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# foreword

This is a non-exhaustive account of my trajectory through a pass, where I developed a big part of my PhD research.

This is also a laboratory to experiment the boundaries where theory and practice finally blur each other. It is a celebration of collaboration (wanted and unwanted), of encounters, differences, misunderstandings and bonds.

I come from performing arts and choreography but since many years ago I have expanded my practice towards a transdisciplinary field.

In the last years I have been going through a wide spectrum of body practices: yoga, meditation, therapies focused on the body-mind, somatic work, walking practices in nature, drifting in cities, movement research. Looking for the embodied experience. Focused on the process and the research and not on producing a predetermined outcome, I like to navigate across the boundaries of disciplines – besides arts I spend a lot of time reading biology, political ecology, anthropology, sociology and philosophy.

What will follow next is an account

that has something of a chronology but is full of leaps and digressions. You are also very welcome to drift moving back and forth as you wish.

This text is made of my memories and reflections, but most importantly it is made by the contributions of many people that I came across alongside the way. Whenever I felt at a blind spot, I looked for the others. So, working very actively with the feedback I received, I started to use the feedback systematically to move forward in the research, mainly through asking specific questions and requesting written answers. That way I could come back over and over to my feedback to find out what was happening, what I was doing, and what my work was revealing. It is as if I couldn't see directly the thing and I had to see through the other person what I was doing. The way this operates is kind of magical. I can see and feel me better through the others than through myself.

So, this booklet is full of contributions delivered to me in the format of a feedback.

This is an incomplete account, it will always be, I cannot encompass all the conversations, all the influences, all the company, all the friendship,

all the caring, all the love, all the listening, all the differences, all the misunderstandings, all the 'lost in translations' found through my trajectory .

Feel welcome to an uneven report.



# intro

This research is about the digestion of the world—and the worlds inside of the world—and also the acknowledgement of our earthliness and our humble position within the cosmic scale.

It goes around a personal process and the unexpected intimacy that arises in our relationships with both known and unknown beings, things and natural forces.

The research is committed to tracing processes in which we are involved. It is an account of my journey towards understanding the complexity of being alive, the entanglements we are part of, and the unavoidable interdependence among everything that exists. This occurs to us all both as living organisms who are entangled with other living beings and things, and as humans who are made of political, historical, biological, cultural and gender layers – layers that of course overlap all the time. All this driven by a desire: that of belonging.

I started this project from a hunch, a starting point that I could barely understand, half intuition, half a

blind spot.

The hunch was a feeling of alienation in the relationship between humans-things-environment, which led me to wonder if that weave of entanglements could be otherwise. I could feel this as a lack of desire, lack of Eros, lack of deep connection, lack of mattering, lack of ‘fleshness’, and a ubiquitous feeling of nonsense. All this made me feel that I wanted to (in Spanish) *engullir el mundo*, voraciously gobble the world. It awakened in me a deep anxiety of devouring the world, colliding with it, setting off everything, burning down and dismantling structures as a way to resist this zombie mode.

In the beginning of this process, I was being very affected by the increasing dematerialization of many relations in the world. Back then I was sure that the alienation in our relationships was the product of this. I still think this is part of the problem, but now it is clear the root of the question started much earlier with Modernity and the big shift in the mindset that came with it, especially since the transition from the Middle Ages to Capitalism, and the world spread of Capitalism

since the conquest and colonization of the Americas.

So, this project was born from the blunting, the numbness, the dissociation from the world I was experiencing at those times. Because I work from the body—the experience of the body as a living being, first and foremost—, when facing a moment of dematerialization, I wondered: What is happening with our senses and perception in our current context, and with our sensibility towards other bodies, both living beings and things? And how does this affect our relationship with our environment? How are we building a specific corporality based on the *lack of contact*?

# ecologies

In the search for another kind of sensibility towards the world, and as soon as I started to trace back the origin of —what I could feel as—the schism, I realized that the problem was much deeper than I first thought.

I was searching in two fields mainly: the sociological and personal. What I realized then was the **complexity** of the question: the fact that everything was linked or interdependent on another thing/element/cause/phenomenon/circumstance/condition. I was facing a dense weave of interrelations that could not allow me to know one thing without knowing all the cluster in which that one was involved. That's how the sociological calls for the historical, and the historical to the political, and so on. Or the personal calls for the biological and the biological for the cultural, and the cultural to the sociological and so on. And at the end everything is interrelated again.

With the wish of building reshaped relationships with things and beings that surrounded me, I started to

approach the thing as an ecology to comprehend. Instead of focusing on one specific, well delimited phenomenon, I opted to work in a wide spectrum: not to focus on the seed but covering the whole field. As in permaculture—or earlier—as in ancient milpas<sup>1</sup> in Mesoamerica. That's how I started to search in my body and through my body how 'things' were connected or interfaced, as well as in other fields, e.g. how 'things' are connected or interfaced in the sociological, historical, political, and so on. And of course, I always did this acknowledging that each field is leaking into the adjacent, and recognizing the blurring of boundaries, the change of the scale but not the change of phenomenon: tracing the transversality, so to speak.

1            Agricultural system from Mesoamerica, focused on the coexistence of diverse seeds and on the caring of the soil. This approach is completely opposite to Monoculture.

## cycles, spirals, translations in orbit

In my journey towards understanding both complexity and the alive, I realized there was an element I should better comprehend: cycles. This led me to the relation of life and death, the organic and the inorganic, the living and the non-living, the cosmic and the earthly. This points towards the ecology of things, how we are all connected, the diversity and heterogeneity that is needed to sustain a cycle. At that point it was clear I needed to get closer to different cosmogonies that consider elements, environment, living organisms, and the relationships among them in another way. That's how I came back to indigenous cosmogonies from México to situate myself from another point of view. This action of 'coming back' also happened in other levels of the research. In my bodily practice, I came back to my senses and perception to work with them from a very pre-verbal state. *I fell back into*

*my senses.* In the work with objects I was developing, I returned to work with elemental materials: wood, stones, crystal, coal, *I fell back into the primal.*

By chance, during the pandemic, I ended up living in Tepoztlán, in México, a town in the edge of a forest. Woods in there spread in all directions, reaching houses, churches, and squares, even now after decades of huge deforestation and urban sprawl. So, I started gardening. This led me to be aware of the weather, the agency of time, the natural conditions that were needed to do anything. I fell back into my surroundings. The interdependence with my environment was explicit. I can see all this now as if the research itself is moving in a cycle, a spiral, an orbital movement, *i.e.* a translation.

