

ON MOBILISATION
PROJECT /

TOOLKIT

Toolkit publication: edited presentation, documentation

ON MOBILISATION

PROJECT

Content



ON MOBILISATION PROJECT

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Preface

Editorial team

The ON MOBILISATION project emerged from a bottom-up collaboration between wpZimmer, Baltic Art Center, Studio ALTA and Lavanderia a Vapore, organisations actively engaged in international solidarity and emancipatory movements within the cultural field. To effectively address and mobilise micro-communities, the project embraced the local specificities of each partner, engaging individuals committed to social justice and equality.

In collaboration with six artists — Kalle Brolin, Elisabetta Consonni, Daniele Ninarello, Ahilan Ratnamohan, Marika Smreková, and Danae Theodoridou — and through their artistic research and practices, radical forms of civic participation were developed.

Toolkit brings together personal testimonies and reflections written by artists, participants, and organisations. Each contribution highlights, in its own voice, the significance of collaborative ways of working as a path toward a stronger cultural sector, but also as a means to transgress its boundaries into social spheres that were previously inaccessible or simply unconnected.

The publication is structured around four main thematic pillars of the project: *On the Language of Mobilisation*, *On Inclusive Mobilisation*, *On Mobilisation of Care*, and *On Mobilisation and Learning*.

Toolkit, like the project itself, proposes a softly guided framework for participation grounded in peer-to-peer

dynamics, enabling the circulation of knowledge and contributing to the ongoing demand for fundamental equality and social fairness.

Throughout its course, from 2023 till 2025, ON MOBILISATION has connected and supported emerging micro-communities that resist, reject, and rise against violence and oppression, while simultaneously building transnational alliances — because we know that no one is free until everyone is free!



Glossary



Introduction to
the key terms of the project

ART RESIDENCY —

A space and time for the local and transnational development of an artistic project; a point of intensified exchange between an artist and micro-community members.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH —

Carried out by artists and experts in various fields of art. Artistic activities qualify as research when they shape and renew the criteria of their own practice and their interaction with society. Artistic research is often developed within a critical and reflective community.

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION —

Community mobilisation refers to the process through which individuals or groups within a community come together to pursue a shared goal or address common concerns. Within the *On Mobilisation* project, two distinct yet interconnected types of community mobilisation are identified — micro-community mobilisation and transnational community mobilisation.

EVENING SCHOOL —

A space for informal peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange, highlighting perspectives and forms of knowledge that are often underrepresented.

FACILITATOR (PERSON OR ORGANISATION) —

A facilitator guides artistic processes by creating inclusive spaces where diverse perspectives are heard and collective knowledge emerges. Unlike mentoring, facilitation does not assume “one who knows” and “one who doesn’t know” hierarchy. Using a variety of tools — such as workshops, informal meetings, discussion formats, and creative toolkits — facilitators engage stakeholders in co-creating, discovering, and applying learning insights throughout the project.

GHOSTING RESIDENCY —

A form of artistic residency that pairs a local artist with an international guest artist, fostering a subtle and sustained collaboration through shared time, space, and practice. Rooted in the idea of *the ghost in each other's practice*, it builds trust and connection through everyday rituals, such as working in parallel, sharing meals, or co-engaging with materials. This playful and reflective approach encourages mutual influence, constructive feedback, and a deepened understanding of different contexts. While centred on a one-to-one relationship, the residency can also include multiple ghosts who follow and support each other throughout the project.

MICRO-COMMUNITY —

A small-scale community consisting of no more than 30 individuals. It functions as a safe space—both physical and digital—founded on mutual trust and respect. Members of a micro-community connect around a shared problem within a local context, aiming to improve or resolve the issue. Micro-communities mobilise human, material, financial, and other resources necessary for socio-economic development at the local level.

TOOLS —

We distinguish between empirical tools (e.g. surveys, publishing formats), methodological tools (various facilitation methods), and artistic tools (e.g. the ghost in each other's practice, the artistic practices themselves).

TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNITIES —

Micro-communities who maintain family, social, cultural or economic links across national borders. These groups of individuals have several identities, links, and competencies in more than one culture.



Timeline

14

Art Residency
MARIKA SMREKOVÁ
Studio ALTA
18.02–21.02.2024

Art Residency
MARIKA SMREKOVÁ
Studio ALTA
1.07–7.07.2023

Art Residency
KALLE BROLIN
Baltic Art Center
4.03–24.03.2024

Evening School
PEACE TALKS
with Kalle Brolin
Vita Huset
7.03.2024
14.03.2024
20.03.2024

Art Residency
DANAE THEODORIDOU
wpZimmer
2.10–21.10.2023

Afternoon Accessibility
School
**ON INCLUSIVE
MOBILISATION**
Studio ALTA
7.10–9.10.2023

Performance/workshop
**AN ATTEMPT TO DEVICE A
DEMOCRATIC ASSEMBLY**
with Danae Theodoridou
wpZimmer
15.10.2023

Ghosting Residency
DANIELE NINARELLO
wpZimmer
13.10–21.10.2023

Evening School
**ON MOBILISATION AND
LEARNING**
wpZimmer
18.10–20.10.2023

Art Residency
DANIELE NINARELLO
Lavanderia a Vapore
30.10 –7.11.2023

Ghosting Residency
AHILAN RATNAMOHAN
Lavanderia a Vapore
30.10–6.11.2023

Art Residency
DANIELE NINARELLO
Lavanderia a Vapore
14.04–24.04.2023

Art Residency
KALLE BROLIN
Baltic Art Center
8.05–29.05.2023

Ghosting Residency
DANAE THEODORIDOU
Baltic Art Center
8.05–29.05.2023

Symposium
**ON LANGUAGES AND
LANDSCAPES OF
MOBILISATION**
Baltic Center for Writers
and Translators / Baltic Art
Center
31.05–1.06.2023

Art Residency
MARIKA SMREKOVÁ
Studio ALTA
1.11–8.11.2023

Evening School
**ON MOBILISATION OF
CARE**
Lavanderia a Vapore
2.11–5.11.2023

Art Residency
KALLE BROLIN
 Baltic Art Center
 16.09–29.09.2024

Art Residency
MARIKA SMREKOVÁ
 Community center Žizkostel
 24.09–26.09.2024

Symposium
**PARENT-FRIENDLY
 CULTURE — ON
 ACCESSIBILITY**
 Studio ALTA
 1.10–3.10.2024

Exhibition
**ON MOBILISATION OF
 CARE**
 Lavanderia a Vapore
 29.05–31.05.2024

Symposium
**ON MOBILISATION OF
 CARE**
 Lavanderia a Vapore
 29.05–31.05.2024

Publication
MOBILISING WORDS
 January 2025

Art Residency
AHILAN RATNAMOHAN
 wpZimmer
 10.06–30.06.2024

Art Residency
MARIKA SMREKOVÁ
 Studio ALTA
 11.06–13.06.2024

Ghosting Residency
**MARIKA SMREKOVÁ &
 ELISABETTA CONSONNI**
 wpZimmer
 21.06–29.06.2024

Workshop
**INSTITUTE FOR ANARCHIC
 AND ARTISTIC LANGUAGE
 LEARNING with Ahilan
 Ratnamohan and Enrica
 Camporesi**
 wpZimmer
 22.06.2024
 27.06.2024

Symposium/Closing Event
ON MOBILISATION
 wpZimmer, Antwerp
 27.02.2025

Exhibition
ON MOBILISATION
 Out of Sight, Antwerp
 28.02–30.03.2025

Art Residency
**MARIKA
 SMREKOVÁ**
 Studio ALTA
 8.07–12.07.2024

Publication
**ON MOBILISATION
 TOOLKIT**
 May 2025





On the Language of Mobilisation diving into the military history and current

A —
ON THE LANGUAGE OF
MOBILISATION

importance of
Gotland, and how
this has shaped
language and
relationships.

Baltic Art Center

The Art Residency as Support Structure

How has Gotland, the Swedish island located in the middle of the Baltic Sea in a marine crossroad between Northern and Eastern Europe, absorbed the ancient cycles of mobilisation and demobilisation in its language and its landscape? What roles do artists and art organisations play in these cycles?

The foundation and the history of the Baltic Art Center (BAC), runs parallel with the latest of many historic cycles of military mobilisation and demobilisation on the island. During the perfect funding storm that took hold of the Baltic Sea Region in the post-wall atmosphere of the 1990s, we confidently grabbed the title of "Baltic Art Center" in 1999. The Cold War was over, Gotland had demobilised, and the cultural initiatives were invited to fill the void.





BAC and other cultural organisations in the region were founded in a new golden era by triumphant liberal democracies – but it didn't take many years for the tide to turn. Russia's covert invasion of Crimea in 2014 became the starting point for military remobilisation, which then increased considerably after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. After a rushed process in the Swedish parliament and humiliating negotiations with Turkey, Sweden became a NATO member in 2024.

A 200-year narrative of neutrality was over, and the military was once again a strong presence on the island. What will this mean for BAC and other cultural initiatives born out of a desire to build cultural dialogue in the Baltic Sea region in the peaceful (if brief) period following the collapse of the Soviet Union? And perhaps more importantly, how do these new military narratives affect the people of Gotland? These were some of the core questions with which we entered the On Mobilisation partnership, with its broader thematic framework of mobilising civil society through artistic processes.

BAC started out as an art space in a newly renovated warehouse in Visby harbour and then transformed into an international visual arts residency that focuses on facilitating artistic processes and projects in 2007. Still based in Visby, we

have an office, a guest apartment, a car and a small staff who use and share their “know-how” and “know-who”. These are BAC's main tools for facilitating artistic work on the island of Gotland. We don't have an artist's studio – we have an entire island, the ‘BAC-mobile’ and a generous supply of coffee, tea and biscuits for the many meetings where we discuss budgets, explore ideas and brainstorm about where to go, who to see and what to do next. This is the support structure that gives our resident artists access to Gotland, its sites and the local communities with whom they can develop their projects.

Because of our location on Gotland and its role in the aggressive sides of geopolitics, we decided that our artistic research project would be to commission an artist to explore the historical and contemporary peace movements of Gotland. We invited the Swedish artist Kalle Brolin, an artist who has established methods for long-term research projects on multi-layered sites of time, history and human endeavour in visual film essays that function as associative time-based portraits. Kalle Brolin in turn responded to the commission with a proposal to portray the local peace movements.

Starting with the initial brainstorming with BAC staff about where to go and who to see, Kalle Brolin continued his artistic research with a method of informal interviews with peace activists on

Gotland. The evening school *Peace Talks* that we organised as part of the On Mobilisation project also provided an opportunity to research and map the people and events that make up the local, current and historical peace movements.

Peace Talks took place in three three-hour sessions in Visby in March 2024. We primarily targeted the network of people connected with Kalle Brolin's research, but the audience grew by word of mouth and gathered an intergenerational group of artists, academics, students, senior peace activists and their initiatives. One thing that became very clear during the *Peace Talks* sessions was that artists have played an important role in historical and contemporary peace movements as organisers, designers and sponsors of the movements and their events on Gotland but also internationally. The evening school developed into a platform for several local activist groups and revitalised the idea of a local peace movement to the extent that one participant initiated the re-establishment of a Gotland branch of Sweden's largest peace organisation (The Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society) during the final session.

