

People I Care About table of content
W139, October 2023

Have a Good Dog Press & Friends
with Dasha Leo, Ran Re-Reimann,
Ilya Stasevich, Aske Hvitved,
Gersande Schellinx



collaboration as an octopus

collaboration as action

collaboration as a lifestyle

collaboration as a cadavre exquis

On the 11th of October 2023 we sit around a table at W139 on Radio Pickle, in the context of the People I Care About project, organized by Have a Good Dog Press and Friends.

This reader is a collection of collective knowledge gathered prior to the round table that takes place.

The interwoven exchanges and references found in this small publication is not only a digital file or a bunch of papers stuck together. This is my hand reaching out to you my fellow collaborators. And your hands reaching back. This is us sitting around the table to talk about collaboration, friendship, the process of collective making process, how we experience it and the platform we inhabit.

An excerpt of Sara Ahmed's 'Becoming Straight' in *The Material Kinship Reader*:

'The Human Condition: "To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it". (...) The loss of the table would be the loss of a 'tangible' connection. Arendt would clearly mourn the loss of the table, as such a loss would make social gathering impossible. And yet we must ask, What is the "point" of such gathering?'

The discussion continues.

Dittel, K. and Edwards, C. (2022) *The material kinship reader material beyond extraction and kinship beyond the Nuclear Family*. Eindhoven: Onomatopée.

of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other would no longer be separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible.¹¹ The table here is something 'tangible' that makes a sense of relatedness possible. Tables, when used in this way, are kinship objects: we relate to other relatives through the mediation of the table. We could even say that the table becomes a relative. The loss of the table would be the loss of a 'tangible' connection. Arendt would clearly mourn the loss of the table, as such a loss would make social gathering impossible. And yet we must ask, What is the 'point' of such gathering? The table in its very function as a kinship object might enable forms of gathering that direct us in specific ways or that make some things possible and not others. Gatherings, in other words, are not neutral but directive. In gathering, we may be required to follow specific lines. If families and other social groups gather 'around' tables, what does this 'gathering' do? What directions do we take when we gather in this way, by gathering 'around' the table? So, I am seated at a table. It is the dining table and the family gathers around it. The table

101 Sara Ahmed

mediating between bodies that gather around to form a 'gathering' is described by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*: 'To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it.'^{7,8} What passes on the table establishes lines of connection between those that gather, while the table itself 'supports' the act of passing things around.⁹ Janet Carsten, in her volume *After Kinship*, explores the table as a kinship object, focusing specifically on the kitchen table: 'My own powerful "house memories" focus on a large kitchen table at which not only cooking and eating but also most family discussions, communal homework, and many games took place.'¹⁰ The kitchen table 'supports' the family gathering by providing a surface 'on' which 'we' can do things. The shared orientation towards the table allows the family to cohere as a group, even when we do different things 'at' the table. It is interesting to note that Hannah Arendt suggests that the disappearance of the table would mean the loss of such sociality—when people do not gather or feel 'part' of a gathering: 'The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic séance where a number

100 Becoming Straight

Dear fellow collaborator,

On the 11th of October 2023, we will meet at W139 with Dasha Leo, Aske Hvitved, Ran-Re Reimann and Ilya Stasevich, all our fellow collaborators. Together we will launch 'People I Care About' with a conversation on Radio Pickle.

To prepare this conversation I'd like to ask you two questions:

1. What is collaboration to you?

Try to give a short definition of what that term means to you.

2. Could you tell us a story that illustrates this definition?

The story might be personal or overheard, appropriated or imagined.

These questions are inspired by 'Love Letter to Friendship and Collaboration,' published by Have a Good Dog Press, which explored their topic of interest by distributing a questionnaire to friends and collaborators.

To start this talk with you on collective creation and learning, my fellow collaborator,

I wish to make a collective reader in which one will discover our responses to the aforementioned questions, as well as the foundation of our collaboration.

To gather those replies, I would like to receive your answers to the two questions above in **one** of three ways:

a letter

or

an audio-piece (no more than 5 minutes for each question)

or

a phone-call (not longer than 10 minutes for each question)

Please make sure to have your answers written or communicated to me by the **25th of September.**

On the 6th of October each fellow collaborator will receive their own copy of the reader, to be read beforehand, as common ground for our conversation on Radio Pickle on the 11th of October 2023.

Thank you, my fellow collaborator, for your collaboration.

And thank you for your friendship.

Gerardo Schellinx

Letter to 'People I Care About' for Radio pickle at W139
16.9.2023

Ran-Re Reimann

is an Amsterdam based graphic designer and a builder working with structuring different kinds of (found) material in print or in physical spaces. He holds bachelor's degrees in graphic design from the Estonian Academy of Arts (grad. 2019) and the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (grad. 2023).

Dasha Leo

(they/them) graduated from the Fine Arts department at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in 2022. Since the beginning of 2021 they have been running a small publishing called Have A Good Dog Press with a focus on collaborative process in making. Their cross-disciplinary practice evolves around their interest in finding different ways of working together and providing a platform for others.

Ilya Stasevich

is a writer, artist and curator based in Amsterdam, NL. In his independent practice, operating largely through writing, construction and drawing, he deals with space and time. Ilya looks for points of interaction between the two and their mutual impact, as well as human relationship with both, grounding in ideas of memory, belonging and alienation. On a more collaborative level, he applies the same methods to exploring the link between the viewed and the viewer — exploring how space-making and writing can enforce that junction.

Aske Hvitved

'I'm an artist, pickle enthusiast and a radio host. I can best describe what I do as a constant exploration of staging of different layers of traditions. In this case pickles and radio get webbed together with thinking about preservation and archiving of art and art talk. Framing ways of thinking, a humorous undertone is combined with existential reflections on the human condition and art making. How does one think while immersed in the act of seeing art? And how can conventions regarding this thinking be interrupted by the experience itself?'

Gersande Schellinx

is an Amsterdam based interdisciplinary maker and designer. Inhabiting publishing platforms, her work consists of creating contexts in which to publish, research and make content for publications. Bookbinding workshop manager, Gerrit Rietveld Academie. Graduated with a bachelor of arts' degree from the TXT, Gerrit Rietveld Academie and a master's degree in XPUB, Piet Zwart.



Gersande Schellinx <gersandeschellinx@gmail.com>

A letter to People I Care About

Ran Re <ranrereimann@gmail.com>

19 septembre 2023 à 15:58

À : Gersande Schellinx <gersandeschellinx@gmail.com>

dear,
dear dear dear dear dear dear, dear,
gersande

first of all, i really love receiving letters, i even love the ones that end up in my spam box, hence my reply as e-mail.

i hope it won't end up in your spam box.

if it however does, i hope you'll find it...

or it would also be fun if you'd find something else.

anyhow, let's go.

1. what is a collaboration to you—

i think collaboration is something that start's when one 'thought'\idea' meets/encounters another 'thought'\idea'. however a meet is not enough on it's own. they must do something together. and it doesn't necessarily have to be just one 'thought', could be several. and that's where the magic starts to happen. the two\three\four\five\sixty\hundred/... listen, merge, mingle, inspire, cut, interrupt, talk, walk, merge, merge, merge, until there's no longer that 'one' or the 'other'. there's just a new thing called 'together' = collaboration.

but perhaps i'm too romantic.

2. could you tell a story...

let's say i want to bake a cake. i walk the street, i meet someone, i tell them, hey... i'm thinking about baking a cake tonight. so now we have 2 (or there's actually many more) ways things could go. 1) we don't bake a cake \or// 2) we bake a cake together. and when we indeed carry on with... discussing, teasing this cake baking idea and finally go to get the ingredients then i believe... that whenever there's discussion, an exchange, then there's also always a collaboration.

thank you for asking,
thanks for creating a discussion,
thanks for being,
thank you for you kindness,
we'll see soon,
we'll talk soon,
can't wait,
will wait,

ran

[Texte des messages précédents masqué]

—

Ran-Re Reimann
+372 56625177

Dear,
Dear dear dear dearest Ran

I was glad to read you love receiving letters: I love to send them!

In the context of our common project People I Care About, I wanted to make sure everyone got their letters in time and decided to send them through email. This communication tool comes with its own risks. As you underlined it, what can be misplaced offline, can be misplaced in the infamous SPAM BOX online. Yet, everyone got their letters: communication is ongoing and safe.

Out of all our fellow collaborators, you are the only one who didn't build up your vision of what is collaboration towards a certain entity or creature. I understand collaboration for you to be togetherness, an encounter, something of a series of actions calling for more actions, it's in motion. Collaboration is action.

You are a romantic in your vision, but I would leave the 'too' out of it.

Collaboration takes care, listening and understanding. Shouldn't communication be at the heart of any good romance? I have to think of Love Letter to Friendship and Collaboration by our dear collaborator and friend Dasha Leo. Especially the chapter 'Where Friendship meets Collaboration', it starts as follows: 'I imagine romantic love, collaboration and friendship being characters walking along in little shoes. Friendship is a dog that Love and Collaboration are walking.' So actually you might be a collaborator at heart because you are so romantic?