## the lecture performance as an ecosystem

With the decision of tackling the question from many perspectives, I had to develop a set of practices that include different kinds of things to relate with—cardboard, glass, trees, logs, stones, coal, lumber, my own body, my own partner, my own kin, my ancestors, maize dough, fungi, a garden... I've been working with processed, raw and rotten stuff, with the alive and dead as I began to comprehend how important the transformations, states, and modes of an ecosystem are.

I set up as well different approaches towards these elements, different ways to relate to them: both material and semiotic (from my senses, my perception, from the physical qualities of the thing and my body, from my own associations, resonances, memories, from how we affect each other, in all levels, from the very concrete to the conceptual one). I did this in different formats: actions, bodily work, experimental writing, videos, meditation practices, sampling of diverse materials, storytelling. There can't be a single way

of approaching the materiality of objects, events, bodies, etc. It is ultimately a method made to preserve the heterogeneity of the (re)search.

I was aware of the slowness and opaqueness of the 'thing', and how indescribable it is, but I did not want to summarize or reduce the (re)search. I wanted to keep the wideness. I did not want to subordinate one material to another. I did not want to establish hierarchies. And on top of that, I did want to keep working from each thing itself and the bond that was appearing, and not from the pressure to make something to fit into a final product. I did not want to call it a final narrative or a piece. I wanted to keep the complexity going.

Of course, this confronted me with a big problem: how to share the research? How to choreograph it? Because I was, and I am still sure that performative work has a potency to explore and to make the most out of it. And at some point, and by chance, I arrived at something



similar to a lecture performance. That allowed us—all the things I was working with, the research, myself—to really have the space to unfold different ecologies. I arrived at the lecture performance as I would arrive at a milpa, a place to grow things in, all together. I also use the lecture performance as a tool to think about the stage: what am I doing there? What relationships do I establish with the others? How do I situate the spectator within the ecosystem of which they will also be a part? The lecture performance is a space-time where every little thing is bleeding over into the other, no matter how similar or different they are. It is a space to make kin, to make entanglements explicit, to mattering, to be a failure, to mess up, to discern, to remember what is forgotten, to rest, and hopefully to find your way finally.





We [artists] shouldn't produce more things  
but digest what is there

## digestion

Digestion is a form of destruction and transformation.

It is decomposition and breaking down.

Through this, it is a way to extract the valuable components from the thing and a way to get rid of what is not needed anymore. It therefore makes space for the new to come.

It is a primal process to deal with whatever enters to body – to mix, to select, to extract, to render, to get apart, to ferment (!), to absorb, to dispose of.

Digestion opens up something that was previously closed, it makes nutrients available and useful. In digestion, we figure out. It is the constant movement of the living.

I started to think about digestion some years ago as a way out from the infernal couple of production-consumption. The acceleration of this hellish cycle had driven me, both in my body and in my mind, until collapse. The imperative of accelerated production seemed to me, apart from a very exploitative mode,

a nonsensical movement. Are we aware of what we are producing? Is anyone out there interested in what we produce?

It is clear that consumerism has a hidden, imposed agenda.

While wandering and kind of lost, in the middle of an impasse, I was looking for a line of flight.

If I don't want to be neither a producer nor a consumer anymore, what would I be then? Is there another niche to occupy? Can we play another role in the multiple ecologies of the world? Here is where digestion came up. Instead of producing or consuming products, I would rather process what already is here and over there.

There are too many things around us, things that go inside or through us that we cannot grasp, that we don't understand, or rather, that we would like to be closer to us, maybe not necessarily understand but to be closer.

To be part of them.

What kind of relations with the world do we want to build?

So here I propose a humble position: to occupy the role of the *digester*.

Not being anymore a producer/consumer, not even (gracias, pero no, gracias) a product.

It is not a glamorous position because it is about very *basic* and *invisible* labour.

But its force resides in this anti-glamorous aspect.

Because this offers the possibility of reclaiming spaces out of the *finca*<sup>2</sup>, the transnational market where we are all caught in.

2 In Southern México, 'finca' refers to big plantations owned by landlords. After the Spanish conquest and for centuries, indigenous people lived there as slaves. For the Zapatistas (EZLN), Neoliberalism is the new chapter of colonization of the world, but now not only through actual military wars of conquest but through economical ones. The Zapatistas see the whole world as the new 'finca' where transnational corporations are the new landlords. We all are part of this new 'finca', no matter if we are peasants living in the countryside, or workers of any kind living in the city... We as cultural workers are exposed to the same exploitation as they were before in the plantations.

# digestion and soil

*'The soil was a horizonless external gut—digestion and salvage everywhere'*  
Merlin Sheldrake<sup>3</sup>

Along this research, I realized that, in order to go forward, first I had to go backwards. I realized that *to grow* something I needed first to make the conditions for it to grow. (I realized as well that usually we take for granted that conditions are given but that's not necessarily true.) I learned this first, in a very intuitive way, by observing the garden which I was taking care of in Tepoztlán. Later I started to connect this empirical knowledge with the knowledge I was receiving in some spaces (both in Brussels<sup>4</sup> and México<sup>5</sup>) where permaculture or analogous practices were developed.

A little further and to really go backwards, I remembered the concept and practice of the 'milpa' in the ancient agricultural system of indigenous people from Mesoamerica, the place

where I come from. In this agricultural system – which is closely linked to cosmogony–, earth, and by extension soil, plays a central role, it is not the mere substratum as it is considered in modern agricultural practices. Soil has agency. It is a central element in growing anything. You have to take care of it. You have to, firstly, *grow* soil.

So, I realized that I had to cultivate soil for this (re)search to happen. But what is soil? What is it made of? Why can it be dead or alive? And foremost, how can we stop perceiving soil as an abstract place, a mere *backdrop*?

Soil is basically an extremely complex ecosystem full of different organisms that interact and balance all the time. Soil is made of the breaking down of *dead* matter, performed by the 'masters of decomposition,' *i.e.* fungi. So, the route that all this process showed me and what I started to follow is this:

# DECOMPOSE COMPOST COMPOSE

Fungi are not only recyclers but regenerators and networkers. I see them as the connectors of the world: the world of the living and the world of the dead, the organic and the inorganic, the cosmic and the earthly. They are weavers between species of plants, animals, bacteria..., weavers among scales and dimensions, so to speak.

The digestion that takes place in the soil happens as a collaboration between all of these elements. As in our guts, the work is carried out by many participants (who I consider as important as humans).

Something similar started to happen

in this (re)searching process: at some point I realized the digestion of the work was being carried out by many contributors, because of the dialogue we were holding all the time, either through mentoring, informal conversations, feedback sessions, work in progress, *scores*<sup>6</sup>, intimate confabulations, and so on.