The evening school *Peace Talks*, as well as the personal archives and conversations with Kalle Brolin's interviewees, mixed with the artist's own research, references, associations and ideas. All these things led him further and deeper

into the social networks and imagery of peace activism on Gotland. The resulting portrait of Gotland's peace movements is entitled *Peace on Gotland* and is visualised as a two-channel film and photo essay that montages past, present, fiction and actual events on Gotland. Kalle Brolin is not only trying to create a portrait of different generations of activists and activism on Gotland. He is also trying to capture and make us see the flip side of war – peace and peace work.

The artistic research project titled *On the Language of Mobilisation* conducted by BAC and Kalle Brolin on Gotland as part of the transnational On Mobilisation cooperation developed into a real call and response of methods, aims and purposes, where the overlaps created blurred boundaries between art organisation, artist and local communities. Once gathered, the different groups of activists of Gotland's current and historical local peace movements mobilised and organised a new peace platform. The Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society Gotland is once again a strong voice for international disarmament and the costs of mobilisation and military aggression for Gotland. The local district is now working with the national level of the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society to create public events and programmes to provide alternative thinking into a public discussion dominated by military logic.



Session: Peace Talk II (interview session)

Date: March 14, 2024

Location: The White House, Vidy, Gland

The second session of our evening school was dedicated to the writing of letters, using a specific exercise in the history of the peace movement in Gland as a case study. We had set up the space to function both practically but also as an stage, or a performance, of the writing of official letters. It used the anthropological method of the role-play exercise as a model. Participants and organizers in two teams: peace marches to Gland during 1980 took turns entering a stage and giving testimonies, telling about what was important to remember about the organizing of their marches, according to them. Each testimony was recorded on film, but there was also a live transcription being performed by two non-organizers. Their transcriptions of what was being said was broadcast from their laptops to a big screen which was visible to the audience, standing right across the stage, so that we all got an image of the actual writing scene of letters being performed in real time. We also collected images of the peace marches brought to the session by the participants, and had them scanned to digital format, generated live and also shown on a second screen next to the stage, visible to the participants in real time.

The collected documentation was later transferred to three official archives in Gland: the regional and national archives, the museum of history, and the central library where it will be available as source material for future researchers interested in the history of the peace movement in Gland.

PEACE TALKS

Lessons Learned

1 —

I felt like when we arrived for the first time, it was as though we became forty years younger.

I felt that it was a very mixed group down there at BAC. It felt just right, I think. There were students who were full of ideas, and there were many different kinds of people. At the same time, I found it fascinating to relive something we were deeply involved with in the 1980s during a four-year period. We also had a lot of artists who worked directly with the peace movement back then.

→ Hans and Maud Söderberg, participants in the Evening School *Peace Talks*, co-organised by Baltic Art Center and the artist Kalle Brolin

**Peace On
Gotland**

I Beginning work on a visual vocabulary (May 2023)

While I am in Gotland, visiting all the peace activists that I can find, two books of poetry accompany me. One of them is *alfabet*, by the Danish poet Inger Christensen. The other one is *War Primer*, by Bertolt Brecht, partially compiled while he lived in exile in Sweden. I look to the work of Inger Christensen for its formal qualities as much as for the subject matter. Her long-form poem is a list of things that exist in the world, many of them elements of nature like flowers and animals and weather phenomena, some of them man-made, and a few of them man-made weapons of both small-scale and mass destruction. That these few items on the list, like the hydrogen bomb, possess the power to eradicate all the other things, all the elements of nature, is chilling, frightening, vertiginous. The poem speaks with a quiet sadness, but it also uses insistence, insistence on bearing witness to life.

When I visit a nature preserve on Fårö, on the northernmost end of Gotland, I find myself standing on a stretch of coastline that has no visible signs of life: the rock under my feet is black and looks as if it had once melted during extreme heat and then solidified again, like a stream of lava reaching the ocean. The waves have worn the edges off everything. There is nothing growing on this rock, no moss or algae, and there are no birds in

the sky at this moment. I wonder if there is any life in the waters before me. What I see is only dead black rock, grey ocean, and grey sky, and I think that this is what a world without any life to witness it would look like. It would still be beautiful, a wonder of creation, but there would be no one to witness it, to appreciate it, to be filled with wonder at the beauty of it.

When I visit the far south of Gotland a few days later, when I've gone in the opposite direction, I meet with a priest who has founded a Peace Center. He talks of the necessity of dialogue with the people of Russia. I mostly talk of how a destroyed world would be a world without witnesses; I am still taken with that stretch of coastline up north. Taken with a landscape that tells me that it is peaceful, but only because it has no life.

In *War Primer*, Bertolt Brecht has combined photographs cut from newspapers with short poems, or epigrams. Each page has one image and a poem to comment upon the image. A primer is a book of ABC's meant for teaching children to read, or a short introductory text on a subject. Brecht wrote his *War Primer* during and shortly after World War II, as an introduction to the forces that give us war. He had planned to follow it with a *Peace Primer*, but that plan never came to fruition. I imagine I could use the idea of this never-written *Peace Primer*, this ABC of peace or short introductory book on peace, as inspiration for an artwork to

come out of my stay on Gotland. This introduction to peace that only exists as an idea, *in potentia*. Never witnessed outside of the mind of a writer who is long dead.

On Gotland, I visit people every other day. In between, I write down what I recall of our talks. But mostly I look through the images they have given me.

I meet an international diplomat who has negotiated in six wars. I meet a retired UN soldier who speaks of his struggles with putting words to experiences. I meet people who organised enormous peace marches in the early 1980s, one beginning in the north of the island and one in the south, eventually converging in the city of Visby, somewhere in the geographic middle. These peace marches were supported by the prime minister of Sweden, who vacationed on Gotland every summer, and who was approachable to his neighbours. I meet people who are arranging protests against the Swedish application to join NATO, struggling in the face of public discourse, facing condemnation – what a contrast to those people marching in the early 1980s, with the wind at their backs. I meet with groups of environmentalists, draft dodgers, historians, volunteer workers.

Our talks are not planned beforehand, in the sense that they could have been interviews. They are much more free-form. I listen to their stories and their thoughts, their memories and their feelings, their analyses. I speak of whatever

I come to associate with what they bring up, or I speak of something that I saw or heard the day before, at a previous meeting.

Maybe I lose the thread, sometimes, during these talks. But the people I meet all show me images and press clippings and sometimes an object connected to a memory they have. The priest at the Peace Center in the south of Gotland shows me a short film of how his emails to every member of the Swedish parliament are sent one at a time by an automated program, with the names of every politician passing through the address field. He thinks I might find this little film clip interesting – and I do. It's a new format, but the same struggle: to be heard. Will any of these politicians even open his emails? The first thought is to put this modern, technological attempt at connecting with a politician next to a photograph of the prime minister from the early 1980s, on vacation in Fårö, jumping on his bike and heading over to a meeting with the local peace activists.

When I contrast the automated emails from the priest with images from a conference held in a remote location (Folk och Försvar, at Högfjällshotellet in Sälen January 7th-9th, 2024) where lobbyists representing the weapons industry have unrestricted access to Swedish politicians and military leaders, I am again struck by the difficulties that peace workers face in our present moment. The Swedish Prime Minister makes a public statement from the conference,

claiming: one, that Sweden must prepare for a coming war; and, two, that immigrants or the descendants of recent immigrants should be viewed as cowards and traitors to the country, because they do not wish to defend it. His statement is debunked many times over in the following weeks, but the impact that he, and by extension the weapons manufacturing lobbyists, have on public discourse is far wider than a steady voice reasoning for diplomacy and dialogue.

The people I meet all show me images. They are images which I could include in a future artwork, whatever that would turn out to be. Maybe a *Peace Primer*, with images rather than poems commenting upon other images. Maybe the images that turn up in all these meetings on Gotland could be placed in contrasting pairs, as if on a double spread in a book, and together communicate a thought or a feeling that is not formulated into words.

The images I am presented with are either documentation of an organised event, i.e. potential historical documents, or images with a double nature. Most of them do not present an easy statement but rather speak to the complexities of working with a peace project. Some people have prepared before our meetings, dug up old scrapbooks and photo albums. Others come to think of some image as we sit talking, through an association that has just formed, and bring them out while I wait.

II

Peace Talks in the White House (March 2024)

Nine months have passed since I was here in Gotland last year. Public funding for Swedish peace organisations has been cut by the right wing government, due to a mixture of pragmatic and idealistic considerations, whereas membership numbers in these same organisations have risen considerably. To speak out against what the Israeli army is doing in Palestine is not met with the full force of public condemnation anymore, other than from right-wing propagandists, maybe because of the images coming out of Gaza. But to speak up for diplomacy and negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, suggesting a diplomatic solution in order to save lives on both sides, is still considered traitorous.

On Gotland, some new initiatives to protest against the NATO membership and the bilateral DCA deal between Sweden and the USA have found new wind. Maybe the public's fear of a war with Russia has now been accompanied by a fear of having nuclear weapons placed on an American army base next to where they live. Last time I was here, the Nej till NATO (No to NATO) group consisted of a few older people who were reluctant to speak to me, perhaps lacking spokespeople and the room to speak. Now, in March 2024, they are more than willing to speak not only to me but also at an evening school,







where they will share their plans for upcoming actions and protests. Meanwhile, a new initiative, Naj till DCA, organised by Gotland för fred, have collected signatures for a petition aimed at the two parliamentary representatives that come from Gotland – asking for them to say no to the bilateral DCA deal between Sweden and the USA. Gotland för fred have been successful in not only collecting a lot of signatures, but also in getting the local newspaper to get the parliamentary representatives to make public statements on their position regarding the DCA.

This time around, I am in Gotland mainly to organise and run the three evening school sessions. BAC and I have set up one evening per week, in collaboration with the NBV bildningsförbund (an organisation for adult education in the form of study groups) and the local branch of Uppsala University. BAC have gotten permission to use the facilities of NBV, a former church in Visby, unofficially called the White House. In line with this grandiose naming of the location, our evening school sessions have been titled Peace Talks. In the months prior to the Peace Talks, from December 2023 until I arrive in Gotland three months later, I get in touch with all the people I met with last time – first phone calls to re-establish connections, and then text messaging and emails. It's a good feeling, a bit like getting reacquainted with old friends. It also takes up most of my working days.

When I first learned of the idea of running an evening school as part of the On Mobilisation project, I pictured a classic Swedish reading group, where a small group of people meet once a week to discuss a text that everyone had read during the week prior. I felt that this was of course do-able, but that it would be better to re-think the content and purpose of the evening school based on what potential participants had a demand for and what I would be good at running.

Also, I wasn't working with one pre-existing micro-community, but with a diverse collection of individual people and smaller groups. So, the purpose of the evening school could be to temporarily form a sort of peace movement by getting them all together in the same room, seeing and talking to each other, and sharing their work with each other.

Finally, for the benefit of my own work, I could use the evening school sessions to collect more images for my film. To that end, I decided upon two questions to run as a theme throughout the sessions: One, what would peace look like? Two, what does a peace movement look like? While peace is an abstract concept, an idea that you cannot point to, touch, smell, or even describe, an image is always concrete; it has form and colour and is made up of specific material. Artworks that attempt to picture what cannot be pictured offer a long line of suggestions, none of which manage to capture the totality of a concept: maybe it

could look something like this, to me it looks like this, I interpret it to look like this. An image of peace will always be a failed attempt at describing something which cannot be described. For me, this is one of the most amazing things about art, the constant attempts at doing the impossible, not because we're expecting a sudden success, but because of the joy we find in making the attempt itself. And I think that this can resonate at least a little with doing activist work against oppressive and immobile structures, even though the likelihood of achieving success is not impossible in these cases, only very, very difficult.