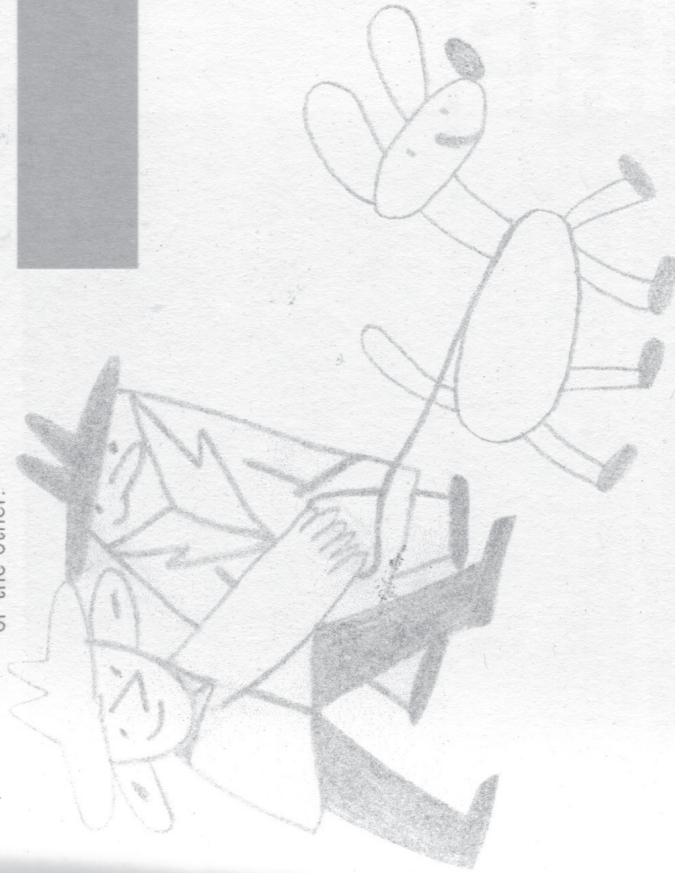
On the 25th of September, Ilya, Dasha, you and I met for an informal formal meeting in Osdorp. We all sat down around a table to talk about the program of People I Care About. Upon my entry the group inquired how I was and what I had been up to. I lazily replied that I was building 'things holding things' for other people. You jokingly reacted with 'my hand holding yours', this spontaneous naive image stuck with me. Holding someone's hand evokes notions of support, strength, reliance. Like Dasha describes in their definition of collaboration: 'it is easier to climb a fence if someone can give you a hand.'

Leo, D. (2022) Love Letter to Friendship and Collaboration.
Amsterdam: Have a Good Dog Press.

WHERE FRIENDSHIP MEETS COLLABORATION

I imagine romantic love, collaboration and friendship being characters walking along in little shoes. Friendship is a dog that Love and Collaboration are walking.

The way they take care for the dog makes it go one way or the other.



From now on I will use Love (

), Collaboration () and Friendship () in capital letters to talk about these characters.



WHY COLLABORATE?

There is not a single isolated system that we can use to support the evidence that one can do things alone. Everything that is, is due to collaboration.

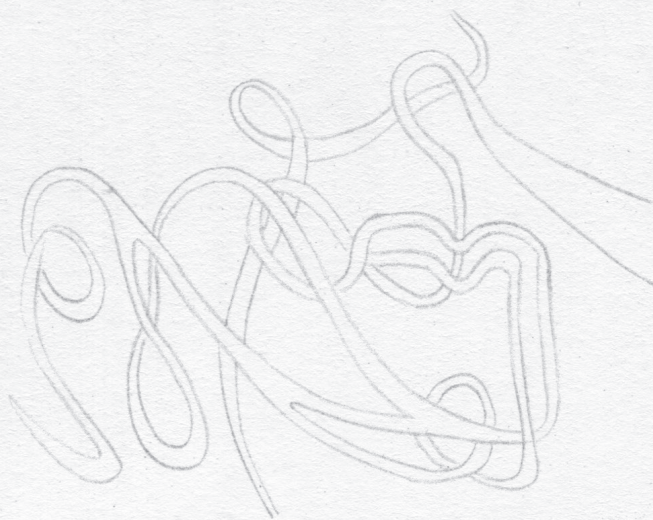
WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF IN A COLLABORATION?

Hurting someone's feelings, neglect, exploitation of natural resources

WHAT IS A BAD COLLABORATION?

Plastic wrapped cucumbers, everywhere!!

The path they take would probably look like this:



collaboration as action

as in very complicated, full of knots and entanglements.

Collaboration is tightly entangled with friendship, or a kind of social relationship for sure. It is an essential strategy of survival. The process and, especially, the outcome of working in collaboration with someone else is under no one's total control. I believe, the common fundament of collaboration and friendship is communication, respect and mutual interest. The communication, of course, can be non verbal but there needs to be some type of a common language between the collaborators in order for them to understand each other. Like in musical improvisation, you don't ask the others what they are going to do but you listen. For something to come out and interweave together into any sort of work there needs to be a reciprocal movement and there needs to be trust. Without anyone putting anything forward there is no motion, no development.



In response to your baking situation, I would like to share with you my favorite cake recipe. Which I successfully cooked for the first time this summer! This cake has been in my life for over twenty-four years. It's a chestnut cake. Aleth, who taught me this recipe, would always bake it with the nuts from her own chestnut tree. This tree welcomes you onto her property at the entrance.

Some essential steps necessary to execute the recipe are not written down and I was lucky to have this knowledge passed on to me directly in the kitchen. Your baking hypothesis reminded me of this experience. Had I not worked with her in the kitchen to make this cake, the recipe would not be enough. Some information can only be shared in action.

Let me know when you want my help to figure out the recipe yourself.

Like an enthusiast said before:

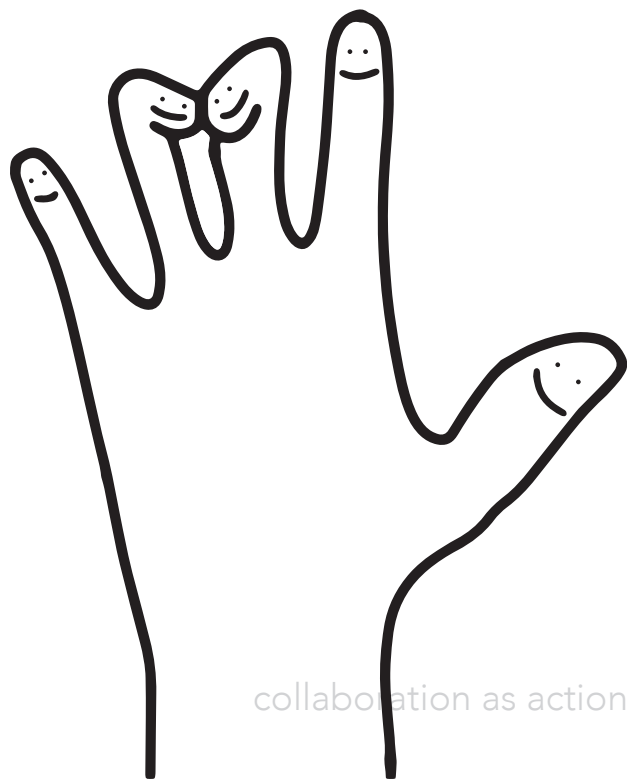
We'll see you soon

We'll talk soon

Can't wait

Will wait

Gersande



'Chestnut Cage

- 250gr of fine sugar
- 125gr of butter
- 150gr of flour
- 150gr of crushed chestnut
- 1 bag of yeast
- 2 bags of vanilla sugar
- 4 eggs

Mix the four egg yolks with the sugar, the melted butter, the vanilla sugar and the flour without forgetting the yeast.

Mix thoroughly, add the whipped egg white and the crushed chestnuts.

Th°8 for 80 min cooking.'

Rough translation of the recipe below.

Gâteau aux noix.

- 250 g de sucre fin
- 125 g de beurre
- 150 g farine
- 150 g noix pilées
- 1 sachet de levure
- 2 sachets de sucre vanillé
- 4 œufs.

Mélanger les 4 jaunes d'œufs avec le sucre, le beurre fondu, le sucre vanillé et la farine sans oublier la levure.

Bien mélanger, ajouter les 4 blancs d'œufs monté en neige, et les noix pilées.

Th°8 pour 80 min de cuisson.



Gersande Schellinx <gersandeschellinx@gmail.com>

A letter to People I Care About

Dasha Leo <dasha.leontieva@yahoo.com>
À : Gersande Schellinx <gersandeschellinx@gmail.com>
Cc : Dasha Leo <hello@haveagooddog.org>

26 septembre 2023 à 14:46

Dear Gersande,

Collaboration is a lifestyle. Collaboration is always communicating and being attentive. Collaboration is compromise and finding solutions together to make things happen. In a good collaboration answers come before questions. Learning to be a better collaborator I learn to be a better person towards the ones around me. In the end, it is easier to climb over a fence if someone can give you a hand. Perhaps there is collaboration in friendship sometimes?

In my BA thesis I wrote about collaboration and friendship comparing friendship to a dog. If collaboration was a dog, it would need a lot of care and constant attention. You couldn't just let it go on its own and expect everything to be fine.

tune in to how other people feel
listen carefully and ask questions
be active
when buying breakfast always bring some extra croissants for the team
make sure that everybody knows what's going on
(NTS) don't assume
have fun!!! (fun process is more important than the outcome)

Properly nurtured and cared for collaboration can grow into a strong skilful creature that would embody strong and diverse qualities of all its caretakers.

Yours,
Collaborator,
Friend,

Have a good dog!
Dasha Leo
(they/them)

haveagooddog.org



On 16 Sep 2023, at 15:20, Gersande Schellinx <gersandeschellinx@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Dasha,

Find attached in this email a very important letter!

xx

G

Dear Dasha,


I am grateful for the platform People I Care About is giving us to reflect on our working together. Over the years I've worked with (almost) every one of our fellow collaborators closely, but for the first time we find ourselves in this specific constellation.