Later I realized it was obvious I could not process everything on my own. But beyond my impossibility to do that, was the recognition of the nonsense of doing it myself alone. I mean, I wanted to figure out things that go beyond my sensibility, or knowledge, or experience, or expertise. I wanted

3 'Entangled Life', Merlin Sheldrake.

4 In *Digging*, a permaculture workshop guided by Kobe Matthys at Zenne Garden. This workshop was proposed in the context of *a.pass*, in my first block, Troubled Gardens curated by Nicolas Y. Galeazzi.

5 With Octavio de León Parra, Casa Jardineser, Tepoztlán, México.

6 In my second block in *a.pass*, *A Looming Score*, curated by Lilia Mestre and Sina Seifee.

to find paths for action or perspectives unknown to me. I wanted to be nourished by others and, hopefully, to nourish others. I wanted to make my soil as diverse as we could. We can say that a monoculture kills the diversity in any field, as we know by following the practice of the milpa. That's how here follows

~~monoCULTIVO~~  
~~monoCULTURA~~

~~MONOCULTURE~~

This is Spanglish (Spanish + English) – we found out with my partner, Karel, that there is an analogy between doing a ‘monocultivo’ (the word in Spanish for monoculture) and develop a homogenous culture ‘monocultura’. We say no to the loss of diversity.

As I have learned from fungi, I wanted to be a connector, because this project was born from the longing of missing worlds and my constant feeling of dissociation from this Earth.

# troubled gardens

## ecologies of artistic research<sup>7</sup>

I arrived to a.pass with a big open question: How does the agency of what is alive –at that point I was only thinking of human agency— affect the environment and vice-versa, how do these things and the specific environment in which we are immersed shape us?

This was an extremely open question, and I wanted to approach the (re)search in a very intuitive way; working from my nearby surroundings, from my sensory perception of space, from proximity. This was the first score I shared with the group and the tool I used to arrive to a.pass, to the Zenne Garden and to Brussels:

### first step

- to listen to the environment
- to connect myself with my surroundings
- to open my perception and to let the outside come inside
- to allow myself to be affected
- to interact with new entities
- to pay attention
- to be alert

### second step

- to listen to the materials
- to build with them
- to recognize the tendencies of the thing
- to be guided more than to guide
- to negotiate
- to pay attention all the time
- to be present

### third step

- to find associations
- to discover what “makes sense”
- to believe in the absurd
- to find and to build a specific corporality
- to feel the timing of the encounter
- to get to know the material
- to be part of what’s going on

<sup>7</sup> My first block in a.pass, <https://apass.be/troubled-gardens-block-2019-ii/>, Block 2019/II, curated by Nicolas Y. Galeazzi.



Nicolas Y. Galeazzi proposed, among other readings, *The Three Ecologies* by Félix Guattari. We used it to frame the different aspects of what we were working on there: the social ecology to engage with the group, the mental ecology to engage with our researches, and the environmental ecology to engage with the garden. I knew that book from before. To read it again in this new context reminded me of the complexity of my (re)search. It also reaffirmed the conviction of tackling the issue from different points. I felt encouraged to explore the roots of our current crisis, making visible that we cannot separate the ecological crisis from our own crisis as human beings.



Zenne Garden, May 2019, Brussels

First public proposal to test my score: an experience offered during our block-stay at Zenne Garden

*a garden, a rainy, wet garden,  
a fire that I wanted to share  
a booklet made with my hands with tiny letters  
a storytelling about being in the woods  
made by my fellow researchers Lucia Palladino and Piero Ramella  
a moment set up for contemplation*



# digestive tract as a technology

I

A piece of something, anything, entering my mouth. Between my tongue, my palate and my teeth. I'm moving the thing, trying to recognize it, trying to get to know it better. (It doesn't matter if it is something that I already know). While saliva is lubricating the thing in my mouth, I can feel my tongue trying to extract the singularity of the thing - trying to figure out the thing - trying to shred the thing in many levels, deciphering the taste, the texture, the weight, the density of the thing.

The process goes both ways.

I am not at all the only one who unleashes a transformation. Through undoing the thing in my mouth, the thing is doing something to me too. My mind, my eyes, my nose, my mouth, my teeth, my tongue, my stom-

ach, are interacting with the thing, are changing my body, are releasing saliva first - sensations and feelings -, memories later.

So, it goes back and forth, back and forth.

The process of digestion is starting.

II

I'm not talking about food only. Not at all. I have never stopped tasting the world through my mouth (since I can remember), whenever I find whatever little piece of unknown petty thing, I have the automatic impulse of putting the thing in my mouth as a way of testing and tasting the world better. But why do I keep doing this? And why am I telling you I keep doing this?

~~Shameful thing. Shame on me.~~  
~~That's disgusting.~~

Where did I learn to do this? Did I inherit this instinct from that ancient organism who is only a digestive tube? (The mouth - the primal place to grasp

anything).  
Maybe. As a basic instinct  
to relate with the world.

III

What comes into the mouth  
is not always a thing to  
swallow.

(If it is your tongue, or your big  
toe you wouldn't let me take the  
thing with me,  
as much as I wish to do that. Or  
would you?)

Now it is your tongue, a  
juicy exchange of different  
biofluids is happening be-  
tween us. Now my body is  
becoming receptive to your  
saliva. And your saliva is  
lubricating my tongue. And  
my microbiome is dealing  
with yours, our immune sys-  
tems reacting to this.

Do we have to do something to  
expel that tongue?

Many substances from our  
stomachs and intestines are  
releasing into our blood-  
stream.

the relationship between my  
mouth my sex my mind  
It is really the beginning of eating  
each other.

And this is only a first

step in the digestive  
tract, the mouth.

IIII

But sometimes it hap-  
pens that I do swallow the  
thing. The process of di-  
gestion is resuming. I'm  
feeling how the thing  
slides through my esoph-  
agus. Chemicals from my  
mouth, stomach and brains  
are flowing from the top of  
my head to my guts, going  
down till they reach the  
pit of the stomach.

