting, structure and way of meeting one another. The loose structure of the programme was conceived as a digesting mechanism, resembling the workings of the gut. Readings, practices and food are collectively digested over the course of ten days; everyone brings their own contexts, conditions, practices, thoughts, bodies and ways of living which can be deemed the input that is worked through in various ways and comes to produce an immaterial output. The output or what leaves the programme can be broadly considered as further encounters, collaborations, memories, products but also debris, or as new ways of relating to knowledge, learning and life.

Garp Sessions starts from the assumption that giving a fixed definition to knowledge prevents us from being attentive to other ways of being in the world and from creating alternatives to assumed definitions of knowledge. Through Garp Sessions, we experiment with coming together with many others in different ways, investigating how bodily experiences and intuition can also be considered part of the knowledges we build together in the intimate setting.

Each year, the facilitators are invited by us to lead the programme, which follows an intuitive curatorial process that doesn't work for certain specifications but rather looks for those who need such space or time and who would benefit from the process. The facilitators then decide on a

theme and invite the participants: people whom they would like to think with, live with, get to know better or learn from. In that sense, it is a rhizomatic community that is not limited to our own curatorial outlooks as the founders of Garp Sessions, instead giving space to the perspectives and positioning of its facilitators. This choice of a selection process raises the question of exclusivity, of who gets to become part of this community and who is otherwise excluded. Here, we acknowledge the presence of a curatorial process which is based on selecting and leaving out, though we nonetheless try to remain diverse in the process. We approach both people whose practices we are relatively familiar with and are intrigued by but also people who operate in fields other than ours (i.e. dancers, performers or dramaturgs) and therefore whose practices we are not as knowledgeable about. We try to be mindful of the balance between facilitators from Turkey (or who are already familiar with the context of Turkey) and those based in other countries (and potentially have never been exposed to the Turkish context). We are transparent in terms of our intuitive process of contacting a number of facilitators who we feel might appreciate and benefit from the programme and who we felt could build a structure for that iteration together. We also try to avoid duplicating the existing value systems of the art world which we are criticising. For instance, we encourage the selection of participants not based on CVs, qualifications or accomplishments but give visibility to younger and less established artists and marginalised individuals. We pair them with artists and thinkers from other parts of the world and who are at different stages of their careers and who have varied skill sets and expertise.

The programme is largely informed by a certain locality and therefore its structure, practices and urgencies are very much determined by the setting or the place itself. The local specificities of

this fishing village, so much dependent on the sea, its isolated location, the weather, the flora and fauna, the local produce and what we consume comes to shape the encounters that take place there. Therefore, my focus is on situated embodied experience of the space, which turns to the many encounters with other beings including other-than-humans that takes place there. Another major question I try to explore through Garp Sessions is how we might build a long-term relation with a space that evolves, transforms and changes each time we visit, whilst we still seek to maintain a certain structure or methodology that it is never fixed but remains open to transforming through different people, bodies, questions, desires, needs and metabolisms.

Even though the programme is not necessarily about Babakale, each year our concept somehow deals with the local context and stakeholders of the village. For example, Garp Sessions 2022, titled "Between Neighbours, Strangers, and the Bedpost" was facilitated by David Horvitz and Gizem Karakas, and explicitly dealt with the dynamic between the programme and its participants and the local community. The title, inspired by a Turkish saying which refers to gossiping, was an invitation to think about this relationship in terms of the hospitality and friendliness of neighbours as well as the tension and scepticism of strangers.[272] The group has made a special effort to extend relations to an intentional community, to play games with them and open up their collective thinking process to neighbours in the village through joint exercises. We have hosted workshops with children living in the village (including a make-up session led by Ela, a participant's five-year-old daughter), collective acts of gift exchange, performative walks and many other daily encounters. Throughout the years, being shaped by the theme and the interests of participants, our relationship with some of the local residents have deepened

[272] Garp Sessions. http://www.garpsessions.com/index.php/past/garp-sessions-2022/

despite social and linguistic barriers. Many past participants have carried these relationships beyond the programme, chatting online through Google Translate with Mr. Amazing, for instance, a local farmer who contributed immensely to the 2023 programme, sharing his knowledge of endemic plants, leaves and recipes. In the fall of 2023, one of the past participants consulted with Mr. Amazing after a mushroom foraging workshop, ensuring that the mushrooms they had collected were safe to eat. These local knowledges have saved us in foreign contexts on countless occasions. Our encounters with the local community and the tools we learned from continue to have an impact on our lives and practices beyond the given setting and time frame of Babakale.

We try to not be participants who observe the locality from the outside. We make use of the produce the village offers, breathe the air there, experience daily encounters with its inhabitants and incorporate ways of moving that the space requires: inevitably becoming with the locality. Therefore, the setting is an important agentic factor in the creation of encounters. There are rituals and practises intrinsic to the village that have determined how its daily activities take place, where tensions might arise amongst the inhabitants of the village and which of our own habits would form over the ten days we lived there. Some mundane activities from daily life had immense impact on the ecosystems there. It would also worsen issues with the plumbing infrastructure, resulting in toilets being clogged. Additionally, electricity blackouts would be caused by the growing number of people who came to the village over the summer. All of these caused interruptions to the organisation of our daily lives in the village. However, through disorganising, they shaped the structure of the days we spent there and the encounters we had.

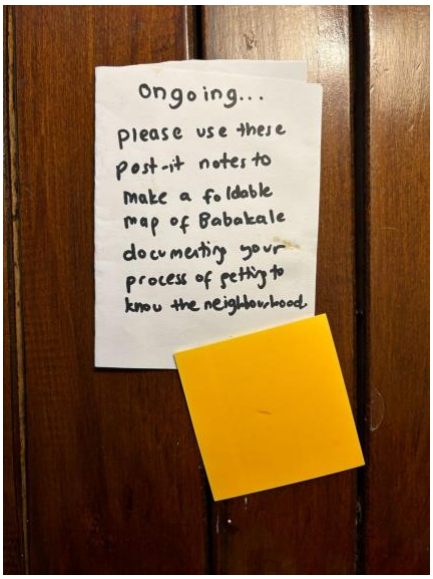
I'm curious to understand how by remaining unfixed and open to transformation, we can build a long-term relation with the materiality of a space that evolves and transforms, and which we find changed each time we return there.

There is a dirt road downhill that takes you to the sea from the house. It is a rather slippery one with a few stones and bumps, and not much to hold onto in case you slip. My body feels different walking down that path to the sea every year, even every morning. Some mornings I feel confident, taking larger steps and easily reaching the flat part of the road; on others, I'm preoccupied with thoughts or more concerned with taking photos to document the day. My feet used to enjoy the massage provided by the uneven stones, but years later I am deterred from going to the sea because my hips are getting heavier and I'm afraid of falling and hurting my back. The main reason for me to go down to the sea was to swim, and the removal of the wooden dock that I would dive into the sea from is a good enough excuse for not taking the walk regularly anymore. Being in a given space, the body learns and finds it difficult to unlearn at times. Every year I return, I know I will have to redefine my relationship to that slippery dirt road.

Imagination, through Garp Sessions, is framed as a collaborative and relational act; the programme merely sets the conditions for imagining different socialities and coming together differently. It is intriguing that conversations which have taken place across different years of the programme with diverse groups of participants seem somehow already entangled with one another. I argue that this is because the setting and the conditions through which these different

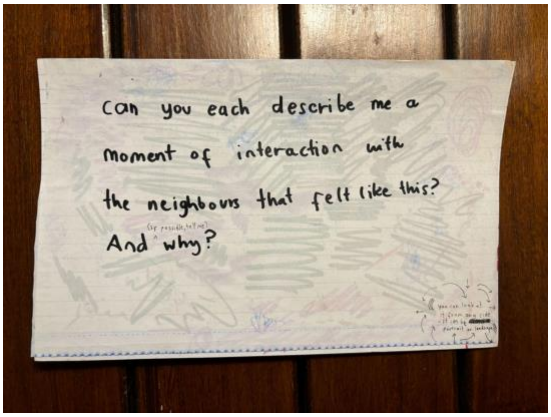
encounters unfolded were highly informative and shaped these encounters. This marks, therefore, a call to listen to our immediate surroundings and the many other-than-human agents that contribute to our encounters. The group places attention on the material body and the interactions of bodies with their environments through exercises such as tracing the rocky landscape which was introduced by Ayşe Idil Idil as part of her 'teaching session,' a methodology we tried in the first year of the programme but not pursued by the following groups. Idil brought the participants down to the beach, handed charcoal and large sheets of paper, which they placed on their selected rocks and traced their surfaces. This exercise which lasted for a couple of hours under the sun, was an attempt to connect with the landscape from a much closer focus and in a repetitive, laborious way. It required to be attentive to the textures and protruding lines which deepened our relationship to the rocky figures we are used to seeing from the house sitting above them. In the next years, facilitators have introduced exercises borrowed from the Theatre of the Oppressed and Pauline Oliveros' deep listening. We have had workshops such as collective poetry writing, healing trauma through henna, body improvisation, locking eyes, breathing techniques, body percussion, Kungfu, the Impossible Translation Workshop; and games such as "32 Questions to Fall in Love" or "Light as a Feather." These exercises, often initiated through personal or collective needs, allowed us to meet each other as bodies by tuning into our bodies and the environment we were immersed in. It was important to move away from the table and engage with materials through critical thinking but actually engage with our material bodies and observe how we sense, feel and move through space. Paying attention to our bodies and meeting each other's as bodies as well were additional elements of our creative thinking processes. It also introduced playfulness into the encounters and created an opening to be vulnerable and intertwined with each other, in terms of what we consumed together and who or what we were

intra-acting with. These embodied exercises were paired with engagements with artworks, by artists such as Camille Henrot and Pipilotti Rist, or with readings of theory, including texts by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Elizabeth Grosz, Alexis Shotwell and Bruno Latour to name a few.

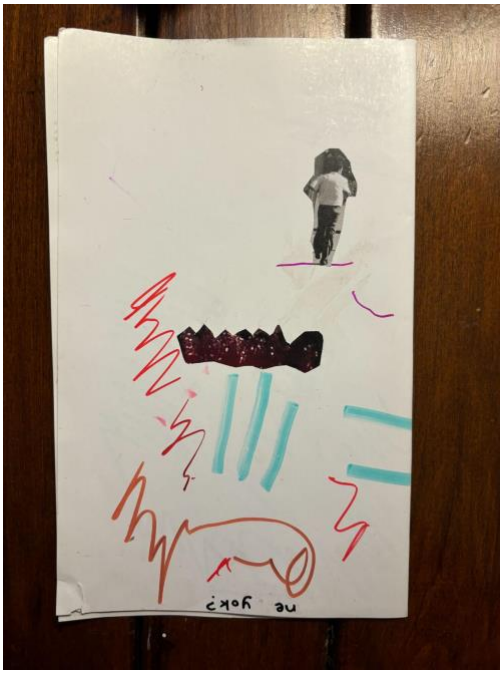


An interesting moment in the programme's approach to bodies of various kinds occurred in 2022, when were joined by a "neither present nor absent participant" who could not physically join the group in Babakale. Instead, we encountered each other through letters. This physical absence (due to personal conditions) necessitated exploring alternative ways to be present within the rhythm of the programme without sharing the conditions and metabolic processes that the group was encountering. It failed to do so on many occasions, but it also introduced another plane of thinking around the nature of present and absent bodies in the encounter. It touched upon an interesting point regarding collaboration, compelling us to realise how we are always encountering and working with absent presences (ghosts, past experiences, memories, ancestors) in our lives. The letters written by Ayşe in London come from a different time and reach us in Babakale having travelled across a continent and multiple cities and villages in Turkey. What does this mean in terms of disorganising as well as in relation to the metabolic processes of the

group? Absent presences are significant parts of our encounters. Receiving Ayşe's words, already out of date, we somehow encountered the past. As such, the past can be returned out of time, feeding into the metabolic processes of the group. It is hard not to think of this in relation to trauma and how memories compose us. Therefore, the marks of our pasts as well as our ancestral heritage are always very much present in how we encounter the other, albeit indirectly or subtly.



As for the letters, although they required more organisation practically, they also contributed to disorganising or disrupting the initial flow of the programme and our understanding of the encounter in our given context. I argue that absence can be an important element for disorganisation; we constantly disorganise that which is not there by existing through the marks and residue of what once was there or is somewhere else, in some other time. Finally, disorganisation is often driven by the absence of certain needs or desires, and therefore, absence can be understood as integral to what creates the need to disorganise in the first place. Therefore, this curatorial decision to involve a ghost-like participant opened my understanding of an encounter to different temporalities, spaces and phenomenologies.



3.6. Collective Digestion as a Central Element of Garp Sessions

From the glass backdoor of the house, we can see the village square. When dust starts flying around and we hear some distant honks, we realise that the trucks bringing us the food that will sustain us for our time here are arriving in the village. It is just past noon. Back in the kitchen, one can hear some hesitant and shy conversations bubbling up. We tend to be timid at first, calculating how much space we can take up in the house and in our conversations. This silent negotiation process will soon be moved toward a much louder one; with the inviting shouts of the sellers in the market, our coins, Splitwise notifications, excited exclamations at the pinkness of tomatoes, the astonished gasps of participants from Turkey - the prices are shockingly low compared to the bigger cities. With our artsy tote bags under our arms, we are headed to the market. By that time, we are usually starting to get hungry. The fridge is empty. And it is always difficult to figure out how many watermelons would be enough for a group of six people for ten

days. The sellers are curious to see who the new people are this year. They are eager to save the best peaches for them. Ayşe and I give a hug to our favourite vegetable seller, the older woman whose name we never learned but who always gives us the best cucumbers. "You're back" she says. "Yes, we are and we have a group of hungry people for you." Walking back home, the conversations flow more easily. We hear a participant talking about an eggplant recipe from their grandmother. Another one is talking about their lactose intolerance. Another compares the weird-looking round fruit to a similar one which is unique to their country. In those 40 minutes of cheese tasting, encountering the locals and negotiating numbers, the ice has been broken.

The 2023 programme, titled "Decomposing, Decaying, Fermenting: The Mediterranean" and facilitated by Evy Jokhova and Felixe Tazi-Kani, was a moment in the project when food, its value, politics and distribution, concerning how we socialise and are socialised through food, became our subject and research matter. Pickling was handled as more than a metaphor but a collective practice. The group studied and experimented with several food preservation techniques. Some of the exercises that composed the research and practice of the group were: daily foraging sessions where we searched for rock sunfire, capers, leaves and sea urchins, along with ceramics workshops, making a garum, a visit to the Temple of Apollo, cooking and preserving different vegetables every day (and then presenting this preserved food as part of our open studio for the closing event). We discussed how other species also preserve their food. For instance, it was extremely bizarre to learn that crocodiles store dead bodies at the bottom of the lake, only eating them when it starts to decompose. Overall, the programme was a true act of collaboration with other-than-human actors to research the myriad socialities and stories of and around food.

One key and perhaps, sole fixed element of the programme is our commitment to collective cooking and eating. The first morning after the group's arrival in the village is always food market day; this is the only time that the group can get produce and supplies for the entire duration of our stay as the village does not have any big shops, supermarkets, bakeries, or butchers. We have fixed the day of arrival as such so that the shopping activity can act as an ice breaker and point of negotiation within the group. I would like to stress that this kind of negotiation is significant for collaboration as it renders visible the inherent differences between each person. I would also like to add that my understanding of negotiation is not necessarily about making compromises or seeing things either one way or the other, but instead concerns coming together and creating new ways of being through inherent difference. Similarly, cooking together, which can be quite difficult for some people as it requires delegation, the giving and receiving of orders and synchronising work, which implies a threshold between work and play, necessity and pleasure. A collective effort is executed and roles are given, adopted or assumed.

The dinners where participants cook and eat together are moments when we reconvene and reflect on the day's activities, elaborating on things that we discussed earlier in the sessions. They provide an informal setting for building relationships and meeting one another as digesting bodies. Sharing food and eating together has always been, one of our main collective activities and a crucial form of socialising on a daily basis. We wanted to explore how eating together, consuming one another, and digesting together might affect our intellectual processes as a community.

The word 'company' comes from the Latin root 'cum' and 'panis' which means 'with bread' or 'sharing bread.' Sharing bread is a very intimate way of being in each other's company as well as

a ritual that creates a feeling of ‘communitas’ - of being a community, of being together. There is something cannibalistic about eating and cooking together for one another. The other is consumed as well as nurtured in this embodied activity where digestive threads blend, interact, confront and intermingle. When the enzyme in one’s saliva breaks down the starch, blood runs down to the stomach, bodily fluids stick to the corners of plates, forks clash and digestion is kicked off, formality begins to fade and pleasure becomes a collective process. When eating together, one is also devouring the other; their company, their presence and participation, their enjoyment from this shared meal and their commitment to this particular encounter. One also consumes part of the other, in that it is the encounter that is being digested together.

Cooking and eating with others require losing control. The different stages require and render visible various posthuman collaborations, with plants, vegetables, animals, bacteria, ecosystems, food cultures, pesticides, flora and fauna, others’ bodily fluids, air and little bugs that are swallowed and countless interactions that take place within the body of the eater. All of this corresponds to our raw intuitive need for feeling full, satisfying hunger, taking pleasure in smells and tastes, the ritual of sitting down, of existing in each other’s company and recognising the body of the other. These aspects make the experience of eating together a learning experience that differs from those of traditional and formal learning spaces.

Garp Sessions was invited to the 8th Canakkale Biennial - created around a theme of “How do we work together?” - to be one of the five initiatives that made up the curatorial team. For this, we hosted a dinner in Babakale that brought together all the invited initiatives. Setting forth from our own model and understanding of working together, we thought it would be most true to our structure and ethos to gather around a table. We believed there was little dialogue and

connections between the invited initiatives, namely Are Projects, AVTO, Ka Atolye and Monitor, and we wanted to create further encounters and bonds between them. Our programming prioritised getting to know the other initiatives, their models, struggles and motivations. It was organised as an online gathering which was then followed by a dinner prepared with chef and researcher Irem Aksu. It was centred in Babakale, at the table and in the kitchen that is the heart (and stomach) of our programme. The menu conceived for this event focused on produce that comes in pods, such as beans, walnuts and fish eggs. The white sheet that covered the table included questions which we passed onto the initiatives, asking them about themselves, the art ecosystem and our collective dreams. The points of our conversation were then opened to a larger public audience through a talk we gave in Canakkale, which revolved around routines and rituals. Through this event, we also found the space to further address the connections between food and art, especially in contemporary art practice and research.

Cooking practices, performative dinners and projects that question the political, social and cultural infrastructures of farming, cultivating, cooking and eating have long made their way into the sphere of contemporary art.[273] For Garp Sessions, cooking and eating together is also an undeniable component of our experiences of cohabitating. Sharing a house for the duration of the programme, the group works through the intimacy of using a kitchen, a fridge and local produce together. In 2022, we created a cookbook which brought together 20 recipes contributed by participants of the programme from 2019-2021. All the recipes in the book are inspired by and

[273] For instance, Cooking Sections which was established by Daniel Fernández Pascual and Alon Schwabe in 2013 examines the systems that organise the world through food using site-responsive installation, performance and video. Also, Cooking Pot, a project launched in September 2013 at CCA Glasgow explores how food brings people together and what it revealed about the culture of a certain community or locality, in this case mainly in Scotland. Through cooking classes, workshops, talks and screenings, it aimed to increase general awareness of food.

produced from local produce and refer to the local context. Therefore, they mostly utilise cheese, vegetables, easy to store grains and of course, fish and seafood.

Being a rather closed process, it was important for us to open up Garp Sessions to others by sharing stories of our food and digestive narratives in the form of recipes. Most of these recipes have strong storytelling elements and they present an interesting glimpse into the life of the village, our collective experiences in the kitchen, decision-making processes, daily routines and encounters within the programme. For instance, artist Can Yildirim's eggs recipe which he made multiple times for himself and another participant, serving as a post-workout breakfast meal for them, opens with an invitation to find two eggs that remind one of "brotherly love, care and radical vulnerability."[274] Cemil Hamzaoglu's recipe also included the radio stations he liked to listen to while he was cooking, whilst Larissa Araz's garlic bread recipe makes references to the local bread that goes stale very quickly and so requires interpretation in other ways.[275] They are fragmented narratives that carry the ethos of the programme without trying to represent it in its totality, as it would fail to do so anyway. It is an effort at documenting and remembering our collective digestive processes through references to daily life in the village, routines, habits, learnings and rituals.

I argue that what Garp Sessions offers as a curatorial model is to determine a thematic and invite people to gather around that thematic in a particular space for a given amount of time and create conditions for further encounters to take place in this setting. In that sense, it is very much like the practice of pickling which largely relies on temporality. Through fermentation, pickling

[274] Edited by Garp Sessions. *Garp Sessions Cookbook*, 2022.
[275] Ibid.

allows for things to exist, be preserved and strive to exist across a different time scale. It gives things time to unfold rather than creating gatherings intended to produce immediate outcomes. It allows room for constantly evolving processes to come across each other and allows connections to occur which results in a rhizomatic learning experience. It is a way of introducing something else into a pre-existing constellation rather than producing something new altogether.

Madeleine Collie, in "Towards a Metabolic Attention or More Than a Metaphor" asks: "Can we disorganise our relationship to capitalism through our metabolisms?" Collie particularly explores ways of possibly escaping capitalist modes of food production and consumption.[276] Her notion of disorganising metabolisms works to disrupt "the economies that we encounter through our guts."[277] Metabolism, as a methodology, links the insides of bodies with the outside world through food and flows of matter, presenting a way to imagine the visible and invisible within larger systems of life. It foregrounds "metabolic attention."[278]

Through Garp Sessions, we aim to highlight complexities around the consumption of food that we serve at the table, at the centre of the house as well as the programme. This is intended to imagine a broader collective metabolism that considers our individual bodies, the local context and produce, other local actors, flora and fauna as well as the multiple companions that accompany our process in Babakale. More than what is consumed, the aspect of attention is activated through how we consume.