Like most of the group you find collaboration to revolve around communication, being present, emphasizing the fun aspect. For you collaboration comes with growth, more than something you do, its a way of living: collaboration as a lifestyle.

For me collaboration is entangled with work, and my work is entangled with my friendships. And I constantly try to re-evaluate the blurred boundaries between those dimensions. What it means in terms of time, finance, emotional investment, health, joy.

Somehow when I read your vision of what collaboration is, it feels like there are no differentiation with living and working. At least that is what I understand with the word 'lifestyle'. How do you experience collaboration to flow through your private, personal and professional life?

Our working together, as friends, enables us to work with care, but also pushes professional boundaries in a space where there is emotional investment, what in the words of Ilya I call 'Think of Me Every Time You Think of Giving Up'.



This aspect of collaboration and friendship happens in a complex dimension. I'd like to share a conversation found in 'making matters - A Vocabulary for Collective Arts' that underlines how theses ambiguous terms (which I also feel very close to) can put a veil on problematic issues at play. With this conversation I'd like us to stay critical of the terminology we use, the values we revendicate and try to stay aware whether we actually enact them or only think we do. How can we make sure we enact our friendships in our collaborations and not only exploit our friendships in collaborative projects?

Could you tell me more about this statement: 'in a good collaboration answers come before questions'. What do you mean?

During my master at the XPUB, I've learned to question everything. All the given I've had in how to collaborate with others were put to doubt. I've learned to ask questions, as many as I could. To listen, react to what I heard and build on this meticulous exchange, in a space where nothing is a given. Every new constellation of working together needs a different attention, and questions are a way to get to the finest tuning in that constellation.

Cramer and Wesseling (2022) Making matters: A vocabulary for Collective Arts.
Amsterdam: Valiz.

The following edited correspondence ran in parallel to shipment HQL-364 from Rotterdam to Hong Kong through the network of LIGHT LOGISTICS, and was preceded by the correspondence in distribution→

EW: I think the need to play with formats of work, organization, and distribution→ are now more urgent than ever before—not because crisis is upon us, but because the problems that were always there have been revealed more blatantly. Why art, design, and culture are still important is because they deal with methodologies—comings together and ways of seeing and playing that precede the politics that most everyday folk don't even realize addresses (or neglects, or unfairly treats) them. So education, and welfare, and government funding all need to go through a self-reflexive hall of mirrors, so to speak.

FC: I couldn't agree more. At the same time, I'm afraid of the empty gestures→ and buzzwords that will get ticked off (like, for example, 'care' as a now-ubiquitous noun in art project funding application prose) if this becomes more mainstream. In Europe, I also witness the constant failure of artists to truly commit to collective projects and not just use them as platforms⇒ for displaying/performing their individual portfolios.

EW: Yes, it is not surprising at all that we've watched the hype on care build up over the last year, but as someone primarily confined to margins, the mainstreaming of discourses is also something to learn and navigate as part of our practices. The tricky thing about care, and so many other widely debated issues is that they really need to be enacted rather than simply theorized or talked about. But the need to repeat, repeat, and repeat again to people who are less affected by what is lacking in the socioeconomic system (power is a crux issue at every scale) is a

necessary part of expanding possibility. It entails 'mainstreaming' and popularizing and this gives those of us who do want to speak and practice from a position without power a tremendous pressure to re-circuit, re-articulate, and re-work the existing imaginaries.

What you mentioned about the failure to really collectivize in Europe is also a problem in Hong Kong and China. When HomeShop, the artist-run project space I was involved with from 2008–2013, was invited to participate in the 'Unlived by What is Seen' exhibition in 2014, the curators told us they wanted to include us as a collective practice because they felt that all the other collectives they observed in China at the time were merely solidarity-for-opportunity kinds of conglomerations, often splitting up when the group becomes famous enough that the individuals of a group can then make their way with solo careers.

So it's no wonder that so many of us have that starty-eyed fascination with the hype of many Indonesian collectives, *haha*, but as discussed with my friend Riar Rizaldi in a talk a couple of weeks ago, there are many problems there as well that tend not to get discussed publicly, and the exportation of *nongkrong* can in some ways be just as much of a selling strategy like anything else.

That said, having much more time to read and dilly-dally around in a confined space these days, I finally got to read your paper on 1970s Mail Art more carefully, and the key value I can take from the various examples you present is to see similar struggles and resonances resulting in similar impulses and tactics, such that your idea of the 'eternal network' represents a notion of affinity.

FC: Yes, and I am also wondering whether these struggles, resonances, and mistakes need to be constantly re-enacted and repeated by each new



LIGHT LOGISTICS shipment HQL-364,
photo: Florian Cramer.

generation in order to be fully (*i.e.* not just in an abstract or disembodied manner) understood.

EW: There are changes along the way, from generation-to-generation mutation. But I fear that despite such continuities, there is also a repetitive relegation to the realm of marginal play. Whatever foresight those projects from the sixties forward had for internet behaviours today—and as you say our pinpointing of AI/algorithms as the evils of the system is misplaced—how could intimate and networked actions parasitizing off of larger infrastructures really affect anything?

FC: Maybe that's the problem—that, by focusing on (larger societal) effects, we're unintentionally superimposing growth or impact expectations on these projects while their main value might have been their subjective-collective experience, and functioning as an experiment?

EW: Thank you for the reminder. I have to tell myself again and again in so many arenas to focus upon 'subjective-collective experience, and functioning as an experiment', rather than the unintentional but hard-to-escape notions of growth, development, and impact, as you say. The question of change is perhaps naïve and misplaced. Regardless, it is difficult not to acknowledge outcomes as part of the process of communication that happens among any form of *collective organizing*. How that communication occurs is central to the difference between centralized or decentralized processes, and I think Display Distribute's inquiry into grey economies actually implicates us within certain murky areas between centralization and decentralization. These have been some of the greatest challenges to the project, but they are reasons to continue. You are right that 'radical inclusivity' does not necessarily garner any momentum, but neither do elitism and the reverse

snobbery of oligarchic movements, which is a critique of both ends of the political spectrum.

If as you say the main value is located in the experiment of a subjective-collective experience, then your previous question might be answered by saying that the constant re-enactments and repetitions by new generations are necessary. Embodiment and affect cannot be historically reviewed except as practiced singularities, right?

FC: Yes, but you could also criticize that as a petty-bourgeois hobbyist self-limitation that gives up on the larger picture.

EW: Completely on the mark as well! There is a close friend with whom I have had many emotional disputes along these lines, and perhaps this pinpointed critique precisely circles us back in some way—whether as a picture or a way of manoeuvring—to the necessities of an eternal network

2021-02-19

Dear 慢遞員易玲何子 (& 妍廷),

HQL-364 is currently quarantined in a hotel in Taichung. Elaine, I hope it's not a major let-down that we have only been able to bag thirteen copies because of the bulkiness of Yenting's luggage. My agreement with courier Amy S. Wu was that she would give me a large stack of copies and that I would return to her whatever wouldn't fit the luggage. The remaining 62 copies are currently at my home and still need to be returned to Amy, who lives nearby.

Florian

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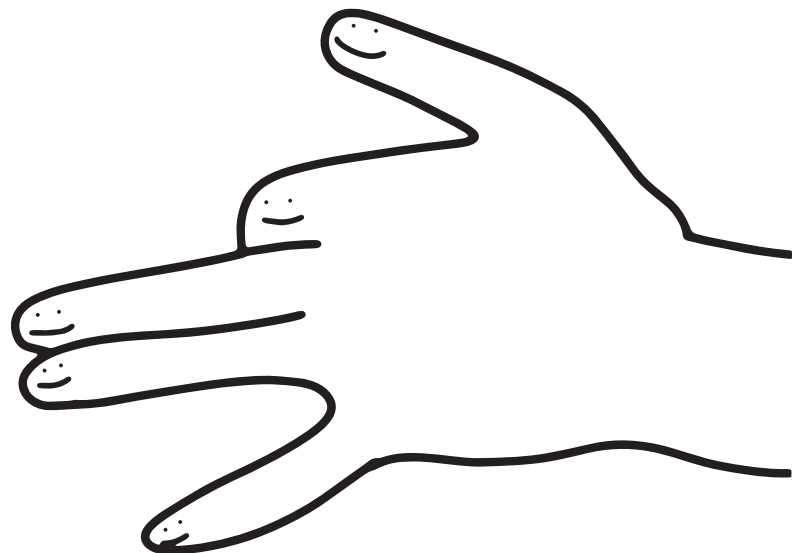
delivery of LIGHT LOGISTICS shipment HQL-364,
photo: Florian Cramer.

73

'Tune in to how other people feel listen carefully', you know that too: how could we become better people if we didn't listen? This excerpt of the cadavre exquis I shared with Ilya from For a Rainy Day is yours too to read 'even the thinnest voice will be heard. Tune into every voice.'. Growth is the heart of collaboration, something alive, a creature to keep healthy and happy, someone to play with. Collaboration is a dog. To own a dog is a lifestyle.

Thank you for your answers,
Thank you for triggering all those questions,
Thank you for your friendship, in life and in work,
And our work-ing together,

Gersande



WED26SEP2023

Dear Gersande,

Here are some thoughts in response to your questions.