During the first evening school session, I introduced this theme – what does peace look like? – by talking about the history of the peace dove as a symbol for the modern peace movement, a symbol created by Pablo Picasso, and about the history of the abstract peace symbol, inspired both by the semaphore alphabet and by a mis-remembrance of the farmer in white being executed by the French soldiers in the painting *The Third of May 1808* by Francisco Goya.

The three evening school sessions had an internal logic or dramaturgy to their set-up, with the participants gradually getting more and more involved. For the first evening, I had come up with a program of art videos, with short presentations, suggestions and thoughts to stimulate discussions.

So the content, and to be fair a lot of the talking, was provided by me. But the participants also got to present themselves to the group, while having dinner together, and I thought maybe this bit was the most important of the whole evening. We repeated this part for the second session – present yourself, and if you're part of any group doing some sort of peace work, could you also tell us about that? By the third evening, this part was actually the whole of the 2.5 hour session, just people presenting themselves and their peace work to each other.

Each evening had a greater number of participants than I had expected. It wasn't just the people I had met previously who turned up; I think some people learned about it and came out of curiosity and a need to find a group of like minds.

The first evening school began with dinner and presentations. Then the three art videos were introduced: *An Idealistic Attempt, and Reconstruction Of An Action That Never Took Place*, by FiaStina Sandlund, *Before The Curtain Falls*, by Caroline Mårtensson, and *Participant Observers*, by Henrik Andersson. They all spoke to variations of our theme – what would an image of peace look like, and what does the peace movement look like? The videos provided suggestions of possible answers to these questions. We got to see a filmed meeting between a young idealist and an older veteran of the peace

movement in Denmark, planning an action together while debating the costs and the consequences of a life lived in opposition and activism. The meeting between generations in this film was meant to hopefully resonate with the meeting between generations in our evening sessions. Then we got to see a film without words, just images of nature and the biosphere under threat, using a nature preserve in a military shooting range as an example. Plants and trees smoking after explosions, insects crawling out of hiding. This was thought to interest people in similar situations in Gotland, with new shooting ranges, located in actual nature preserves, being opened up not only to the Swedish army but to NATO troops as well. In the third film, we watched images of the first peace march against nuclear weapons taking place in Stockholm in the 1960s, while listening to a reading of the observations made by the military secret service on the participants in the march. The defamatory remarks made by the secret service stood in contrast to what we could actually see in the images, the descriptions clearly based on prejudiced opinions of the peace protesters. But these were also some of the official sources for writing the history of the peace march – some photographs, and the observations written down by the secret service. This is how this march will be remembered by those who were not there themselves. This video was meant not only as a reply to the question “what does the peace

movement look like?”, but was also useful as a bridge into the second of our evening sessions.

The second session of our evening school was dedicated to the writing of history, using a specific event in the history of the peace movement on Gotland as a case study. We had set up the space to function practically but also as an image, or a performance, of the writing of official history. It used the anthropological method of the witness seminar as a model. Participants and organisers in two iconic 1981 peace marches in Gotland took turns entering a stage and giving testimonies, talking about what was important to remember about the organising of those marches, according to them. Each testimony was recorded on film, but there was also a live transcription being performed by two text-interpreters. Their transcription of what was being said was broadcast from their laptops to a big screen standing right next to the stage, so that we all got an image of the actual writing down of history being performed in real time. We also collected images of the peace marches brought to the session by the participants, and had them scanned into digital formats, performed live and shown on a second screen next to the stage, visible to the participants in real time.

The collected documentation was later transferred to three official archives on Gotland – the regional and national archive, the museum

of history, and the central library – where it will be available as source material for future researchers interested in the history of the peace movement in Gotland.

The third and final session was dedicated to the now, rather than to history. It was meant to be filled up with whatever people brought with them to a session of show and tell. This made me more nervous than any of the other sessions, mainly because I had almost no input to contribute myself. During the weeks leading up to this session in March 2024, I had gotten in touch with new groups and new people, asking them to come to this session and share their work. The previously mentioned No to NATO and Gotland för fred, but also people from *Larm*, a magazine published by cartoonists protesting against Swedish NATO membership, and Rebellmammorna, a sub-group within Xtinction Rebellion.

I had also planned to facilitate the formation of a local branch of the nationwide peace organisation The Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society (Svenska Freds- och Skiljedomsföreningen). From the participants of the first two sessions, I had learned that there were both former organisers from both the national and the (now defunct) local branch of The Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society, as well as a number of younger people interested in perhaps starting up the local branch again. But during the course

of the third session, we learned that one of the participants had already taken it upon herself to start up this local branch during the previous week. The evening ended with an extended coffee break with new connections being made, and a list of contacts administered and later passed out to all of the participants for further possible collaborations.

A lot of ideas about the form my film could take were beginning to take shape, coming out of these sessions. In addition to a lot of specific images collected, of course, I also had thoughts on the structure of the film, the central questions posed, the method of collecting images and the manner of presenting and speaking about them, and even thoughts on the purpose of making the film. I have begun to make notes on all of this, but I will hold off on presenting them as finished thoughts or ideas until I have sorted through everything.

Most of my time on Gotland, this time around, was spent on contacts – phoning, meeting, and writing to people. But I also had a couple of occasions to try out some ideas for filming, returning, for example, to that dead part of the landscape I had visited last time, up north in Fårö. I also brought a camera into a concert performed by the The United States Army Europe and Africa (USAREUR-AF) Band at a concert hall in Visby. The band consists of 30 musicians and 12 singers, all members of the US armed forces. Their job is to be

musical ambassadors for the US Army in European and African countries. When they played in Visby, they performed the Swedish national anthem, which caused all the audience members to rise out of their seats and sing the lyrics to the anthem. Then the music segued into the American national anthem, which nobody knew the words to, even though they all continued to stand up. I tried to counterpoint the footage I filmed of this with the actual lyrics of the US national anthem written out, since nobody knew them. Some of the lines from “The Star-Spangled Banner” go:

And the rockets’ red glare
The bombs bursting in air
Gave proof through the night
That our flag was still there

I think this is one of many examples of point-counterpoint images and commentary I could work with, also in line with the never-realised *Peace Primer* by Bertolt Brecht that I mentioned previously as a source of inspiration.

On a final note, on my last evening on Gotland this time around, I went into a local shop five minutes before closing time and bought the local newspaper. On the front page, there was a news headline about how the regional government in Gotland had now decided to recommend to the national defense department not to allow US nuclear weapons to be placed on Gotland, and to have that written into the bilateral deal with the US.

III

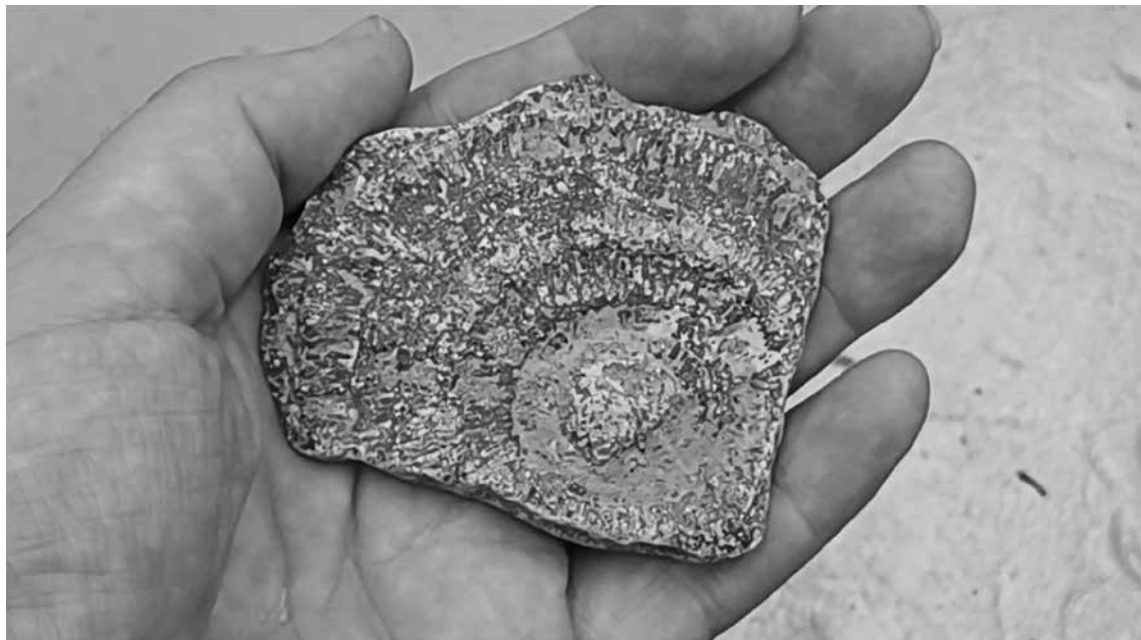
Extravisuality and the third image (September 2024)

Protests, marches, sit-downs and peace meetings are regular occurrences during my third residency period in Gotland. I attend them as a participant and observer and documentarian, staying in the background, making new connections and meeting new people.

Working on the art video, ‘Freden på Gotland’ or ‘Peace on Gotland’, is my main focus during this residency period. The video is meant to follow the so-called essayistic model. I visited people and places in order to shoot original material, and I also spend a lot of time looking up and securing the rights to archival material, i.e. images produced by other creators (perhaps most notably, some scenes from a film by Ingmar Bergman, in which military planes drop napalm on Fårö).

Among the people I revisit, I could mention Kerstin Blomberg in Fårö, a veritable veteran of the peace movement, who provide me with new image-material from working with Ukrainian refugees. Following up on that, I visit and film at a collection point for materials donated to Ukraine. But the visit with Kerstin in Fårö is above all spent in heartfelt conversation and in helping her with some manual labor around her farmhouse.





The eco-village Suderbyn, where I shoot some new sequences for the video, is also among the people and places revisited. The eco-village is situated literally across the road from a recently reopened military shooting range. If my previous visit to the village concerned collecting documentation of their situation and work, this visit focuses on shooting specific images that I want for the art video – a consequence of going through all the previous documentation and experimenting with placing it alongside other images.

I contact the local press-representative of the Swedish army in Gotland, who provides me with the rights to use their press images from the shooting range. I also get the rights to use some video shot by NATO during a joint practice drill at this same range. These images and clips are to be edited into the montage together with footage from the eco-village, to give these contrasting images of peace work and peacekeeping a common context.

Among the new places and people that I get involved with, I could mention a circumstantial event during a local protest action in which I participate. I meet with the students, teaching staff and researchers, who are part of the group *Gotland for Palestine*, and take part in three of their protest actions (Tuesday walkouts outside the university building, and Saturday manifestations in the central shopping street).