But here, there is another  
threshold to conquer. And  
it is not always open.  
the feeling of being stuck  
Or it can be open but there  
is so much stuff going in-  
side that the  
tube clogs up.

stuck and stick  
nothing is going back and  
forth anymore

For some days we can't di-  
gest the world anymore. We  
are not capable. We feel  
full while we are empty.  
We wonder how other liv-  
ing beings deal with this  
unfitness. We wonder how

their digestive tracts are  
similar or not to ours. We  
ponder how they experience  
fear, sorrow or anger, or  
vertigo and fragility, or  
pleasure and satisfaction,  
or the simple indigestion  
of the world.

|||||  
the digestive tract  
is dark opaque  
the digestive system is  
autonomous  
it has its own life  
its own drive  
digestive system is linked  
to a vital drive  
it is not personal  
not even human  
it's ancient and linked  
to too many sensations  
you cannot control it  
and it doesn't care about yourself

|||||||  
When everything goes  
smoothly into the stomach,  
you can feel the breaking  
down of it made by juices  
and the churning in your  
belly,  
this vibration, this stirring  
hormones released, diverse

acids balancing each other.  
Mixing and breakdowns.  
It is an actual turmoil,  
if you think about what is  
taking place there. There  
are some essential yet  
burning steps that have to  
be taken, like, the acids  
released into your stomach  
that could destroy you by  
corrosion.  
But you need that to be alive.  
We are kind of blind about  
how violent it can be. I  
can feel the turbulence.  
And I like it.

|||||||  
Going down, inside, through  
the guts, with the help of  
the liver and the pancreas  
a long road into the dark-  
ness full of bacteria and  
fungi, the ecosystem of  
your guts.  
*There are more bacteria in  
your gut than stars in our  
galaxy. I just learned that  
from a beautiful book.*  
You never do anything alone  
You are always full of companions  
You are a society in itself  
*In the blind spot of our  
intestines, the habitat of*

*big part of our microbiome,  
our symbiont.*

*The responsible of our  
moods, psyche, diet, sleep,  
sexual habits.*

*A site of fermentation of  
the indigestible matter, a  
fermentation made by our  
microbes.*

**There is always the possibility of  
transformation.**

*Blurring our notion of  
boundaries,  
an intimate collaboration is  
happening all the time through  
symbiosis.*

*We are so many people, it  
is crazy  
I am plural-you are plural  
yet singular*

|||||||

*In the final part of the  
canal, there will be still  
something to be reabsorbed  
back: minerals, vitamins,  
water, from your guts to  
the blood.*

**An intense and neverending  
exchange.**

*Meanwhile, the leftovers go  
outwards like waste mate-  
rial, and start to be part  
of another cycle.*

## a looming score we share your politics of damage<sup>1</sup>

My second block at a.pass was mostly about setting things in motion. We practiced the Bubble Score proposed by Lilia Mestre which is about 'the Relation between Performance and Writing'. The system is simple but powerful: in the first session each participant shows five minutes of their work. From there a mechanism of weaving starts between all the participants. You are asked to formulate a written question to one of the participants of the score. about one of your fellow's works. The next session you present again five minutes of your work responding to a question made to a third person. So, the whole practice is about showing practical work, writing and asking about other people's work, and responding to questions addressed to others.

### i transplant myself and the earlier lecture-performance-like

After the work in the Zenne Garden, many ideas around growing, feeding, caring, and gathering were buzzing in my head. I was having a hard time feeling myself lost in relation to my surroundings, going through a harsh moment of a body-mind dissociation.

I realized I needed to transplant myself and my research, which means that I needed to root the search into another soil, and from there to reboot myself. In the middle of an emotional impasse, I took this mechanism of asking-replying as a way to move forward. I thought about it as a diary, a space to go deep into what was going on. The following is the beginning of the lecture-performance-like that I presented:

<sup>1</sup> My second block in a.pass, <https://apass.be/projects/a-looming-score-we-share-your-politics-of-damage/>, Block 2019/III, curated by Lilia Mestre and Sina Seifee.

## looming-score diary

Some essential questions asked in the last block and in the opening week of the present block.

### Pierre: What's your desire?

[EXPENSIVE Q]

Pierre asked me this question and it was kind of shocking to me. Suddenly it was clear that I didn't have an idea, not even a blurry one. I spent many days trying to discover my desire. At some point it seemed that I had to admit the lack of desire. But no... I had the feeling that was not true. I knew that *I must* have one. At some point, I realized the impossibility to connect with my desire. Some days later, I also discovered the impossibility to connect with many other important things. I will come back later to where this led me.

### Lilia: WHERE IS THE GLUE?

[MOVE-YOUR-MESSY-ASS-Q]

This question came from my first mentoring session. I was explaining to Lilia all I was concerned with. There

are a lot, and I don't know how to address all of them. She asked me many times, 'Where is the glue?, where is the glue???'

Now I can see that the research I am doing wants to be a solution for a problem that I was not aware it even existed.

### Nicolas: Matter matters?

[RIDDLE Q]

or Why do you care? / Why do you give a shit?

I have the feeling that this system is based on the illusion that everything flows lightly and smoothly through the world as if we were talking about ones and zeros that flow through the cybernetic channels.

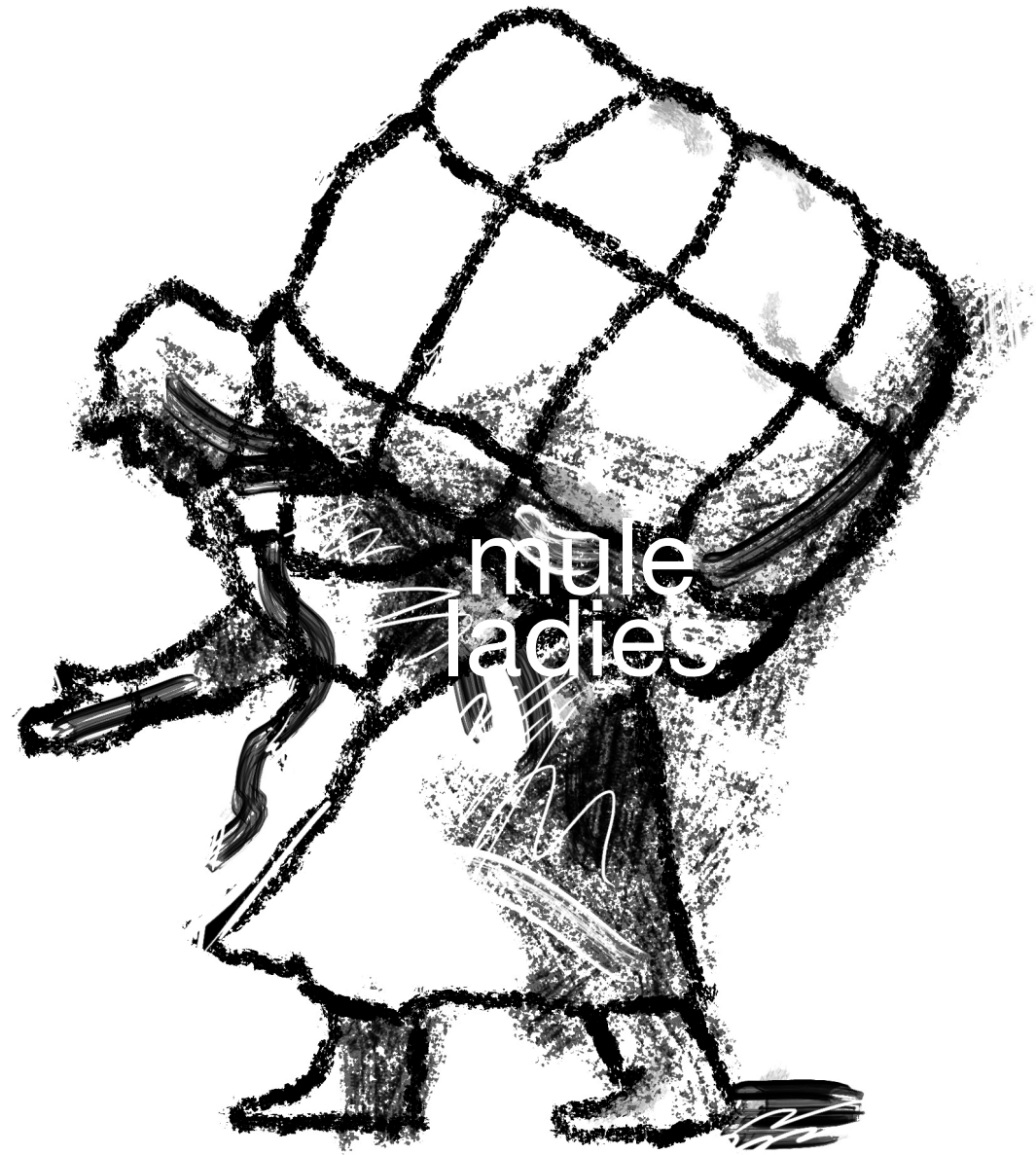
I have the feeling that this illusion can only exist if we make invisible the material conditions that life needs to happen.