I.

If I was to write a book on collaboration, it would contain the following chapters;

Different Paths To the Same Destination
A Tale of Defenceless Autonomy
Studio Visits
Consent and Commitment
Mutually-fulfilling Exchange
Trust and Pride
Perfect Machine
Give Much, Receive More
Friendship Framed
Think of Me Every Time You Think of Giving Up

II.

I think in words, mostly. Which I'm content with but it has its flaws. The main outlets for words are writing and speaking; in sentences. The way they are formed in my mind often lacks in precision, cohesion and multi-perspective. Writing helps solidify thought, but speaking has an even greater impact on clearing up or building upon an idea. The same way you can't think of a word sometimes and a friend is saying it for you — in collaboration, when coming up with a plan, people bounce off of each other's thoughts in conversation, leading to projects and proposals that are way better faceted than if they'd been kept locked up within one's mind. Like a cadavre exquis, multiple people's approaches build up on top of one another, making joints; and after a little post-production, rounding the corners and erasing the rough lines, all methods streamline towards a common destination.

Hope this is sufficient <3

x
ilya

Dear Ilya,

Without being aware of it you started to shape the title for our round table on the 11th of October 2023: People I Care About table of content. I have this image of the five of us, sitting around a table, sharing knowledge, making jokes and sometimes, you filing order in this spontaneous stream of ideas.

With this minimalistic descriptive portrait of what your (hypothetical) book about collaboration is about you open tracks for my thoughts to run. Like a mirror I read what my experience gave me to read in these chapters. Now I can write to you some of the reflections I glanced at.

When I open up a book, I always start to skim through the table of contents. So, Ilya, in my head I pick up your book about collaboration in my hands and open it up to the table of contents page. The chapter titles are sovereign. They immediately dictate in which order I will start my reading. Here are the three chapters you listed that caught my attention immediately:

Consent and Commitment
Give Much, Receive More
Think of Me Every Time You Think of Giving Up

More than anyone else, with those three titles, you touch upon one of the most important feature of collaboration, yet sometimes unspoken about, the emotional value and individual investment.

With Consent and Commitment you remind us that all collaboration start with an underlying contract agreed upon with all the involved parties, bonding a project in mutual reliance. Give Much, Receive More illustrates the indispensable individual gain one finds in a collaborative structure; in the artistic field that gain can be in terms of network, visibility, emotional investment, experience, experimentation, sometimes financial. And finally Think of Me Every Time You Think of Giving Up, a secret clause in our original contract that always calls back to an emotional bond signed within a collaborative structure which is harder to get away from than any practical or rational motives.

An interdependent circuit of being and making. Like a mirror I read what I wanna read in these chapter titles. Thank you for inviting me in your stream of thoughts.

Collaboration as a cadavre exquis. You, Dasha and Aske describe collaboration in bodily entities. It makes me think of the concept of transindividuality. How individualities are interdependent and shape each-other mutually, to 'form a collective or "superior" individuality without, however, suppressing their autonomy' something Aske also points at with the communal body of an octopus.

of man' (that is, of *every* human singularity, according to his own multiple variations): 'Cupiditas est ipsa hominis essentia, quatenus ex data quacunq[ue] ejus affectione determinata concipitur ad aliquid agendum'.²³ The essence of causality is indeed a 'differential' of activity and passivity within the same 'subject' or – as Spinoza prefers to say – the same individual, but it is precisely this unity that is expressed in each individual's *conatus* by binding him by the same token to an infinite multiplicity of other individuals.²⁴

The comparison with Kant could again be very significant here. Both thinkers have only one general schema for explaining the order of physical causes and the order of moral or 'practical' effects: in Kant, it is that of temporal succession; for Spinoza, that of modulation.²⁵ But Spinoza's schema does not attempt to oppose the two levels of reality, making one the mirror image of the other. Whereas in Kant a causal order is a linear *ex post* determination, and a final order is a linear *ex ante* determination, operating by means of anticipations or intentions (that is, representations of goals), Spinoza makes 'practice' a modulation in the same way as any operation, or as any individual causality; freedom thus becomes not the *reversal* of the natural order, but the necessary expression of its active side. The whole question of the structure of time is also thereby altered.²⁶

Transindividual Integration

However, such a description only paints part of the picture. It only introduces a 'first order' complexity into the elementary schema of causality, by establishing an equivalence, or – as mathematicians might say – a duality between the idea of each

individual's existence or activity and the idea of multiple connections between different individuals. In a strong sense, each individual qua an existing mode is the set of conditions of its existence, given within an infinity of other individuals.²⁷ Proposition 7 of Part II of the *Ethics* calls this first order of complexity the 'same order' of connection, displayed in the same way in things as in ideas. But the propositions that follow immediately after this introduce a second order, which allows us to specify our common notion of nature as involving the concept of the individual as a determinate level of *integration*, incorporating other individuals ('lower' levels of integration) and incorporated in its turn, with the others, in 'higher' levels of integration. It is here, it seems to me, that the very notion of the individual expands to include the *process of individuation*, the trans-individual dimension of which is irreducible.

Of course, the idea of an individual being composed of 'parts' which can in turn be part of the composition of more general 'wholes' is nothing original. It is this, moreover, which gives rise to the classical antinomies that correspond to the fact that one or the other term is posited as prior to the other (individualism and organicism, mechanical and organic unity, etc.). In Letter 32, Spinoza takes up this point again to demonstrate that, in nature, there are *objective* orders of magnitude, which are associated with reciprocal actions or interactions ('omnia enim corpora ab aliis circumcunguntur, et ab invicem determinantur ad existendum et operandum certa ac determinata ratione').²⁸ The distinction between the 'whole' and 'parts' appears to be relative: what is a part at one level becomes a whole at another, and vice versa. But this does not imply that the levels themselves are arbitrary: they are based on the existence of the 'same ratio of movement and rest' between the parts of each unity which retains its shape or

remains stable (as far as it does) – ‘certa ac determinata ratione, servata semper in omnibus simul, hoc est, in toto universo eadem ratione motus ad quietem’, an idea in Descartes’s ‘laws of nature’ that Spinoza has taken up, but in order to turn it back against its original creationist context and apply it not to the ‘world’ but to the singularity of *each particular level* of integration.²⁹ In Spinoza, a ‘constant ratio of motion and rest’ can exist at different levels (and no doubt at an infinity of levels, even if only some of them are known to us and practically concern us), which means that relatively autonomous bodies, stable or stabilised for a certain time, really exist (as long as this ‘ratio’ is maintained), contrary to what happens in Descartes, where the ‘law’ applies only to extended substance considered in its totality. Consequently (as the lemmas after Proposition 13 of Part II explain), for each individual its identity (the fact that it remains ‘the same’, and therefore ‘itself’) is explained by a constant ratio at a determinate level. But its variations or transformations are explained by the constancy of a ratio at a *different* level.

Such a presentation, however, although referring to ‘dynamic’ concepts (of ratios of movement and rest), is nonetheless dependent on a static – and, ultimately, finalistic – representation of nature, conceived as a hierarchy of forms, or as a general order of the subsumption of individuals within one another, according to their degree of complexity (or of the multiplicity of their elements). This defect comes from the fact that we always come back to what Spinoza calls *natura naturata*, in which the ‘individual’ is a formal notion that applies indifferently to all levels of integration (the representation of the whole of nature as ‘one individual’ come from precisely this point of view), as if this natured nature, as a hierarchical order given between two limits, from the *corpora simplicissima* to the *facies totius universi*, was the

result to which the ‘naturing’ power tends as its end. But the small ‘physical treatise’ after Proposition 13 contains another idea of causality, expressed in Postulates 3–6. It concerns precisely the way in which an individual body is affected by others outside it. In the demonstrations of Propositions 19 and 24, it becomes very clear that the doctrine expounded is not a physics in the restrictive sense of laws of motion, but a theory of the very nature of ‘things’ or ‘individuals’, expressed in the attribute of extension just as well as it might be in any other. It is this that will allow Spinoza, without any break in continuity, to call the *conatus* of the essence, in Part III, the same ‘constant ratio of motion and rest’, an effort to persevere in its existence, which, for each finite mode, makes it a component of the infinite power of nature or *natura naturans*.³⁰

What does Spinoza actually say? That each individual’s preservation, that is to say its stability and identity, must be compatible with a ‘continuous regeneration’ of its parts, what today we would call a regulated inward and outward flow. Materially, it is constituted by a continual exchange with other individuals. Mentally, it is constituted by the fact that all consciousness of the body mixes up or ‘confuses’ its own states with ideas of other things, just as the perception of external objects is mixed up or confused with a representation of the body itself.³¹ To say that an individual continues to exist is simply to say that it is regenerated or reproduced. An isolated individual, deprived of exchanges with the other individuals that form its environment, could not be regenerated. It would not exist. And therefore Spinoza implies from the outset that every individual needs other individuals to maintain its form and existence (see Postulate 4 of Part II and his use in the proof of Proposition 39 of Part IV: ‘Quae efficient, ut motus, et quietis ratio, quam corporis humani partes ad invicem

habent, conservetur, bona sunt; et ea contra mala, quae efficiunt, ut corporis humani partes aliam ad invicem motus, et quietis habeant rationem’).³²

Of course, to say that the exchange is ‘regulated’ means that it results from a relation between forces (*potentiae*), and that it involves destructive as well as constructive effects which must find an equilibrium. Now, it is not enough to suppose here that the exchange takes place ‘between’ different individuals: it is necessary to specify *what is exchanged*. On this point Spinoza expounds a simple but daring idea: it is the *parts* of the individual itself. ‘Regeneration’ means that a given individual (who may be called *ego*, or, better yet, *se* or *seipsum*; one encounters this phrasing in politics in the formulation *sui juris esse*, which means, strictly speaking, since right is power – *esse suae potentiae*) constantly abandons certain parts of itself, while constantly incorporating some parts from others (which one can call *alteri*), on the condition that this substitution leaves some invariant ‘ratio’ or essence.³³ Now it is clear that the *ego* or *seipsum* thus preserves its essence if the dynamic ratio that defines the individual is itself preserved, independently of whether or not others’ essential ratios are preserved. Clearly, ‘my’ preservation may very well involve ‘their’ destruction. But the opposite is also true: the entire process can be viewed from the point of view of any of the individuals involved; ‘their’ preservation may very well imply ‘my’ destruction.