In between these actions, I visit a site in the farthest southern point of Gotland, where an engraved stone lies in a field to commemorate an experiment that took place in 1972. The Bang experiment was meant to measure the stress effects on people who were overflowed by military jets passing the sound barrier, resulting in a bang. A group of women were placed in a field and overflowed by fighter jets; their stress reactions were measured by researchers from the National Institute of Health.

Back in Visby again, I take part in a Saturday manifestation with *Gotland for Palestine*, which is suddenly overflowed by military jets doing a low pass with roaring engines. This event creates a spontaneous montage, which becomes incorporated into the video.

An essayistic approach of filmmaking could be to be a filmmaker who is in the film, looking at images, making discoveries, coming up with ideas, and presenting the process instead of some end result; this puts the filmmaker on the same level as the viewers. The filmmaker Harun Farocki says that, in the essayistic film, montage does not create a linear pathway through a story or an argument, but rather uses repetition and mutation to create relations between one image and another, relations that are associative and cannot be formulated according to propositional logic. An experiment with the stress effect of fighter jets passing through the sound barrier in 1972 resonates with a moment experienced during a peace protest

in 2024 and produces a sense of empathy with something that lies outside of both of these two moments and these two locations.

In a film, traditionally, an image will follow upon an image, and then another follows upon that. A story is developed. But in the essayistic film, images can be placed next to each other simultaneously. Or above, or below one another. There could be two screens next to each other, running different films simultaneously, in an installation. And even though the connection between the simultaneous films might not always be apparent, at first, the viewer will roam, as if in a landscape, while looking to construct meaning.

Through associative montage and comparative image analysis, we could perhaps achieve a conscious, directed construction of extratextuality in film, continuously attempting to find a pairing of two images that can produce associations, connotations, metaphors and symbols that cannot be found in either image taken alone.

Extratextuality, when used in film, gives a meaning to the image that lies outside of what we see. Maybe it should be called extravisuality instead, when it's about film. In my case, this meaning would be an evocation of the abstract concept of peace, a third image which I could spend the entire film attempting to develop, through the continuous selection and placement of two images next to each other. Of a priest sending

out automated emails to members of parliament in 2023, next to a prime minister riding a bicycle from his summer house down to meet the local peace group in 1981. Of a military shooting range in a nature preserve, next to a permaculture farm practicing soil restoration, both simultaneously, but on opposite sides of the same road. Of two national anthems played by the occupier to the occupied in 2024. Of military planes dropping napalm on Fårö in a Bergman film in 1968, next to images from a nature preserve in Fårö which seems to contain no visible signs of life in 2023.

Lessons Learned

2 —

Your meetings served as a catalyst for The Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society to start up on Gotland. This might have happened anyway, but we don't know for sure.

For me, the meetings functioned as opportunities for further education, moments to pause and reflect. I take with me the thoughts about what peace and war are, the meaning of the words. Peace is more than the absence of conflict and war; peace is not the status quo, a natural state that we find in nature. Peace requires constant effort to achieve and then maintain, on both a small and a large scale.

→ Charlotte Flodin, participant in the Evening School *Peace Talks*, co-organised by Baltic Art Center and the artist Kalle Brolin

ghosting
Kalle Brolin

**Only Here Could
Bergman and Tarkovsky
Have Made Their Films...**

Performing the
Ghost in Gotland

‘Excuse me, but where is Gotland?’ I hear myself asking with slight embarrassment at one of the first meetings of the On Mobilisation cohort, when I learn that I will visit it and act as a ghost for the visual artist Kalle Brolin.

What led to my pairing with Kalle, I learn, is the common focus of our work on language and the creation of citizens' vocabularies related to social movements. Kalle would meet people from various peace movements in Gotland (active mainly in the 1970s and 1980s but also today), who raise their voices against the extended (national and international) military presence in Gotland. His main question was: 'what kind of language can stand next to such institutionalisation of war?' His aim was to work on the (impossible?) task of (re)mobilizing the Gotland peace movement and, together with its people, create a new vocabulary, a particular type of alphabet for peace and solidarity.

For the past five years, I have worked extensively on a larger artistic research project that I call *The Practice of Democracy*. In it, I create a series of score-based participatory encounters where inhabitants of different cities in Europe meet to explore and practice different democratic practices together (such as public speaking, assembling, protesting, etc.). The scores I create – namely, a series of instructions for thinking, speaking, moving – are mostly language-based. In my case, the question is: what kind of language can mobilise people to experiment more imaginatively with politics and come up with alternative (as opposed to capitalist) ways of practicing social coexistence.

The connection between Kalle's and my work then seems clear enough; what was left to discover was what exactly I would have to do as his 'ghost' in Gotland. How could I stand next to a person as they work? Especially when this work includes close, one-to-one encounters with people who speak Swedish, a language that I don't speak? As what could I – a foreigner – How could I – a foreigner – stand between Kalle and his interlocutors? Suddenly, the idea of the ghost started to look more attractive. Being there, but so discreetly that I could even pass unnoticed...

Along with recurring talks with Kalle, scheduled visits to churches, art museums, local galleries and the architectural remains of Gotland's military history

...what followed also included a series of unique, unexpected moments:



- for the first time in my life, I drive a boat, assisting Kalle in his search for an old assembly space, now hidden under the waters of a lake.

- an activist whose home place we visit tells me that I am sitting on exactly the same spot on her couch that one of the main political figures of the Greek socialist party – who she knew personally – had sat. The visit suddenly takes an unforeseen historical turn (especially when thinking about the current political situation of my homeland, strongly characterised by voices on the extreme right) and involves me directly. Many ghosts in the same room... I am overwhelmed by the rich archive of texts and images she shared with us, and by her generous hospitality.

- During one of the short road trips we did with Kalle in Gotland and its surrounding islands as part of his planned visits, I find myself daydreaming while looking out the window. Such a generous treatment of space, I catch myself thinking. Everything here looks exceptionally spacious: such long fields, such sparsely populated areas, an open space that also opens space for the mind and heart to wander. Later, I learn that Andrei Tarkovsky filmed his *Sacrifice* here, whereas Ingmar Bergman has made many of his films on the small island of Fårö, which is almost attached to Gotland. It makes absolute sense. The rare, open, spacious temporality that is so characteristic of their work could only have taken place here.

- On another road trip of ours, I am surprised to hear Kalle asking: 'Now, apart from accompanying me, what is there for you and your work here? What can I do for you?' In such a generous shift of focus, a ghost can materialise itself in mysterious ways. It is aAfter a couple of hours, hours that my dream to visit Bergman's house and his grave comes true.

- It is also then that I learn about the Almedalen Week, a unique festival of democracy that emerged in 1968, when Olof Palme, minister of education at the time, spoke from the back of a lorry at Kruttorner in Visby, and has taken place annually in Visby since then. During the last



day of my ghost visit in Gotland, I spend time visiting the park where Almedalen takes place and read about the event in the local library, which stands right opposite the park (such a nice alignment of knowledge, language and political action). Suddenly Kalle's question 'what kind of language can stand next to such institutionalisation of war?' seems to get a good reply here...





...later that day, I hear that in recent decades Almedalen has taken a tricky twist, becoming mostly a lobbying event for Swedish political parties, a kind of prestigious party for the press, which severely impacts the local community in terms of infrastructure, ridiculously high prices during that week, etc. Palme would definitely be sad to see the frustrating collapse of democracy in these last decades...

Towards the end of my ghosting week, and as the rest of the On Mobilisation cohort arrives in Gotland for our meeting, I find myself once more strongly grounded in grounded strongly back to my main questions of interest, albeit through an inspiring detour, that shedstough, which gives a new light onto them: how can art contribute to the reactivation of truly democratic practices today and become a strong alternative to the toxic rhetoric of war, violence and hatred that is currently so popular today? How can art, through its language and structures, offer a frame, through its language and structures, for 'demos' -- namely, the people -- to empower themselves and claim back their power as the first, constitutive part of demo-cracy?

During our cohort meeting, I am asked to reflect back on my experience as a ghost and share some thoughts on it. I write and share the following with the group:

"It starts with a suspicion (what is this forced collaboration about?) and a certain guilt (how can someone --in this case Kalle -- do his work while at the same time having someone else -- in this case me --- asking questions, time, attention?). How could I intervene in another's working process? How to not become an annoying burden?

It then evolves into an existential question: what is my role here? What am I supposed to do? What does a 'ghost' normally do?

And it ends (at least from the side of the ghost) as a triple act of:

1. resistance: the ghost as a great opportunity to slow down and, 'waste time', against the continuously accelerating working rhythm of capitalism that mainly

focuses on executionexecutes things, often with only superficial results. When there is not much to do, other than following someone, time feels different and holds another type of potential...

2. mutual generosity: as a ghost one learns, as Bojana Cvejic has argued, to ‘stand under’, i.e. to support, before she ‘under-stands.’ During our days of exchange with Kalle, we both learned how/when to be there (for each other) and how/when to leave space and (dis)appear; how and when one should (not) be alone.

3. emerging knowledge: when one does not (need to) ‘know’, when one has no expectations or nothing to prove (to the demanding art market), then things come only as the rich, unexpected surprises of new insights, appearing from different directions in ways that one cannot (and should not) control. Maintaining such positioning towards knowledge is a core concern I have in my work and, at the same time, the greatest challenge we all face, I guess, as (art) workers in such harsh neoliberal contexts. Most of the time we fail but maybe the important thing is trying...”

In my recent book *Publicing – Practising Democracy tThrough Performance* (Nissos 2022), I propose a careful approach to ‘locality’ as a core working principle for reactivating democracy via art. The practice of ghosting could be seen as the ideal practice to enter the ‘locality’ of a new place. Entering Gotland’s locality as a ghost has insightfully taught me, once more, the complexity, contradictions, paradoxes involved in internal political debates.

As I travel back home, the local flight from Visby to Stockholm is full of soldiers and other army officers who are probably also traveling back home for the weekend. I am thinking that for a week we were sharing the same place, that small piece of land, working in such different ways on how we can live together.

Next to such an armed force, our protest slogans, our bodily language and actions evolve in time, looking for ways to make poetry, and political emancipation, mutual understanding and support, constitutive parts of our democracies...





On Mobilisation of inclusivity responds to the situation of young parents and the •

• difficulties they
• face when
• wanting to •
• participate in •
• cultural life.

Studio ALTA

**Where did all the
people who used to be
part of our audiences
disappear to when
they became parents?**



The question “Where did all the people who used to be part of our audiences disappear to when they became parents?” arose in 2020, when my colleague Anna Chrtková and I first engaged as curators with the work and long-term research of Marika Smreková. It sparked curiosity about a potentially significantly large group of people who might have slipped out of our attention, perhaps due to the unquestioned patterns through which we are accustomed to organise events in the arts.

What began as a kind of detective story developed further within the structure of On Mobilisation. As we dug into the research on like-minded initiatives in the Czech Republic and around Europe, we understood that the greatest benefit lay in the close collaboration



between an institutional framework (Studio ALTA) and the artistic approach of Marika Smreková. Based on this relationship, we started to build a platform called Parent-Friendly Culture, with the understanding that if we want to change something, we need to start with ourselves and rethink the way we operate in Studio ALTA.

The following text is a summary of our institutional tools, strategies and the findings we gathered throughout the On Mobilisation journey.

What Is Parent-Friendly Culture?