Last August I was working on a project about borders, fences, and walls. I knew about some women that live in Melilla, a city at the border between Africa and Europe, they work carrying belongings of migrants who want to cross the border. These women are allowed to cross the border at any time they want. There is only one rule:



*you can only cross the things you can  
carry with your own body.*

So, now I am going to do a mental  
experiment and after that an exercise:  
What if my economic subsistence  
depended on the ability of my body to  
carry stuff from one place to another?



# appetites

After a first tryout where I decided to bring everything together—texts, actions, movement, images—I received this as a part of my feedback:

## Naming

Is it simply a lecture-performance? Or is it communication on multiple levels?

Is it kind of a “walk-and-talk”? While asking yourself a question, you act, or try out whatever you get as an answer?

Is it unfolding a kaleidoscope? Or are you dancing Cubism? (Nicolas Y. Galeazzi).

From then on, I decided to dive in fully into the format of a lecture performance.

Then I had an encounter with Jeroen Peeters as a mentor, and our conversation gave me a hint about how to address the moment I was going through. This is part of what I shared in the second performance I did:

*from desire to appetite = digestive tract*

*In my encounter with Jeroen, he told me about desire and appetite. He told me that for him, desire is something that sounds very strong, and instead of it he preferred to talk about appetite. (Also, because I talked about food).*

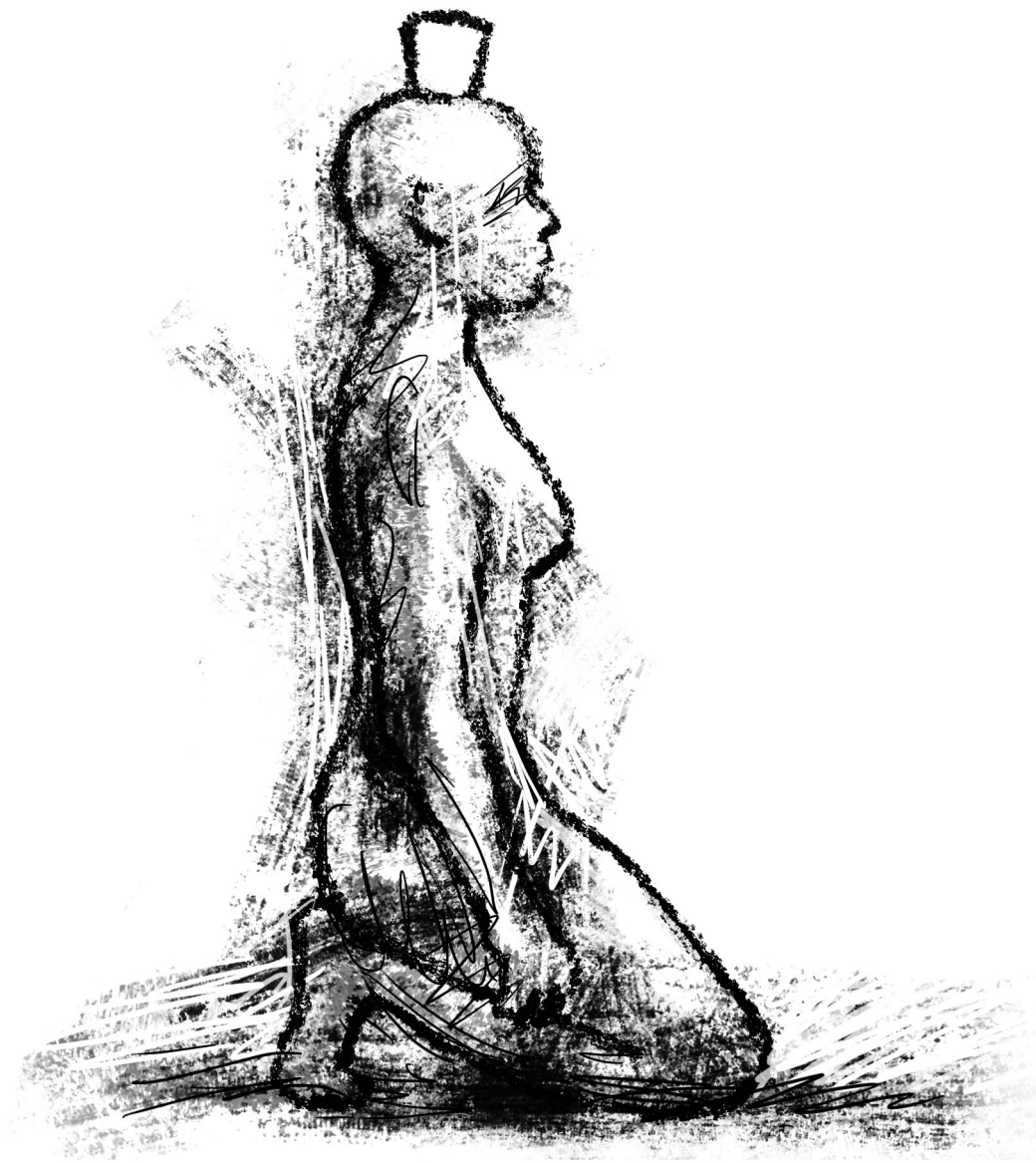
*Then he connected appetite with the mouth and then with the digestive tract. He talked and talked and talked about this (apparently he is a big fan of this subject, and me too).*

At this moment appeared a very important concept that would become central to my research.