[276] Collie, Madeleine. "Towards a Metabolic Attention or More Than a Metaphor." UnMagazine 15.2, November 2021. https://unprojects.org.au/article/towards-a-metabolic-attention-or-more-than-a-metaphor/
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.

To conclude, collective digestion and metabolic attention guides how we move through our daily lives in Babakale. Through the cheesecake recipe we have perfected while baking for multiple birthdays celebrated at the table, feeding the stray animals what is left of our own food and therefore creating a connection between our digestive threads, addressing cultural variations around breastfeeding and catering to the distinct diets of babies, or foraging and situating through tasting the foraged food as research, we shift our attentions in Babakale to our guts collectively. It is interesting to think of the various layers of feeding each other happening throughout our engagement with the village. We are fed by the local produce, the local flora and fauna whilst we're feeding each other, the village cats, mothers are feeding their babies, and we engage in cooking with and for another. Cultural differences, sensitivities, metabolic processes and structures we have built for ourselves are all at play in these processes that define our time in the village together.

3.7. Alternative Guidelines

During the pilot iteration of Garp Sessions in the summer of 2019, titled "Alternative Guidelines" and facilitated by Ayşe Idil Idil and I, a daily journaling exercise led me to reflect on the agencies involved in this encounter. The encounter could not be deemed as merely one between the six human participants present for the programme. Rather, the space was much more crowded, filled with many human and other-than-human others, organic and inorganic materials and the materiality of the setting that hosted us; the house, the garden, the cemetery right next to the house, the dirt path down to the sea, the sea itself, the village and its neighbouring villages. I remember feeling overwhelmed by and overly sensitive to the crowd. The visible and invisible others included stray cats who would steal the food we had collectively prepared, thus making

dinners on the patio a challenge in the first days of the programme. A neighbour's dog named Hibiki, after the famous Japanese whiskey brand, became an important audience for our afternoon reading sessions. Lichens covered the bricks on the side of the dirt path we took down to the sea where sea urchins would then sting us, urging us to seek help from herbal remedies. We also encountered plankton on a raft one evening. There were cockroaches who were too frightening for some of us and therefore, we decided, had to be killed in the end. Within these encounters, human and nonhuman cells were growing will in our bodies. Being seduced by the fresh fish and seafood that is available in the village from which it is being transported across the country, most of us learned how to clean and cook calamari. We learned to grow to like the strong fish smell in the village as it is how the village maintains itself, it is around what the locals socialise. In that sense, it is as much about friendship and camaraderie it is about work and labour. We encountered sheep in our daily hikes and made friends with a sheep keeper who became a regular in our dinner tables. We learned what kind of a friend he is first through his care for his sheep and then his care towards us and to sharing our food. These are just some scattered examples from this first iteration of Garp Sessions which, I claim, proved that our relationships were much more complex and crowded; always informed by multiple others in uncontrollable and unexpected ways.

Not all these encounters with others are based on harmony and undisturbed coexistence, which also retain relations of power, violence and an inability to collaborate. For instance, in the summer of 2023, a workshop on making dolma[279] with foraged leaves took an unexpected turn when we learned that two of the endemic leaves we had gathered were in fact poisonous, leading

[279] A traditional Turkish dish that is usually vine leaves stuffed with spiced rice and meat.

to violent vomiting and inducing a fear of poisoning in me. Our material bodies, adjusting (or not being able to adjust) to the specificities of this location, consuming the local produce and engaging with the species unique to the area had a great impact on how we would come to encounter and learn from each other. Our encounter was informed by these and many other agents as much as it was by the six participants. Garp Sessions, in this way, was a multispecies collaboration from the onset.

Garp Sessions has been actively working to question what types of communities we (starting as the founding 'we' of the programme, then expanding into the 'we' of a community that has developed over the years and now, possibly including the reader, too) want to build and how to sustain them. We are also committed to thinking about the human and other-than-human companions, dependents or collaborators that fit into and foster these communities. The structure of the programme requires taking time off from our lives and routines in order to be somewhere else which considering people have dependents, fulltime jobs, responsibilities, visa constraints, financial worries and other factors that might restrict their mobility, is a strong commitment and sacrifice. Therefore, it raises the question who gets to be part of such programmes and who this model leaves out. I acknowledge the fact that it does exclude some, however, we try to be aware of this as we're inviting participants and make sure we provide support when it comes to most of these restrictions. For instance, in the 2022 programme, we have hosted a family with two children, offered babysitting help, and shared responsibilities around the kids we have had in the programme. However, this condition also brings up a question of who we live interdependently with, which then reveals that we are interdependent with the entire relational world and that this indeed offers an opportunity to think about such relations of dependence differently. Our plants

that need care when we leave them for ten days, our dog companions who require us to adjust our daily routines when we're in the village, the fish we rely on for our dietary needs and pleasures; these are all immediate agents of our interdependent relations. Yet, we can also think with the genes and internal defence systems that plants develop, the human gut bacteria that helps us cope (or fails to do so) with sudden changes in our dietary and daily habits, how food in part becomes waste which puts pressure on the local infrastructure and how endemic species respond to our companions when they visit Babakale. All these factors actively shape the encounter and form communities of knowledges that are constantly becoming within this given context and set of conditions. Here it bears asking: How do those we already live with, those that compose our immediate or chosen families, those who explicitly depend on us to survive, who rely on our care, who we flourish with and have already formed affective alliances with and are therefore dependent on, come to inform these models?

Garp Sessions works from a specific set of conditions that changes yearly. Our participants change, our needs change, the agencies that make up the setting change and with this, our questions and urgencies change. However, there are some consistent conditions which have shaped the programme's attitude and what it has become. The sun sets around the same time every day each year, the cooking is stable and the houses remain pretty much the same. Most years we also try to coincide the programme with the Perseid meteor showers, so that we can return to see a similar constellation of stars (we like to imagine at least). All these permanencies create a certain pattern or possibility for connection across the different sessions. What is produced, most of the time in the form of relationships and a shared conviviality, stems out of these specific conditions and spatiotemporal elements. And this, I argue, is a curatorial gesture; it

is already the curatorial. It opens up a discussion about what the curatorial is and situates it as an exercise of attunement.

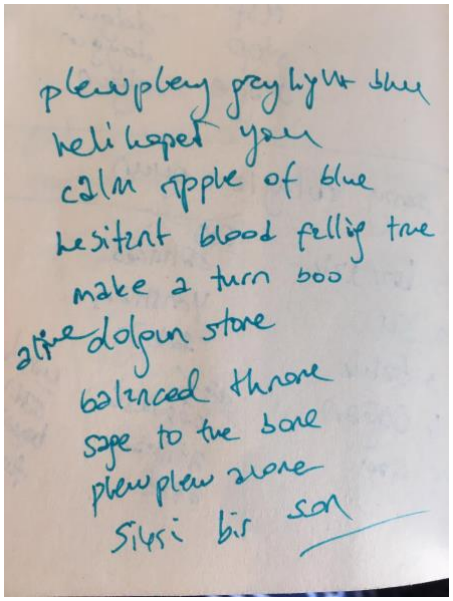
When I entered the building, the first thing I did was check the columns that carried the old worn structure. Living with the reality of an expected earthquake, I had to learn to manage my fight or flight responses and make sure I could flee. Taking the stairs up to the flat of my massage therapist who unnervingly lived in this clearly unsafe building, I realised that my body was stiffer than it was when I left my place. My body needed this. He welcomed me with a warm smile and between our brief conversation about the weather outside, feeling the output of his heater and my urgency to use the bathroom, I noticed the two men sitting at his kitchen table. I felt a sudden unease with the idea that there would be men hanging around the flat as I would be getting completely naked and laying down on the massage bed. In a few seconds, I would call out to my therapist "I'm ready!" in the most defenceless state possible. He came in and asked about the current state of my body as well any negative feelings I had been having lately. I felt angry all the time at everyone. He let me know that anger is stored in the liver, and it had a "shhhhh" sound. I thought it sounded like waves and made a joke about the meaning of my name, Deniz (the sea) and the sea being unsafe for swimming. I'm not sure if the joke landed well, but he calmly started pressing on the right side of my abdomen. Chi Nei Tsang is a Taoist [280] *massage technique that claims to unlock ingrained negative emotions in the organs of the body. It is mainly an abdominal massage that addresses the digestive system, which is our emotional regulator. He presses down on my liver, working through my intestines, letting the serotonin do its wonders.*

[280] Taoism is based on the notions of continuity between humans and nature as well as a state of constant flux and transformation in the universe. Thus, it can be located at the roots of an ecological ethics which presents a belief system beyond the human.

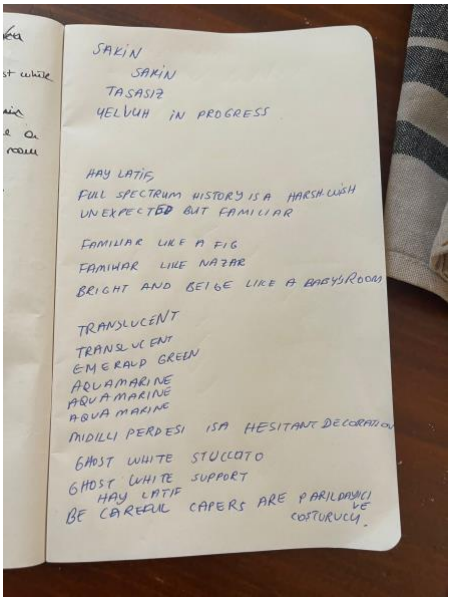
In the first year of the programme, we had planned to have sessions on the last day of the series where participants would reflect on the process and share some of the ideas they had been thinking through. They would also present a proposal for a work or project which would be developed in response to the process. Overall, this final session would serve as an opportunity for participants to re-present their research or practice and share, as the residue of our collective thinking. However, as we tried to create space for these reflections, we immediately noticed that it was too intense of a process. It was quite difficult to reflect on our experiences while still very much immersed in the space. Being attentive to our current state and needs, we dropped the reflection session from the schedule, perceiving this not as a failure but rather a finding. The reflection, we felt, would come later in time.

In the summer of 2022, one of our facilitators, Gizem Karakas, led a creative writing workshop which resulted in collectively writing poems. Exercises she put together to initiate the writing process included picking a number between 1 and 100, leaving the house, taking (picked number) steps, stopping to look around, writing the first thing one sees and repeating it as well as word association games with strangers in the village. She also asked questions such as “How is the sky feeling?” “How does the sea move?” “What does the wind look like?” and “What sounds does the cactus in front of you make?” to explore words that we can learn from multiple other-than-human actors through our sensual capabilities. This was an exercise in engaging with the materiality of the village by paying attention to what surrounded us, encountering and entering into dialogue with multiple others, strangers, collaborators in the village - both human and other-than-human. The resulting bilingual poems, collectively written sensorial responses to the

ecosystem of Babakale, were read aloud and shared with a wider audience on the last day of the programme. This can also be considered a farewell note to Babakale and its posthuman community.



Poem 1



Poem 2

3.8. The Story of the Sea Urchin Family or Learnings and Frictions

The Story of the Sea Urchin Family

Babakale does not have a smooth, easy geography. It is difficult to get there; from Canakkale, it is a two-hour drive going along rocky roads and through villages that get smaller and smaller. More animals start blocking the roads and crossing the streets. People tend to stare at you longer as they become more surprised to see someone just passing by. I always enjoyed driving and being in a car, and it's only in the past couple of years that I have started getting carsick.

Therefore, unless I'm driving, I must sit in the front seat, my window rolled down slightly, with my right index finger out the window. I had read this somewhere and it turns out to really help the brain reorient itself and soothe the nausea. Therefore, the car is also often filled with the smell of fertiliser. This difficult journey to Babakale, along with its rocky sea full of sea urchins and its strong winds, are the reasons for its lack of tourists unlike the other villages and towns not far from it. I would call it peevish. Babakale is a bit like an old grumpy man who can, in fact, become violent. He is not like most Aegean towns that are more welcoming, warm (both in terms of its climate and its people) and easy-going. This is also one of the reasons that I'm so fascinated by this place, which does not resemble any other place I have been. It feels like nowhere; it could be anywhere. The first couple of times we were there with Ayşe, I struggled to go into the sea. Having grown up in an Aegean city and used to its smoothness, I was challenged by the difficulty of reaching the sea and getting into it due to the tall sharp rocks that were covered in sea urchins. I wore sea shoes for the first time in my life. After a few tries, I grew accustomed to it and even enjoyed the slight challenge. I like things that you have to work for. Then, the reward is even more satisfying. During an afternoon swim, I was enjoying my newfound cockiness that had come with having mastered the rocks and sea urchins of Babakale, feeling overconfident that my feet were safe. My familiarity with the surroundings led me to falsely believe that a rock was much deeper below me than I had thought and I ended up grabbing a sea urchin. My feet were fine, but my hand was not. My left palm was full of sea urchin spines and I spent the rest of the evening with a hot water bottle tied to my wrist and some oils provided by the women in the village. That day I learned that I was still a stranger to this village, and that I would always remain as such. I had assumed to know it, to have mastered it, to have become its friend but here it was teaching me that I couldn't possibly. That sea urchin

taught me not to assume, not to get too comfortable and not to take myself too seriously. It was an exercise in humbleness, which brought us closer in several senses.

Despite our initial intention to escape the pressures of the art world, by the summer of 2020 and in the midst of the pandemic that forced us to stay home for months, these needs had shifted. The group was in dire need of connecting, being outdoors and exploring the local landscape. This swift change in our needs made it clear early into the programme that we needed to always adjust to the individual and collective desire lines of the group in that specific moment in time. This required the programme to remain fluid and rendered existing desire lines even further visible. It also forced us, as curators, to observe, create and foster connections between the varying desire lines of different years, programmes, participants and the other actors that informed them, human and other-than-human. With this in mind, we have been questioning how we can support our community internationally whilst still locally fostering connections with the village. We have become mindful of the local context and actors as well as how we communicate these connections and desire lines to a larger public. Our biggest effort at this was a book we published with a grant we received from SAHA Foundation in 2023. Garp Sessions: Documentation and Commissioned Works 2019-2022, brought together texts and contributions by many of the past participants of the programme as well as interviews with journalist Fisun Yalcinkaya on the programme, Gerko Egert who is the co-founder of the publisher of the book, nocturne platform, artist duo Cooking Sections and Dogan Tosun, a knifemaker from the village and Babakale, Beautification, Culture, and Solidarity Association. We perceived the book to be a documentation of the first years of the programme as well as a commissioning platform which invited past participants to produce new work in relation to their experience in Babakale or to

present their current research and practice. It was an attempt at creating further connections between the different years of the programme, our extended Garp Sessions community and including voices from the village. Printed in Turkish and English, it was an opportunity to further circulate glimpses from the programme to a larger international audience but at the same time, it enabled us to communicate the programme better to our local community in Babakale. The fact that images, stories, experiences and voices from the local context were put together with the rather closed experiences of the participants was significant for us. Understanding our motivation to do the programme in the way that we do allowed us to have more layered and interesting conversations with people who had been first witnessing and in time, actively shaping the programme through their involvement. It also compelled us to understand that for the sustainability of the programme, we can't solely depend on funding structures from the art world but that we need to create our own local network, beyond the programme, with the local actors to build a lasting community that is self-sufficient. As of 2024, we are taking steps in that direction, getting in contact with local producers, small businesses and associations in the neighbouring villages and imagining what kind of gatherings we can create together which would help gain each other visibility and support.

Belonging, as Aimee Carrillo Rowe suggests, hints at a politics of relation which is also a tool for thinking outside of institutionalised and individualised neoliberal modes of thinking. Her notion of 'differential belonging' instates "a move to shift the terms of interpellation from that of the subject to the spaces between us."[281] In doing so, it invites thinking of location as well as the relational conditions that create it. I find this kind of belonging quite fitting to describe the Garp

[281] Rowe, Aimee Carrillo. "Be Longing: Toward a Feminist Politics of Relation." *NWSA Journal*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2005, p.18. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4317124.

Sessions community. It concerns a belonging not just to community but to a certain set of desire lines, conditions, and localities as well. Communities that form in response and as a reaction to existing conditions often emerge out of necessity. They are partly improvised and most of the time experimental in nature at the beginning. In messy and disorganised structures, our urge or initial reaction is often to clean parts up or to hold onto what we can control, which may result in repeating the same operating systems or behaviours that we wanted to create an alternative to in the first place. This circles back to a question I have raised before: How does one let go of a position of authority or complete control in processes of collaboration? It is an ongoing struggle, a delicate balance between ensuring things are hold together without imposing a fixed hierarchical structure; embracing one has never been fully in control while intentionally practicing losing control. Trying to trace our collaborations or understand other ways of being and knowing comes with a certain exercise and wish to control, but it is a significant starting point to notice this, to then question, challenge and choose not to exert it. When control is let go of and a mode of gathering is disorganised, one is confronted with the fact that there are many factors which can't be predicted and that not all encounters or dynamics can be easily captured. Human actions can create other-than-human responses or there can be relationalities which can't be foreseen or controlled. Nevertheless, these relations determine how we adapt and impact the lives, habits and desire lines of many other beings we cohabitate with. As such, it also puts forward the challenges of collaboration at times especially when frictions arise.

Thinking about friction, our position within the village warrants some further attention. No matter how much time we spend in Babakale, we are *outsiders*. We arrive in the village, interact with it, consume it, contribute to it, encounter, learn and teach within it, but all of this occurs

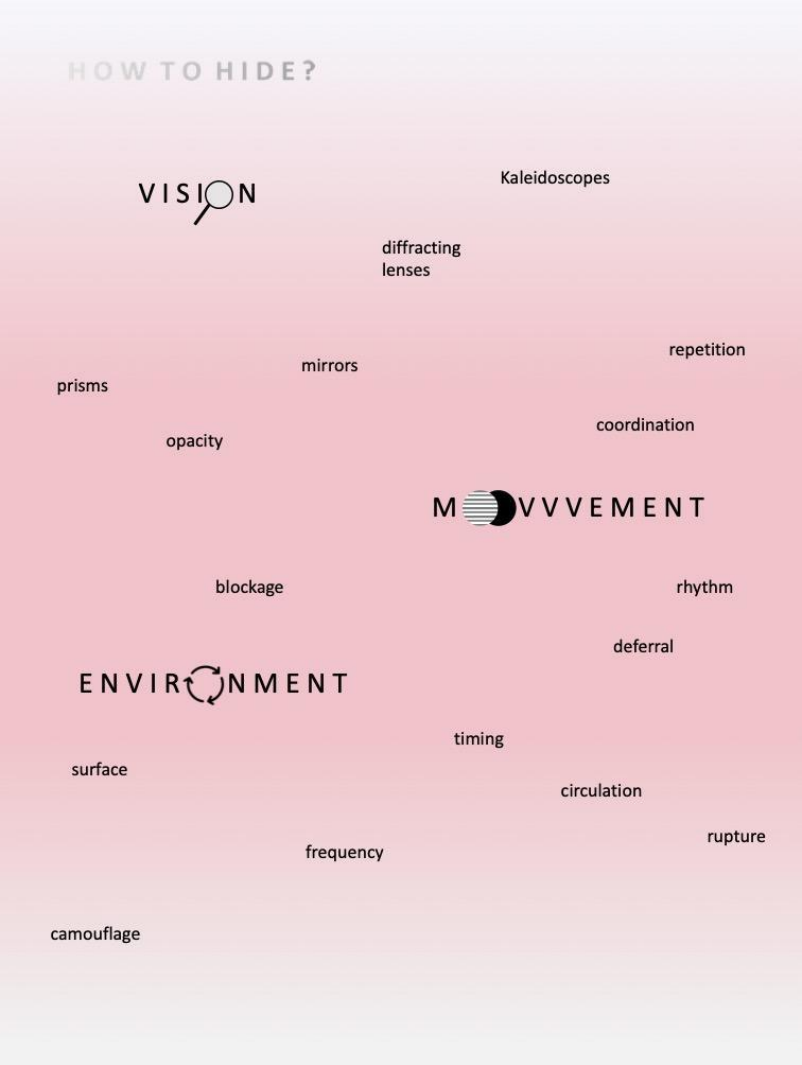
within a predetermined period of time. This position reveals a tension or negotiation that subtly takes place with the residents of the village. In the first year, as we were trying to familiarise ourselves with the social dynamics of the village, we were told a story about two brothers who used to run a bar in the village; it was one of the rare places in the village where alcohol was openly consumed. They were 'tolerated' by the local community until a summer when they were visited by a couple friends who made the mistake of showing affection in the village centre. This led to conflict between the locals and the brothers, which turned into physical violence and then silent protest, eventually driving them out of the village. This was an early warning which we appreciated in terms of understanding boundaries that needed to be respected. Another version of this came when one of our past residents tried to film some local men sitting in a cafe in the village centre and directed questions at them. The men who were approached were very bothered by this unwelcome intrusion into their private lives; they started questioning the resident in response: "Who was he?" "What was he after?" "What was he trying to get at?" Such moments of rejection and clear portrayals of annoyance were also signs that acknowledged our presence in the village. It took us a while to embrace them as informative frictions and processes of mutual negotiation across our temporary coexistence in that given space.

Friction is also very much present within the group dynamics; encounters are not always harmonious when desire lines, rhythms, needs, expectations and opinions are diverse. The kitchen and the dinner table have witnessed multiple conflicts around contemporary political positions, arts institutions and affiliations, daily schedules and personal commitments, including unexpected early departures to attend funerals, missed flights, tensions around upcoming doctors' appointments and expectations on one another for help in producing work while in

Babakale to name a few. Sometimes tension was merely due to different needs we had when encountering something foreign for the first time. It took time to feel comfortable in the presence of others. However, what shapes these encounters is hidden in the 'how' more than the 'what'. It is all about how we do these activities and with what kind of attentivities.

3.9. Experimental Pedagogies: Its Origins

Experimental Pedagogies was conceived, from the beginning, as an online research project that could potentially, at one point, be continued or presented offline. This would depend on many great uncertainties in ways that would only be figured out at later stages. Our work together almost always starts with an open-ended question and without a concise plan or structure in mind. The format in which the work is presented (whether it be a publication, an exhibition or as snippets on our website) is often dictated by our process of long conversations and sharing of materials with one another. Since we started topsoil in 2017, through various projects, we have been interested in creating caring, hospitable and open spaces for sharing, learning from and being with others.