Firstly, it is Studio ALTA's process of self-transformation towards a more inclusive environment of cultural institutions for parents and children, shaped by the following questions:

- Where did all the people, who once had been an integral part of our audience, disappear after they became parents?
- Is there any way to bring them back?
- What do we need to do in order to make it possible for them to be part of our audience community again?
- What are the barriers of our institution that prevent some people from entering?
- What does this have to do with society as a whole and

the general narratives that are woven into the way we organise ourselves in the arts?

- How do we not only create activities for parents, but make them meet with non-parents and make children visible in public space?

Out of these questions, we formed the Parent-Friendly Culture platform and rooted our actions in 6 pillars:

1. IT CONNECTS a group of people – artists, parents (mothers and fathers) and non-parents – via Facebook and WhatsApp channels. The aim is to share information about PFC events and create a support structure within a micro-community. Invitations to these groups have been spread over social media and by leaflets with QR codes posted around playgrounds and schools.

So far we have gathered approximately 600 people in our FB group and over 100 in our WA group. The people are active, responding to our calls and participating in the events we are sharing. The group is slowly becoming a tool for the people as they start to share their own content, and one day hopefully it will become a supportive infrastructure for self-organising. Forming these groups was the first thing we did and looking at the results of our initiative, we

consider them a major reason for its success.

2. IT OFFERS accessibility tools in the form of setting earlier show-time for live performances/ events and providing parents with free babysitting by experienced kindergarten and early years educators.

Since late 2023, we have organized 15+ events with free childcare and involved 6 other cultural institutions. We took shows from our regular program, made them start earlier and arranged 2 babysitters. Result? We had a new audience! As a side benefit, we figured out that an earlier start doesn't repel the general visitors; on the contrary, many of them welcome an earlier start.

In 2025, two Prague-based independent theatres started to organise child-care on a regular basis at their own expense and several other events are appearing across the country.

3. IT DRAWS attention to the invisible and under-appreciated work of parents of young children and their exclusion from social life, and to the barriers parents have to face.

With our activities, we got significant media outreach. There are many people working there who understand that this is also their topic and are generally interested as parenthood becomes a big thing not only in culture but

in society as whole. We got invited to panels and other discussions and were asked to navigate other initiatives in becoming more parent-friendly.

We understood when talking about Parent-Friendly Culture, we are also necessarily talking about much deeper topics, such as the values that are embedded in our society, the role of the arts, capitalism, and patriarchy. These are communicating vessels, and thus striving for a parent-friendly culture can bring surprising strategies to respond to today's most urgent challenges.

4. IT INITIATES new intergenerational performative works that allow children and parents to participate. The content and form of these works are not primarily for children, but they benefit from their presence and participation.

Our new premiere Seeing Invisible by the collective of Mariĕka Smreĕková, Lenĕka Jabŕřková, and Matĕj Nitra premiered on September 26th, 2024. This experience also made us look more closely at the other artistic works we are presenting and think about whether they have the potential to invite children into them along with adults.

5. IT CREATES open-source material such as: registration forms, childcare handover protocols, know-how in spatial design, a network of babysitters

and care workers, and a guide for implementing PFC into other institutions.

These materials have been proven and tested by both our positive experiences and the mistakes we made. To share the materials, we are hosting detailed guidance workshops for institutions and culture workers on how to work with accessibility for parents and how to create a new communal audience.

6. IT CULTIVATES a welcoming culture.

Parent-Friendly Culture taught us many things about our communication with the audience: not only parents but also the other people that we are making our culture work for. In the end, a welcoming culture is the most important and basic accessibility tool that costs only our empathy.

What It Takes to Make Culture Parent-Friendly

When thinking about accessibility for parents and children, there is not only one path to follow or a single manual to copy and paste. Instead, there are a multiplicity of means that help parents to attend cultural events and one has to figure out what constellation works best for a particular context and capacities. Here is a list of a few tools that we have been working with, scaled

from the least demanding to the more complex ones.

A welcoming culture: Simply find a fitting context that you want to open for the parents and say out loud that parents are welcome. Maybe it is a long-durational piece, a discussion, or any other format that allows one to enter and leave at any point or that doesn't demand absolute silence and attention, so that if there is a babbling kid around, no one would mind or the parent could easily leave and re-enter later.

When we talked to many parents in the Czech Republic, we often heard stories about how unwelcome they felt when going out with their children. To quote Marika: "It's not a given that parents and children are welcome and that their presence has been taken into account. And if it's not a given, it's necessary to state. Until such time as it becomes a given."

Time: This is one of the essential tools and criteria in parents' decision-making processes regarding whether they can come or not. Events that start later than 7:00 pm tend to be inaccessible, as they overlap with the sleep patterns of children.

In experimenting with earlier start times, we learned that it is not only parents who benefit, but also people who have to commute from different cities, people who work early morning shifts, people who want to visit more events that evening or, surprisingly, many of

our colleagues from culture sector for whom visiting events is part of their job.

Space adjustments: Including barrier-free access for strollers, changing counters, potty and baby toilet equipment, a kitchen corner, small chairs and tables. A specially designed space with carpets and sensorial objects creates a significant impact. When we were thinking about such a space, we created an outdoor zone with haptic stimulants, toys and a big chalkboard for drawing that was used by kids and parents; later in the night, it became a favourite spot for adults to have a drink. We avoided using infantile aesthetics and plastic objects so that the space was appealing to both adults and kids. Most of the things we arranged for free as we activated our networks and people donated things they were not using anymore. Even with low or no budget, you can make space more accessible. Tadeáš Polák, one of the educators who works in our childcare system, says: “What I have learned about kids is that they like 3 things: to destroy things, pastry and private ownership. If each institution possessed several bread rolls and at least a small thing that could be thrown down, tangled, covered with paint or torn apart, the world would be a slightly friendlier place.”

Childcare provided during the events: Is one of the most effective tools to bring the parents and children in. When we were

speaking out loud about the idea of providing free childcare, we often got the response that it is just too expensive. Well, it's not. Roughly calculated, every event with free childcare costs us:

- 2 x 80€ for the babysitters (they usually work for 2 hours. The average payment they get in nurseries is 10€ per hour. We try to balance the extreme underpayment of their carework)
- 1 hour of our tech team to prepare the childcare zone
- 40 minutes of our in-house staff to host, supervise, and talk to parents before and after the show
- 30 minutes of our PR team to share the information to the relevant channels
- 1-2 hours of our production team to deal with extra reservations, paperwork, and coordinate with the PR and tech crews and other team members

In our case, we provided the childcare for free with the obligation for parents to buy a ticket for the show. Our capacity for the childcare zone was about 10-14 children. Usually, there were 8-20 adults coming (parents and their friends) so 50-150% of the costs related to the babysitters returned from the extra ticket sales.

Persistence, honest interest and curiosity: I consider this the most difficult element of accessibility. Be ready to fail and make mistakes and be open to learning from them. Be prepared for last-minute

cancellations from parents whose kids suddenly got sick and surprising criticism from the public saying that if you are considering parents, why not people with dogs who also need to find someone to take care of their animal companions? (Yes, this happened.) Dedicate your mental capacities to the parents who are coming to the events and listen to their stories.

What It Brings Back

Parent-Friendly Culture brought us a new audience or an old audience with whom we had lost contact. From the on-sight conversations with parents, we learned that many hadn't been to a theatre for 2 or more years. According to audience development research, if people lose the habit of visiting cultural institutions, it is very hard to renew this connection. We welcomed couples that hadn't seen a show together since they became parents, or artistic couples for whom it was suddenly possible to see the work of their partner. The accessibility tools made our program open to people who have never been to Studio ALTA and had very little or no connection to contemporary dance and performing arts. They came only because of the possibility and some of them are becoming our regular audience members. Parent-Friendly Culture also brought a more joyful atmosphere to the events as well as increased

media coverage and a stronger negotiation position with our funders. Parent-Friendly Culture can thus be seen as a strategy for more sustainable institutions and can cause a durable impact on the relationship within the artistic community and audience.

Why It Concerns Us All

Throughout the process, I have often questioned why I spend so much energy and attention on a world that seems to be far away from me. While I live in a heteronormative long-term partnership, we do not plan to have children and I have always been accustomed to being kind of afraid of the presence of children. As I turned 30, many of my close friends went on a different trajectory and became parents. Since most of my social life takes place within cultural events, I started to lose contact with them. This made me very upset, as I thought that the fact that my friends are having kids shouldn't be a reason to throw away the years of work we put into our friendship. Parent-Friendly Culture turned into an environment where we can reestablish these relations and where I can face my fear of children. I slowly learn how to interact with them and how I, even though childfree, can participate and contribute to the carework of others.





Lessons Learned

3 —

I was refreshed and moved by getting an opportunity to enjoy culture – and even to be involved in the creative process – while being free to take a step back at any time to look after my children. Culture and art truly are food for the soul, and I was hungry. So in that sense, as a parent and as an artist, I very much hope that this will continue and develop in order to support the slow transformation of Czech society.

→ Eva Pejkofski (violinist, mother of 4 children),
participant in the artistic research project *Parent-
Friendly Culture* by Marika Smreková

Parent-Friendly Culture



“Becoming primarily, or even secondarily, a caregiver is a significant change that impacts all areas of life. Care transforms our closest relationships and our wider social ties, it has a fundamental influence on our professional life and it impacts our mental health, free time and financial security. Still, despite its significance, care takes place privately, away from everything we associate with social or professional life. This displacement from public life leads to isolation for caregivers, which has many negative aspects from professional stagnation through financial distress to very intimate effects on mental health and relationships.”

— Dorota Ambrožová,
writer, documentarian, journalist, mother

Before I became a mother, I had a rich cultural and social life as a theatre director. This changed significantly when my daughter Emilka was born six years ago. Suddenly, a great deal of cultural programming, as well as working in the sector of the performing arts geared towards adults, was inaccessible, unless I didn't mind leaving my child at home crying during an evening visit to a cultural institution. It was clear to me that motherhood would change my life, but that doesn't stop me from posing some questions: what if our society and cultural institutions could function in such a way that parents and their children are not cut off from the public? What can we, as a society, do to achieve such a transformation in the established system? What if parents' interest in cultural programming didn't have to be reduced solely to performances for children?

I decided to break down barriers for the community of parents who want to be part of cultural life and co-create a diverse audience. Since 2023, I have been working with curator Petr Dlouhý on the community platform Parent-Friendly Culture within Prague's Studio ALTA. As part of the On Mobilisation project, we undertook artistic research into the accessibility of live cultural events for parents and children and their position in society and culture, I as an artist, mother and activist and Petr from an institutional position and as a childfree person. "One of

the local culture wars concerns where small children do and do not belong. And little is said about the fact that parents, who spend their evenings taking care of the littlest ones at home for a number of years, first during parental leave and then outside working hours, often feel lonely and tired and miss the cultural and social life they had before. They are an unseen, *non-grata* group," states journalist Jana Návrátová in her podcast, *Suflér*.

There can be many ways to combine childcare with a visit to a cultural institution, but...