In the feedback session of that performance, I asked Nicolas, one of my mentors, to propose some questions to the spectators, and he asked this:

- 1) What did matter to you in the presentation?
- 2) What's the materiality of this presentation?
- 3) Did you get any kind of appetite for another relation to material?
- 4) Where could Anapaula search for the materiality of your appetite?

Here is the list of appetites I extracted from the answers I received after my performance in PAF, November, 2019:



## [appetites]

*try them (the other appetites) with somebody who differs and cares for you  
(not alone), you don't have to figure things out by yourself*

**(Appetite to see you on the move)**

**(appetite for transformation)**

**(appetite for intimacy)**

**(appetite for negotiation with what is given  
to you and me)**

**(appetite for mimesis)**

**(Appetite for more)**

**(Appetite for Love)**

**(Appetite for humour)**

**(Appetite to go further / to think forward)**

**(Appetite to pay more attention to all that  
surrounds me)**

**(Appetite to be touched)**

**(Appetite for honesty)**

**(Appetite for singularity)**

**(Appetite for something that I cannot name  
yet, it's a bit scary, but in a good way)**

**(Appetite for checking my emotional status  
of my relation with materiality)**

**(Appetite to bite) to eat / to hurt /to digest  
another being**

**(Appetite for failure)**

**(appetite through paradoxes)**

(Appetite to see you on the move)<sup>1</sup>

I would like to see you more on the move -  
to see you moving. Your bodily presence is  
powerful. It would be great to be daring in it.  
In relation both to the contextual images you  
presented [...] and to the matter as such.

**(appetite for transformation)<sup>2</sup>  
to burn the cardboard down  
(appetite for intimacy partially colonized  
by visual capitalism)  
to consume your body  
(appetite for negotiation with what is given  
to you and me)  
to talk to you about memory of dance lessons  
and pedagogical past  
(appetite for mimesis)  
to try the glass-balance practice**

(Appetite for more)<sup>3</sup>

I think there were some essential jumps. It felt as if New  
Materialism wasn't anymore an abstract interest but a  
personally challenging question. What is that glass on  
your head doing? How do you master to hold it so long  
while moving?

By being in very close conversation with it. [...]  
Same with the knife. Its potential is not a projection! It cuts  
for real. It's not at all equal to you nor anything else. The  
difference to you is real. However, in the performance,  
you created a specific unique difference. You did it as a

researcher who still needs to understand the difference.

(Appetite for Love)<sup>4</sup>

I think, you stated loving the material. Yet, the  
performance went beyond emotional attachment.  
Love as a (one possible) relational practice: Beyond and  
/or within care?

Just love, or love through taking care?

Love, desire, care, exploitation, merge, converge, - affect.

Does the knife desire you?

How does cardboard have agency?

Objects act on you through their given purpose.

**(Appetite for humour)<sup>5</sup>**

More on humour. "Oh, this is very conceptual, but  
I like it." Taste is seldom expressed in artistic  
and theoretical contexts, and yet, when expressed  
through humour, it is light, precise and personal  
(and it quite literally gives 'appetite' a place in  
the proposal).

**(Appetite to go further / to think forward)<sup>6</sup>**

**How does the body position relate to the image?**

**I had to think about performance art and the sym-  
bolic/semiotic value of matter/objects. One thing  
that came to mind was 'semiotics of the kitchen'  
and this thanks to the objects you used. Glass, knife,  
lamps... Where does home come in the perception  
of the world as you describe it? Appetite to pay more  
attention to all that surrounds me.**

1 (Kasia Tórz)

2 (Sina Seifée)

3 (Nicolas Y. Galeazzi)

4 (Nicolas Y. Galeazzi)

5 (Jeroen Peeters)

6 (Lilia Mestre)

Appetite to be touched<sup>7</sup>

(Appetite for honesty)

My appetite is precisely in the works (or searches) where honesty is evident

**(Appetite for singularity)<sup>8</sup>**

**Your Mexican body is very significant, it is not any body that is in contact with all the materials with which it works, this I also see in your presentation, and the way that your historical and geographical body assumes it is beautiful.**

(Appetite for something that I cannot name yet, but it's a bit scary, in a good way)<sup>9</sup>

...in the conversation or relation with my body and your body and with the objects. Both fragile/nervous and steady/grounded. I can't exactly describe the relation, but I feel appetite and it's a bit scary, but in a good way.

(Appetite for checking my emotional status)<sup>10</sup>

I got an appetite for checking what is the emotional status of my relation with materiality, and even for developing and working with this emotional side of the relation.

7 (Rui Calvo)

8 (Flavio Rodrigo)

9 (Adriano Jensen)

10 (Magda Ptasznik)

(Appetite to bite)<sup>11</sup>

I was thinking about biting and my kid biting me when he loses the control. Does his desire come from his digestive tract? Is it in between? Is it a materialization of desire? Is it wanting to eat me? To hurt me? To digest me?

**(APPETITE FOR FAILURE)<sup>12</sup>**

**FAILURE (WHAT ARE WE SUCCEEDING IN WHEN WE ARE FAILING?)**

*(appetite through paradoxes)<sup>13</sup>*

*I got appetite through paradoxes*

*-of disappearing to protect desire*

*-of digesting in the blind spot*

*-to materialize wanting is to want in secret.*

*To want within.*

\*

*Appetites* became a method that emerged to work with desire in the relationship between my body and the world.

It works as a strategy, a compass, a frame, an uplift, an instruction, a field to develop diverse practices.

The main idea is to perform them through any means I find suitable (a video, a text, an exercise, an action, a movement, a gesture, an encounter), to try each of them.

11 (Sara Manente)

12 (Piero Ramella)

13 (Adrijana Gvozdenović)



# the in – between<sup>14</sup>

During the first year of the pandemic I had an unintended break from a.pass. I spent the whole year in México, where I continued my (re)search in a very different context, that of a rural place, close to the woods, in Tepoztlán (as I have mentioned earlier). This is a big full chapter, for time and space reasons I cannot unfold here, but I can say that such time really gave me the opportunity to go quite deep in my research. It was a time of digestion, of breaking-downs, of dismantling instead of producing.