Such an explanation, if at least it does not distort Spinoza’s doctrine, nevertheless raises problems. How, in particular, can a regulatory process understood in this sense admit of degrees? When Spinoza describes human life, he tends to posit a radical alternative to preservation and destruction, in an all-or-nothing logic that leads to the definition of an ‘enlarged’ concept of

death as the discontinuity or rupture of memory (cf. Proposition 39 of Part IV and its famous Scholium of the ‘Spanish poet’).³⁴ Yet the very notion of an ‘increase’ or a ‘decrease’ in an individual’s ‘power to act’, resulting in an increase or decrease in its autonomy, seems to imply that there are degrees of *conatus* or *margins of variation* between individuals’ indefinite preservation and immediate destruction. It is also difficult to explain what rules, or what circumstances, make the preservation of a given individual compatible or incompatible with that of other individuals (hence, from the subjective point of view of an *ego*, make ‘my’ preservation compatible with ‘theirs’).

But does this difficulty not provide the programme of subsequent parts of the *Ethics*, at least for the case of human individuals?³⁵ It seems to me that its solution must be sought in the implications of Spinoza’s model of the construction of the individual (or of individualisation) according to an originally transindividual causality. The demonstration of Proposition 24 of Part II shows that, to be able to exchange parts with others, each individual must undergo a *virtual decomposition* (which, of course, applies to ‘me’ as well as to ‘others’, in short to ‘everyone’ – *unusquisque*). In other words, when certain parts of an individual are acted upon by external things, it is because they are cut off or simply isolated from the set to which they belong, forming a transitory unity with certain parts of other individuals. In Spinozist terms, one can say that they are then considered not for their contribution to the initial individual’s essence or internal ratio, but as separate individualities which can be subsumed under other *rationes*. What Spinoza is saying is that any individual who acts on others and suffers by others’ actions (the two being necessarily linked) is somehow placed ‘outside himself’, but that one must not conceive this interaction

INDIVIDUALITY AND TRANSINDIVIDUALITY IN SPINOZA

as a 'one-on-one' confrontation between indivisible individuals. Individuals mutually modify each other or 'mingle' with one another because they exchange constituent parts (which are always material, but one can of course understand this to mean not only extended parts, but also signals), or because they are constantly 'analysed' and 'synthesised', decomposing into more basic parts and recomposed into relatively autonomous units.³⁶

It is, then, apt to ask what distinguishes a virtual decomposition, which is transitional or reversible, from an actual, irreversible decomposition, which is to say from the destruction of an individual.³⁷ The answer to this question is given to us by Spinoza in the theory of social relations in Part IV: it deals with human individualities, but he takes care in his demonstrations not to rely on common notions. Everything depends, in fact, on the single Axiom of this Part: 'Nulla res singularis in rerum Natura datur, qua potentior et fortior non detur alia. Sed quacunq[ue] data datur alia potentior, a qua illa data potest destrui'.³⁸ The more complex an individual is, the more relations it will have with the outside world, the more intense the exchange of 'parts' with other similar or dissimilar individuals will be, and the more necessary they will be to preserve its own existence, but also the more its own preservation will be threatened by the superior power of the very things it needs. I therefore understand Spinoza's thesis, in the final analysis, to be that the *multiplicity* of other singular things is necessarily stronger, more powerful (and potentially more destructive) than any particular singular thing ('me' or the 'self'), all the more so because all these things form a unity or a set from which 'I' am excluded. On the other hand, the strength of any given finite multiplicity of external (opposing) things is always likely to be surpassed by a set or 'combination of forces' (a *convenientia*) of which 'I' would

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myself be a necessary part (which is to say, the characteristic ratio of motion and rest of which I enter into). In the last instance, this process is endless, and could go on to encompass the whole of *natura*, which is to say that the *perspective* of integration and of collective augmentation of power could go on to infinity. This means that this process has no end.³⁹

In Propositions 2–7 of Part IV, Spinoza describes the play of partial causes, hence the necessary role of passivity in the preservation of human individuals. Passivity is the superiority of external causes, the virtual decomposition of the individual. It is inevitable. But any affection can be repressed (*coerceri*) by a contrary affection. This idea is presented, first of all in a general way in Propositions 29–31 of Part II (which give a general description of the effects of *convenientiae* on the preservation of individuals), and then applied to the human case in Propositions 38–40 (after the presentation of society as a system of reciprocal utilities). The relationships that are established between individuals by virtue of their 'common nature' form a collective or 'superior' individuality *without*, however, suppressing their autonomy. On the contrary, they increase their *potentia agendi* (including their ability to think and know), and therefore their power to exist.⁴⁰ If we remember the Axiom of Part IV (the natural superiority of external forces), we can conclude from this that the unification of a multiplicity of individuals through their mutual 'conveniences' is an intrinsic condition maintaining its autonomy ('individuation') and its singularity ('individualisation') for each one of them. If the individual could not find other ones with which it 'agrees' to regenerate it, it simply would not exist.⁴¹

We can therefore finally conclude that the complete concept of an individual represents an equilibrium, not fixed but

dynamic, which would be immediately destroyed if it were not continuously reconstituted. Such an equilibrium (which, following Simondon, we could call *metastable*) implies that in the process of virtual decomposition or deconstruction a process of recomposition or reconstruction is permanently superimposed. Now, even though this represents nothing but the singular essence of the individual (although it is exactly what Spinoza calls its *conatus*), it is determined in its very essence by ‘collective’ processes, that is to say, ‘constant ratios of movement and rest’ or *convenientiae* which incorporate the individual into a greater individual, or into an individual of a ‘higher’ order.

This is why I have suggested that the Spinozist theory of natural causality has a ‘second-order’ complexity, in addition to the first-order complexity expressed in Part I, Proposition 28, and summarised in the formula *ordo et connexio causarum*. It is not just about interaction or about a reciprocity of causes situated ‘at the same level’, but about the process of interaction which, for each type of individual (*individuum genus*, in the terminology of Lemma 7 after Proposition 13 of Part II), regresses to the lower, underlying level, and *simultaneously* progresses to the higher, encompassing level.⁴² Clearly, Spinoza thinks this schema is universal – that is why it can be explained in ‘common notions’ – and that it underlies all natural causality (which means that the ‘first order’ of complexity that expresses a static connection between individuals always comes from the second, which represents the collective equilibrium of partial decompositions and recompositions). However, this explanation can be given fully only when we think of the individuals who come into play as human beings. No doubt this is because, in that case, we can draw the necessary elements from our experience (*Experientia sive praxis*, as the *Political Treatise* 1.3 says). But what experience?

Precisely that of the conflicting affections which influence our degree of activity or passivity, which make us oscillate between increasing and decreasing independence with regard to partial causes: experience of the harmonious or conflictual unity that we form with other things, and especially with other men. Experience, in this sense, of existence itself, not as opposed to reason, but as always already including it.⁴³

‘Society’, or the Transindividual Mediation Between Imagination and Reason

At this point, several objections may occur to readers of the *Ethics*, based in particular on Spinoza’s distinction between ‘adequate’ causes and ‘inadequate’ causes, and more precisely between being a cause inadequately (being primarily passive, determined by external causes) and being a cause adequately (being primarily active or producing effects explained ‘by our own nature’). This is generally understood by contrasting situations where we depend on other individuals with those where we are independent and act ‘by ourselves’. Now, the reasoning I have outlined above suggests that Spinoza should be interpreted in a much less ‘individualistic’ way: to be active, or an ‘adequate cause’ of one’s own actions, is *also* to establish a relationship with other individuals, but one that should be thought in terms of *convenientia* or synergy and not of ‘dependence’, even as ‘mutual’.