...the problem with the Czech cultural system lies in its preference for a single one of them: visiting a programme intended for children or families. This approach ignores the three years of isolation associated with the established social system of maternity and parental leave that the primary caregiver has no choice but to experience, due to the inaccessibility of institutional daily childcare (there are insufficient nurseries and those that do exist are often unaffordable). It also ignores the several years that follow for both parents, when productive (gainful) work is replaced by other, socially reproductive (caring) work. Often, this does not end even when the child is asleep in bed at night. Put simply, if you become the primary caregiving parent (of which 98%

are women, according to data from the Employment Office) in the Czech Republic, you can soon find yourself in a situation where the only thing you can do in cultural institutions is to meet other parents with children. You will only be offered programming for children at times when most of society is in productive work or at school. The number of years spent in this way depends on the number of children you care for, as well as their personality traits. Many children, for example, cannot handle being separated from their primary caregiver at night and so there are several years when it is impossible to leave them at home at night.

When society begins to separate non-parents (people who do not have children) from caregivers with children, there comes a point at which intergenerational dialogue starts to fall away. For many young people, like me, the first time they come into close contact with an infant is when they become parents themselves. They don't know how to handle the situation and subsequently blame themselves for being bad parents and making many mistakes in caring for their firstborn. At the same time, their social environment, i.e. the whole set-up of contemporary western culture, fails to create conditions for learning caregiving and communication by observing it in public. During this research, many parents stated that, until they had children themselves, they could not

imagine all that parenthood entails and had no empathy for people with small children in public space, i.e. when they encountered a child's display of emotion, such as crying on public transit or at the next table in the cafe where they were trying to work.

The advent of parenthood also reconfigures social ties. After the birth of our child, we went several years without seeing the people who had previously been our closest friends, something that also happens to other parents and their closest childfree friends. When I was available, they were at work and they went out when I needed to put the children to bed. I persuaded a few of them to spend time with me and the children at a playground. A couple times, I tried to break through the barrier myself and took my children with me to an evening cultural event in good faith, hoping that I would get lucky and the younger child would sleep contently without crying disruptively in the carrier and that the older child's sleep schedule wouldn't be disturbed by attending an evening programme before going to kindergarten the next day. Still, the whole time I had the oppressive feeling that it would have been better for everyone – me, the children and the surrounding adults – if we had stayed at home.

During those visits, I strongly felt the absence of spaces that would welcome parents, non-parents and children during the day and



early evening. I get that it's still easier in the Czech Republic to take your kids along to a pub or a shopping centre than to a cultural event, where parents are under constant pressure and subject to public demonstrations that they are unwelcome and disturbing the others present. The cultural spaces that are open to them consist primarily of children's theatres, galleries and museums and specific programmes for children and families offered by cultural institutions predominantly targeting adults. If, however, the only programmes that welcome parents and children are those designed for parents and children, parents are reduced solely to their caregiving role. From the point of view of culture, I constantly experience being regarded as the person accompanying a child to a programme; my needs are invisible and unimportant to the cultural sector. Despite its protestations to the contrary, the cultural sector lacks the willingness to create support structures that would help parents participate in cultural life and make their visits compatible with reproductive work.

I will cite one analogy to illustrate the unfortunate objectification of parents as a target group. If I were to need a wheelchair, I would not only want to encounter people in wheelchairs at cultural events, at programmes dramaturgically framed by disability, because we share a single characteristic that places us in the same target group

within the cultural sector. Any curator or dramaturg currently working in a cultural institute would find it strange if access to culture for people in wheelchairs was addressed by the institution creating a special programme solely for wheelchair users instead of enabling them to be part of the general public. On the contrary, it is increasingly common that the cultural offer expands hand-in-hand with barrier-free access and toilets and early seating options. Parents have different needs: changing tables, ramps for prams, places where children can spend time, venue-provided childcare, earlier start times, etc. Just like people in wheelchairs, however, parents are interested in a wide-ranging programme that reflects their interests and needs and allows them to be part of a diverse audience.

If cultural institutes regard a multi-generational, diversity-rich society solely through individual, entirely separate, target groups, the culture sector will contribute to segregation, rather than inclusion. This is despite the fact that institutions create a whole range of programmes for different groups of people – unhoused people, teenagers, mothers with children, immigrants, seniors, etc. – under the label of inclusivity. The function of an open cultural institution is not just to increase accessibility to the arts at entirely separate times, but to create spaces where people with different

life experiences and needs can encounter one another. If we include children in such spaces, we allow them to learn how to behave in and move through cultural spaces and how to commune with art alongside adults. At the same time, society can learn how to treat others and how to listen to, respect and recognise the benefits of intergenerational encounters.

The fifth thesis in *Feminism for the 99%* (2019) by professors Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser reads: “Gender oppression in capitalist societies is rooted in the subordination of social reproduction to production for profit. We want to turn things right side up” (p. 20). The book highlights who in capitalist societies has the right to free time and, in this case, the right to culture. One visible indicator is the event’s start time. Through it, we clearly see who the cultural event accommodates and who is excluded from it. The authors describe a crisis of reproduction in the context of capitalism because “[o]n the one hand, the [capitalist] system cannot function without this activity [of social reproduction]; on the other, it disavows the latter’s costs and accords it little or no economic value. What this means is that the capacities available for social reproductive work are taken for granted, treated as free and infinitely available “gifts” that require no attention or replenishment” (p. 73).

The authors state that, “in fact, social-reproductive capacities are not infinite, and they can be stretched to the breaking point. When a society simultaneously withdraws public support for social reproduction and conscripts its chief providers into long and grueling hours of low-paid work, it depletes the very social capacities on which it relies” (p. 73). Similarly to social-reproductive work, work in culture is undervalued by society, underfinanced and often designated as a hobby, rather than work, even if it often takes place in unsustainable conditions. Hence the need to emphasise the connection between the cultural sector and parenthood, rather than pretend that they have nothing to offer one another. To mutually acknowledge their time-intensive work (social-reproductive and cultural) as valuable and offer due care, attention and space for replenishment.

Across countries, the majority of those in productive work are free primarily in the evenings. And across countries, young children need someone who will look after them before they go to bed and be there during the night. Once children are able to handle separation from a single parent, the parents generally start to alternate evenings, so that the primary caregiving parent can sate their appetite for evening leisure time after years without it. If the parents wish to attend a cultural event together, they must be lucky

enough to live in close proximity to relatives, or have sufficient capital to add paid, at-home childcare to the price of tickets to an evening cultural event. Evening cultural events thus become accessible only to parents with sufficient social or economic capital. The rest in partner relationships go through the major test of years without any childfree time alone together. The parent-friendly approach, in which performances start earlier and childcare is provided within the cultural institution itself, allows both parents to have a social experience. Accessible culture can thus also have a positive impact on partner relationships.

Four things were essential to mobilise in the direction of the socio-structural change we addressed through the Parent-Friendly Culture research: to unite (physically and online) everyone interested in change and the implementation of a parent-friendly approach (to build “community” and trust), to have well-evidenced audience development data, to set up a space for experimentation and testing and, subsequently, to put proven proposals for implementing inclusive measures in cultural institutions into practice with the public (to test and analyse tools of support such as implementing various types of childcare, earlier start times for programmes targeting adult audiences, creating intergenerational art works, and communicating the significance of these changes to the wider public,

parents and non-parents alike). There are many ways childcare might be combined with a visit to a cultural institution. We just need to be willing to accommodate parents and their children, remove the barriers that prevent them from accessing culture and replace them with inclusive tools. In their book *Proč jsme tak na-štvané?* (Why Are We So Angry?), the labour lawyer Šarka Homfray and the photographer Michaela Karásek Čejková write: “When we come to the topic of equal opportunity, one thing applies. When we encounter inequality and internal barriers, it’s not just the person who has to overcome the barriers that loses, the entire society loses.” Each dismantled barrier offers a benefit. For me, the most significant benefits of Parent-Friendly Culture come from linking up the world of isolated parents with the world of non-parents, and the adult world with the world of children, which we in western cultures have managed to separate significantly over the last decade.

Seeing the Unseeable, or adults and children together in society...

Part of the Parent-Friendly Culture research and the closing Symposium of Accessibility in October 2024 was the creation and presentation of an intergenerational participatory performance titled *Vidět neviditelné* (Seeing the Invisible), which I co-created with

the artists Lenka Jabůrková and Matěj Nytra. The aim of the project was to simulate intergenerational dialogue through the language of nonverbal play, i.e. collective care as per the African proverb “it takes a village to raise a child.” *Seeing the Invisible* offers space for people of different ages and life experiences to meet. For many visitors who are not parents or did not come with children, the performance is an opportunity to get in contact with children and parents and practice mutual interaction, empathy and ways of getting involved in the care of an unfamiliar child through the language of play. At the same time, it often results in a new experience for the children, for whom it is far less common to have a non-hierarchical interaction with unfamiliar adults outside the family circle. We endeavour to ensure that all the spectators can experience the feeling of full acceptance during the performance.

“The sorting of the population by age into those who belong at home with their mothers, then in kindergarten and gradually in the individual school years complicates intergenerational dialogue. It prevents mutual learning and recognition, which lead to understanding,” writes Dorota Ambrožová, reflecting after attending a performance of *Seeing the Invisible* with her daughter. She continues, “the gradual transformation of cultural organisations and institutes can happen even without legislative

change and depends primarily on the awareness of the people who work in them. The first step would be the awareness that culture contributes to inequality in the care sector and that the first steps toward inclusivity needn’t be so difficult.”

The development of cultural institutions and works of art as spaces where we can test practical proposals for the kind of reality we want to live in is itself a valuable tool for achieving positive social change.

Parent-Friendly Culture leads to a parent-friendly society...

“The cultural sector builds barriers between parents and non-parents, between caregivers and non-caregivers. There is often a lack of empathy here, a lack of willingness to find an inclusive approach for everyone, whether on the side of the visitors or the artists who shape culture,” Dorota Ambrožová states, reflecting on statements from the artist-panelists at the Brno conference Women in Art vol. 2, which I took part in two weeks after the birth of my second daughter. “I know the feeling that it would have been better for everyone if I had stayed at home (with my child),” confessed the musician Marie Kieslowski, another panelist at the conference, agreeing with her colleagues that the first step, which incurs no cost, is the interest and willingness to accommodate.

This perspective is not only present in the feelings of mother-artists endeavouring to continue carrying out their professions in the presence of an infant, but in the feelings of many parents in the Czech Republic. They are united by the experience of having left home with a small child and entered one of the many public spaces primarily intended for the adult faction of society or they have brought children with them to attend a cultural programme for adults. In most public spaces, a caregiver with a child feels unwelcome. This is reflected in the negative reactions of people outside or on social media, the absence of changing tables and children's chairs in most state and cultural institutions and, above all, the lack of society-wide communication that would make it clear to the public and to parents that children are welcome in a given space. Today, many parents are convinced that they should only take their children to places especially intended for them – playgrounds, cafes with play areas, cultural and state institutions for children, etc. Whenever parents are given the space to speak about how they feel in society or in a cultural institution others are eager to refute that feeling. There is no exclusion from the cultural sector, they argue; parents are welcome even if they are not specifically invited and the timings of cultural programs do not align with their schedules. These issues are raised instead of listening carefully and believing

those who bring these assertions and feelings to the surface. It's not a given that parents and children are welcome and that their presence has been taken into account. And if it's not a given, it's necessary to state. Until such time as it becomes a given.