I dedicated myself to explore my *appetites*. Many practices were unfolded there: gardening, walking in nature, weeding, meditations, contemplation, hacked therapy<sup>15</sup>, somatic work, movement research, a Tantra course, and a learning process in entheogens (psychoactive substances that induce alterations

in perception, such as mushrooms). I did some reading and writing as well. I set up a space to focus on experiencing and inhabiting the unknown.

I'm extremely thankful for this year. To have this time was a gift, since it helped me to understand temporality. From then on, I started to work more consciously with the agency of time. I could not come back to Brussels for more than a year, but I was still supported by a.pass during the pandemic. I made part of a score proposed by Lilia Mestre and mentoring. The description of this block was this:

*The current In-Between Block is a simple infrastructure of extended mentoring that supports the a.pass researchers in the development of their work during the Coronavirus measures. a.pass supports the researchers in using the current situation to reflect on*

*the resonance of their practices within the contemporary social, ecological, artistic, political and economical discourses. A series of scores are being developed and practiced to keep the contact and the exchange going between the researchers. This shared practice over distance allows us to reflect on the crisis and support each other through it.*

<sup>14</sup> The name of the block during the first lockdown, <https://apass.be/the-in-between-block-2020-ii/>, Block 2020/II, cared by Lilia Mestre, which I did online.

<sup>15</sup> I took Somatic-Experience therapy with teacher and choreographer Jenet Tame as a way to dive into my research, to use a therapy beyond a healing lens as a researching tool. That idea was given to me by my fellow researcher Magda Ptasznik: "What if you (and me too, actually) could [resort to] the methods used in therapy for working with yourself... or the Anna Halprin methods that are used to recognize one's emotion... Intuitive movement or drowning [sic] but not to use it as a material but [as a means] to recognize your attitude and specific interest."

*Among other things, this is what remains of my mentoring sessions with Elke Van Campenhout:*

## ON WHAT KIND OF OBJECTS

What makes an object meaningful to work with?

What is the invitation to me as a spectator?

What is the overall problem you are addressing?

Where is the tension that makes things come out?

What is the research changing in you?

## ON WHAT I'M INTERESTED IN AS A VIEWER

What are things bringing you?

What are things teaching you?

In what way?

How forceful are they?

How mystical are they?

## ON MATERIALS REFLECTING YOU BACK IN THE NEGATIVE

It's also very particular which materials come  
to you just through circumstances

Somehow, it's also making some kind  
of negative mold cast of your life

Somehow, you are not talking about yourself but  
about all the materials you encounter

in that sense it is reflecting you back in the negative

I think that's important also

Because you are (of course) part of the equation  
And I think the work is showing you that you cannot  
have an objective outside you

And these things that you are, are always implied in the relation,

Allowed to be a part of it.

## ON THE QUALITY OF OBJECTS

What is its unity?

When does it become close?

When is it open?

How do you open it up when it is close?

How can you turn something inside out?

How to free something from its projection?

To see everything as a partner

You seem to be my translator of the world

## ON THE SHAMAN, THE GATHERER AND THE WITCH

What is for you the link between the shaman  
and the choreographer?

What would you say is the main difference between them?

Your objects are mirroring these human networks  
(about my faith in humanity, connections and the social fabric)

What is the difference between mirroring and projecting?

What does it mean to have a clear mind?

How would you describe to have a clear mind?

(Early Chinese medicine locates the brain in the heart)

What if we displaced the brain to the heart,  
and the heart to the womb?

# not in the mood

research as a dialogue

Research, for me, always happens

with-in a dialogue

You dialogue with many entities all the

time (ideas, references, raw materials,

bodies, images, places, emotions, things,

feelings, contexts, conditions...).

Research is an amplified conversation,

a multi-layered, non-linear, deferred

conversation. It is the affection between

entities... some of them are other hu-

mans...

I arrived to *Not in the Mood*<sup>16</sup> to put in practice the research as a dialogue with a lot of people, allies, complicities, readings, and new circumstances as well. I found there many resonances in the readings proposed by Sara and Adrijana, especially the ones that I knew previously, and were very close to my research, namely Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch*, and Brian Massumi's *Politics of Affect*. I found an excellent companionship in Isabel as a mentor. She helped me to unravel

all the entangled 'hank' that at that point was my research. Antye was an excellent mirror to look through in terms of what kind of writing I was developing at that time.

I also came back to put everything in one place and time. The lecture performance I tested there was the moment when I could finally find a place to articulate all my searches and experiences.

In the last pages of this account, I share with you fragments of the feedback that I received after asking the following questions<sup>17</sup> to my spectators:

**1.impression:** in one short sentence describe your feeling.

**2.naming:** what do you think the work is made of, not only as to material and technical ingredients, but also pertaining perceptions, affects, philosophies, style, etc.? try to name the elements that were suggesting meaning for you.

**3.your opinion:** explain shortly if and how it worked for you. think from your research perspective, you can activate your epistemology to engage with what you saw.

**4.your opinion:** explain shortly if and how it worked for them. try to think what they wanted and if they achieved it.

I hope to see you on the other side.

ap  
Brussels, January 2022

<sup>16</sup> My last block in a.pass, <https://apass.be/not-in-the-mood/> Block 2021 II, curated by Isabel Burr Raty, Adrijana Gvozdenović, Antye Guenther, Sara Manente, Rob Ritzen, Sina Seifee.

<sup>17</sup> These questions were proposed by Sina and Lilia for the HWD feedback session in A Looming Score (Block 2019/III).

4.

**what does it mean to carry and touch something heavy,  
something edgy, something sad, something 'cuttable'?**

(Gina Seifert)

4.