Such an interpretation is certainly not obvious, but I believe that it can be defended and I would now like to do so. One could certainly begin by suggesting that when Spinoza speaks of man or human nature (as in the *Ethics* Part IV, Proposition 4: ‘Fieri non potest, ut homo non sit Naturae pars, et ut nullas

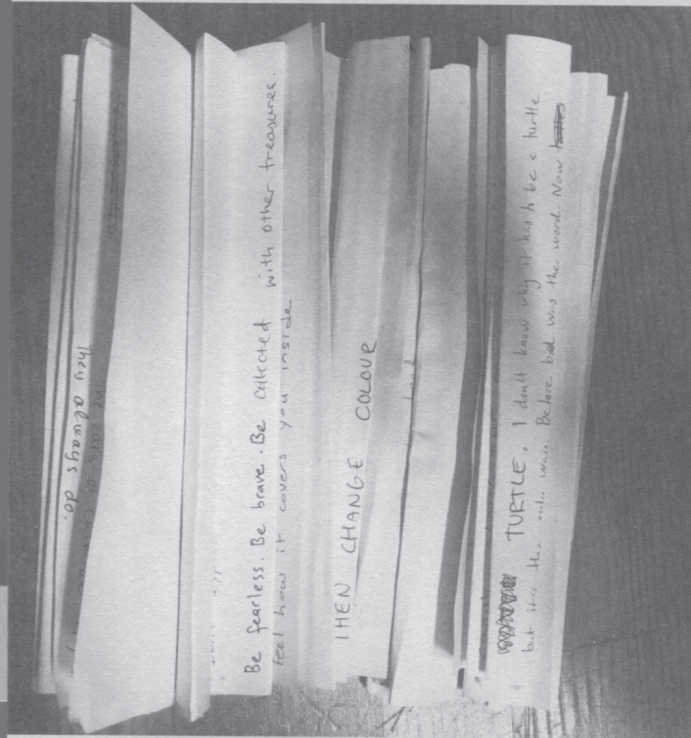
Yellow: A Monotone Monologue Hannah Hassen	cover, pp. 131–133 and 193–196
looking back at you to see if you are looking back at me Vika Adutova, Maria Gordana Belic, Eva Funk, Araiz Mesanza, Daniela Müller, Gabrielle Paré, and Per Westerlund (V, M, E, A, D, G, P)	pp. 2–11 and 56–64
Introduction Nicholas John Jones and Rachel Withers	pp. 12–31
For A Rainy Day: Publishing As A Site Of Collectivization Iz Öztat	pp. 32–55
Collaboration: Ten years down the line Maria Lind	pp. 67–71
Case studies. Key works from the history of radical publishing Ellef Prestsæter and Rachel Withers	pp. 72–105
On the font Eller med a	pp. 106–107
To publish Torpedo	pp. 108–109
Library Underground. A reading list for a coming community Eva Weinmayr	pp. 110–129
The Provincial Museum: An Archive of the Commons Guttorm Guttormsgaard and Ellef Prestsæter	pp. 135–161
A Joyful Struggle Martin Berner Mathiesen	pp. 162–171
distributing work, positioning your “audience”: options for authors özgür k	pp. 172–181
Biographies	pp. 182–185
Further Reading: Bibliography & Webography	pp. 186–190

Don't rest, narrate was edited by Nicholas John Jones and Rachel Withers. Hannah Hassen and Martin Berner Mathiesen were invited by V, M, E, A, D, G, P as an extension of their community. The introduction was written with input from Özgür K, Ellef Prestsæter, Iz Öztat and V, M, E, A, D, G, P.

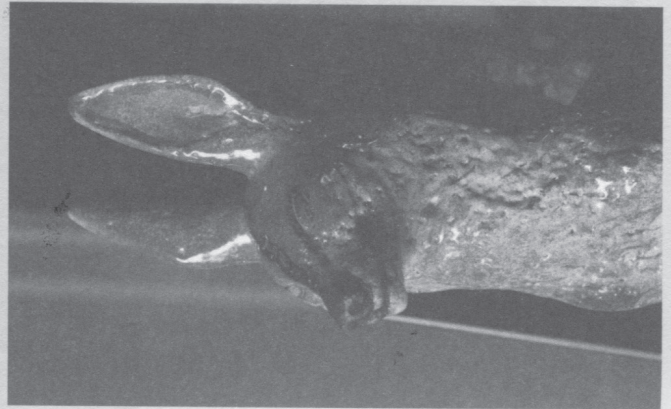
Torpedo and Eller med a took a big leap of faith and invited us to present an experiment as part of *Art Night in Bjørnvika*, a public event designed to channel cultural capital to the new development zone. Led by Maria Gordana Belić, Daniela Müller and Per Westerlund, we performed together in and outside of PUB. We occupied the pavement for an hour, mimicking a 'How to' video on martial arts streaming from a screen placed in the window, going through three cycles of physical exercise interspersed by three writing sessions. Some entries from the writing read: 'I wonder if we [will] ever get out of here again. But maybe Barcode it is now ... The kicking scared a few people. I feel that's OK. All the time the noise of the construction ... Important to take each other seriously, it makes art possible, [or] rather process possible.' Titled *It's a good exercise*, the action got us thinking about where and how we wanted to practice and it initiated a writing process. We started tuning into each other, moving together (literally and metaphorically), and learning by doing.

After that, we went on *dérives* in Bjørnvika: unplanned walks aiming to reread its terrain. We spent a day in the forest and took a trip on an old rescue boat in Oslo fjord with a captain friend. We became convinced that we didn't want to be co-opted into the new construction site and end up realising yet another 'contemporary art project'. As we flowed through a series of exercises suggested spontaneously by all the group members, we committed ourselves to an experimental open-ended process. We

collaboration as a cadavre exquis



The Exquisite Corpse.
Watch out for the birds.
Pay special attention
to the points closest to
your feet. Stop carrying.



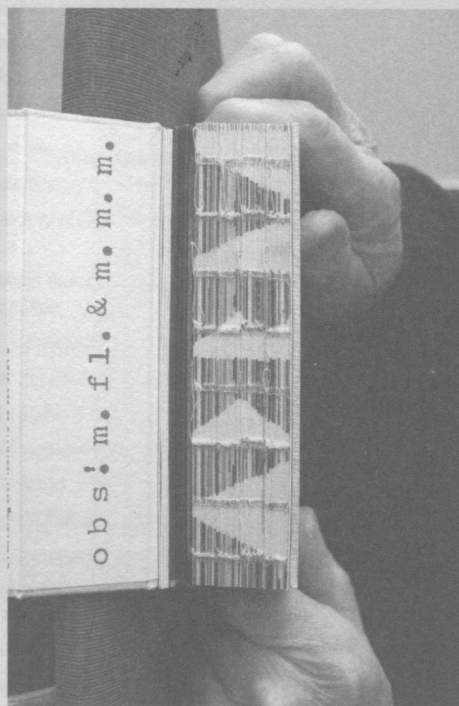
started inventing and performing our own rituals: 'exquisite corpse' exercises in which an action to be performed would be scripted based on seeing only the sentence above it; reading the texts out loud to transform them into collective sound; choosing from the actions in the text and performing them. This gave rise to artistic forms and working processes in which everyone was involved, and it articulated how we wanted to treat each other.

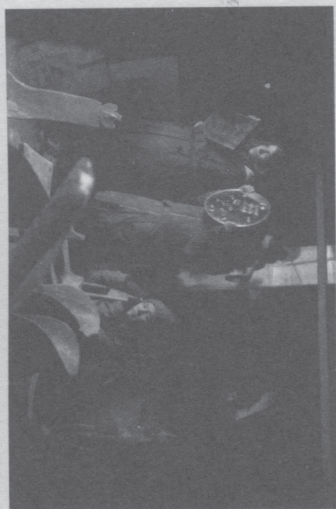
Start where the river goes underground.
What living can be made possible? You are looking for something to stand on. Pretend that you found it. Enter the attic. Play with the triangles it provides. Draw a circle in the sea and remember your sisters. Send them triangles. Don't rest, narrate. Go hunting for a sympathetic ear. Unfold following the current. Stop carrying. Find peace. Construct a weapon out of the object to your right. Form a cup with your hands and take some water to a friend. Make unnecessary knots to remember. Put yourself in a newly written history. Never forget Sappho. Accept your mother. Respond to perpetually changing constellations. Move with them. It's all right to be chameleon. Take the traces of use. Even the thinnest voice will be heard. Tune into every voice. Mimic whatever moves you. Figure out what it needs and offers. To where you point is something that is looking for you. Touch it with care ...³



Redirect the light in the attic. Objects stored in the dark, highlighted through our movements. Enter the attic. Play with the triangles it provides.

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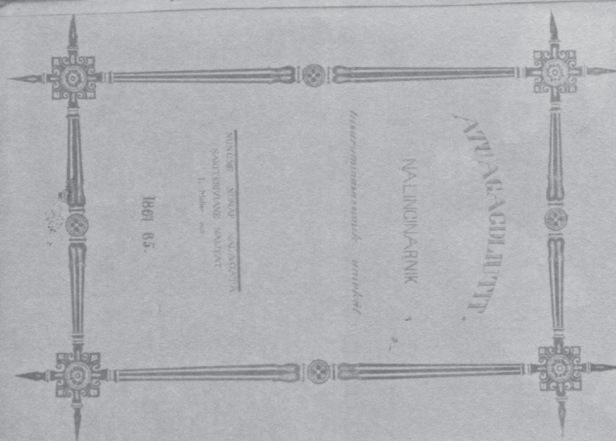




Redirect the light in the attic. Notice what you see with each movement, choose your favourite movement. Take your time. Unfold following the current. Leave it there and escape.



NANTISSE. OVALGUEFOSAK. MALONDEN. RUKKERTOPPENS NYE KIRKE.