In 2019, we produced an online zine titled “Rising Below the Surface" which was our first online project, being obliged to work virtually since we were now based across three different continents and time zones.[282] Again trying to explore the question of “How to work together?” - and this time at a great distance and from greatly varied contexts and conditions - we realised we had failed terribly to produce an answer. It seemed the only moment we came into true contact was when we realised we’d been misunderstanding each other all along. Thus, we asked each other why we only came to look at affect when frustration appeared? How else could we bring a

[282] topsoil, “Rising Below the Surface”. topsoilcollective.com, 2019. https://www.topsoilcollective.com/research/2019-tank/

bodily quality into our online encounters? With this question, we became more experimental and insistent on really allowing for a sense of intimacy, rather than leaving us cut-off in parallel worlds. Therefore, the zine became partly centred around this failure to work together and was produced as a reflection on our inability to work together with the communication channels and methodologies at hand. The introduction of the publication explained:

> "For this first issue, we had to learn how to work together when not together in one place, but scattered across the world – in Costa Rica, Turkey, Germany. Thinking together becomes a difficult task when there are oceans between us, when climate makes some sweat, some freeze, when even time holds a different meaning depending on where you are and when we feel the pressure of our environment in different ways and in different parts of our bodies. How to synchronise schedules, hormones, love lives, technology and moods? And above all, how to get rid of our stubbornness of what we believed was the right thing to do?

...

However, through the work done by particularly postcolonial thinkers in the past decades, the ideological and ambivalent political and social claims attached to this image have been interrogated. And very importantly, it has been shown, what this view of a seeming totality is also hiding. One of these hiding aspect is the situatedness of the image, which means that the view from above, the 'gaze from nowhere' came about from a particular location within a particular historical moment. As environmental theorist Elizabeth DeLoughrey shows, it is not a global image, but an American image of the globe. More precisely, the image emerged within the period of the cold war, where the US military used satellite imaging from space as means of surveillance to spy on Russia and Asia, and by that followed the idea that who occupies space will also control and manage the earth. Consequently, critics have pointed to the ways in which many kinds of visualizations of the globe are closely tied to the histories of modernity and colonialism. The point is precisely that these connections to powers and control that brought about this image are not visible within the photograph itself, which instead foregrounds a simplified imagination of a humanitarian project of universalism, of peace and brotherhood, where the unity of humans on this planet overcomes borders, conflicts and differences.

...

For me, taking time, the silence and not bringing things together immediately was not a big problem but the most difficult thing was how we were working when we were trying to communicate those very separate things.

It was a methodological challenge for me which then became very emotional. You know my reaction to the Google Doc towards the end of the process. It was a bodily reaction, the whole thing was giving me serious anxiety and physical symptoms like stomach aches.

That confusion could have been resolved much earlier.

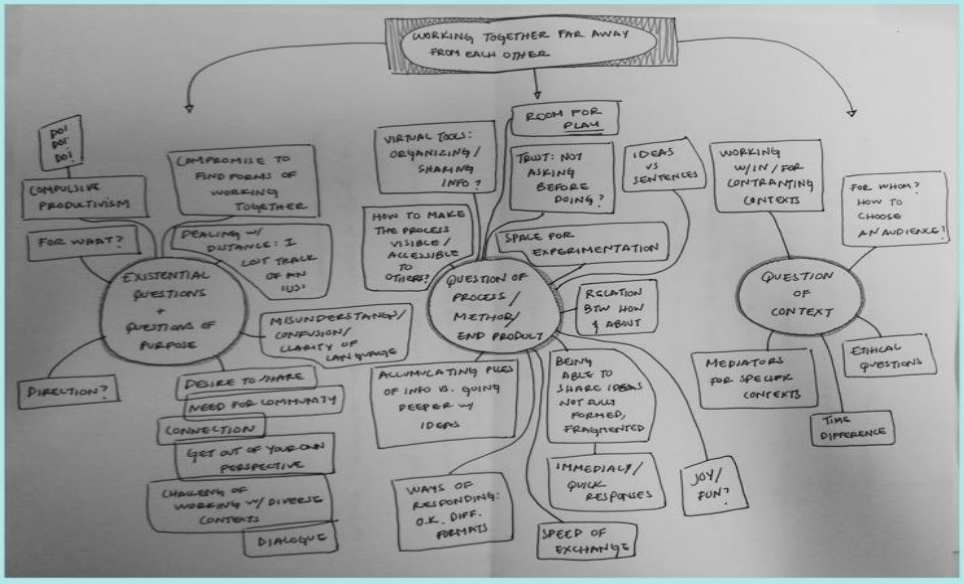
For me this is much more interesting than the research itself.

Throughout the time, my confusions were slowly fading. Well, anyways. That's it- end of my monologue.

I'm getting dressed, do you want to go?

For some reason, it feels quite detached from my personal life or what I want to share with you.

For me, there were some other problems and I was really lost because of this misunderstanding.
If it doesn't feel more personal or bodily, I get completely lost.



Therefore, when we started Experimental Pedagogies, we had assumptions about what kinds of struggles possibly awaited us; we knew we had to first and foremost come up with methodologies that worked for us, individually and as a collective. Only this time, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, our struggle was a globally shared one. However, we had a clearer idea of what it was that motivated and drove our work together. We had learnt to accept moving with our intentions rather than adhering to a concrete departure point or desired arrival. This meant we embraced a mode of working that is radically structureless and situates friendship as our central methodology.

3.10. The Paradox of a Lack of Structure in Structures

Working through the lack of a fixed structure in different ways and at different scales allows me to further explore modes of disorganisation and organising. It prevents me from capturing the lack of a structure as a method in itself. Working from a relationship which points to a different understanding of a method is an important strategy for my practice and writing. It is a way of working that might not be productive within a different set of conditions and contexts, but it allows me to centre embodied, personal and affective experiences.

The paradoxical nature of disorganising through organising and creating new structures that are structureless is exactly what enables me to work non-dualistically. When something is a structure itself yet without a solid structure, this compels me to refuse to settle on the one side or the other and continue to disorganise. Therefore, although it might be counterintuitive, this paradox of organising disorganisation is exactly what allows processes of disorganisation to unfold as it does.

This paradoxical understanding of structure by no means celebrates a lack of rigour or seriousness. Disorganising through this paradox, comes closer to being open and welcoming change to processes of thinking, producing and being with as a result of radical hanging out as it was suggested by ruangrupa in their controversial documenta 15.[283] It also does not imply carelessness but rather the opposite; building such a friendship and working methodology can be demanding and involves a huge amount of careful labour. Working from a relationship requires

[283] According to the Glossary for lumbing, Nongkrong which is an Indonesian term that means "hanging out together, is an important element of whole documenta 15. It means unforced togetherness and socializing, spending time together.

us to constantly share the needs and struggles that we encounter in experimenting with practices of teaching and learning that haven't been framed as such before. We regularly find ourselves in need of checking-in, comprehending and communicating together our confusions, stakes and drives. We prioritise caring for one another and for the collective, which involves empathy, sympathy, trust, and support. We do this by placing equal weight on our wellbeing, our personal, professional, and bodily growth and our friendships as theoretical and curatorial work. Even more so, we situate the fragile and messy aspects of our relationship as the drive of our collective work.

Experimental Pedagogies is a way of creating work from a relationship. Experimental Pedagogies draws on various methods and exercises such as regular quick inputs and impulses, meditation and deep listening exercises, dream sessions, glossaries, workshops with invited collaborators around ways of learning and intensives that may produce processual maps and infographics. I will expand on these individual methods in the next chapter, but it is an open-ended process that looks at aspects of intimacy, friendship, trust, conflict and negotiation in learning together. By looking at the implicit, often invisible strategies and methodologies of care inherent in friendships, we want to explore how they can be transformed into active and affective learning spaces with others.

With friendship a condition for our work and it often being thought of as outside the sphere of production, we argue that working through friendship may resist such neoliberal modes of work. Then, we wonder what can the curatorial be without production or relevance? Working in such a manner presents a conflicting situation; we feel the need for justification from others that the

work that we do is valid and simultaneously seek justification from the inside that what we are practising or working from friendship. These two parts are essential, and they need one another. Thoroughly investigating what they do to each other, we explore how this can be turned into an intentional methodology and used in life and practice.

Our friendship relied on our shared interests, concerns and alliances as much as our trust in each other's thinking, support, criticality and curatorial outlook. However, practising friendship is highly processual work. And it indeed provides us with a set of tools or guidelines for entering into relationships across other areas of our lives; it gives us confidence, grounds us, motivates us and impacts how we introduce friendship as a way to learn from the other in our larger communities. The work we put in together is focussed on sustaining a relationship. We have come to recognise that whenever we present our work, it is relatable for many, often something that people find lacking in their 'professional' lives and it raises an aspect of friendships that they want to bring into their working relationships.

Finally, the lack of a structure at times makes it difficult to share our work with an audience. This realisation leads to another question: Do we need to share our work with others at all? Our answer to this question often changes (especially regarding its presentation); however, we still wish to build more relationships, extend a sense of friendship into our other networks and share the tools that have served us. We often ask ourselves: What is our question or struggle beyond this relationship? We also feel the pressures of how one must communicate in the art world, and it is not always easy to stick to the ethos that we've been working on for so many years. Yet, moments of minor revelation allow us to perceive our work as emancipatory. Forming our desire

lines that are only based on our wish to learn from each other, in doing the work of friendship, is a radical stance. And it is this lack of structure that allows us to be attentive, open, constantly becoming and disorganised.

In 2022, we were part of School of Commons, which is an initiative dedicated to the study of self-organised knowledge practices and decentralising knowledge, which is based at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). We shared aspects of our working processes, techniques to map our methodologies and created visual representations and documentations to show how we organise thoughts, memories, processes and research. With our project at School of Commons, our intention was to research how other collectives that were part of the cohort were developing ways of working together. We were interested in how they understood the role of friendship in their collective projects and what practices of intimacy they engaged in. And how would we, as topsoil, encounter the collectives through our own understanding of caring encounters? It was an opportunity to learn from others, but we also realised that it forced a certain structure on our work and therefore slightly changed how we think and work together. Slipping into a structure for a given period of time and for a particular effect does not negate the disorganised nature of our practice, however. This particular structure and the emphasis on presenting our work in a certain way moved us away from our motivations which were rooted in relationships. It provided a challenging experience that was followed by a need to reconsider what kind of structures we could flourish in.

3.11. Conclusion

The chapter presents various approaches to the curatorial to demonstrate how the disorganised, attentive and posthuman curatorial models this dissertation presents are informed by but remain different to these definitions of the curatorial. Setting off from the problem of the non-curatable and an overly anthropocentric approach in mainstream curating, which fails to notice other-than-human agentic capacities, my understanding of the curatorial, to echo Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, is about inventing techniques of relation.[284] These techniques compose my curatorial models and disorganise the curatorial. The chapter has presented some of the methodologies and strategies adopted in this endeavour. Through various stories, the chapter has also created points of access into the specific conditions and motivations that inform the two projects I present, namely, Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies by topsoil. It has given particular attention to the model and methodologies of Garp Sessions and will more explicitly concentrate on the tools and approach of Experimental Pedagogies.

The next chapter will place a stronger emphasis on topsoil and Experimental Pedagogies and further situate friendship as a curatorial methodology which aims to challenge and reconfigure the priorities of a disorganised curatorial. It will address notions of care and conviviality as friendship and lay out how it might allow possibilities for being together differently with multiple others and create new knowledges that go beyond our human narratives.

[284]Manning, Erin and Massumi, Brian. "3 Ecologies Project: An Interview with Erin Manning and Brian Massumi." Conducted by Moran, Stacey and Nocek, Adam. https://techniquesjournal.com/3ecologies-project/.

CHAPTER 4: Learning from the Others and Friendship as a Methodology

> "Something now leaves me; something goes from me to meet that figure who is coming and assures me that I know them before I see who it is. How curiously one is changed by the addition, even at a distance, of a friend. As they approach, I become not myself but myself mixed with somebody."
>
> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

4.1. Introduction

Chapter four frames collective learning as a crucial aspect of the curatorial and unpacks notions that are at the core of learning from the others such as conviviality, care and friendship. Through addressing the theoretical framework of Luce Irigaray, an influential thinker for approaching questions of difference and love, I point out the limitations of her thought and present a posthuman rethinking of her philosophy. The chapter acknowledges opacity against clarity as well as the impossibility of being fully known and fully knowing the other. Through Irigaray's texts, the chapter introduces the possibility of thinking through multiplicity. Her thinking calls us to understand relationality from the perspective of difference, particularly sexual difference, but as a mode of thinking that acknowledges and celebrates different ways of being, nonetheless. It helps me to conceptualise empathy as understanding radically different organisms in their own terms through remaining different. Doing so creates potential for imagining, making, building new worlds and new ways of being in the world that take inspiration from those that already exist but are at times unrecognised.

The chapter also tackles the curatorial practice of topsoil and how it has raised questions on what learning can be, beginning from our own methodology of learning from one another while working in a relationship. Through Erin Manning's practice with SenseLab and 3Ecologies and

her proposal of the ‘minor gesture,’ it suggests undoing ways of knowing to arrive at more inclusive forms of producing knowledges collectively.

My understanding of friendship, for the purposes of this thesis, is friendship as care, as conviviality and as a condition that informs our thinking, being and working. It is what allows us to learn from our inherent difference, care for and support each other’s flourishing. Looking at readings of friendship as a condition for work, as a thematic concern and through some recent examples from the art world, this chapter proposes friendship-work as the working method for Experimental Pedagogies. It adopts the format of our meetings as topsoil and opens with an invitation into meditation exercises, then moves on to impulses, examples and theories, and finally attempts to map all of these thoughts. In that sense, I would like to mimic our methodology of working with friends and try to practise friendship in writing. I attempt to do that by replicating our time spent working, learning and practising friendship as topsoil as well as continuing with the vignettes and using a rather colloquial tone in parts of the chapter. A sense of care and openness echoes in this chosen style of writing which is a desire for making friends through reading about and through friendship.

I would like to further explain the reasoning behind my use of the word friendship instead of ‘kinship’ which Donna Haraway explores thoroughly in her writings. Although my approach to the notion of friendship goes beyond the anthropocentric understanding of friendship between humans but rather presents an opening to multiple others, implying making friends with ideas and desires, I chose to stick to the word friendship in this thesis. This is partly because of the ways in which we are connected with other than human beings which is explored and

accentuated through the notion of kinship is further delved into in my exploration of notions such as entanglement, co-existence and co-evolving processes. However, friendship, especially in relation to our practice as topsoil, strikes me as a more fitting terminology as my understanding of friendship is friendship as practice, which means it involves labor and commitment. Therefore, I employ the term friendship-work to describe our ongoing practice and I will later delve into this term in the upcoming pages.

In conclusion, the chapter does not claim that the practices are able to fully engage with the other-than-human worlds but is an effort at presenting tools for making friends, opening up to multiplicities and allowing desire to flourish.

4.2. Meditation: A grounding start

I would like to start the chapter with a grounding exercise because this is how we, as topsoil, have been encountering each other throughout Experimental Pedagogies in our online meetings. In the lack of a physical meeting space, we have been meeting in an imaginary space to attune to our bodies. We have been trying to find ways to create imaginary meeting spaces, to ground ourselves and to hold that space, incorporating our various bodily experiences despite our bodies not being physically gathered. How the air circulated in our respective rooms, how our bodies felt and what our relative time difference implied for our routines became participants in our encounters that produced bodily and atmospheric affects. As such, an organic and intuitive routine has emerged. With the goal of meeting one another as distant yet participating bodies, we decided to dedicate the first ten minutes of our meetings to setting up another space of

imagination. Each time, a new participant would lead the others through that mental place. This marks a combination of a place where we can all arrive at, a meditation exercise and a set of memory techniques. In the past, we have met in our dream schools, on the streets of Rotterdam, at previous art institutions we have studied or worked in; we met in the skies outside of our homes, we met in Babakale, and we met within parts of our material bodies. This grounding exercise I wish to take you through is based on a previous meditation led by Amelie Wedel, which is guided by my additions and interpretations.

First, you might want to bring your body into a position that feels comfortable. If you're sitting on a chair, maybe just lean back, drop your shoulders or put your arms on your lap, palms facing the ceiling. If you'd like to, you can first read the instructions and then close your eyes. Take a deep breath and begin to listen to the sounds in the space around you. Just observe what is there. Then, imagine that you are slowly stretching out your ears, so that you might hear sounds and noises that are further away, coming from the outside, from the streets; or they might be sounds which you imagine are in your neighbourhood or wherever you are right now. Even if it seems silent, try to pay attention to your wider environment through your ears and your imagination for a moment. Now, slowly come back to the space where you are situated, imagine that you are scaling backwards from your wider environment to the space you find yourself in and then arrive at your body. Take a deep breath. And for a moment pay attention to the sensations in your whole body. Maybe you can feel the whole at once or maybe just parts. It's all fine. You are surrounded by friends, whatever this might mean to you. What do you hear? How does your body feel here? Do you feel cared for? Do you feel loved? Where in your body do these feelings of love manifest themselves? What do you see? Is there conflict? Do you feel safe? Are you able to express yourself, your emotions, your thoughts? Would you like to stay here for longer? How

do you feel leaving this space? What have you learned in this space or in this encounter? Take a deep breath. Arrive back in the space of the here and now. Wiggle your toes and fingers and open your eyes whenever you are ready.

Back in 2023, when I was guiding a meditation during one of our topsoil Zoom meetings, I brought Experimental Pedagogies and Garp Sessions together. I asked Amelie and Sofia to imagine a learning space. I had done the same and had realised that my learning space, in fact, did exist and it was the kitchen we used in Babakale. The learning space, or dream school as we then referred to it, is either by a beach or by a park. There are at least two rooms; a communal kitchen with several drinks and snacks options always available. Hydration is key. In this space, there are never more than ten people, so we don't need huge rooms. Here we keep our books, plants, recipes, pickles, art works, games and other materials which we deem relevant to our learning. It can be thought of as an archive; when we leave the space, what remains of us is there. It's our collective residue. I don't like the traditional classroom seating arrangement, but I don't feel comfortable sitting in a circle either. I am aware that other bodies might be comfortable in such settings or might have completely different needs. For instance, they might need order to feel comfortable enough to participate. I do not claim to know what will create ease in a group, but it is an important question we need to be asking ourselves if we want to foster friendships. Needs and requirements might and will clash and these are the questions we need to be asking when attempting to bring together differences. Therefore, how we come to be seated is very random. Some lie down, some sit on the floor, some sit on chairs in rows or squeeze in couches. We are encouraged to move very often. No discussion or session takes longer than an hour and a half. We can invite a lot of other people to this space. There is no

room for excessive formality and for performative seriousness. Then, we wrote a letter from a future to our current selves, imagining a dream school. The idea was to look back from that future and revisit or speculate on all the struggles, difficulties, and revelations we had along the way.

I wrote: "For most of our process of working on Experimental Pedagogies, we were mainly communicating digitally because we had no other options. First time we entertained the idea of turning our 'school' into a physical space, we were clueless as to where it would take place. Which country would it be in? Would we all be in the same city? The school never had a physical location and after such a long time in the absence of bodies or physicality, it was difficult to imagine it having one. It took us a while to understand that our school (it is interesting and funny that we called it that back then) didn't have to be located in a single space. The school could be dispersed. The school could be a model which gets adopted to any location as well as the conditions of that physical location. This was a revelation for us. Then, we realised we needed to tell people about it. It was another struggle to narrate our story of the school. It took us months to have proper sentences but that feeling we experienced collectively when we told our story to someone for the first time and saw that it resonated with them was magical. We looked at other models extensively; now looking back maybe we didn't have to spend so much time and energy scrutinising what others did. There were endless possibilities. Yet, looking at all these other structures, we still opted for lack of a structure. Did we underestimate our need for structure and coherency? Or was it exactly what we needed and what worked for us back then? Finally, we had no idea we needed to relearn almost everything. And this relearning has been our journey somehow and still is today."

4.3. On Difference, Friction and Mediation Between the Self and the Other

French philosopher Luce Irigaray's feminist approach is based on a notion of 'impossible difference.' According to her, because we don't know how to look at the other as a subject, we do not really know love.[285] She believes love is only possible if the two are "always disunited, distanced, always a "two" irreducible to one."[286] She emphasises the significance of perception, which is a possibility for remaining two, for dialogue and cultivation of thought as opposed to sensation which reduces the two to one. To remain (at least) two, to be fragmental, crowded and without clear edges or separations requires that one lets go of the fantasy of being whole, of uniting, of fusion. Irigaray defends an internality and a never-to-be-knownness in everyone.[287] That which is invisible and that which cannot be fully known is what creates room for intersubjectivity and for learning from the other. However, desiring to fully understand and know the other (and believe it is possible to do so), we often prioritise the knowable or the visible, in turn foregoing the potential of the invisible, the silent or the indiscernible. For Irigaray, this is worrying because dialogue also requires an acknowledgement of silence and seeing of the invisible, in which one can't be thought of without the other.[288] Silence does not have to mean passivity or oppression; whereas speech is a sign of power, silence can be sometimes say more by disrupting and activating dialogue. Irigaray describes her experiences when still and silent in nature as remaining herself while being with her and playing at the limits of her self or her

[285] Irigaray, Luce. *To Be Two*. New York: Routledge, 2001. p.42
[286] Ibid., p. 43.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid.

body.[289]

Irigaray explores the ways in which dialogue can emerge through difference as she imagines a culture of mediation between subjects. This ideal of mediation depends upon the idea that one does not disappear in or appropriate the other but rather perceives the other as someone he or she does not know yet and will never fully know. The possibilities of the other are never to be fully comprehended. The constantly becoming other, therefore, is to stay unknown. She stresses that two can never possibly be one but can *touch upon* what is between the two, being not fixed or predetermined but in constant flux.[290] She understands bodies as mediators as well as tools that allow us to acknowledge our entanglements with a world beyond the so-called self and beyond the human. The body, according to her thinking, is not a tool for capitalistic desires but possesses its own desire lines in all their complexities.