The feeling that Marie Kieslowski describes became even more firmly embedded in my perspective as a theatre director, mother-artist and mother-spectator from 2018 to 2021. In those years, I struggled to communicate the issue of cultural accessibility for parents, i.e. people engaged in social-reproductive work, to various colleagues, artistic directors and promoters, but often encountered a lack of understanding or unwillingness to make culture more accessible. According to Eva Zavřelová's doctoral dissertation researching theatre audiences in the context of patterns of spending free time, in the Czech Republic alone there are approximately 1.6 million children under the age of 15 for a population of just under 11 million. Taking their parents into account, we have a huge group of potential spectators, many of whom find culture inaccessible.

During my three years of maternal isolation, it was easier to go to art and cultural institutions by combining artistic work with childcare during the day than to attend evening cultural events as a spectator-parent with a child. I realised that the fundamental

question isn't just how not to exclude many artist-parents from the cultural sector, but how not to exclude spectator-parents. How not to lose active spectators as soon as they become parents, since, as Eva Zavřelová's research shows, many young parents who stop being part of the audience over a course of several years get used to spending their free time without visiting cultural institutions. Their social-spectatorship ties and attendance patterns fall away and, as their children grow up, they return to cultural institutions with far more difficulty, if at all.

It was only through my own lived experience that I realised that capitalist societies do not place the same value on care and parenthood as they do on productive work. Further, even the more socially sensitive cultural sector blindly contributes to this inequality of approaches and the segregation of people into carers and non-carers. Ultimately, this helps to render caregivers and children invisible and makes it impossible for them to interact with the whole of society. During my maternity leave, I – as a person with a broader overview of culture in the Czech Republic – received only two invitations to cultural events that mentioned that parents with children were welcome and that the organiser had arranged childcare. It was like a balm for the soul, that it had occurred to someone to organise an event at an accessible time, to invite us and arrange childcare, so

we could be part of the discussion and the shaping of public opinion by analysing society-wide issues in public institutions. I immediately asked what was necessary to make this more the rule than the exception in culture.

“It's actually hard to find someone who could and should advocate for the interests of parents. Until you're a parent, you don't understand the issues and you don't feel able to speak for them as a group. And as soon as you become a parent, caregiving absorbs most of your energy, so you have no capacity to work on changing the rules,” says Alexandra Bolfová from the Co.labs cultural centre in Brno. For me, a 2021 meeting with the curatorial duo of Petr Dlouhý and Anna Chrtková proved pivotal and fateful, as I encountered their willingness to listen to the need to implement parent-friendly approaches and make parents and children visible in the culture sector. As non-parent-artists, they managed to be interested in the issue and make space for it in their work; Petr subsequently supported it at Studio ALTA, by incorporating my research into the On Mobilisation project.

As part of its Parent-Friendly Culture platform, Studio ALTA put our researched accessibility tools into practice. It became a test-case, a laboratory for a parent- and carer-friendly cultural institution. Thus began a process of transformation that helped change





the status quo in the local cultural sector concerning the public perception and access to culture for parents of the youngest children. Parent-Friendly Culture disrupts the still-dominant assumption that such attempts at accessibility are either unimportant, unnecessary or unmanageable in terms of an institution's capacity. Through its example and positive results, Studio ALTA has motivated other cultural institutions, arts collectives and individuals in Prague, Brno, Olomouc, České Budějovice, Pilsen and Hradec Králové. We were directly involved with the implementation of accessibility tools at the Alfred ve dvoře theatre in Prague, where parents can find a regular programme, including childcare, beginning in 2025. I believe that this transformational process can lead more cultural organisations to change their perception of care as work and their view of the position of children and parents in society. "Culture traditionally belongs to sectors open to reflection, dialogue and transformation. To grasp the topic of care from various perspectives and try to find inclusive models for it to be carried out can lead to transformation in the way it is perceived socially, which will ultimately benefit the whole of society," notes Dorota Ambrožová in her article.

Thanks to two years of Parent-Friendly Culture research, parental care has gained media visibility in the Czech cultural

sector and has been referred to as work several times in the media. At the same time, parents' right to regeneration and shared leisure time, and thus the right to access culture accompanied by their children, has been publicly recognised. We discovered that parent-friendly accessibility tools are sustainable for the cultural sector and represent a simple way to broaden their audiences. And so old spectators are starting to return to our theatres, while, at the same time, a new generation of spectators is being cultivated as young children become used to cultural institutions from an early age. Parent-Friendly Culture hasn't reinvented the wheel. We can find similar activities and initiatives in Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Norway and the United Kingdom. Parent-Friendly Culture offers a chance for connection and structural understanding. It represents a vision of how it could be if taking an interest in parents and children became a regular practice for cultural institutions and demonstrates the benefits of the cultural sector's contribution to parents' reproductive work.



Lessons Learned

4 —

What touches me about Parent-Friendly Culture is that I feel like someone cares about me through this community. And also that as a parent I am perceived as a powerful spectator, that I am not automatically excluded from the cultural scene as a parent of young children. I feel directly supported and invited in a positive sense.

→ Johana Ožvold (film director, musician, actress, mother of 2 children), participant in the artistic research project *Parent-Friendly Culture* by Marika Smreková

ghosting
Marika Smreková

WHAT'S A
GHOST?

When I first heard about the role of the ghost we should play in another process or that others would play in ours, I thought about the famous 1990s movie with Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore. This thought was not at all relevant to understand what we were going to do but at least some aspects of the character played by Patrick Swayze could help me to imagine the quality of the action I could have, as a ghost or being ghosted: for a long part of the movie, Swayze's character exercises a way of being present in other people's live without being present. And so did I.

All the literature and imagined concepts related to ghosts agree on the fact that it's unclear what matter they are made of. I then assume the role's lack of definition as an intriguing enough posture.

Like Patrick Swayze, I was expecting to observe the process from the very outside, willing to interfere without interfering for real and shaping the sense of responsibility toward a process in a very particular way.

The first, and best experience, was being ghosted by Kalle. Kalle arrived during the last week of the creation process for *How to Become a Platypus*; it was a moment of rushing in order to prepare the presentation while some parts still needed to be discussed. Kalle was there, in and out, but present. He could try some of the participatory devices with us, he was available to listen to some of my thoughts, and he joined in the training and the preparation of some tools.

The most exciting conversation happened IN THE MEANTIME: in a bus while going to Balon Market in Turin to buy some objects we needed, having a beer after work in a shitty bar in Collegno.

In *Performance and Liveness: A Politics of the Meantime*, Livia Andrea Piazza recognises the *meantime* as a time where the new arises, outside of the main time, in the oversight, in a parallel track running alongside the ordinary.

In a shitty bar in Collegno, we had a conversation over a beer about why we are doing this job in a world that is collapsing: asking again what happens in the meantime, while we are here? How much does the ghost dimension of art in society contribute to producing the new, or does it make no contribution at all?

Of course we didn't come up with an answer. We finished the beer.

In June, it was my turn to take part in a crossover ghosting: I was ghosting Marika, who was ghosting Ahilan. By the end, I was playing with ghosting both of them. My time was built around an imprecise schedule based on their schedules. My attention was on intermittency, a light effort to find linking points between things that were not related. Attending Ahilan's workshop on language, focusing on my work, visiting the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, grabbing a conversation between Ahilan and Marika, visiting Extra City Kunsthall, diving into Marika's process and trying

to understand what the concept of her work did to me, going to watch a show by Florentina Holtzinger. Having a feedback session with Ahilan and discovering the importance of children's agency in the world through talking with Marika.

As a ghost I was everywhere and nowhere.

On Mobilisation of Care takes inspiration from the history of Lavandaria to find

C —
ON MOBILISATION
OF CARE

out what, social
gestures of care
and community
healing might.

Lavanderia a Vapore

**What if art is not only a
reflection of the world,
but a rehearsal for its
transformation?**

Over the past two years, within the framework of *On Mobilisation*, Lavanderia a Vapore focused on care as a possible form of togetherness—a way to reweave the social body through mediating forms that tend to the crises of our time. *On Mobilisation of Care* prototyped methodologies that mobilised care through bodies, relationships, and non-normative forms of learning. It demonstrated that care is not simply a theme, but a practice—a political, poetic, and transformative force for reimagining how we come together.

The collaboration with artists Elisabetta Consonni and Daniele Ninarello moved beyond a service-based relationship, engaging instead in active dialogue that led to co-creation and co-curation. This process also supported the

development of their artistic trajectories and reflected a shift in institutional practice toward shared authorship.

Public events were shaped through curatorial strategies and methodologies that mobilised both people and forms of knowledge often marginalised by official educational structures. Lavanderia a Vapore was transformed into a temporary commons—a space shared and inhabited by an active, engaged community of participants and visitors, opening new perspectives for institutional practices.

Structured across talks, workshops, performances, and participatory formats, the project served as a fertile training ground for artistic strategies aimed at generating change. These strategies, rooted in embodied urgency, intervened in the political sphere and emerged as potential catalysts for transformation.

These formats functioned as laboratories that investigated how artistic practices can mobilise bodies, awaken critical thought, and expand imaginative and affective capacities—both individually and collectively. At its core was a shared inquiry: *How can we assemble as a collective able to remake the present through alternative, artistic strategies and sensibilities?*

Inspired by the ancient Greek concept of the symposium as a convivial site of embodied

knowledge exchange, Lavanderia a Vapore reimagined these gatherings as immersive, sensory experiences, where thinking through the body and activating all senses offered an aesthetic and political method for knowing and acting. True to its mission as a center for dance research, Lavanderia re-centred somatic practices and physical experience as vital forms of inquiry.

Preceding the public events, the venue also hosted artistic research laboratories where methodologies of embodied knowledge-making and tools for artistic mobilisation were developed and tested. Throughout the project, new and existing methods were not only presented but *lived*. The dramaturgy unfolded gradually, culminating in *The Evening School on Care, Symposium, and Exhibition*—from the reawakening of bodies anaesthetised by systems of control, through the dreaming of alternative futures, to the enactment of collective visions for a more just present.

A central element was the spatial reconfiguration of Lavanderia a Vapore. The building was transformed into a soft, tented landscape—a dreamy encampment evoking the iconography of occupations and protest movements. Soft carpets, informal seating, and the removal of rigid structures created an inclusive atmosphere where participants could engage at their own pace. This deceleration of time fostered

deeper connections and allowed a shift from rigid formats to fluid collectivity—balancing individual needs with communal rhythms.

Horizontal Postures and Resistance to Productivity

Actively challenging traditional power dynamics, participants were invited to shift from verticality (control, authority, performance) to horizontality (community, shared authorship, relational autonomy). In doing so, the notion of the collective was reimagined—not as uniform consensus, but as a space of plurality, negotiation, and new forms of togetherness.

Senses, Reciprocity, and the Poetics of Exhaustion

Care was explored through the senses, reciprocity, and interdependence—via somatic dance practices and interspecies, sensual investigations of transformation. Daniele Ninarello's *Healing Together* reframed the orgy not as a sexual event, but as a radical gesture of collective embodiment—the emergence of a common body through the relinquishment of individual boundaries. The performance offered a counter-model to hyper-individualism, embodying care as shared vulnerability and co-presence.

Intersections and Multitudes – The Souq of Knowledge

A central pillar of the Evening School was the *Souq of Knowledge*, a nightly installation open for three hours each evening. This intimate, immersive space—styled as a “souq”, a site of exchange and circulation. It featured 12 tables hosted by individuals or collectives who each shared embodied or lived knowledge of care in one-on-one encounters.