**I was invited to see an embryo, and I felt the thoughts that  
are written before, as well as all the other words that are  
being written at the moment and that will be said in a  
couple of minutes, they can become the nutrient for this  
embryo to continue to grow. I feel the work is somehow  
independent from the you or us. I feel the work is almost a  
piece of tree that slowly decides to become a table. I don't  
know if this makes sense at all. But there is a sense of  
agency in the work that blocks me from answering this  
question. And maybe this is a possible achievement of  
what they wanted...**

(Carolina Mendonça)

### **1. Impressions:**

**Cosmogony of a construction worker**

**Galactic nostalgia**

**Anti-extractivist and anti-utilitarian poetry**

**Encounter based on encounter**

**The risk of being alive the risk of being dead**

**Spatial ethnography**

**Where is the line between the ethnographical and the biographical and the cosmic?**

### **2. Naming**

**Trans-materiality / trans-dimensional / trans-spatial**

**Onto-epistemological - quantum physics**

**Geontological: union of bio and geo to break binary**

**perceptions of a binary subject/object divide**

**Universal: wood cycle, cardboard, wood, charcoal: the cycle of life and death of the living and non-living, non-living doesn't mean dead...**

**Feeling micro and macro at the same time**

**The cosmos present in earthly survival**

**Anti-extractivist and anti-utilitarian**

**Autobiographical things**

**Stream of consciousness**

*(Isabel Burr Raty)*

### **3.**

**For me it engaged with several affective layers of acknowledgement of life and death. It brought together death as universal knowledge. The death of a dear person, the death of trees, the calcifications of materials into stones, bone... time... humbleness and perspective of personal history with natural-elements history. The intertwinement of emotion, needs, commodities, processes and awareness of the intra-connection of the all. I have to think about the book "Meeting the Universe Halfway" from K. Barad.**

### **4.**

**The elements want to be what they are. They stay close to themselves. They don't complain. They sustain their qualities, they are open to interact and to be part of what is there. They are part of the world narrative. They say things but I feel sorrow and tiredness.**

*(Lilia Mestre)*



3.

I can relate to the work of how we follow the processes of decay and transformation, the decelerated time in relation to a human perspective and the idea of an expanded body or better an expanded idea of the body: stone is a body, chair is a body, cardboard to sit for, heating, etc...

*(Para Manente)*

3.

the more participatory parts felt 'clashing' between mexico/latinX and european, i felt the relation human-emotion-nature strongly and how it is being perceived very differently in different cultures/parts of the world, and maybe for each single human even. i also felt the relation of coloniality & 'contemporary' death which makes me think a lot and feels like shifting my mindset. the explanation of the stone & wood - the house was there before, but previously in a way that was living or animated, when it was a rock or a tree. it was very poetic but also transformative: what is a human physically and what is a human culturally? and what's their history in this thought? the transgenerational collective dna? how and why can/do we still have to deal with it?

4.

[...] there were a lot of elements and it felt confusing to me and maybe to you too. but i "enjoy" that moving continents bring so much confusion and it is very confusing, and extremely overwhelming. so i felt the 'overwhelming' with materials & media, text and movement, sound, etc., quite strongly, it infected me with this feeling i believe they wanted to transmit.

*(Federico Protto)*

3.

Al lo largo de la experiencia pasé por diferentes percepciones en relación a los materiales y a esos "saltos" de una cosa a la otra. Ese estado intermedio entre la performance, el ensayo, la charla, el encuentro, la invitación, la celebración, la bienvenida y la despedida, todo junto creo que es un elemento muy potente del trabajo. Al comienzo parece que hay muchas ideas, la doble proyección, el espacio, los materiales que se ven alrededor, la luz, el sonido, los papeles pequeños que pasan de mano en mano, no llego a leer todo, y me siento un poco sobrepasada. Pero con el correr de los minutos entiendo que eso es... que no hace falta leer todo ni atender a todo lo que se presenta, que es mejor entregarse a sentir. Las acciones que vas armando para nosotras desde el texto hasta los movimientos, las historias familiares que vas tejiendo con las historias de otras, que también somos todas nosotras, acostarnos con el tronco y las piedras, verte enraizada y confiando, reírte de vos misma, decir que sos una outsider adelante de todas, cortar el banquito, el viaje a Europa y lo que cuesta ese movimiento... ese sobreesfuerzo..... son todo como parte de lo mismo, contado de maneras diferentes. Tratar de reconstruir algo, o de observar las partes para poder verlas cada una pero luego superpuestas como uno de los textos donde leí acerca de los mundos que conviven en nosotras. Es como un rompecabezas que vamos visualizando entre todas y quizás faltan partes o también sobran pero eso pareciera que en este espacio que estás creando, no es algo importante...

(Jimena Pérez Salerno)<sup>18</sup>

18 During the experience, I had different perceptions related to the materials and to those leaps from one thing to another. There is an intermediate state between the performance-art piece, the essay, the talk, the getting-together, the invitation, the celebration, the welcome and the farewell... – and I think all of it together is very potent in this work. At the beginning, it seems there are many ideas: the double projection, the space, the materials that can be seen around, the light, the sound, the little pieces of paper that go hand in hand. I can't manage to read everything, and I feel a little overwhelmed. But as minutes go by, I understand that it's not necessary to read everything or to pay attention to all the things that are presented; I understand that it's better to surrender to feeling. You assemble actions for us; you present text and movements; you weave family stories with the stories of other women (and we all are those women); you ask us to lie down next to a log and to stones; we see ourselves rooted and with trust; you laugh at yourself; you say in front of everybody that you are an >

outsider; you cut a little bench; you mention the journey to Europe and everything such movement is worth. There is an extra effort. All of that is part of the same, but told in different ways. We try to reconstruct something, or to observe the parts, in order to see each one of them, but overlapped. This happens similarly to something I read about the worlds that coexist within each one of us. It is like a jigsaw puzzle that we visualize collectively; there may be missing parts, or excess parts, but that doesn't seem to be important in the space you are creating.



## afterword

This text is meant to be a chapter of my PhD Thesis, the third one, in the middle of the whole manuscript. In this part of the work, I wanted to open up the guts of the project, to see how things are processed slowly in collaboration with others. I wanted also to put in context part of the research and the creative process. To show how everything unfolds over time.

This space was reserved to make a pass context leaks into the PhD context, to bring closer a non-academic context to an academic one.

These two spaces are committed with artistic research and approach the question from different fronts. My endeavour was in merging the two contexts in one.

I am developing my research within the PhD program in Humanities, Arts and Education at Universidad Castilla-La Mancha in Spain. The program has a practice-based approach aimed to artists and researches. I am working with the research group artea, investigación y creación escénica, a group on research and creation in performing arts, (<http://artea.uclm.es/>).

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While following the a.pass program, Ana Paula oriented her artistic research questions towards the relation between activism and performance. Her PhD studies and her choreographic practice are supported by New Materialism theoretical approaches, creating awareness of the different forms of attachment that are necessary to induce environmental change. Her encounter with the work of E. Povinelli [among others] and her key concepts of 'geontology' and 'geontopower' has opened a dialogue with Ana Paula's engagement in creating participatory settings that include performance, installation, video art and story telling. Her performances continuously break the borders of disciplines while fragmenting and reassembling boldly different affective relations with the world. Ana Paula's work proposes to reconfigure the historical, the environmental, the emotional, and the fictional to enter new potential territories of hope.

Lilia Mestre

Brussels, 23 August 2021