In *Sharing the World*, Irigaray refers to the encounter or the event as a crossroads.[291] It is an opening to the other which creates a between-us that must be cared for. The encounter points to a relationality that requires a constant questioning and potential shifting of the boundaries where the self ends and the other starts. Irigaray perceives recognising the otherness of the other as "a gift" rather than something that needs to be overcome, which also allows for unity to exist.[292] This is important for this project as it sets the ground for approaching friendship not as a meeting

[289] Irigaray, Luce and Marder, Michael. *Through Vegetal Being: Two Philosophical Perspectives*. Columbia University Press, 2016.
[290] Irigaray, Luce. *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
[291] Irigaray, Luce. *Sharing the World*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2008.
[292] Irigaray, Luce. *Sharing the World*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2008. p.50.

of similarities or an affective bond based on sameness but as a site of friction respectful of differences.

Irigaray looks closely at the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, especially his writings on invisibility. She describes the wish to see the invisible as "A look forever organized, or disorganized, around an impossibility of seeing [un impossible a voir]."[293] She is intrigued by the invisible since with the impossibility of fully knowing the other comes the paradox of seeing in the other what the other does not see in themselves. Here, seeing is indeed privileged over other senses but Irigaray adds that the tactile, like the visible, does "not obey the same laws or rhythms of the flesh."[294] The touch, then, is also forever organised and disorganised around the impossibility of touching. Irigaray also points to the significance of conflict, dysfunction or resistance in order for something to become immediately noticed. The other's existence is most noticeable when we are confronted with its resistance.[295] I propose that this can be a lens to think through times of crisis and rupture. Crisis, malfunction, accident, sickness, breakdown; these can be thought of as situations when the presence of the invisible is felt most strongly. The Covid 19 pandemic and the swift entry of the term droplet into our vocabularies can be a simple yet contemporary example of that. The in-between space between bodies that we had not been attentive towards suddenly became extremely acknowledged and visible due to the rapid contagiousness of the virus that put our lives in danger. Conflict and friction are crucial components of collaborative curatorial practice and integral to all our relations with the other-than-human. Acknowledging this point is important for not romanticising the notion of

[293] Irigaray, Luce. "The Invisible of the Flesh: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, "The Intertwining--The Chiasm"." Cornell University Press, 1993.p.153
[294] Ibid,.p.162.
[295] Ibid., p.85.

collaboration as a smooth process of harmony, instead addressing tension as an equally informative aspect of our relationships.

Irigaray and Michael Marder's *Through Vegetal Being*, containing writings that they addressed to one another, looks at the vegetal world in order to reflect on what it means to be human. It explores the relational world and different ways of being and thinking. It is, Irigaray suggests, all about a dialogue in difference.[296] Instead of using the word 'difference 'which I find fails to acknowledge the complexity of entanglement, I address a constantly co-evolving process that unfolds through relations. This is because differences are not fixed, just as beings and boundaries are not fixed. Therefore, I contemplate our entangled but situated experiences of being in the world as constantly co-evolving processes that don't imply fixed selves. In contrast, difference can place too much emphasis on lacks which is the basis for desiring the other. However, I argue that desire lines are entangled and difference is never static. Rather, difference is constantly being shaped by multiple desire lines running in parallel, crossing one another or perhaps meeting briefly to diverge again. Therefore, the concept of difference alone falls short explain these complicated layers of our co-existence and becoming. It is somehow limited and too static as a term. What I'm concerned with is not so much about differences but about being attentive to how those differences are transformed, manifested, and transforming over phases of becoming. This kind of attentivity creates intimacy, possibility for love and goes beyond the mere concept of difference.

[296] Ibid., p.101.

Irigaray's writings are particularly interesting for my project due to her attentivity to different ways of being that shape our lived experience. She is forming relations with beings that are inherently different from her and strives to create new knowledges through looking, breathing, walking, and being in nature differently. She finds solace and space for meditation in observing the vegetal world, being among plants and trees. Irigaray is astonished by the multiple forms that, for instance, a tree can take as well as how it changes while remaining itself. It is alive as long as it is "rooted in oneself, but also being vulnerable."[297] Difference is what separates them but also what allows them to share. I don't think there is a clear separation between a self and the other as, demonstrated by the diverse ecosystem of the microbiome, the self is already a collaboration with the other. Therefore, I rather focus on how as relational beings we constantly enter into unfolding processes of encountering, becoming and transforming.

Even though I suggest Irigaray's thoughts on difference have blind spots, tending to be centred around the heteronormative human experience, it also opens to further exploration of the in-between of bodies in relation. Irigaray perceives desire as "wanting to enter into relation with the other" and "a question of establishing, keeping and cultivating the between-us."[298] Here, Irigaray's notion of desire might be understood as merely a human desire. However, I argue that desire here for Irigaray also implies a wish to understand our complex relations with a world beyond the human. It could even be extended onto questioning what would an other-than-human desire would look like? Can we notice such desires in our bodies when we're sickened by a bacterial infection or when bit by a mosquito? The same desire can give way to being attentive to other desire lines that has long gone unnoticed. Therefore, although initially her remark seems

[297] Ibid., p.42.
[298] Irigaray, Luce. *In the Beginning, She Was*. New York, London, Continuum, 2012. p.18.

anthropocentric, Irigaray calls attention to the material composition of the vegetal world in which she is immersed. Her later writings, especially *Through Vegetal Being* where she expands her focus from a rather limited notion of difference to one that is opening up to entanglements, other-than-human possibilities and going beyond the human-centred perspective.

It is important to bring in Donna Haraway here as a thinker who addresses complex relationships with other-than-human companions and dynamics of otherness from a rather different lens. Haraway, in her prominent text "The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness" places dog-human relationships at the centre of her thinking in order to suggest an ethics and politics of significant otherness. Through dogs' stories, she contemplates cohabitation, coevolution, and embodied cross-species sociality.[299] Her notion of companion species rests on contingent foundations and the co-constitutive relationships she describes with dogs, which is a relational practice. The relationship of care that centres otherness at every scale, changes both the dog and the human who, in fact, share microbiomes over evolutionary history. Haraway argues that we can't know the other but we should always ask who or what is emerging in our relationships.[300] It is through being attentive to difference at any scale that an ethics of relationality emerges. Haraway's thinking, compels me to consider how to recognize emergent forms of noticing, layered complexity at various scales; the local and the global.

The notion of difference, despite its limitations, opens room for respecting the otherness of the other, for acknowledging and encouraging multiple desire lines and for following these

[299] Haraway, Donna J. *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness.* Chicago: University Press Marketing, 2003. p.4.
[300] Ibid., p.50.

inherently different desire lines. Furthermore, for me, the notion of difference implies an interspecies or scalar difference which brings me to the gap between what is curatable and the non-curatable. I have elaborated on Irigaray's thinking because her notion of difference allows me to undo how I know otherness and the insufficiency of her thinking reveals the problems I'm finding in existing definitions of difference which separates one from the other. Developing my understanding of difference allows me to better understand and learn conviviality and friendship through a set of dynamic relationships.

4.4 Learning as Negotiation of Differences

We are gathered around a table, but it is not the one that is at the heart of the kitchen and around which we circulate like black flies always in a rush to stick to one's skin. We are sitting at a large table, made of two different-sized tables placed together, in front of the two houses, staring at the endless blackness that is the sea and the sky in the midst of the Perseid showers. Bats are flying around as if desperately looking for something they don't seem able to locate, confusing us and distracting us from watching the showers. It is funny how bats can be mistaken for shooting stars (disappointment). To our surprise, there are few shooting stars to be seen, but instead a convoy of Elon Musk's Starlinks. It's the third night in a row we're seeing it and therefore it has partly lost its incredibility. And frankly, we are more captivated by what's on our plate. On a large rectangular plate lies a large variety of leaves: grape, lemon, pepper and fig to name a few. Dolma is a traditional Turkish dish usually made with vine leaves. Rice cooked with spices is wrapped in the leaves to form thin cigarette shapes, and the thinner the better. Its preparation is very laboursome and therefore it is a dish saved for loved ones, a special

occasion that presents a way of caring deeply for the eater. Sitting under the stars, which are not shooting, we get our leaves and begin rolling dolmas; for ourselves and for others. As we devour the tastes of the differing types of leaves, some more unfamiliar than others, a question pops up: Are we certain that all of these leaves that we have foraged are edible? I can feel a familiar anxiety creep in. My fingertips and my toes go slightly numb. I start sweating. Brief online research proves that indeed one or two of the leaves are not edible. The stray cat who has become part of our group despite a very territorial dog and his nervousness around so many humans, is the first one to notice my angst. It takes one to know one. Meanwhile, Engin, our dog companion, the territorial one, is tied to a metal leash. Not because he needs to be constrained and definitely not because he would rather be. It is not because we want to control him either. He is restrained because we feel the need to protect him from people in the village who are not accustomed to having a dog around. And Engin has proven to be a danger to their chickens which, it turns out, the men of the village are quite territorial about. Having received threats regarding guns they own, reservations they can dismiss and dogs they have encountered that are no longer, we decide Engin is better off on the leash and next to us. If he had access to this piece of information, he would probably not protest this restraint we have placed on him. Meanwhile, on the table, some people are relaxed, not taking this situation as seriously (we boiled the leaves for too long, we each had one or two leaves, we can have some vodka to kill the poison) whilst some others immediately go silent. I have been talking about my stomach, the most vulnerable spot in my body. My brain is not helping either. I run to the bathroom and kneel down.

Difference requires constant negotiation which is a way of being together through difference and within constantly co-evolving processes. The previous chapters have demonstrated that the

material body is a site of collaboration which also implies it is site of negotiation. It negotiates the intra-actions of human and other-than-human agencies, various states, impacts and intrusions. Therefore, negotiation is a prerequisite for relationality.

The word 'negotiate' comes from the Latin *negotiatus* which literally means the carrying out of business.[301] It also links to *neg* (not) and *otium* (leisure), therefore 'not leisure.' Acknowledging that the word 'leisure' is a troublesome one, I question how negotiation is integral to the two curatorial models I put forward. Both practices are not "business" in the conventional sense (as they aren't aimed at either production or profit) but are closer to doing things that one does in their free time, namely, leisure. However, in artistic and curatorial practices that put different disciplines in dialogue and present alternative ways to work, can business and leisure be clearly separated from one another? In either case, trust is crucial for negotiation and negotiation doesn't necessarily have to mean making compromises but rather respecting the otherness of the other and developing new ways to be with them. Therefore, this requires creating desire lines rather than trying to fit into existing paths. It requires resisting making compromises that diminish the potential of the tension of these co-evolving processes of being.

Conflict is a paramount element of these relations. Anna Tsing calls 'friction' the awkward, unequal, unstable and creative qualities of interconnection across difference.[302] Encounters that include dialogue across difference always contain conflict and an inability to fully comprehend the other in their nature. In such encounters, different layers and intensities of interaction and relationality take place. Moving between scales, perspectives, and relationalities, frustrations

[301] Merriam-Webster. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/negotiate.
[302]Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, N.J.:Princeton University Press, 2005.

may arise and conflict is expected since there are not smooth transitions but moments where things don't come together coherently or harmoniously. Additionally, this kind of friction can potentially enrich the encounter itself, creating further contact zones, room for speculative thinking, and possibilities for learning from other ways of being in the world. What is important here is whether the encounter is able to hold up moments of friction because friction can be made rather generative. Tension can be understood as the connective tissue between things, which are ongoing but only perceived in a given moment of friction or even rupture. The ways in which friction plays out vary: friction between the agents comprising the encounter, friction with an outside agent or friction with oneself. Some of these moments of friction might serve to remind us that we are not constitutive of a unity and that we are not one but, in fact, multiple. Our multiplicities work – temporarily – toward the construction of an encounter from their situated positions. Being vulnerable in face of a shared threat, issue or concern can become a force that disrupts and connects through friction.

Fire Walk, an artist book by Ülgen Semerci and Burcu Yağcıoğlu which I edited, was published in 2022 with the support of Aşina, a book publication and distribution project supported by the European Union. The book was centred around the phenomenon of fire and aimed to provide multiple entry points into the topic: ecological, mythological, contemporary, personal and psychological. We felt that the topic was rather timely amidst the wildfires happening across, for instance, Australia, California and Southern European countries. A historical and cultural phenomenon, fire needs to be thought of within the contemporary moment and in the face of climate crisis as a manifestation that renders it visible. Rather than dwelling in an apocalyptic

attitude, my approach to it is following Haraway, acknowledging the extent and seriousness of this manifestation but not fall into despair and remain present to stay with the trouble.[303] In that sense, we considered fire a fruitful symbol for thinking of many intensities that define our zeitgeist: urgency, emergency, contagion, agency, and crisis. And we aimed to respond to such devastating phenomena to understand its complexities. The book consisted of five main pieces: Burcu Yağcıoğlu's "Fire Dive" that approached fire as a historical, mythological and ecological notion; Ülgen Semerci's essay based on an interview with an artist who experienced their artworks burning down; an interview with Ismail Bekar on fire ecologies and the recent wildfires in Turkey; a poem on fire as a metaphor for the age of anxiety, and finally; an ending note which outlined a future installation to come by Burcu and Ülgen.

The poem which I contributed, titled "In Case of Fire (or self-worth and living in the age of anxiety)" was an attempt to write from a state of anxiety. It was not intended as a text about anxiety in relation to fire but a piece of writing which enacted some of my personal and shared anxieties. It is difficult to think of the times we are living through without feeling the weight of despair which we all experience when confronted with the damage that we, as humans, have caused to the environment, resulting in an inability to imagine any future. As I am proposing ways to reimagine worlds and create alternative ways of life that are more sensitive to our bodies

[303] Haraway, Donna J. Staying with the Trouble. Duke University Press, 2016.

and surroundings, this anxiety marks an emotional state that we can't overlook but instead have to live through and work through. Through this poem, which was the first time I attempted to write poetry, I was allowed write not about but through these feelings and bodily sensations associated with fire. It presented an opportunity to work through friction and the fear, anxiety, guilt and despair that we, as humans, collectively experience amidst the climate crisis. It also demonstrated how our desires to preserve, handle and care for others can be at odds with our actions; it is important consider the desires of other living beings as well (for instance, a particular type of pine tree in Turkey that experienced widespread fires in the summer of 2022). This attention renders visible how we can negotiate multiple desire lines, especially in times of crisis.

Tsing, in *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection,* explores the specificities of a local set of conditions in order to examine their embeddedness in the broader connotation of global connections.[304] She investigates how cultural forms that are seemingly shaped in the very local (her main example of the Indonesian rainforest) respond to the effects of global encounters and needs.[305] It is this interconnection between the global connections and local struggles that creates "cultural diversity" and create frictions.[306] Her approach enables me to understand that anything can be a location that demands to be looked into deeper, regarding its relation to the "global" or the "universal" as "universals and particulars come together to create the forms of capitalism

[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid. p.3.
[306] Ibid.

with which we live."[307] It is through practical encounters that we come into contact with the global and respond to it. To follow Tsing's definitions, these frictions are unpredictable as they are connected to much larger, complex sets of conditions and behaviours and unequal as their impact is not felt in the same ways across localities. However, despite (or perhaps because of) these differences, they make the entangled interconnections between the local and the global. For instance, the main source of income for residents of Babakale is fishing. The fishing village provides fish and different kinds of seafood to not only regional stores but the largest corporations in the country. Therefore, most of the fishing and labour that is happening in the village is not for local needs but to be distributed across the country, and therefore driven by market trends. However, mostly due to rising sea temperatures and toxicity, there are big concerns regarding the disappearing types of fish and tightening regulations around fishing seasons. This is a local issue as much as a result of complex global encounters. It is a local manifestation of global networks of power, market, and ecological destruction. In the book we published in 2022, *Garp Sessions: Documentation and Commissioned Works 2019-2022*, we included an interview with Cooking Sections regarding their practice and their recent exhibition at SALT titled "CLIMAVORE: Seasons Made Drift.[308]" When we inquired them about the rising sea temperature levels in the Black Sea and fish farming, they told about their research into the impact of industrial fish farming on genetic changes of the fish body as well as fish migration patterns that are largely effected by ecological changes. These conversations and lived experiences allow us to see that the local financial and social impact of fishing restrictions are very much interconnected with ecological changes, global markets and industrialisation. The friction lies at such intersection points.

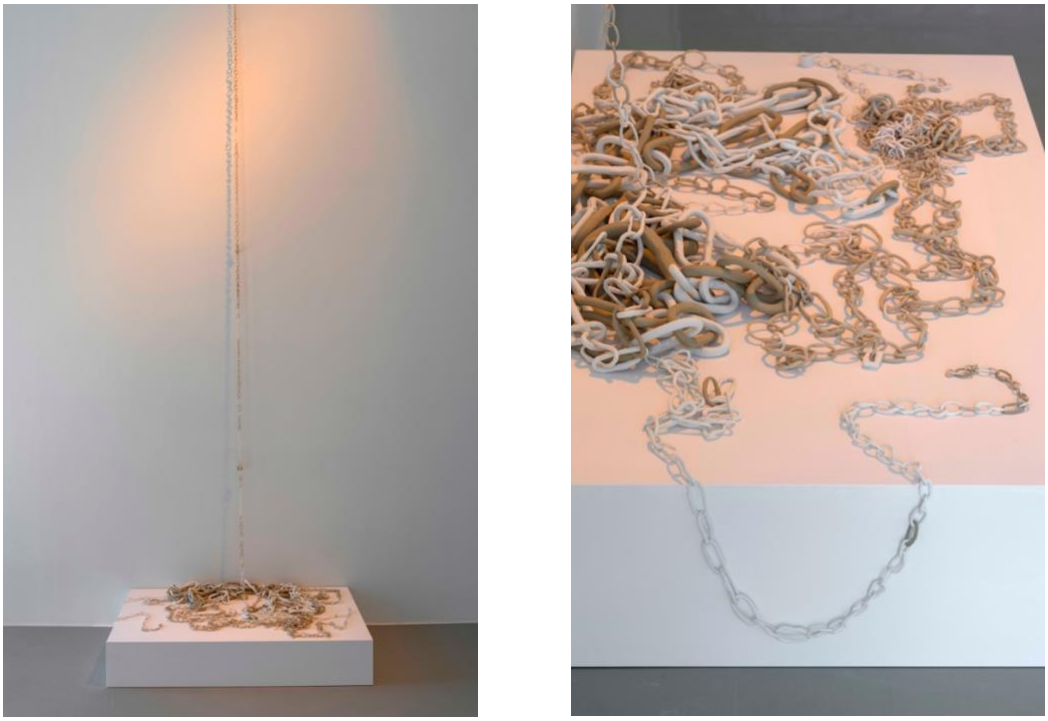
[307] Ibid. p.4.
[308] Garp Sessions: Documentation and Commissioned Works 2019-2022. nocturne platform, 2022.

When we apply this thinking to understand the conflictual power dynamics that characterise to existing learning systems and spaces, for instance, as "battlefields," we can approach learning settings as an "embattled terrain" and a possible space for action.[309] Learning as such can, then, become a practice where the predominant knowledges are challenged and our engagements with different knowledges begin to be negotiated. Perhaps, this openness to negotiation and a pluralistic approach that tolerates unknowability can create room for expanding agentic capacities and further encounters with the other-than-human world. Acknowledging the inevitability of conflict and working through this, expressions of hostility, aggression and destruction can be understood as important openings for conflict in collaboration. Conflict is not to be completely avoided but can rather produce a productive or creative terrain that, in fact, expands the fields of possibility created for learning, where meaning can take place.

In September 2023, I curated an exhibition titled "Sweet Garden of Vanishing Desires" in Istanbul, bringing together the works of artists Ülgen Semerci, Olivia Strange and Deborah Tchoudjinoff at ArtOn Gallery. The exhibition looked at how pleasure is explored, expected, pursued, and expressed in times of multiple crises. It asked: How do we act on our conflicting desires in consideration of the impact of ecological crisis on the entire living world, especially when this takes place through very different contexts, scales and conditions, and in times when loss, grief and anxiety define our collective emotions? Th exhibition marked an attempt to deal with feelings of love, loss, mourning, longing and pleasure, whilst assuming that desire is not singular, consistent or only human. Through the works that approached these notions from

[309] Ibid.

personal, social and ecological perspectives, the artists' situated their desires as a queer form of resistance, a posthuman proposal to live together, a method for remembering what no longer exists and as a form of speculation concerning the future we face collectively. It asserted that letting go of desires that no longer serve one whilst continuing to anticipate new desire lines has great potential as a worldmaking practice.



Ülgen Semerci, Love is a Hierarchy, 2023. Photos courtesy of Kayhan Kaygusuz.

Ülgen Semerci's installation, titled "Love is a Hierarchy" and consisting of a 3-metre-long chain made of ceramic pieces, was produced and shipped to Istanbul from London. Its making, which lasted a couple of months, was the artist's mode of processing a personal love affair. Working with notions of vulnerability, protection and an openness to being hurt, she created a fragile object that was to be carefully hung from the ceiling of the exhibition space, trailing all the way down to the floor. During the installation of the exhibition, a chain of accidents occurred which

resulted in the work being broken. Two days before the opening, the whole gallery space was overcome with silence in the face of this unexpected and tragic occurrence. The motives for producing the artwork, its transportation across continents, the modalities in which it was received and prepared to be displayed and the reaction this accident caused in multiple parties involved (the artist, the gallery and the curator) can't be thought separately than the interconnected local and global forces that had been at work throughout the whole time. It was ironic how a work that was a manifestation of one's vulnerability, made into such a fragile object, become broken as such. It was as if what needed to be shattered would eventually be shattered and that trying to avoid this would only delay the inevitable. This accident necessitated an emergency intervention into the work which also prevented us from being able to display it for a few days while it was being repaired. Nonetheless, I found this to be a very strong gesture and finding of the exhibition. Desire came with the possibility that we might become hurt, broken or shattered into pieces. And it is exactly this openness to being hurt that reveals our inherent yet often well-ignored vulnerability. The conflict that this accident brought into the exhibition could not be thought of separately from the questions that the exhibition was raising, the process of our collaboration and our struggle to find ways to live with one another despite conflicting desires and in the midst of collapse and loss.