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Don't rest, narrate

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Nicholas John Jones
and Rachel Withers

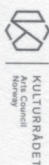
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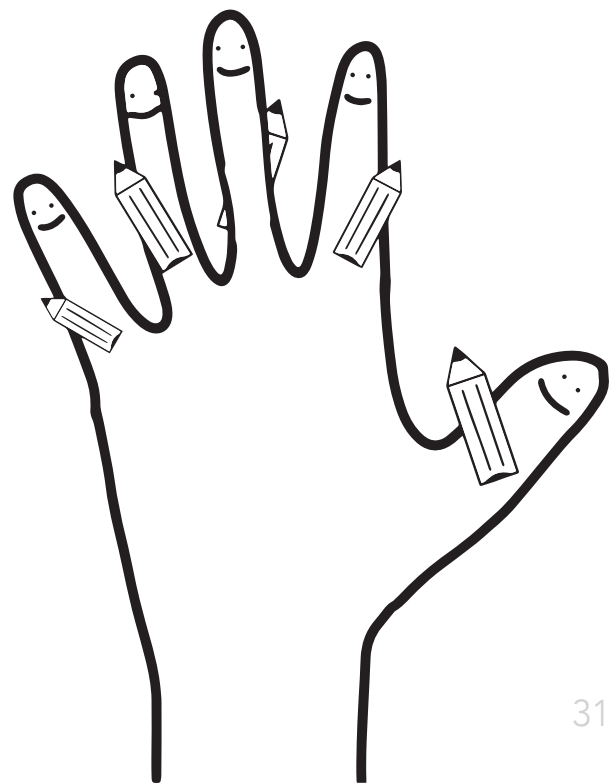
PRAKSIS is a not-for-profit
organization based in
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practice and knowledge
production through
collective activity and the
exchange of ideas, skills
and information. PRAKSIS
seeks to establish dialogue
between artists, thinkers
and organisations locally
and internationally, at
all career stages, and
across diverse cultures
and disciplines.

The translation of collaboration into this collaborative form of making, the exquisite corpse, also had me reaching for a publication that revolves around a lot of the themes enacted in People I Care About, collaboration, publishing, collective making, collaborative structures. This publication Don't rest, narrate was published in 2020 by Torpedo Press. For you to get an idea of what his book is about I forward you the table of contents and the Further Reading: Bibliography & Webography, I always like to dive into. The following is an excerpt of one of the contribution found in the book For a Rainy Day: Publishing As a Site of Collectivization by İz Öztat.

See you soon for pre-, peri- and post-production,

x

Gersande



What is collaboration to you?

It is first and foremost a relation of generosity. An exchange and distribution of knowledge and ideas. Based on a shared desire for new visions, new projects, knowledge, experience, relations and everything beyond.

It is generous because it means putting what we normally think of as individual resources at communal disposal (ideas, energy, initiative, network, even money). It means putting trust in other humans and community. In "investing" surplus into a communal body, rather than trying to maximize personal gain by holding onto control over available resources. A body that only remains relevant and sustainable to its parts, if there is a continuous renewal and refilling of "resources" put in - by its parts. Proposing interaction and activity as its primary form.

A body that gives back by taking the individual on an unpredictable journey of sharing, discussing, joking, collective problem solving and speculating.

Rather than focusing solely on a destination, the nature of a collaboration has no straight line from idea to execution, there are too many autonomous parts involved for that - one could think of it as a body whose brain consists of a collage of autonomous brains. A body where ideas emerge organically without clear intellectual ownership. Reducing individual control and ownership. Shifting focus from market value, competition and commodification.

The way in which we live and work together directly creates the political landscape we inhabit. Working collaboratively is a method to take a stand in society, believing that art and artists can no longer exist for their own sake.

Believing in friendship, equality and solidarity.

Could you tell us a story that illustrates this definition?

I like to think of this previously mentioned communal body as that of an Octopus. The majority of their neurons are in the arms, nearly twice as many as in the central brain, making it so that each arm enjoys a high level of autonomy. They can independently taste and touch, and control basic motions without input from the central brain. Furthermore, each sucker on an octopus's arm has 10,000 neurons to handle taste and touch.

Researchers' best guess is that a mixture of localized and top-down control is at work; it seems to be two forms of control, operation in tandem. This is hardly a story, I'm too restless to write anymore, attached is a bunch of octopus diagrams trying to make my point come across.

BLINDSIGHT

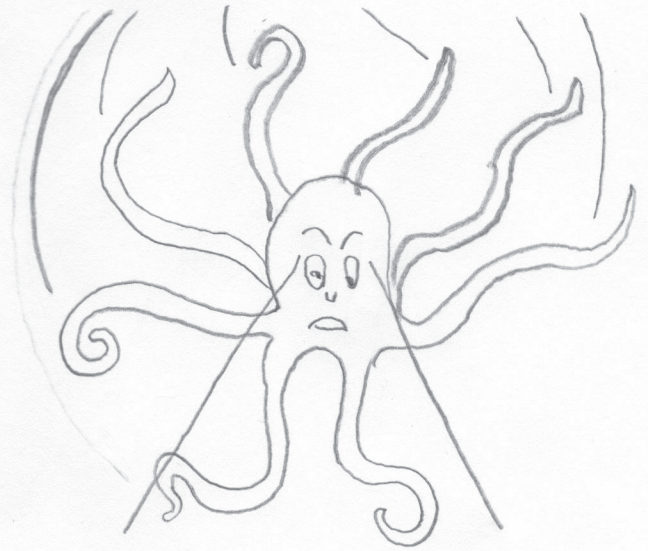
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UNTAPPED POTENTIAL



FIELD OF VISION

AVAILABLE RESOURCES



WINDOW OF POTENTIAL

ONE HUMAN
BRAIN IN
OCTOPUS BODY

COMMUNAL
BODY:



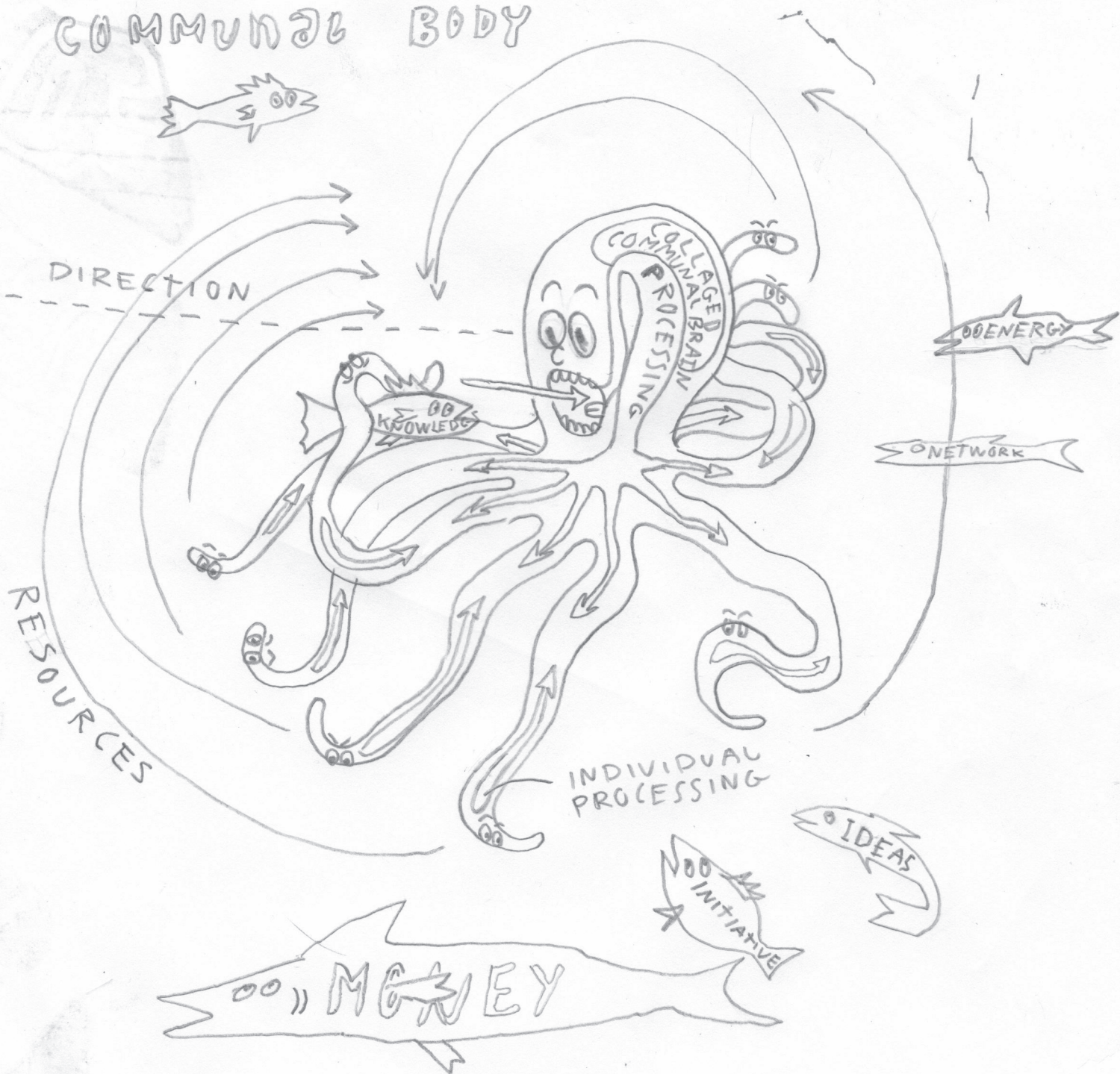
360°

360° FIELD OF
OPERATION
WINDOW OF
POTENTIAL
RESOURCES

FIELD OF
VISION

INNER WORKINGS OF COMMUNAL BODY

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Dear Aske,

The octopus communal body: wow!