4.5. Undoing Knowing and Arriving at Knowledges Differently

In May 2023, I met with artist Jenna Sutela in Berlin, where we discussed a recent work she has developed to be displayed on the rooftop of the Swiss Institute in New York. Sutela's multi-media installation which she calls an earth battery-powered oracle, *Vermi-Sibyl* is inspired by the

matronly puppet figure Marjorie the Trash Heap.[310] Marjorie the Trash Heap, a puppet made of dead leaves, food scraps and various household trash, is an oracle who knows all and sees all. She exclaims; "I'm orange peels. I'm coffee grounds. I'm wisdom."[311] For the duration that the installation is on display, compostable materials are disposed of in the oracle and processed by worms inside the soil. The electrochemical reactions in the soil act as an earth battery that powers a sound piece which transmits compost recordings and oracular messages to the streets of New York. Sutela's work asserts learning from the compost because it has seen so much and has immense knowledge based on various cycles of the compost. I argue that Sutela's practice is a strong example of how to move away from hierarchies of knowing toward understanding the manifold knowledges that all material beings express. Even though our capacity to interpret and work with these other knowledges is limited, speculative practices help us to undo what knowledge is usually understood as and enter into dialogue with the world beyond the human through imagining and learning from other ways of being.

Irigaray's impossibility of fully knowing the other is echoed in what Irit Rogoff refers to as 'non-frontal' thinking.[312] This requires accepting our inherent inability to know the particular experience of the other nor the conditions that inform their experience. Still giving space to these voices and cherishing this multiplicity represents an openness to the other-than-human worlds. Broadening our understanding of relationality and noticing the entanglements that constitute 'us,' we need to create spaces and possibilities for participation and collective knowledge production. And in building this, I turn to relational epistemologies. Theory is a compilation of the ways in

[310] From a conversation between Sutela and the author that took place in Berlin in May 2023.
[311] https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Marjory_the_Trash_Heap.
[312] My understanding of Irit Rogoff's notion of non-frontality refers to not facing concepts in a frontal manner which would assume a thing can be fully known and understood in all its complexity or that things have a front. It rather suggests we can only engage with notions from our situated and partial positionality. Therefore, non-frontal thinking acknowledges we can't get a total frontal view of things and concepts and neither should that be our epistemological aim.

which we exist in the world; we grasp, relate to, and organise the world we live in according to the knowledges that we create. As Rogoff points out, knowledge can never be incomplete. This idea that knowledge can never be fully "had" but is rather in constant transformation and creation (and re-creation) as possible realities change, leads to a non-frontal view of knowledge. This requires an 'epistemic humility.'[313] This project, in line with such thinking, aims to adhere to a humble investigation of how knowledges can be created through encounters. In doing this, looking closely at the material human body as to way to transform collaboration through more inclusive and multispecies terms, this project thrives to stick to a non-frontal, pluralistic and attentive mode of coming together with others whose otherness composes "us."

Arturo Escobar engages with relational ontologies and Epistemologies of the South to propose that we need a pluriverse, or in the words of Marisol de la Cadena, a world where many worlds fit.[314] He is against the capitalistic logic of the global North and highlights the infinite diversity of worlds and knowledges. His thought informs my desire to build new models; we can't use the models and languages of the world we are protesting but rather must invent new ones. The way to do this is through building collective initiatives where different epistemologies come together.

Creating new knowledges is a worldmaking practice and we need to strive for heterogeneous worldings that are created and recreated side by side. These worlds should remain different, not seeking to appropriate or exist within one another but negotiate through their co-evolving

[313] As introduced by Jose Medina in *The Epistemology of Resistance*.
[314] Escobar, Arturo. "Thinking-feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South" In "Revista de Antropologia Iberoamericana", Volume 11, Issue 1. January-April 2016.

relations. Many of the dominant - mostly Western and male - discourses in art and academia, often exclude such potentialities for worldmaking and therefore don't fully serve us anymore. Therefore, we need to ask: How do we distinguish between forms of knowledges that are prioritised, rendered visible and acknowledged versus those that are unnoticed, suppressed, rendered invisible or secondary? What are the power structures and politics that underly and determine these distinctions?

An encounter creates the conditions and intersections where different kinds of intelligence, ways of knowing or materialities can create new relationalities. How can an encounter, especially one that takes the body as its starting point and looks to the world from the body outwards, not be anthropocentric? The answer to this question first requires situating the material human body as already a collaboration between humans and other-than-humans. Additionally, knowledge is not anthropocentric, created and known by humans solely, but rather co-constituted with other ways of knowing and being in the world which is integral to all relationalities. Situating the human body as the lens through which the world is experienced does not necessarily put the human in the centre as the body is never exclusively human. It does not establish the human as the subject of knowledge creation. Rather, it allows for noticing the existing communities and collaborations that take place within supposedly human experiences of the world, approaching worldmaking potentialities as already entangled with other lives and experiences of other-than-humans that surround the human.

There are multiple theoretical discourses of emancipatory pedagogies that situate education within the contemporary art practice. Sam Thorne's *School: A Recent History of Self-Organized*

Art Education presents interviews with self-organised projects from different parts of the world, which propose alternatives to the art school. Mostly run by artists and curators, examples including The Silent University, MASS Alexandria, SOMA, Homeworkspace Program and Open School East challenge the definition of what learning can be.[315] A common element across these alternatives is the centrality of dialogue, which recalls Paulo Freire's renowned *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Framing dialogue as a permanent part of liberating action, Freire asserts that knowledge emerges through invention and re-invention.[316] According to him, once the student realises that reality is constantly transforming and being recreated, she develops the potentiality to intervene in it critically. Therefore, knowledge is never fixed but changes as its conditions and realities change. In an oppressive education system, the teacher is placed as the subject that knows, which doesn't leave room for critical reflection and dialogue – both being crucial for an emancipatory education. In dialogue, the teacher and the student learn from one another and therefore, grow together.

Furthermore, Irit Rogoff, who coined the notion of an educational turn[317] in curating, states that education is not about handing down existing values or merely reproducing the same knowledge but is rather about producing alternative knowledge that "resists, supplements, thwarts, undercuts, or challenges traditional forms of knowledge."[318] Traditional educational methods that address those at the receiving end of knowledge from the powerful position of one who *knows* has a lot in common with traditional curating methodologies. The curator, just as the teacher, positions at the giving end, sets up the context, transmits knowledge and creates meaning, which

[315] Thorne, Sam. *School: A Recent History of Self-Organized Art Education*. Sternberg Press. Sternberg Press, 2017.
[316] Freire, Paulo, 1921-1997. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York: Continuum, 2000. p.72.
[317] Rogoff, Irit. "Turning." e-flux journal, 2008.
[318] Sternfeld, Nora. "Unglamorous Tasks: What Can Education Learn from Its Political Traditions?" *e-flux*, no. 14 (March 2010).

has proved to be an unfruitful approach to the curatorial. The curatorial should instead invest in collectively creating meaning through putting multiple perspectives into dialogue.

I align my understanding of creating knowledges collectively with such thinkers including Rancière, and particularly his notion of an 'emancipatory education' that figures equality at the very centre of the educational process.[319] Unlike a firm distinction between a teacher who knows and a student who receives knowledge, emancipatory pedagogies acknowledge that multiple knowledges and ways of knowing need to be in dialogue with one another, affirming that knowledge is not a fixed entity to be transmitted from one subject to another.

Then, I would like to ask: Can a disorganised, attentive and posthuman curatorial practice engage with this kind of emancipatory pedagogy? This understanding of the curatorial aims to create new knowledges collectively through dialogue and expand our perception of the actors in these dialogues rather than delineate some agents as active and others as passive, or as being on the receiving end of knowledge. It strives for a mutually constitutive community of learning from one another. And as such, this approach to the curatorial in relation to disorganisation creates the possibility of emancipation of some kind.

4.6. The Notion of Study and Learning as Disorganisation

As previously stated, going into Experimental Pedagogies, we were interested in expanding on the ways in which we were learn from one another which eventually became, even though not defined as such at the beginning, an investigation into what kind of a methodology friendship

[319] Ibid.

could provide us. We did not define early on what we understood of learning but looked at the texts of various thinkers such as Nora Sternfeld, Felix Guattari and Vasif Kortun as well as constantly experimenting with different methods and tools.

In 2019, when we were working online via distance for the first time, our individual research was heavily preoccupied with academic texts and required us to do a lot of close reading. We did not want to be do that kind of deep research in our collective work but instead wanted something lighter that would help us to enter into discussions from our own conditions, interests, and changing needs. We felt that a fast pace was essential for this. Impulses allowed us to bring in thoughts, research, experiences, stories, texts and works from our individual contexts. The sharing of these impulses was based on rhythm, of maintaining a certain speed of thought, and creating various entry points. In doing so, we less so dwelled on specificities and rather focussed on creating a more fragmented and diverse narrative around the questions and issues we were addressing as a collective.

We named these effects ‘impulses’ as they come from a place of direct excitement, of desire. They are to be looked at together. We don’t claim to be experts that deliver access to these materials, instead approaching them in a disorganised manner, but never carelessly. We seek to learn from them, not as experts but by remaining hungry students. Then, we approached these fast impulses as a compilation or data pool from which we could make connections and notice patterns, divergences and commonalities. The impulses are what evokes excitement in us, spurs our minds, facilitates the practice of thinking together, allows responsivity and engenders the dialogical. They are intended to get us thinking, remembering and feeling in different contexts

(i.e. dream school exercises), starting from ideas of care, bodily sensations, affects and relationships (i.e. body scans), and initiating dialogue (i.e. anecdotes from our daily lives, experiences in different academic contexts).

Throughout our experimentations on this project, I kept going back to Nora Sternfeld's critical question: "How can we learn something that doesn't exist yet?"[320] Sternfeld follows up on her initial question with multiple further questions, such as: "How can we be together in a world that separates us?" and "How can we learn to imagine a world that doesn't exist yet?"[321] Sternfeld repeats that in order to create alternatives, one has to be within the system and also strategically outside of it. There is no such thing as being outside the system as despite one's role within the art world, it is not possible to be fully outside of the neoliberal system. However, her question regarding learning what doesn't exist yet, is still a valid one as it compels one to rethink the potential of art in pedagogies and the need for inventing new models. Sternfeld's suggestion that the curator's position in the art world is to question why something has been unacceptable and challenge how and for whom it might be acceptable resonates with my understanding of the task of the curatorial. It also allows one to imagine what does not yet exist in order to challenge existing models and provides an entry point into what might be yet to come.

Another point I would like to clarify; what I mean by learning is not necessarily (or at least solely) about the accumulation of knowledges, acquiring new skills, data, or information, instead referring to seeing, exploring, noticing and imagining how things can be done differently. It is

[320] Nora Sternfeld. Ràdio Web MACBA: https://re-imagine-europe.eu/resources_item/sonia-296-nora-sternfeld/.
[321] Ibid.

mainly about opening up to other beings, methods and models in order to understand what is not working for us within the existing models as well as question why they came to be that way to begin with.

Throughout Experimental Pedagogies, we asked: What does one learn from? Does there have to be someone who transmits particular knowledge, skills or expertise within a specific context or setting for learning to take place? The word 'learning' already implies that there is a learner and a teacher, which traditionally creates a strong distinction between the roles in a given encounter. However, it shouldn't be unidirectional as the roles are constantly shifting within the encounter. The object of learning is not necessarily there for one to excavate knowledge out of but can be found in and as the encounter that creates new knowledges. Therefore, I suggest that arriving at (because we are not merely attaining or excavating) new knowledges is a more apt definition.

We continued with our questions: What happens when we see everything as learning? How can we transform every encounter into a potential space of learning? How can we use attentivity as a tool to engage with our surroundings or others differently, notice our inherent difference and therefore approach them as possibilities for learning, for instance, while drinking coffee, walking to the grocery store, watching the waves, playing with a cat or simply moving in space? We come together to learn together and there are no interruptions in our learning, even when we take a break or go for a walk. We keep on learning, just through another form, another scale and register of knowledge. We treat everything as a potential source of learning as it is important to open to ways of learning that are not directly related to productivity, accumulation, or power toward abandoning certain understandings of learning.

For Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, study is a speculative practice that goes beyond the university and the various modes of thinking that institutions require. It is what you do with other people.[322] It is a relational and reciprocal practice. When Bayo Akomolafe describes the first time that he successfully rode a scooter, he writes: "The scooter learned me."[323] He defines the riding as a moment when he and the bike became co-enactors, and situates himself as a witness to the riding. This is a significant approach to an encounter with matter; its agency and participation in interactions is acknowledged and the riding is understood as a two-way learning process. The body of Akomolafe learns how to balance the bike and keep moving just as the bike learns his body and movements. I find this personal anecdote quite striking as it challenges how else learning can take place when one perceives learning as a non-hierarchical process where multiple others can become the teachers when one is attentive to their ways of knowing or knowledges.

Erin Manning's practice of 'radical pedagogy' utilises the notion of study to start from the middle in inventing practices for learning. This requires rethinking value beyond existing value judgements and evaluation techniques and building new forms of knowledges without consulting a method.[324] Radical pedagogy is preoccupied with creating practices that allow learning to make its own agenda.[325] According to Manning, study seeks to create conditions for encountering an another with our inherent differences that make us. [326] Its goal is not homogenisation but, in fact,

[322] Moten, Fred and Harney, Stefano. The Undercommons. New York: Minor Compositions. 2013.
[323] Akomolafe, Bayo. "How I'm learning to trust in my failure." Bayo Akomolafe, March 14, 2016, https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/post/how-im-learning-to-trust-in-my-failure.
[324] Manning, Erin. "10 Propositions for a Radical Pedagogy, or How to Rethink Value." *Inflexions 8*, "Radical Pedagogies." 2015: p. 202-210.
[325] Ibid.
[326] Ibid.

operating through these differences. Manning has gathered people around this goal, creating SenseLab and then the 3Ecologies Institute in order to experiment with research-creation.

Manning begins with the premise that concepts must be experienced by individuals as they are not learned, taught or known but instead lived. I argue that this is not the same as homogenisation of experiences but can acknowledge that experiences are always situated. She often emphasises the importance of accepting and surrendering to the discomfort of not knowing. Her notion of 'minor movements' provides a way of attuning to art practices, which opens the work to its more-than. They are co-compositions which we are part of through lived experiences, curatorial processes that undoes the separation between a field of life and a field of art, and, finally, art that becomes the way rather than the endpoint.[327]

Manning's radical pedagogy requires being attentive to the daily techniques of pedagogical practice, which she defines as "techniques for activating a space of encounter, techniques for attending to the work and each other, techniques for listening across cultures, techniques for attuning to the more-than – and to techniques of "crossing the threshold".[328] She describes crossing the threshold as a critical technique of allowing learning to take different forms, in turn proving how traditional learning environments are not neutral and in fact intolerant to diverse ways of knowing.[329] A radical pedagogy, therefore, first multiplies these thresholds and facilitates the crossing while at the same time challenging how bodies are expected to enter into,

[327] From the conversation between Halbe Kuipers and Erin Manning, published in February 2019. https://onlineopen.org/how-the-minor-moves-us-across-thresholds-socialities-and-techniques
[328] Bee, Julie and Egert, Gerko. *Learn experiments, exchange techniques: A Speculative Handbook*. nocturne platform, 2020. (Manning's text in this book is an expanded version of Manning's "10 Propositions for a Radical Pedagogy, or How to Rethink Value.")
[329] Ibid.

move through, think and learn in conventional learning settings.[330] In this thinking, learning can take many forms; it is always relational and it does not make clear value judgements regarding who can teach and who needs to learn. Manning's thinking allows me to employ a vocabulary for an intentional technique of rethinking knowing and learning as well as comprehending the stakes of situating my curatorial practice among such alternative pedagogical models.

4.7. Friendship as Conviviality

Another notion I would like to address is 'conviviality' because it helps me to better understand the motivations and conditions of our collaborative work. My understanding of conviviality is the creation and hosting of friendly encounters where the joy that the encounter brings is centralised; it is a shared desire line that traverses the two curatorial models this writing puts forward. Although conviviality is linked to friendliness, friendship is not a requirement of many convivial practices; it does not depend on friendship. Pathways into friendship are long and complex; they get built up over time through trust, sharing and care. Most forms of conviviality are not frontal modes of addressing an issue but instead gesture to a space of mutuality which we can all inhabit in the same register, only to use that space for developing something that perhaps did not exist before. My understanding of the term conviviality and approach to convivial practices are often about confusion, experimentation and a lack of a structure, which engages not knowing, failing, and for me, always doing things again. Through convivial practices, what has been formulated and theorised happens on another scale (such as that of the planetary), another modality of sharing (such as those created by institutional settings), and with a different attitude

[330] Ibid.

(such as a playful and light-hearted one). This is partly because convivial encounters are not as coded, designated and structured as more formal, institutional or academic contexts. However, this does not imply a lack of seriousness, commitment or labour that goes into conviviality. My understanding of convivial settings enables an engagement with thought, theory, and people differently. Through creating and getting together in convivial settings, one's thinking may shift, wander and transform.

Conviviality, as such, can also be created by changing our relation to something. There is a certain setup or a staging which brings people together which results in a specific way of engaging with one another that might have been different if the conditions and the atmosphere created weren't as such. For instance, in Garp Sessions, we set up a convivial structure for a certain amount of time in a designated space, to invite a group of people to come together to share the intimate experience of entering into an unknown collective experience, living together in a new place, establishing a contract of mutual trust in which we listen to one another, which produces a particular way of addressing one another. In this disorganised but staged encounter, the terms of reference that define an encounter are changed, and so it becomes an invitation to encounter one another differently. I argue that this is what sets up the conditions for a convivial practice. And what is produced through this kind of practice is beyond its definition, activities and tangible outcomes. It requires thinking with intangible or undefinable relations of collaboration, which is difficult to present instructions for.

Conviviality is in close contact with the notion of 'affective alliances' suggested by Ailton Krenak. Affective alliances point to a group of people building affective bonds around a situation or a cause because they share a position or stake in it. Affective alliances produce intensity and change.[331] It is connected to conviviality; in conviviality and affective alliance, there are people who find themselves in a similar situation, facing a similar set of questions and/or coming from similar fields.

Conviviality is at times exploited with the assumption that a lack of specified outcomes will somehow lead to a more genuine outcome. The illusion of a good time is created in order to reach a seemingly voluntary and pleasurable mode of productivity. It is overtly instrumentalised for productivity. However, I argue, conviviality produces different ways of encountering the other. It therefore is not just a tool or a condition for producing something, but it is the production itself. In that sense, it is both a methodology and an outcome. It is a reaction, a worldmaking practice, a proposition for learning and being with differently. These efforts at building communities gather around a premise and setup that is supportive, whilst being completely different from a sense of networking in the arts. A different setup, a different relation to practice is and different outcome expectations are developed, which itself adds to the creation of a convivial gathering.

[331]Massumi, Brian. "Supplement II: Keywords for Affect." In *The Power at the End of Economy*. Duke University Press, 2015.

In such practices of conviviality, there is a constant shifting between levels of seriousness. In communicating these curatorial projects, I have often felt the need to justify that the work we're doing is 'serious' work. When you operate outside of where the crowds gather and where work usually happens, you have to make an added effort to communicate that you are taking things seriously. There's a difference between being serious and taking things seriously.[332] That which is taken seriously implies an attribution of value. We take seriously things or people we deem worthy of our time, attention and energy. Seriousness implies some level of commitment to that thing or that person. However, seriousness and conviviality do not need to be positioned at opposite ends of a spectrum. Work and conviviality don't have to be separated from one another; serious discursive work and light-hearted socialising don't have to be separated in the name of professionalism. Letting go of such clear-cut separations and allowing grey zones to form in such encounters presents another modality that can be very generative.

Seriousness is a performative practice and moments of slipping away from this performance can create a rupture in our encounters. What about moments of failing to switch from one level of interaction to another? Is this simply a failure or is it a deliberate foregoing of power relationships and value judgements? This performative seriousness, in fact, replicates the systems, modes of conduct and ways of operating that are intrinsic to the neoliberal society that we, as cultural workers, are tasked with questioning as well as trying to subvert and resist. Thus, I argue it is possible to practise conviviality and seriousness at the same time. We fear that not performing seriousness as expected will affect how our work is perceived according to the

[332]Butt, Gavin and Rogoff, Irit. *Visual Cultures as Seriousness*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013.

existing criteria of value judgement. We fear being mocked, criticised and not taken seriously. However, we can be taken seriously whilst still resisting a performance of seriousness. Taking things lightly and putting oneself in a position where one feels open and vulnerable enough to allow light-heartedness to emerge could be emancipatory.

How to approach these practices in terms of the possibility for conviviality between the human and other-than-human? Who is given access to these convivial settings? I'm wary of relying on the word 'love' in developing a theoretical approach to friendship because elements of friendship that shape our work differ from mainstream definitions of love.[333] In order to try to answer these questions, I turn to "Love as a Moral Method: Developing 'Attentive Platonic Love' toward Nonhuman Animals" by Elisa Aaltola, which introduces a very particular reading of Platonic love which is helpful for my understanding of conviviality and friendship. Socrates, building on Plato's idea of love from *Phaedrus*, states that the most advanced version of love is directed towards universal qualities; beauty, good, truth.[334] What would happen if, acknowledging the problematic aspect of the absolute idealism and limitation of these terms, Plato's understanding of love, platonic love, is applied to other beings that could manifest such universal qualities, which therefore includes the more-than-human world. One of the most problematic aspects of this thinking is that it strongly emphasises what have been assumed to be positive qualities, which might in turn imply that opposites, such as the ugly, wrong or destructive, are unworthy of love. However, love can be many of these things as well and truly loving someone or something

[333] Many definitions of love merely focus on positive emotions such as liking, sexual or romantic attraction, strong affection for, devotion and attachment to a person or a thing.

[334] Aaltola, Elisa. "Love as a Moral Method: Developing 'Attentive Platonic Love' toward Nonhuman Animals." Knowing Life Conference, 5 November 2022, Online.

means loving their imperfections and so-called negative qualities. This is particularly important for applying the aforementioned kind of love to the other-than-human, given that our collaborations and encounters with other humans or other-than-humans may not always be positive. Can we love an other whose qualities are far from these idealistic qualities defined by Plato? Can we love bacteria which live in our bodies that, when they become unbalanced, also cause diseases? Can we love invasive species?

Aaltola suggests that the object of love is often idealised and therefore ends up ultimately crushing its object because one does not have a realistic understanding of them and therefore has very high expectations. Rather, she rather compassion, forgiveness and humility. Love, Aaltola adds, consists of the realisation that something other than myself is real and it is this state of attention through which we come to see the world as it is. By being attentive, we come to appreciate the realness of others and their distinctive ways of existing as other realities. It also allows us to let go of our anthropocentricity as we come to acknowledge that we are just one way of being among many others all perfected in their ways.[335] A "species humility" necessitates this realisation as well as forgiveness towards ourselves for not being perfect or the best. In such, one sees that they have their unique ways of existing, their own realities and worlds with their own forms of conviviality. Therefore, love, in Aaltola's thinking, is registered as attention (or attentivity) to the particularity of the other.

[335] Ibid.

Similarly, Lauren Berlant stresses that love is often expressed through a desire to know and be known.[336] Attachment, however, implies relying on an object to project one's fantasies of flourishing and of a good life.[337] She acknowledges the link between love and attachment but states that it is also linked to other modes of relating, such as those involving "proximity, solidarity, collegiality, friendship, the light touch and intermittent ones, and then the hatreds, aversions, and not caring."[338] For worldbuilding or imagining future possibilities for being together, we also need to imagine all these affective dimensions.

4.8. Friendship as Care

With the word 'care' having entered the discourses of art and social theory as well as corporate language, it is safe to say that we are witnessing a care crisis. We are witnessing such a crisis because care is being used in a way that renders existing careless structures even more visible as it is being adopted by neoliberal society only to be turned against those that are exploited by the same capitalist structures in the first place.

An important aspect of this crisis results from our understanding of labour that is mapped between public versus private spheres. Household labour or care is often expected to be performed by women and is assumed to come to them "naturally" which means it is perceived not as labour but as an instinct.[339] This invisible labour of women, "coerced care"[340] (Peterson)

[336] Berlant, Lauren. "A Properly Political Concept of Love: Three Approaches in Ten Pages." Anthropology, 26: 683-691. 2011. p. 684.
[337] Ibid., p.686.
[338] Ibid, p.687.
[339] Petersen, Anne Helen. "Forced to Care." Culture Study. 27 March 2022. https://annehelen.substack.com/p/forced-to-care?s=w
[340] Ibid.

or "affective labour"[341] (Hardt and Negri, Federici), links the precarity of labour to the creation of certain vulnerable states of being. However, although precarious labour has been largely addressed by the Marxist theory,[342] household labour and reproductive labour has been ignored as part of this precarity. Housework contributes to the capitalist mode of operation and constitutes its sustainability. Hence, care work is a terrain of crisis and presents yet another reason to confront existing societal structures. We need to create collective infrastructures of care which would mean addressing the struggles of care as an infrastructural and societal issue rather than an individual problem or choice.[343] Establishing those infrastructures, as Peterson asserts, requires "imagining - and enacting - more robust and informal *communities* of care."[344] In many cultures, such communities already exist. Many indigenous and Buddhist communities (they call these collective structures of care and support 'sangha') approach reproductive and affective labour as a collective endeavour.

In Latin, "cura" means to take care. Although taking care of others and things implies a certain pleasure with feelings of compassion and affection, it is also associated with the burden of responsibility and anxiety.[345] The word "curating" comes from the same root. Hence, care has always been integral to curating practices, especially in the traditional sense; a curator is the one who takes care of artworks, artefacts and archives. The curatorial that I'm proposing calls for a different kind of care, one that invites us to extend care onto the entire relational world. My understanding of care is a "promiscuous care" in the sense that it is extends to a broader

[341] Federici, Silvia. "Precarious Labour and Reproductive Work." Excerpt from "Precarious labor: A feminist viewpoint." Lecture. 2006.
[342] Marx, Karl and Friedrich, Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1948.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Fokianaki, Iliana. The Collective of Care. https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/en/gropiusbau/programm/journal/2021/iliana-fokianaki-the-collective-of-care.html

community of entangled relationalities and also in terms of "caring *more,*" experimenting with different forms, ways, and intensities.[346] It necessitates responsivity as well as responsibility. Recognising our interdependency and that our thriving is always contingent on others, we are able to understand how crucial it is to care and care for promiscuously. However, as the Latin root itself implies, this is not a smooth and frictionless process, and it necessitates further thinking around agency and responsibility. But perhaps this is exactly why it may also provide a cure to the individualistic, human-centred and neoliberal modes of production in the Western world.[347]

The term "care" has been overused, exploited, and emptied out in contemporary art discourses over the past couple of years, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic. I am also wary of producing a feminised ethics of care in acknowledging the historically entrenched female labour of household and familial work. It is problematic that for women, care is expected as a motherly duty or expression of love. Therefore, I would like to approach the notion of care by focusing on what it does for us and how it is an operating principle for our work as topsoil. How do we practise care and what does friendship have to do with it?

iLiana Fokianaki, who founded "The Bureau of Care," an interdisciplinary research platform centred on the ethics and politics of care, defines "the collective joy of enacting care *together"* as "the only way to understand oneself in the world" as well as "a political act."[348] Even though

[346] The Care Collective. *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence.* Verso, 2020.
[347] iLiana Fokianaki stresses a third meaning of the Latin root "cura" in her "Collective of Care," writing: "A third meaning deriving from *Latin* is "curing" – *cura* in many Latin-rooted languages meaning cure. Summarising this myth alongside looking at the etymology of "care" can reveal the roots of how it has developed as a concept: as a responsibility (labour), a pleasure and a cure (of both problems and ailments)."
[348] Ibid.

care is strongly linked to words such as interdependency, need, vulnerability, empathy, warmth, attentivity, responsibility, joy, sensibility and support, none of these words alone can capture the essence of what care allows us to communicate. Care, for us, is strongly associated with generosity, providing for someone's wellbeing and development, trust in their own process, a lack of judgement, empathy towards the struggles of others and a willingness to facilitate their desire or modes of expression as well as a general sense of openness to the other, the unknown and potential. Thinking of the notion of care requires us to work across scales: planetary, state, family and bodily to name a few. Both positive and negative emotions belong to practices of care and the capacity to care, and therefore, we must provide social infrastructures that enable us to care for others. Care is a social, political, infrastructural, and organisational phenomenon. Thus, sociality is an infrastructure that needs practices of care; it requires thinking more carefully about how we're caring for one another.

In 2020, I was a resident on the Erasmus+ funded project "Encounters: through Art, Ethnography and Pedagogy" which brought The University of Agder (Norway), leading the project, together with The University of Amsterdam, The University of the Aegean, Raketa (Stockholm), Arts Cabinet (London) and Ethnofest (Athens). We sought to test out possible intersections where ethnographers and artists could meet and challenge understandings of what 'encounters' can be.[349] As the Arts Cabinet residents, we collectively worked with the notion of care. At the end of the yearlong residency, for an online publication put together by Arts Cabinet, we conducted an interview with Tim Ingold.[350] We discussed the significance of making material research during a global pandemic, making sense of materials in times of non-materiality, relating to other

[349] Arts Cabinet. https://www.artscabinet.org/encounters
[350] Arts Cabinet. https://www.artscabinet.org/encounters-issue-1/a-conversation-with-tim-ingold

bodies in the physical absence of other bodies, his notion of the meshwork, and the ethics and limits of care in times of suffering and loss.

We also produced individual contributions for the publication, for which I wrote a text titled "Wtf is self-care?" In this text, I was critical of the fashionable notion of self-care in contemporary Western society and the way in which it affirms an individualistic moral agenda, which aspires for constant progress and becoming better versions of oneself in order to be a better citizen. Instead, I argued for the difficulty of defining a self and therefore also self-care as it assumes a bounded, isolated and singular self. Blurring such clear distinctions between self and other, I stressed that the self is always relational and that the body is never an isolated container that can be exclusively taken care of. We need to address those who are not well taken care of as well as those whose caring capacities we undermine. Thus, I wondered whether caring for oneself didn't mean, at the same time, caring for all these others? [351] I am aware of the complexities of this question as it brings up pragmatic questions regarding priorities, needs and well-being. How to best care for a virus trying to survive in one's body and in doing so threatening one's health? This question itself brings forth the issue of one's capacity for care and requires recognising our interdependence, not only as or with humans but all relational living beings.

I also proposed that care has something to do with visibility and proximity:

> "The invisibility of the other that needs or demands care and whose vulnerability requires protection makes it difficult to delineate what life or what organism (as viruses are not

[351] Ibid.

technically fully alive) needs care. Does caring always imply protection or ensuring survival and sustainability? You also have to be *careful* towards something if you need it to be controlled or contained. In relation to the virus, perhaps you don't want to nourish it so that it flourishes or grows but you care for it because you need it to be a certain way so that you, *yourself*, survive."[352]

This raises the question of how we can care for someone who is not in proximity to us, and with whom we don't share immediate conditions? Care is not necessarily about intimacy but rather it is a set of ethical relations that underly every encounter. It is based on interdependence and collaboration. It requires caring for an interconnected relationality. Finally, I suggested that by caring for oneself, one can learn to care not for a particular subjectivity but for a larger entangled set of relations that sustain life.

In April 2023, I was a co-facilitator of a series of conversations titled Pedagogies of Transition, organised between Goldsmiths and Monash Universities. Pedagogies of Transition addressed the ongoing institutional crises and its political, economic, epistemological and ecological implications. We questioned what kinds of structural shifts are crucial and discussed possibilities for instituting otherwise. I co-facilitated a discussion titled "Crianza Mutua (Mutual Care)" which invited curator Manuela Moscoso and artist Elvira Espejo Ayca to converse around the notions of mutual care, practices of pedagogies of transition and the struggles and joys of envisioning more caring institutions for the future. They elaborated on how instituting with care requires going beyond colonial, Western and anthropocentric modes of organising knowledge and opening the institution up to possible speculative futures and epistemic shifts. I was

[352] Ibid.

extremely inspired by their approaches to working collaboratively with multiple communities to imagine futures and produce new knowledges. I also suggest their talk addressed how future art institutions need to work through infrastructures of care if they wish to decolonise art and undo Western forms of knowing. Operating from varying conditions, as cultural workers, we face multiple crises such as wars, pandemics and the climate crisis together, which defines our times and should inform how museums and institutions take shape. Some of these conditions place the museum in rather vulnerable positions, especially in the non-Western world. This shared vulnerability, rather than suggesting a weakness, affirms the need to build alternative tools for instituting differently, which is something I am working towards.

For Espejo Ayca, praxis is at the very centre of decolonisation. There is art present in all dynamics of people and communities, whereas there are very strict definitions and biases in academic education. Working with many communities of artists and weavers who make things with their hands, who feel texture, smell and shape, Ayca emphasises the importance of knowledges - like material cultures - that aren't recognised as much in academia. There are different types of intellect and how the body reads or senses the world can be an instance of this. However, touch, she insists, is largely suppressed in the Western Eurocentric world. In "Decolonisation in the 2020s: 'Universal Education' in Art and its Painful Divisions," Espejo Ayca refers to Eurocentric and Western divisions that separate handicraft and art, which she argues fails to acknowledge the act of making or feeling with one's hands as well one's material relations.[353] This also excludes local knowledges and artisans from discussions around contemporary art. It fails to acknowledge various ways of feeling material or bodily and sensual

[353] Espejo Ayca, Elvira. "Decolonisation in the 2020s: 'Universal Education' in Art and its Painful Divisions." https://www.afterallartschool.org/essays/elvira-espejo-ayca/

processes. Ayca emphasises that to truly decolonise the museum, one needs to be extremely self-reflective, in order to understand the past and revisit the present with a diversity of cultural aspects.[354] What is necessary is more mutual respect, bringing more information and contexts to the table and taking a closer, more careful look into various communities' cultures and modes of production. It is important to build bridges between ways of talking about art and different communities and sensibilities if we are to talk of decolonisation of art. Mutual respect between all sensibilities is a horizontal mindset as opposed to a vertical framework which creates hierarchies between thinking and feeling. Ayca instead suggests "feelingthinking" which comes from indigenous practices.[355] My understanding of feelingthinking as opposed to feeling then thinking defies such clear separation between the two and situates it as a mode of learning.

For instance, the indigenous notion of uywaña brings together all mutual creations: *ali yuwaña*, the mutual creation of plants; *uywa uywaña*, the mutual creation of animals; *yanaka uywaña*, the mutual creation of subject-objects; *taqi kuna uywaña*, the mutual creation of everything.[356] This points to the interconnectedness of everything and asks one to be aware of their own situatedness in this network.[357] Indigenous communities revolve around many rituals and practices of attentivity. Indigenous knowledges are created through being attentive to mutual creation and relationality in daily practices, learning from everything that surrounds one and working with it.

[354]From a conversation on decolonising museums between Victoria Noorthoorn, Director of the Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, and Bolivian artist, writer and musician Elvira Espejo Ayca, chaired by Amanda Carneiro, Curator at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo as part of a series of events on Decolonisation in the 2020s that took place throughout March 2021, organised by the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) and University of the Arts London (UAL) in collaboration with Goldsmiths, Department of Visual Cultures.
[355]Ayca, Elvira Espejo and Moscoso, Manuela. "Pedagogies of Transition: Crianza Mutua." Zoom, 12 April 2023. Organised by Monash University and Goldsmiths University, facilitated by Deniz Kirkali and Susie Quillinan.
[356] Conference EASA 2020. Call for papers. "Uywaña: attentionality and relational practices in the Andes and beyond."
[357] Ibid.

The connection between learning and care is a strong one as teaching and learning both imply caring and being cared for. In 2022, in two workshops organised through topsoil, we asked ourselves as well as others: How do people care in learning spaces? We attempted to answer this question by going back to how we care for one another. Care in our learning relationship is characterised by being attentive to bodies (ours and others), where this attention is directed, the physical set up of space, the distribution of responsibility, different rhythms, time and space for individual as well as collective needs, how we imagine along with how we visualise our desires.

In Garp Sessions, on the other hand, our community is very much gathered around a practice of care; in the past year we have witnessed it become a community that supports one another in different ways, having grown to care for the other with which we have shared an intimate process. This, for me, was very clear when one of our past participants said: “Nothing has changed but now, at least, we have one another.” This is where I situate friendship as a methodology for the curatorial that I am trying to define and set out in my work.

4.9. Friendship as a Condition for Work

Historically, many definitions and theorizations of friendship have been developed by male philosophers and thinkers because women have been largely excluded from public life and intellectual societies across different contexts and cultures. For instance, from Ancient Greece and Rome, most of the friendships that were written about describe bonds between males. Engaging with historical narratives as well as storytelling allows me to work through temporal scales of knowledges and allow speculation to come in. I turn to the body as a site which

complicates these existing understandings of friendship. Looking at these historical narratives also makes me question how one can "learn" about friendship? Rather than reading theories of friendship or doing literary research around it, I believe that one theorises friendship differently. Friendship is practised. Friendship is something one experiences and knows through different spheres or planes of knowing and relating.

As topsoil, during our continuous search for a terminology that best communicates what we're trying to do, we have had long discussions around the word "intimacy." Intimacy comes from the Latin word *intimus* which means "inmost" and *intimare* which means "to impress" or to "make familiar." Regarding these etymological connections, I can't help but question, what is more inmost and familiar than the inside of one's body? And therefore, what more of an intimate relationship is there than that which we have to those which we inhabit our body with? Could making the other-than-human familiar be a way of making friends with them? Through the lens of the body, intimacy can hold further meanings and connotations in the context of our relationships with multiple others. Lauren Berlant's definition of intimacy combines these two implications of the word; intimacy involves "an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about oneself and other that will turn out in a particular way."[358] Here, intimacy builds a narrative that stems from certain conditions and particularities of the two understandings of the word, which allows them to share in feeling, understanding and acknowledging the other to a certain extent, and find commonalities in their approach to these conditions. Can we experience intimacy while remaining in difference by looking at the material body, which is already an assemblage and site where the self and its 'others' coexist? Then, is such a clear

[358] Berlant, Lauren. "Intimacy: A Special Issue." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1998, pp. 281. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1344169.

distinction between "I" and a "we" necessary or even possible? Being friends while acknowledging and remaining in difference, we need to acknowledge that the point of friendship is not to come to fully know the other but rather remain inherently strangers to one another. This is why we aren't able to speak of them or write about them as they are infinitely distant to us, which is the basis for separation becoming a relation.[359] Blanchot argues that this interval between the two is what brings friends together in difference.[360]

Céline Condorelli, an artist who's been working around support structures for a long time, in "The Company we keep: a conversation with Céline Condorelli and Avery F. Gordon," poses the question of how we can inhabit friendship as a condition. According to her, friendship is both a way of "associating yourself with other people" but also "associating yourself with ideas or befriending issues."[361] Inhabiting friendship as a condition, one decides what ideas, issues and people they want to be surrounded with. Condorelli, in the second part of the conversation, raises the further question: "What could it mean to want to work in friendship?"[362] I believe this question holds great potential as it opens to the notion of agency and choice within a friendship, which is highly relevant for our work as topsoil. When one gets to choose who they would like to spend time with and especially if they can also choose to intentionally work with them, this may completely transform what friendship can do.

[359] Blanchot, Maurice. *Friendship*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.p.152.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Condorelli, Céline and Gordon, Avery F. The Company we keep: a conversation with Céline Condorelli and Avery F. Gordon. https://howtoworktogether.org.
[362] Ibid.

Condorelli points to this transformative nature of friendship in relation to work, suggesting that, when working in friendship, friendship produces itself as much as the work.[363] It is a way of doing that produces the friendship itself which is "a form of life which cannot be totally capitalised upon."[364] This informs how we position our work as topsoil, as friendship-work, and frames this as a transformative practice of living in fellowship and solidarity as well as of care.

Friendship, Condorelli continues, "is a way of doing intellectual labour together, and also as an escape from work, in order to become more than one's work, more than a worker."[365] I agree with the argument that friendship is collective intellectual labour but the second part of Condorelli's statement that concerns escaping work troubles me; the idea of doing intellectual work together simply through practising friendship means the separation between personal and social life versus work becomes blurred. When is it work, and when is it mere socialisation or hanging out? Doesn't this perpetuate the neoliberal working conditions that the intellectual labour we do together seeks to resist or operate outside of, at least within this relationship or collaboration? For Condorelli, the practice of friendship is "a way of acting in the world."[366] A form of solidarity with people and ideas, it is "both a set-up for working and a dimension of production" as well as "a condition of work."[367] She emphasises the political nature of friendships in terms of allegiance, responsibility and solidarity.

[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid.
[365] Ibid.
[366] Condorelli, Céline and Hartle, Johan Frederik. "Too close to see: a conversation with Johan Frederik Hartle." In *Self-Organized,* p.62-73. Open Editions. 2013.
[367] Ibid.

What impact outside of itself can working from and through a relationship have? I suggest such friendship-work gives one the courage to resist existing modes of institutionalised work, redefine what work can be, build solidarity and find tools for sharing affective values which are integral to the ways in which we work and live in the world. It gives one permission to do otherwise and not abide by the pressures of the neoliberal Western art market. I argue that practising friendship as work and working from friendship as a condition for one's work can be a radical way of doing the curatorial.

4.10. Friendship-Work

The notion of friendship as method was coined by Lisa M.Tillmann-Healy, who is a researcher, documentary filmmaker and professor of Critical Media and Cultural Studies. In "Friendship as Method" she provides a definition of friendship as an affective bond and differentiates it from other affective relationships, such as marriage or familial ties, as friendship is deemed to be a more precarious bond. Listing similarities between friendship and fieldwork on interpretivist and feminist grounds, Tillmann-Healy lays out the procedures for building and sustaining a friendship that, just like doing research, requires conversation, everyday involvement, compassion, giving and vulnerability. Therefore, she introduces the idea of researching at the natural pace of friendship, writing: "With friendship as method, a project's issues emerge organically, in the ebb and flow of everyday life: leisurely walks, household projects, activist campaigns, separations, reconciliations, losses, recoveries. The unfolding path of the relationships becomes the path of the project."[368] In her methodology, she becomes friends with

[368] Tillmann-Healy, Lisa. "Friendship as Method." *Emergent Methods in Social Research*, edited by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber & Patricia Leavy, SAGE Publications, Inc., 2006. p. 273-294.

the participants of her ethnographic research throughout the process of research. Giving examples from her own research, she stresses a level of investment in the other's life to be one of the main distinctions of doing research in this way. However, this is also among the challenges of doing friendship as method, along with not being able to foresee research questions, a required tolerance to uncertainty, being in a vulnerable subject position and the need to be aware of biases and emotional tendencies.[369] Additionally, the affective bonds that are created throughout the long process of ethnographic research implies significant questions regarding existing power dynamics due to the roles of the researcher and the subject of research. Their relationship is one that is already built towards a desired outcome and with a preestablished agenda. Nonetheless, the text is still significant as it offers tools to encounter others; one of the most valuable takeaways for me from this text is the notion of approaching everyone as if they're a friend or "from a stance of friendship."[370]

However, although Tillmann-Healy's text raises interesting points about friendship as a potential method, it is still quite different from how we, as topsoil, approach friendship. In both her case and ours, practice and research are informed by the practices and conditions of friendship. However, a main difference between our approach is that, in our case, the research comes out of the relationship or our friendship instead of friendship being built as a result or effect of the research. Perhaps, to take this one step further, for topsoil, friendship is the research itself. There are no distinctions between our positions as researchers and friends, but they are intertwined in complex ways. Therefore, there is a difference between these approaches to friendship as method. Tillmann-Healy also states that we tend to be friends with people who are more like our

[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid.

self than an other, or simply with people who resemble us. I am, on the other hand, much more interested in friendships that rely on acknowledging the inherent otherness of the other, which do not seek similarity or sameness but rather cherish the unknowability of the other, which makes it possible to constantly learn from them. In this understanding of friendship, the differences between friends are what enables them to become allies.