First, you mention a brain collage to describe collaboration. This example made me think of Ilya's cadavre exquis structure, where he drew the line at collaboration as a structure. You went a step further and became the structure when your thoughts culminated in the communal body: collaboration as an octopus. Aske, I wonder, how would you translate your octopus communal body to our collective body, that of People I Care About?

Both you and Ilya made me think of this notion of transindividuality in collaboration, individuals meeting in an interdependent structure to become a 'superior'-individual-ity. Something like a giant Pacific octopus that are generally five meters long.

The vocabulary you used throughout your replies is very tied to economic models of production, so I tried to decipher the model you tried to formulate, one for a collaborative economy. Some key words that came back in different shapes are GENEROSITY, INVESTMENT, EXCHANGE, DISTRIBUTION.

'We want to take a position, to consciously embody a role, to practice our collective agency and let go of our isolated selves, individual contributions to the collective show and instead learning "being collectively".'

What you say about investing resources into a communal body instead of striving for personal gain made me think of this excerpt in Kimberley Cosmilla's *To whom it may affect*.

This vision on collaborative bodies has quite an activistic undertone. What we do and how we do it changes the now, changes the world around us. You preach the use of soft powers such as friendship and solidarity. Something that makes me look back at Dasha's definition of collaboration as a lifestyle and Ran's experience of collaboration in a series of small actions.

Still, I sometimes struggle with those ambiguous values. How do we make use of concepts of care and friendship without reproducing capitalist models of production and exploitation? How do we enact these values? Sometimes working together projects the illusion of growth when we actually replicate unsustainable models of production and being together.

The core of your collaborative model: the commons. Shared resources, a loss of ownership (certainly not a loss of autonomy). All resources should become a community landmark. In *Radical Matter* Daniel Charny, talks about connectivity in collaborative and community based infrastructures. He lists benefits ensuing

Cosmila, K. (2020) To whom it may affect,. Amsterdam.

contributions and was bound with the paper strap. The zine then circulated to be introduced by each contributor, such as a baton, following its page order.

Once again, facing a similar frustration while organising for the graduation show, we met in despair and not insignificantly joked:

"Let's do nothing, but together!"

"Doing nothing" is perhaps a slightly radical way to express that we want to take a position, to consciously embody a role, to practice our collective agency and let go of our isolated selves, individual contributions to the *collective* show and instead learning "being collectively".

I look forward to future hosting iterations with you,
Kimberley

To whom it may affect,

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Rotterdam (April 2023) Although the presentation showcased various research led individually, the publishing of these works (the public event and the zine) was a result of decisions made collectively. While each model of publishing processes experienced collectively is unique, and this example represents one among an infinity, some aspects are well and truly recurring in many other collective processes.

What I found relevant sharing, through this example, is the acknowledgement and materialisation of the environment that surrounds the intervention. The parties that compose the collectivity are not limited to the participants involved in the making of the publication but extend to all entities connected to the publication. "Hosting while being hosted" therefore involves at least the following: A "host" that provides the publishing space; a "guest-host" that, at once, inhabits that space on a given occasion and opens it to the public; and the two streams of "guests" respectively gathered by the "host" and the "guest-host".

Dear Carolina,

To whom it may affect,

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Franklin, K. and Till, C. (2020) Radical matter: Rethinking materials for a sustainable future. New York, NY: Thames & Hudson.

Connecting Communities

Materials and making are tools and processes that can bring people together. As these projects prove, working on a common undertaking with a common purpose generates and knits together groups and communities, engaging minds as well as hands.

- 1 – Breadline by Bethany Williams
- 2 – Granby Four Streets by Assemble
- 3 – FrankenToyMobile by Andrés Lemus-Spont, Marya Spont-Lemus, Louis Fernandez and Michael Pecirno

Connecting Skills

Designers are gaining mutual benefit from sharing their knowledge and ideas locally, nationally and globally. This is a win-win situation: while facilitating a collaborative approach to solving problems, they are also enhancing their own skills, and ultimately creating a design community with no boundaries.

- 4 – Refugees Company for Crafts and Design by CUCULA
- 5 – Bottle-Up by Super Local in collaboration with Klaas Kuiken, OSΔ00S and StoneCycling

Connecting Tradition

In order to move forward, we rely on the work of others who have gone before; lessons learned in the past pave the way to the future. For some 21st-century design projects, this connection with heritage and tradition is particularly fundamental.

- 6 – Beyond the Mainland by Phoebe Quare
- 7 – The People's Brick Company by Something & Son
- 8 – Karawane by Pour les Alpes

EXPERT VIEW

Daniel Charny



Daniel Charny is director at the From Now On creative and cultural consultancy, professor of design at Kingston University, founder and director of Fixperts, and an honorary senior research fellow at London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

Sometimes engagement is for making and sometimes it's through making – there is a difference. For example, when the community gets together to build a barn, that's coming together for making. But if you set up a making project in a library in a challenged neighbourhood, get people to spend time together, connect with each other, connect with the library, the products they are making are less important in themselves. The more public a project is, the more it is about engagement through making. Both involve building community, authorship, pride and resilience.

This is important because it's not just about making things, it's about understanding that you are part of a community, part of a society. Connectivity and knowledge sharing are a way we can deal with complex problems in the world. There is a feel-good factor to sharing skills, a sense of altruism, but there's much more to it. Open data, open sources, open knowledge are the only way we're going to be able to face all kinds of very difficult situations: sustainability, economic problems, ecological problems, social care, immigration. All of them are about connectivity and empathy. If you experience a relationship with a person from a different sector, different country, different religion – experience a real person, not just an idea, you've had eye contact – that is the first collaboration as an octopus

stage. Do I think craft, design and making can be a tool for social change? Yes, I do. They empower people to be part of a solution, not part of a problem. Sustainability on its own is not a good enough response; imagination without skills is not enough. Connectivity is part of the resilience we need.

Actual skills are the most valuable asset; the transferral of skills is essential to humanity. Surgeons fixing a shoulder use implants made with embroidery techniques. When I talk to makers, they have different attitudes to sharing knowledge. Blacksmiths are often very open – they used to be in the centre of the village talking to everyone. Whereas glassblowers and ceramicists are likely to be more secretive – one side of their heritage is about indoors and hidden discoveries, protected for luxury markets. For example, try asking a ceramicist about their glaze – no way they'll share the secret! We still need both sides – the amazing inventors who have the authorship, and also the openness to pollinate the ideas.

Ultimately this knowledge should be free and available, and the digital era allows us to share skills in a way we couldn't before. Videos capture the exact way people make things – every gesture, you can see it. You learn from people with experience, and how you apply those skills yourself to solve a problem is where imagination comes in. Computer screens no longer stop people from connecting. In fact, the digital has enabled us to learn again from other people, via forums, videos, webcams, live broadcasts.

One of the biggest problems we have is that there's a wall in perception: traditional crafts are not seen as part of our future. People look at 'heritage' as something that's happened – that's wrong. It's a continuum of knowledge. Put a 3D printer next to a dry-stone wall that's been around for ages – the way we learn about both is the same, from other people and from each other.

My interest is in the purposeful combination of traditional craft heritage with the contemporary and with the future. When people pick up materials, they're also making the connection between the knowledge that went into originally making the material and tools, their actual experience of manipulating the material towards a project, and the thought of how they can use that in future. Making is defeating that separation between past and future.

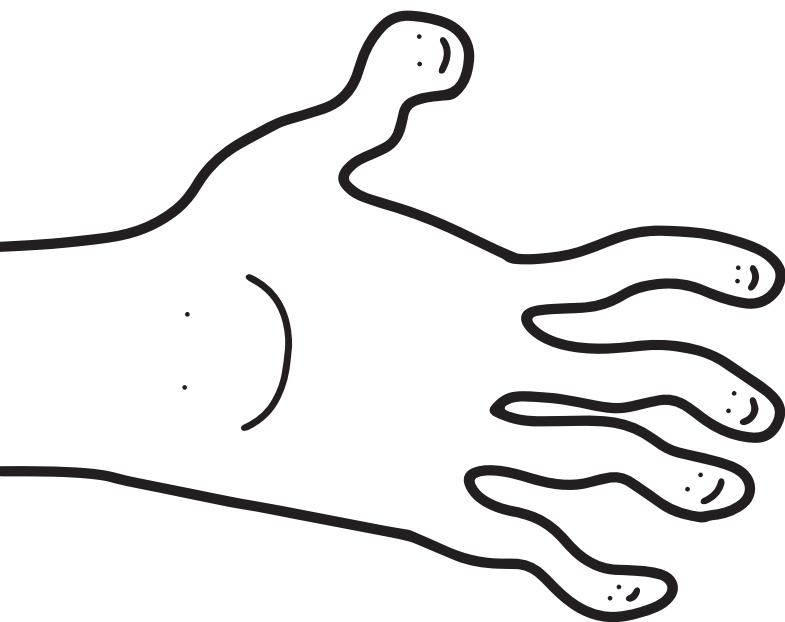
these initiatives like 'authorship and pride'. What do you think about this? Can we let go of ownership and still claim authorship over the commons? Attached an excerpt of Radical Matter in which you can find a list of initiatives/projects enacting what I believe to be some of your artistic and making values.

This written exchange is our first encounter for this project, let me tell you that we missed you around the table. Thank you for your vision and thoughts.

Looking forward to talk more about our octopus' communal body.

See you soon fellow collabrainor,

Gersande



collaboration as a lifestyle

collaboration as a cadavre exquis

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collaboration as action

collaboration as an octopus