Giorgio Agamben, in the chapter titled "The Friend" from his famous book *What is an Apparatus?*, points to the close relationship between philosophy and friendship, which was previously discredited. He goes on to make a distinction between friendship based on utility or pleasure as opposed to a virtuous friendship, writing: "Indeed, what is friendship other than a proximity that resists both representation and conceptualization? To recognize someone as a friend means not being able to recognize him as a 'something.'"[371] This sentence captures well how the word 'friend' falls short of describing the other person or the relationship even partially because it does not represent a characteristic or quality of the person who's being referred to as a friend. Furthermore, referring to Aristotle's notion of friendship, Agamben defines friendship as belonging to "prote philosophia, since the same experience, the 'sensation' of being, is what is at stake in both."[372] This definition assumes that friends experience the reciprocal sensation that friendship evokes exactly the same way. Although I understand and agree with Agamben's emphasis on the experiential and ontological aspect of friendship, I also find that his explanation fails to address the significance of difference and over-simplifies the experiences and positionalities of friends. With my understanding of friendship, I highlight that shared stakes and living and thinking together should not negate inherent differences and should not imply

[371] Agamben, Giorgio. *"What is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. p.31.
[372] Ibid., p.35.

"partaking the same."[373] Agamben adds: "Friends do not share something (birth, law, place, taste): they are shared by the experience of friendship. Friendship is the con-division that precedes every di-vision, since what has to be shared is the very fact of existence, life itself. And it is this sharing without an object, this original con-senting, that constitutes the political."[374] However, for me, the political potential of the kind of friendship that I would like to evoke through collaborative curatorial practices does not lie in the sameness of what and how is shared but in exactly the frictions and potential of remaining different.

Bare minimum collective is a collective formed by Lola Olufemi, Christine Pungong, Christie Costello, Leo Wood and Diamond Albudrahim who all met during their studies at the University of Cambridge. They describe how they "bonded over their shared hatred of work and working culture" with an intention to "produce work as an act of resistance… against work."[375] Hence, their current Instagram bio reads "Work haters art makers." They claim that the world we live in, and eventually capitalism, makes us sick and that this sickness is an endemic social condition. They defy the conventional value judgements that are intrinsic to the art market and do not desire visibility, prestige or funding. Instead, they create "a space to hold one another accountable to creation, joy and pleasure."[376] They approach "laziness and doing nothing within a politicised frame," and work "not in service of the capital" but "in service of each other."[377] A lot of their statements heavily resonate with the ethos of the collaborative curatorial projects that I am

[373] Ibid. p.36.
[374] Ibid.
[375] Olamiju, Fajemisin. "For the Love of Doing Nothing: The bare minimum collective on Illness, Care, and Work." Flash Art, 20 May 2022.
[376] Prowse, J. and Kelly, L. *Creating change: Bare minimum collective on prioritising laziness*. 1854 Photography. 6 October 2022. https://www.1854.photography/2021/10/creating-change-bare-minimum-collective/
[377] Collective, B. M. *The bare minimum manifesto*. Medium. https://medium.com/@bareminimum/the-bare-minimum-manifesto-bfedbbc9dd71

outlining in this writing. Their manifesto demonstrates that it is possible to have a set of statements which name the work you do but does not set this in stone, instead leaving aims open to always evolving, giving permission to be inconsistent, and finally, is open to being destroyed when it becomes static. I believe this kind of flexible approach to one's own work is critical, especially in the face of rigid institutional structures that we have grown accustomed to seeing all around the world.

Similarly, the collaborative models that I'm proposing do not seek to resist work altogether but challenge what work can be. Both Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies explore what work can look like when it starts from a different set of conditions, namely care, friendship and attentivity to many relational processes that are often not included in curatorial discourses. Therefore, I would not define the work we do through topsoil as anti-work but as 'friendship-work.' It is labour; it requires commitment and the dedication of multiple resources such as time, money and mental capacities. A lot of the time, as Bare minimum collective also admits, such practice often ends up being a lot of unpaid and underappreciated work. We give ourselves permission to be together not necessarily to produce work that aims to fulfil the expectations of the Western art world, whilst work sometimes emerges from our being together. Perhaps, in that sense, we are anti-gathering-for-work. We gather around friendship and work towards a relationship.

Ours is not a reactionary getting together. In fact, we sometimes find ourselves needing the kind of support and security that work in the conventional sense may provide. We ask: "Why not let an institution facilitate and provide for our time spent together?" I also wonder if it is necessary

to resist institutional support at all, but instead use it as a tactic to support a non-capitalist friendship-work? In many academic and institutionalised contexts, it is often expected that research is conducted using a certain language and methodology, which tend to disregard certain affective bonds, solidarities and amicable connections. Therefore, I believe it is important to think through these ways of relating to those we work, think and live with. The curatorial models presented in this thesis approach such bonds as an important component of practice as well as a basis for forming alliances and collaborations.

In recent years, friendship has been a subject of multiple exhibitions and biennials, showing that there is an interest in the political potential of working through the notion of friendship. For example, the 14th Kaunas Biennial, co-curated by Alicia Knowck and Inga Lāce, was titled *Long-Distance Friendships* and asked: "in a time of geopolitical fragmentation, can international alliances be forged and nurtured based on friendship and solidarity rather than power and market dynamics?"[378] Working from the notions of friendship and learning, the biennial aimed to look at personal stories, intimate research processes and activating workshops in order to respond to post-Soviet and postcolonial struggles, connecting Central and Eastern Europe with Central Asia and Africa.

Secondly, Olga Grotova presented her practice-based research project *The Friendship Garden* as part of her residency at Studio Voltaire in London.[379] *The Friendship Garden* starts off in the garden of the artist's grandmother situated in the Urals, and aims to explore alternative economic systems based on friendship, cooperation and care across diverse communities, diasporas and

[378] https://bienale.lt/2023/en/long-distance-friendships/
[379] Studio Voltaire. https://studiovoltaire.org/whats-on/olga-grotova-the-friendship-garden/.

generations.[380] It explores gardening as a means of resistance through looking at a marginalised female bond and connection to land. Grotova's grandmother and great-grandmother, having been forced to move to all-female gulags in Kazakhstan as wives and children of foreign nationals executed for being traitors to the Soviet regime, together made their own allotment, taking care of the land and in this, working through their shared trauma via the practice of gardening.[381] Through her project, Grotova addresses various aspects of gardening as well as communities that were built around this practice, particularly focussing on the links between the East European context and the Caribbean diaspora in order to explore solidarity, resistance and friendship through a connection to the cultivation of land.

My understanding of friendship-work is not concerned with friendship thematically but rather approaches it as a methodology for work as well as a conceptual tool for acknowledging and cherishing difference in relationships, and hence opening up the notion of friendship to worlds beyond human relations. A field of potential emerges as we are exposed to various methods of learning in relation to an expanded variety of others, which exposes us to different ways of getting to knowledges. The friendship-work that we do is an effort to observe these different ways, multiplying and mapping them in order to visualise and share these methods with others. It is a mapping practice that works toward building worlds, speculating on futurities and knowing differently in the company of others.

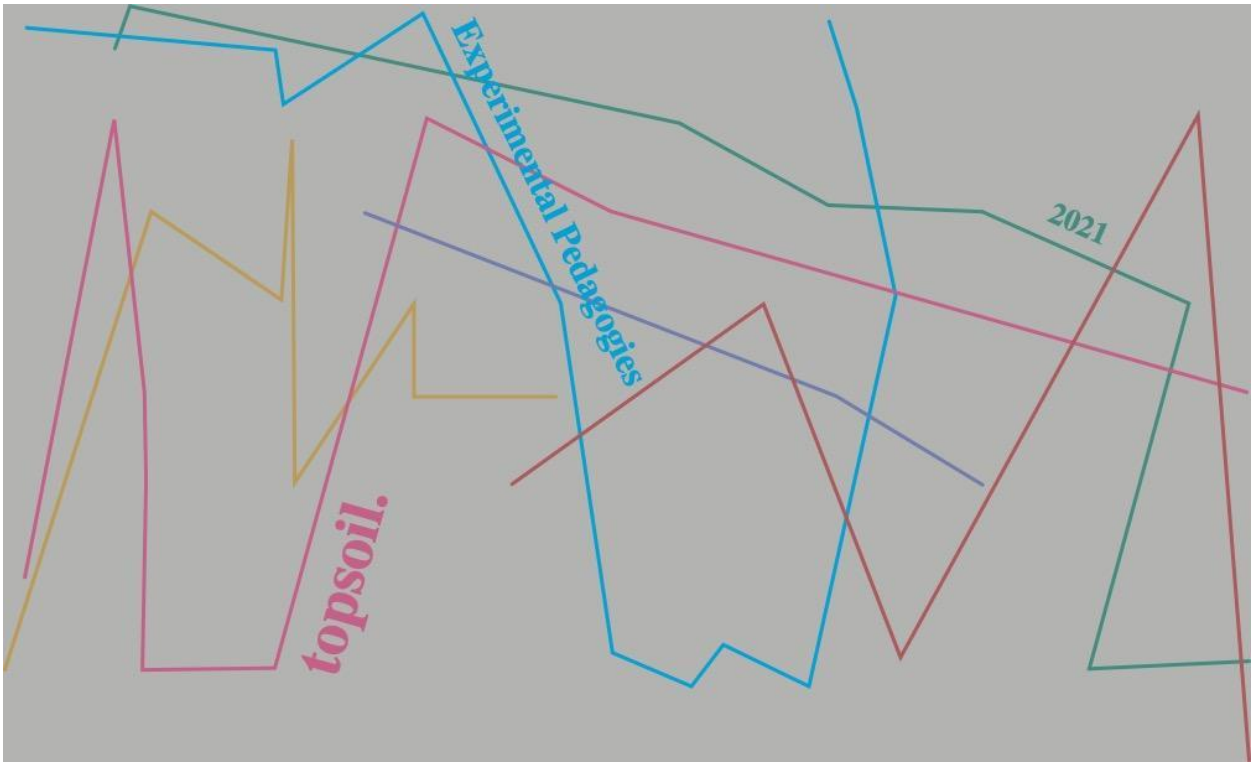
4.11. Speculative Mapping as a Relational Practice

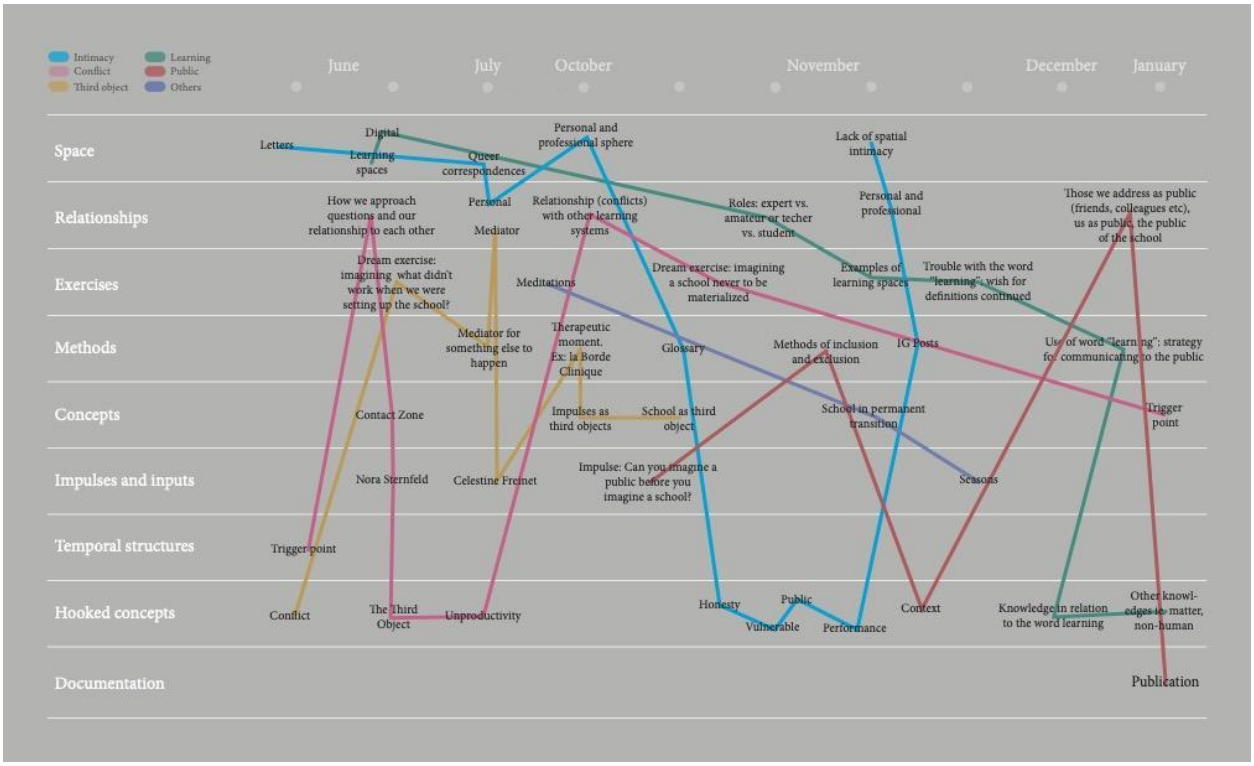
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid.

Having started this chapter with a grounding exercise and continuing with impulses that drew on examples, stories, texts and elements from the two curatorial practices I am presenting, I would like to conclude this chapter by turning to mapping. Rather than attempting to make a map myself as part of this chapter, I would like to elaborate on our practice of mapping and structure the chapter in a way that it contributes to mapping several desire lines through the curatorial models. These desire lines, although often subtle and not easily traceable, are aimed at creating a map of their own. As opposed to tracing which implies an already existing mode, mapping allows us to imagine new ways of living. It has the potential to speculate on lives to come and therefore, has become crucial to our processes of learning from one another in finding ways to live and work together.

Our first experiment in putting together a map as topsoil was not planned. It arose from our inability to bring together many things we were thinking through and our confusion around a lack of strategies for organising all the ideas we were working with. The first map came to be through a necessary process of understanding ourselves. Discussing and trying to verbalise some of the notions and cases we were addressing was in fact limiting us; it was then that we decided to create an intuitive map of these narratives. Initially called a chart, graph or a map, this work was an effort to investigate how and why we learn from one another, and to disorganise through the organising act of mapping. The speculative map that emerged out of memories of months of Zoom calls, voice messages, exercises and online meditation sessions, provided us with an inventory of approaches that worked for us during that particular period of time. This marked a significant moment in our practice, being the first time that had we deliberately tried to let go of our preconceived ideas on what we understood research to be and what kind of practices we

would like to foster. Working from our relationship, we mapped our needs across our shared research and practice.





First, we noticed that we desire to be able to create bonds through our work: between us, between materials, objects and texts, other people, knowledges and techniques. We have learned that building connections, friendships and relationalities as such comes with the necessity to face friction and focus on its generative potential. Second, we worked in rhythms; it is crucial for us to establish distinct phases that we worked at different paces, following different intentions and needs. We acknowledged our shifting priorities and desire lines, always working with the urge to remain open to adjusting our ways of working. Again, this is only possible when there isn't a fixed structure that is dictated from the outside or from within. This openness was mirrored thematically as well. The reason we were interested in alternative pedagogies was because it connected our personal experiences and struggles with the existing normative structures, models and methodologies of curatorial and academic work. Despite its boundaries, it offered the freedom to work from our relationship in order to understand our desire lines and situate them as alternatives to the existing dominant patterns. By bringing in case studies from our surroundings, understanding the contexts of art and critical theory, reading pedagogical texts and through spontaneous experimentation with different methods, we implemented dialogic principles for work from our particular as well as shared contexts, conditions and positions.

Organisation doesn't need to always necessarily assume fixed structures. It is normative structures that are problematic since they tend to be fixed and imposed without adapting to the needs and conditions of people, desires and land. They don't always take into consideration how they leave out certain people and communities due to issues of access and the inability to create models that would work in different contexts and specificities. For instance, the notion of 'buen

vivir' emerging from from South America is an alternative approach to such fixity.[382] Stemming from the thought that development-as-progress needs to be rethought in the face of the climate crisis, the notion proposes a disengagement from development and neo-liberal growth. Instead, it calls us to focus on the needs and rights of all life, which implies an ethical and political opening to extended communities of humans and other-than-humans based upon affection and spirituality.[383]

The map also served to document our process of working and learning together. Struggling with modes of documenting our research, we thought of the map as not interfering with our flow or rhythm, whilst also compelling us to consider what and how we remember. It wasn't simultaneously produced so it allowed us to take our time with each topic, anecdote or feeling only to be revisited after a certain amount of time passed and work through their impressions and marks in our collective memory. This is important as it created room for engaging with additional narratives and bring in fragments of fiction. An important aspect of the discussion when putting together this speculative map was regarding how to faithfully transmit that which we believe is the substance of our work while retaining the openness to imagine and speculate rather than presenting facts and outcomes.[384] Therefore a lot of sensations, feelings and afterthoughts made their way onto the map as we allowed the glimpses of our memories and affective experiences to inform and interact with other data. This first map was especially important as it allowed us to recognise intimacy as the site where our work emerges from as well

[382] See, for example, "Thinking-feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South" written by Arturo Escobar.
[383] Kothari, Ashis; Salleh, Ariel; Escobar, Arturo; Demaria, Federico and Acosta, Alberto. "Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary." June, 2019.
[384] Ibid.

as being what it leads to; it is what allows us to work without knowing where it will go and without sticking to a rigid structure. As such, it allows room for play and speculation.

Moving and transforming through our relationship is key to what we do, and so the map served to document how we strive to move together. Finally, it represents the negotiation of our embodied and situated experiences as well as our different ways of remembering. Starting from our relationship and not moving towards a particular destination, what keeps us grounded together is intention. Rather than a predetermined structure, we are guided by an intention to practice friendship and learn from one anorther. As we collectively wrote in the introductory text of the map: “we intend to come closer to the ways each one of us truly can and wants to learn and express such learning; we intend to come closer to one another by embarking on a journey for sensing, recognizing and potentiating each other’s unique way of knowing: that perhaps may be what intimacy is for us.”

In 2021, as an attempt to further open up our working process, we conducted a workshop titled “Laboratory to Learn How to Talk to Plants” with Ecuadorian artist, ceramicist, gardener and teacher Desiree Coral. Over the course of three online meetings with Desiree between May and June 2021, the four of us explored our “human” capacities to connect with plants and various other-than-human beings. For the first of these workshops, Desiree asked us to pick a plant from our surroundings, observe it regularly over a week, and then try to map it. For the second workshop, based on the previous mappings of our respective plants, we conducted a weaving workshop and experimented with translating our maps onto a grid through weaving. Our mutual learning with Desiree was a way to develop processes of relating, which included a different

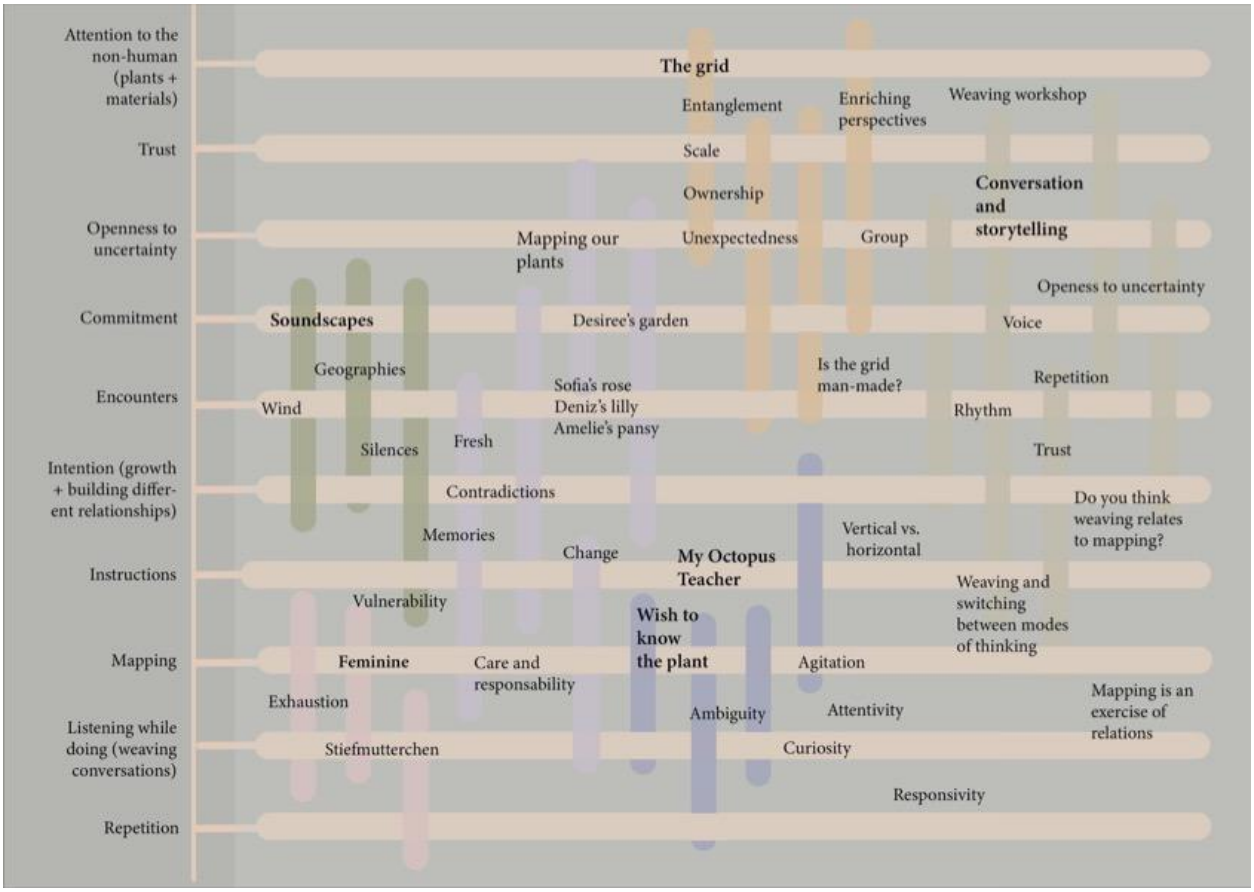
understanding of time. This required undoing oneself (our temporality and limitations), the sensual, our spatial containment as well as the thought patterns and forms of intimacy that arise while doing something with our hands such as weaving or sketching. The main focus of these activities was learning from the material itself and learning by doing. Through being attentive and caring for a specific being we observed over time from a distance, we allowed ourselves to approach it differently than we would have in our daily lives. The encounter was transformed because of the attention that was directed at it. We, then, turned our encounter with Desiree into an infographic on these processes of connection, intimacy and memory within learning relationships. We brought together the techniques and methodologies she taught us with the stories, anecdotes, sensations and experiences that we had throughout the weeks that the workshops took place. What we were experimenting with through being attentive to other-than-human beings with particular agentic capacities was an attempt to expand our understanding of who and what we can learn from and the ways in which we do so.

Laboratory to Learn How to Talk to plants

With Desiree Coral

topsoil.
2021

Experimental pedagogies



Furthermore, the workshop titled "Mapping Encounters" that we conducted at Vierte Welt in Berlin in September 2022 was an important experience for us to better understand what mapping allows us to do. The workshop opened with the question: "What if we take care as the organising principle of learning spaces?" It performed with the group of participants our three-step process: a grounding practice (place-making), a sharing practice (impulses) and a relational practice (mapping). It utilised vocabularies and methods that stemmed from our particular experience of working together long-term, across a great distance and through contextual and conditional differences. For the workshop which had physical and online participants, we shared our methodology with others in order to reflect on the expectations, bodily sensations, questions and thoughts that affect the collective configuration of learning spaces. Working in small groups, we tried to build different registers (including the bodily, anecdotal, methodological, and

conceptual) of mapping the encounter of the workshop itself in dialogue with past (and possible future) learning experiences. “Mapping Encounters" was the second time (the first being for our Kitchen Session at School of Commons) that we applied the structure of our regular online meetings as topsoil, opening up our working process which led to collectively created maps. We have come to the conclusion that through maps, we can think together and document our collaborative processes; we try to discern different layers of our practice of thinking and learning together while visualising the diverse ways in which our thinking and sensibilities play out.

During “Mapping Encounters,” we asked participants questions that invited them to think about learning spaces through sensations, emotions, associations, objects, people and spaces. The list of questions included: “What objects from a learning space you have been in for a long time can you remember? What sensations or associations do these objects transmit to you? If you had to locate the experiences from this learning context in your body, where would it be? What or who gives you comfort in that context?”[385] The answers to these questions were not necessarily to be shared directly with the rest of the group but they were used as entry points into dialogue and relation with others. The answers had to be reflected on and communicated with the broader group in order to be mappable. Therefore, there was a lot of sharing of personal stories and anecdotes while discussing assumptions and hesitations on what a map should present. The questions, as tools for thinking, merely served as an invitation for an exchange of ideas around learning spaces. For this experiment with mapping differently, we advised the participants to: actively listen to one another, ask questions, respond intuitively even if when it meant straying away from the actual question itself, share experiences, categorise and recategorize, let go of the

[385] Mapping Encounters at Vierte Welt, 2021.

their assumptions about what should or should not be included in a map, delve into the entanglements of experiences and words, understand that a map does not have to look a certain way, take time to see and feel the different qualities of lines and the density of information, think of a combination of chaos and order as well as of execution, intuitive play and reflection. This moment for dialogue also asked the participants to be reflective, vulnerable and as such created an intimate setting that already presented a more playful and unorthodox understanding of creating collective knowledges. The fact that the workshop was taking place in the context of a performative space and lacked institutional codes and expectation of knowledge-making made is easier for us to meet one another differently than we would have in many other learning environments. This iteration of collective mapping showed us that despite the lack of an existing relationship or friendship between the participants, the openness of the format which invites to be vulnerable, and share situated it as a play of not knowing, getting lost, making detours, failing and figuring out.

As an outcome of our residency with School of Commons, we put together a zine, published by HumDrum Press, which acts both as a speculative map and an inventory. We were interested in developing a toolbox that consisted of collective methodologies resulting from conversations we had with other collectives in the programme, learning from their methods and their friendships, questioning what they meant by learning and building new affective alliances. We tried to understand how diverse learning processes could be generated through mapping our encounters with other collectives that were part of SoC, following their own subtle methods or intuitions. These collectives that worked in architecture, design, sound or gaming, all had different methodologies but also rather distinct ways of working with another. Based on prolonged

conversations, associations, drawings, descriptions and exercises, we created a visual document that shared what we learned and wanted to integrate into our own practice. This reflected that, for us, learning also means being porous and open to transformation through the relations we engage in.

We invited four collectives, Just Listening, How to love many in many ways, Panta Rhei and Ubungxenye to participated in online conversations with us. We didn't have a preconceived idea of what these meetings would lead to nor a concrete research agenda but proceeded with an intention to be open and curios, allowing for encounters to flow idiosyncratically from one collective to another. After our conversations with these collectives, as we were trying to figure out how to document these encounters, we decided there was a unique feeling that stayed with us after each encounter. With each participating collective, there was something present yet elusive that we wished to learn from them. For example, with Ubungxenye, our conversation felt like a long stroll in a forest; thoughts could go anywhere, one could get lost and would be picked up at another point. The generosity of opening up space for the conversation to just go on without limitations and expectations was a big learning for us. For How to love many in many ways, it was how analytical they were towards their collaboration, their self-reflexivity and strong understanding of their differences. For Just Listening, it was their attentiveness, appreciation and patience. For Panta Rhei, it was their precision and discipline. For the publication, we named this 'something' to be a quality, and we think of such qualities as research practices.

Images courtesy of HumDrum Press.
https://humdrumpress.com/Qualities-of-Collective-Learning

Through opening up to learning from others, we wanted to learn about ourselves: how we work and relate together, why we insist on not having a fixed structure and finally, how we could challenge our work together as well as our friendship. We understood this as an attempt at bringing together facts and data with soft qualities, feelings and intuitions. What was inspiring for us regarding their collaborations were not always their methodologies or mode of operation but also their relationships, how they held space for each other, how they met one another in their work and the ways in which they related to each other and those they encountered. This, therefore, demonstrated to us that knowledges are not fixed entities but always shaped by relationalities and the communities that create those knowledges.

Ideas surrounding cartographies, place-making and theories of space, representation and visualisation slowly and unintentionally became topics of concern for us when we were physically separated, operating from the very particular conditions of the different countries, cultures and art context we were situated in. With Experimental Pedagogies, mapping quickly became a technique for bringing together different knowledges and making connections between them to meet and systematise our interests around collective work, learning and friendship. Our loose methodology became a way of working through layers of relations, talking, mapping, rethinking, asking questions, making changes to our maps and continuing our discussions. It enabled us to create a third space, the empty template for the map, to place our experiences, thoughts, sensations and conditions into relation with one another. Mapping is a layered process where don't start from a pre-existing location but come together to build a new space altogether placing strata on top of each other. It is a relational practice where we pass through phases of reflection, drawing lines, proposing shapes and ways of organising information, and dropping them when they no longer serve us. In other words, mapping is a way of understanding and engaging with the different layers of our collective knowledge making and learning processes.

4.12. Conclusion

Writing and trying to find a language to speak about friendship is a challenge. It is an affective experience that is not easy to translate into linguistic and theoretical discourses. I believe attempting to create that language is, in fact, the task of engaging with theory. I argue that this is important because, as Brian Massumi has suggested, affective alliances produce intensity and change. In order to challenge the existing dominant paths to knowing predominant in Western

societies, we need alternative models, which, for me, take the form of curatorial models that build convivial settings and support infrastructures of care.

This kind of work undoes our expectation of outcomes and value judgements regarding learning and curatorial practices. For me, it raises the questions: “Why do we constantly feel the need to justify our work? What determines the value of curatorial work?” Most of the time, our expectations are focussed on producing something that would cater to the art market. However, if there is not enough progress in the expected ways, in ways that could be easily communicated and framed within existing discourses and trends, what is “produced” can challenge value judgements and refuse the desired professional modes of work. As topsoil, we felt our work needed to be communicated in a certain way, using a particular language and within certain institutional contexts and discourses (i.e. having a website or being part of an alternative learning programme). We have done much of this but have also noticed that our friendship-work requires its own modalities and needs to be situate through another model, another desire line.

I would like to emphasise that friendship does not mean an intentional lack of boundaries. and such relationships are not frictionless or easy to sustain. Convivial practices may even exacerbate the responsibilities and expectations placed on individuals operating in the art world. And coerced care is problematic. However, trying to build a language that addresses these notions in all their complexities is part of the friendship-work we have been doing. This has been the central focus of my learning with others over the past couple of years, engaging with these two curatorial models that have provided distinct entry points into notions as well as an understanding of human and other-than-human desire lines.

An important lesson from the gut that I find highly applicable to friendship is the inevitability of conflict. This does not mean we should all welcome conflict but more that we should acknowledge it as a condition. This does not imply producing conflict but instead, accepting it and exploring what potential toward rethinking relationality it can generate. I have involved moments of friction within my body, with other bodies or among others such as viral diseases that I have experienced, encounters with animals in Babakale and moments of miscommunication within topsoil, to highlight the complexity of being with. I come to the conclusion that desire isn't based on difference but on entanglement. And these entanglements, along with all the friction they bring, is what makes learning possible.

Reflecting on what theory alongside curatorial practice has allowed me to do, I am faced with the difficulty of practice. Discourses on otherness, which have been as central to this chapter as practices of learning, have largely turned to multispecies theories especially in the last decade.[386] However, despite the many engagements with the posthuman on a theoretical level, it is still difficult to practise. In addition to problems of practice in experimental spaces, this project strives to build a practice through engaging with what is non-curatable, invisible, unrepresentable, and indiscernible. It does not claim to offer a posthuman curatorial practice but presents tools for making friends and allowing desire to flourish.

[386] See, for instance, texts by Stacy Alaimo, Elizabeth Grosz and Merlin Sheldrake.

Throughout writing this chapter, I have noticed that there is great need for undoing knowledges and our understanding of friendship and care. This is an ongoing challenge, especially while somehow trying to operate in the art world where our desires are manipulated by the exploitative capitalist system and structures that oppress us and where differences that remain unaddressed whilst value judgements determine what narratives and voices are praised and what others are suppressed. This is exactly why desire lines and the alternative models we need to build must start from processes of negotiation that reveal how intertwined and interdependent our conditions, fears and challenges are. How we respond to things and how we choose to relate to them is very significant for how we engage with our lives and the world around us. Therefore, working from our reciprocal relationships, studying them, increasing our attentivity and understanding our constantly co-evolving processes can change how we approach curatorial practices together. And this, I argue, can change how we think, live and love.

Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to create curatorial desire lines while continuously remaining attentive to other desire lines that might not always be given visibility in curatorial discourses. Placing the emphasis on embodied experiences and storytelling, I have introduced two long term collective curatorial projects that I am engaged with: Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies. These projects aim to create room for attentivity towards a world beyond the human through disorganised models that present an opportunity to learn from the other.

Throughout the past years, both Garp Sessions and Experimental Pedagogies have experienced pauses, breaks and ends. For instance, Experimental Pedagogies came to an end in 2023, at least in the form it has taken so far. I am certain we will revisit the project and take certain aspects of it further in our other research and curatorial work as topsoil. The tools and methodologies Experimental Pedagogies has provided us with, namely grounding sessions, impulses and mapping practices, will most certainly reappear in other projects we work on as a collective. However, at the end of 2023, we felt that we had exhausted the possibilities of this particular project. Our urgencies and needs changed as we had built a practice of mapping, shared this with multiple groups of participants and audiences and received a lot of feedback. These experiences and the reactions of participants helped us to understand in what ways the project had worked for us. In turn, this fulfilled the purposes of our project, and so we felt ready to move on to another research path. This decision was not informed by an assumption that we had found the answers to the questions we were raising throughout the project, and neither were we looking for these in the first place. Knowing when to terminate a project and enter another path or practice of

research can at times be difficult. Especially if there is no specific research question, a set deadline, a final outcome or a strict structure that is desired, it is difficult to know when to stop. When our processes of working became repetitive, static and not as stimulating, we realised the importance of asking different questions that could create further friction between us. This does not necessarily mean that our project failed, at least in terms of how we, as topsoil, understand it. I don't think it has. On the contrary, we have discovered new desire lines and understandings. We do not want to repeat the work we've done because that would prevent us from continuing learning through our collective working processes.

Despite this thesis revolving around potentialities for the curatorial, as a curator, exhibition making still allows me to raise further questions that perhaps did not get to be posed and explored in the thesis. Meeting with artists and having studio visits, learning from their practices, understandings of attentivity and engagement with the other-than-human world, has been a great source of inspiration for me. Exhibitions, as an element of the curatorial that allows to gather around questions, thoughts and feelings planted by the artworks, allows me to extend my questions and provide space for further encounters and collaborations in ways that invite wider public involvement. Therefore, over the past years, I have also been curating exhibitions that were very influential in the production of this thesis. I'm keen on furthering my curatorial practice and after the completion of my PhD, exploring terrains where these practices and theories can be lived out, challenged and complicated.

In the beginning of 2019, I curated *My Dear Friends*, an exhibition that brought together works by Bryony Dunne and Roger Anis at Depo which is an arts and culture space in Istanbul focusing

on critical debate and historical and contemporary social issues.[387] At the time, I struggled to grasp how my theoretical focus and my exhibition-making practice could work together, not being thought of separately but investigating what I'm curious about through different methodologies, media, formats and approaches. *My Dear Friends* focused on Cairo's Giza Zoo which is a site of complex dynamics that documents a colonial past. Dunne's work investigated the pathways which enabled the zoo to exist with fauna and flora transported to Egypt, a former British colony through the Suez Canal. Anis's photographs in turn demonstrated the intimacy between the animals at the zoo and their keepers. The exhibition looked at these human and other-than-human relationships in a designated space, asking how these circulations that are initiated by human desires and interventions in the existing geography and flora and fauna could activate dialogue around the colonial past within contemporary social, cultural and political realms in Egypt and the wider region. In the years following that exhibition, I have come to understand how multiple desire lines can come together and that a practice revolves around the urge to ask complex and pressing questions and always reconsider them. It is expected that one would circle back to questions of the same origin, explore new languages and tools to ask them again, challenge one's own answers and engage with different conditions and stories to really understand what is at the core of these questions. For me, new connections and encounters have been made since, serving to investigate what and how we know as well as how else collective knowledges can be created while constantly questioning what ways of knowing we are opening up to. As I have tried to demonstrate through my engagement with theory and storytelling, across scales and difference, we form digestive threads that are always political and ethical.

[387] Depo. depoistanbul.net/en/about.

I argue there is an urgent need to interest those who have not understood the necessity of engaging actively with nature and other-than-human beings in our entangled coexistence. We need more models and projects that push us towards caring for what's left of our forests, animals and flora and fauna. This is why it is crucial to write about them and tell stories, as many people from various fields of environmental and animal studies, critical theory, postcolonial and posthuman theory have been doing.[388] The other-than-human world produces its own knowledges and has its own desires, the more we open to these desires, we realise they are not just about nature but about all lives including humans. Therefore, storytelling is a way of getting to know ourselves. The stories I have attempted to tell in this dissertation are a significant part of the practice-based component of this project. They help me move away from academic language, bringing in multiple fragments and putting different desire lines into dialogue, jumping from one to another in order to emphasise the interconnections between pathways. This is also part of a strategy to explore how friendship can be practised through writing, in the ways this dissertation has addressed and guided its reader. This allowed me to perform what I have been suggesting regarding being attentive to multiple desire lines and practicing opening up to different ways of knowing by bringing academic writing, storytelling and curatorial practice together through the writing. I refrained from only using the academic language that we are accustomed to reading in dissertations as the curatorial methodology that I am proposing requires me to form my own desire lines, build new languages and find new ways to relate to the other. The shifts form the vignettes or stories to descriptions of curatorial projects while weaving them with theory was an intentional strategy to render these multiple desire lines visible or felt. Therefore, the abrupt

[388] Some of the main theorists that this dissertation has addressed are Donna Haraway, Luce Irigaray, Bayo Akomolafe, Astrida Neimanis, Marisol de la Cadena, Isabelle Stengers and Anna Tsing among many others.

changes or jumps in writing were intended to mimic the disorganised and unknown nature of these practices.

A major aspect that I have chosen not to address for the purposes and concise focus of this dissertation is the accelerated rate of technological development, which further complicates our understanding of other ways of knowing. Therefore, as a next step, I would like to move my research to this omitted component and address advanced computer systems and cybernetic forms as part of the posthuman, questioning what this means in terms of the curatorial and the pedagogical. At this point, I am inspired by artists whose work performs an important role in beginning to address these complicities. I find the work of Athens-based artist Kyriaki Goni a very fruitful approach to move my own research on the posthuman beyond the level of other-than-human animals. For instance, her 2021 work *Not Allowed for Algorithmic Audiences*, turns to the materiality of voice in light of voice user interfaces and gives playful tips on how not to be heard by algorithms online.[389] With machines being able to detect our emotions and desires, for instance, based on our intonation or body postures, Goni is interested in what voice assistants are to us.[390] The installation revolves around these questions of human-machine relationships through various media; 4K CGI video, voice over, prints, vinyl letters and text. Starting with the human body, Goni strives to find ways of understanding and relating to these existing and growing systems. She puts other-than-human ways of knowing and producing knowledges in dialogue with artificial intelligence to address the entanglements of human, nature and machine.

[389] Kyriaki Goni, https://kyriakigoni.com/projects/not-allowed-for-algorithmic-audiences.
[390] Ibid.

Jenna Sutela, a Finnish and Berlin-based artist, combines elements of the digital and analogue in ways that are also very significant for extending my thinking. She has been working with scientists and coders in order to find ways to bring together the digital and the analogue in her installations. In *Nimiia Cétii*, a video installation developed in collaboration with Memo Akten and Damien Henry, Sutela experiments with new forms of interspecies communication, documenting the interactions between a neural network, audio recordings of early Martian language and footage of the movements of a bacterium called Bacillus subtilis.[391] The computer, understood as "a shaman of the modern days" and an alien of our own making, tries to decipher messages from entities from different temporalities and spatialities that can't speak.[392] Sutela's work, similar to Goni's, aims to bring analogue and digital phenomena and tools together as well as bodies and machines, working with speculative thinking and what is available for us to know between the past and present. For instance, they both address biological and computational systems simultaneously, using CGI, and artificial intelligence as well as the ancient technique of pen plotting, traditional materials such as bronze and silk or engaging with phenomena such as shamanic rituals and oracular readings. To conclude, their experimentation with digital tools and computational systems open up new arenas of thinking which provide a strong entry point into an aspect of human and other-than-human relationships which I have not thoroughly addressed in this dissertation.

I was only recently able to situate my other curatorial projects, exhibitions I have curated and books I have edited or written over the past 4 years in relation to this practice-based PhD project. Even though they initially seem somehow separate from the two long term collaborative

[391] https://www.somersethouse.org.uk/whats-on/jenna-sutela-nimiia-cetii
[392] Ibid.

curatorial projects at the centre of this dissertation, I have come to notice that they are also part of a larger quest regarding how the curatorial can be approached differently. These more organised acts of curating, albeit differently, aimed to ask questions that are still significant for the purpose of this research, exploring answers to them through exhibitions, artists' works, fictional texts and poems that I produced. Such acts have served this project tremendously and have created further entry points and research areas within my practice. It was initially difficult for me to grasp how they must also constitute the practice component of this project as the dissertation focuses on two models that are not centring exhibitions but, in fact, question what else the curatorial can do. However, I now realise without the exhibitions and books, this thesis would have remained limited because they allowed me to extend my questions and understandings onto encounters with artists and their work, creating further room to practice some of the notions this dissertation tackles and learn from their artistic practices. They allowed me to explore further some of the questions I have been preoccupied with by experiencing how artists engage with similar questions through their works as well as their limitations to answering these questions,

To once again echo Arturo Escobar and Marisol de la Cadena, these practices are striving to demonstrate the coexistence of pluriverses, a world in which many worlds exist which can create passages between the *'No Longer'* and the '*Not Yet*.'[393] They aim to present alternatives to what has long existed in the neoliberal logic of the Global North and suggest that these types of speculative practice, in fact, hint at potential futures where a diversity of worlds will continue to co-exist without set hierarchies between their ways of being and knowing. They call us to be

[393] Escobar, Arturo. "Thinking-feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South" In "Revista de Antropologia Iberoamericana", Volume 11, Issue 1. January-April 2016.

attentive, first, to our material bodies; they can show us how the human is always entangled with the other-than-human as the body is an ecosystem. Then, they situate attentivity as a methodology to approach our encounters with the other and understand this as an opportunity to learn from one another, acknowledging and co-existing while remaining different. Finally, it aims to present friendship and storytelling as methodologies that allow one to engage with one another and the knowledges they carry differently, without creating hierarchies between ways of knowing and sensing.

Amidst the uncertainty and inflicted fears of our times, it is not possible to use the existing models of the world that we are critical of. That is why this project, from a curatorial perspective, finds it necessary to attempt to invent new collaborative models and new ways of relating to knowledges. And this will continue transforming over the next few years, not remaining fixed but constantly seeking to map out pluralistic desires lines and aiming to respond to those desires. It is an ongoing practice, one that will create further desire lines and will continue to explore the potential of the curatorial for collectively re-imagining our relationships and ways of being in the world.

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