The *Souq* created a low-threshold, highly affective space for knowledge exchange—accessible, soft, and deeply human. It recognised and uplifted forms of knowledge often unacknowledged by dominant systems. Beyond its poetic atmosphere, its power lay in its ability to unearth potentialities and enable intersectional convergences. For Lavanderia a Vapore, it marked a transformative expansion of alliances and a redefinition of the institution as a site of radical hospitality and distributed knowledge.

Rest Is Resistance – Rest as a Form of Revolt

In a world that glorifies endurance and productivity, a political refusal was staged: to resist exhaustion and embrace rest as a regenerative, rebellious act. What if slowing down were our revolt? What if rest could activate a fuller presence with ourselves and others—opening space beyond the constraints of the

so-called “only possible world”? Rest and sleep were explored not only as personal recuperation, but as infrastructures for collective care. The logic of constant performance was dismantled, inviting a culture of sustainable relationality—one that resists burnout, embraces interdependence, and reclaims vitality as a political act.

Epiphanies and Visions – Imagining the Future

The program invited participants to dwell in the liminal—where loss of control becomes the condition for epiphany and dreaming becomes a shared tool of transformation. Could collective imagination give shape to other possible futures?

As part of this dramaturgical arc, *Il Tempo delle Mele*, a ritual ball, was co-created with 50 elderly residents of local retirement homes. This six-month process, focused on first love and sensory memory, culminated in a celebratory event that reinstated participants as active agents of desire and memory—countering ageism and cultural invisibility.

How to Become a Platypus, an artistic research and participatory performance by Elisabetta Consonni, investigated invisible forms of knowledge and non-linear learning. Through role-play and collective speculation, it proposed interdependent systems

of meaning, resisting clarity in favour of ambiguity, authorship in favour of collective configuration—pointing toward democratic models grounded in care and collaboration.

Collective Fights – Reclaiming the Choral

The reactivation of chorality became a site of convergence and collective struggle. Here, care was mobilised not as sentiment, but as infrastructure—for resistance, solidarity, and re-entry into public space beyond institutional confines. The collective voice emerged as both aesthetic practice and political tool.

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Rather than offering fixed answers, *On Mobilisation of Care* cultivated conditions, tools, and atmospheres that allow us to ask differently: *What if art is not only a reflection of the world, but a rehearsal for its transformation?*

Lessons Learned

Feeling is frequency; whether small, medium or large, an electric charge creates an electromagnetic field.

Healing Together

Notes on the Creative Process

**The space outside
begins from the skin /
A slow unloading of an
invisible accumulation.**

Body as choreographic score
releases the tensions that are revealed / opens the dams
reading the score on the body / care and attention to
every single detail
the body begins to release its thoughts into space /
makes them perceptible
gestures describe the reality of the body
left in the air like fingerprints
an apparent disorder that is the order of the body's
events is accessed
welcoming the disorder
the body is vulnerable / the body is a response / its
choreography is written in the cells
from outside, a new score arrives and invites us to
create new possibilities
it emerges on the skin like a weather map / I follow the
shifting of disturbances
the emotional journey of a cleaning process
operating in silence

The idea for *Healing Together*
grew out of a series of short
choreographic actions called “silent
protests” created during periods
of lockdown and dedicated to the
concept of the “body of protest”.
What emerged as important to me
was the “call of the body”.

As if in the body and on the body
some sensations and tensions
desire to manifest themselves, to
express themselves. Body parts
asking to squeeze out. The potential
of what is released between bodies
and from bodies fascinates me and





pushes me to investigate how these “humoral spaces” can become a place in which to intercept other parts of oneself, a formless and invisible yet perceptible place, a vibrating material in which to immerse oneself, to pass through – listen to – interpret. I have the feeling that this place, generated by the passage of many, can bring me closer to others and to myself at the same time.

During the creative process, a spontaneous need arose to investigate the concept of attention, of what we put into action with our whole body in the act of listening. As a result, a thought that was about both care and pleasure was born.

The skin becomes an extended eardrum, wide open to the world, vulnerable. It vibrates as others pass by, as temperatures change, as shades transform. To train oneself to stand on the brink of what is about to happen, to recognize a certain lucid calm, resembling contemplation. To become resonance, decentering and moving just outside the skin, on the periphery of the body. Drifting, flowing, as water and light do. Mapping on the body the sensations that emerge/where I feel the tension. Perceiving to perceive and seeing what we let go of – entering the free flow of thought brings reconciliation. No control. Follow a sensational logic.

Observe how each particular part decides to move.

Gesture → Response

Body → Response / The healing process is connected to the possibility of expression.

Creating a clear mind / clearing the mind.

Become your body / be your body.

Skin

Surface I listen to
not knowing who I am
this skin seems to drip something
of me
sometimes screams the past
now imagines the future

The work arose from the desire to undertake a process in which the performers could surrender themselves to a mutually constructed space in which to expose their vulnerable bodies and proceed together through a dance that emerges from their own stream of consciousness activated in real time, in order to release and reveal new and repressed tensions. What emerges is a reflection on the meaning of caring, participation, listening, and healing, meant as transformation and liberation, as a revolutionary act of standing beside the nature of our own body and mind.

Our bodies suffer continuous dictates from the outside. Bodies are territories constructed by dynamics of control, forced not to express their vulnerability, which remains unobserved and uncelebrated. In order to investigate certain issues, I decided to imagine and think of a “unique organism” composed of four different bodies that animate each other constantly, to give life to an organism that is capable of self-generation in the present, and keeps itself alive through constant relationship, lifts bodies up, and pushes them towards joy, as a form of protest. On stage, four performers offer themselves to the community, with their exposed vulnerabilities and open wounds. The shared practices focus on listening to what their own connective tissues are asking them to release in response to the

information provided by the environment in which the bodies are immersed, which arrives as an invitation capable of lighting up micro desires, which can be accepted or not.

The performers are invited to verbally and gesturally translate every thought, desire, and impulse that arises as a response. The choreographic device emerges as an expansion of the somatic experience that the performers unfold in front of the audience, establishing an empathic relationship. The identity of each individual body is revealed and deconstructed in real time through encounters with others, showing how boundaries can blur and defenses can surrender. A mutual construction is activated, in which the performers translate in real time the choreographic score that is written on their bodies moment by moment, manifesting themselves as living bodies, moved by desire and mutual support to build their own liberating, vulnerable and revolutionary dance.

mobilise / become conscious /
constantly repositioning / change
point of view as the
landscape changes / disobey

Lessons Learned

6 —

Like a shield I protect,
tense, curled, I heed the call,
I let myself be cut through.

I happen, piece by piece,
I form and deform,
leaving fragments behind.

I inhabit unknown places,
echoes of the past and present that envelops it all.

Thin sheath in thickened layers,
I get goosebumps when I hear you.

ghosting
Daniele Ninarello

(Ghosting)
Residency at
Lavanderia a Vapore

My time at Lavandaria a Vapore was spent attempting to understand what ‘ghosting’ can be and how an outsider can integrate themselves into a hyper-local context. Throughout all of this, but not always integrated into it, I continued my own research by throwing myself into the Italian language in a quite intensive manner, albeit in an extremely limited period of time.

I ghosted Italian artist Daniele Ninarello, who was in the last days of his creation process for *Healing Together*. This involved joining the ensemble during their physical warmups and observing the final runs of the show leading up to the premiere. Deciding how I could contribute to the process was a delicate negotiation. I was extremely aware of the vulnerable position an artist is in before a premiere and at the same time aware of the fact that I could never understand the process they were undertaking after a few days of observation. I would offer Daniele a few thoughts after each run of the show, but did not attempt to involve myself in the group feedback sessions. These sessions were being run in Italian and it felt quite strange to join and in doing so request that the language of command change.

This turned out to be a theme of my time observing the festival. Most of the events were intended for an Italian audience, and our participation (I was at Lavandaria with my two daughters) could sometimes result in the whole group changing language for just one English-speaker, something I am not at all comfortable with. At the same time, a lot of the events were purely based on movement, or were more one-on-one, and this allowed us to integrate into the community in a strange, slightly exotic, but nice manner. In contrast with this were the interactions which I had in the nearby pizzerias, markets, shops and the hotel, where I would interact entirely in broken Italian and could engage in my own practice of creative language learning and attempt to use this learning process as a prism through which to view and understand the society.

How can an outsider integrate themselves into a hyper-local context? For me it was clearly possible in intimate interactions, but much trickier when negotiating the context as a whole.



Lessons Learned

The place of being
Place of latency/place of emergence.
Getting used to feeling the skin vibrate when
something emerges from the depths and
accompanying it into space, to let it live outside of
itself. Clearing space from within to create spaces
where we welcome something from the other.

The feeling that the four of us are one, that your
hand is mine, and your eyes look at what I want but
cannot see.

Please play with me, let's give a damn; now my legs
are asking to jump as high as they can, and your
hair is asking to let my neck take me to the ground,
and then I sing if then you sing with me, eventually.
Eventually.

How to Become a Platypus

I was invited to take part in the *On Mobilisation* partnership to implement the project *Special Handling* within Lavanderia a Vapore, with the possibility of engaging with the communities in Collegno.

Special Handling was built in 2021 in a specific neighbourhood of Milano, as a search for what could be a collection of ‘invisibilized knowledge’ through a system of barter: I was offering free massages in exchange for something people could teach me. The research project involved many months of encounters with different women. The result was a one-to-one performance, located in a tent built during the process, and the intention was to create a collection of invisibilized knowledge encountered through meetings with local people in different territories.

After applying the project in two different cities and presenting the performance as a performative collection in a few venues, there was a strong urge to return to the research question with a critical approach to re-shape a few elements.

Some new questions had appeared with time:

- how to recognize and grasp the kind of knowledge that is invisibilized?
- is the definition of ‘invisibilized’ another way of underlining the hierarchy between different kinds of knowledge? (This consideration is especially relevant when the project was created in relation to women with a migrant background, where there is the risk of approaching them too much through the perspective of their vulnerability)

Due to these doubts inherent in the core research questions, I felt that the **invitation** offered to the people encountered in different territories **in the process, was not well-defined and clear**. Moreover, a significant amount of time was needed in order to negotiate with each person what knowledge they wanted to transmit. Time was also needed to search and build one-to-one relationships in each territory.

I've been developing my artistic practice in line with the notion that the time invested in the creation of relationships in a site is a crucial part of the artistic process. In the case of *Special Handling*, the project was too skewed towards the creation of relationships, and the artistic processings of the action created in those relationships was absent. This observation opened up two questions. On one hand, how much space is the work of engaging with people afforded in the process? This topic is closely related to the degree of commitment of care towards people. On the other hand, perhaps the project's imbalance in favour of creating relationships suggests that relationships themselves are an artistic, and, more specifically, a choreographic, element.

Another factor was that I didn't feel very happy with the performative outcome of this massive work of relating. The outcome consisted of a one-to-one performance inviting people to enjoy some element of the collection of knowledge. I felt a

degree of criticality concerning the idea of collection: which elements of a particular knowledge do you put in a collection? What is enough to be representative of a piece of knowledge? What's knowledge without the context in which it is situated? Why am I collecting? Is there a choreographic dynamic in a collection? Is there space for learning and transmitting knowledge in a collection?

A list of ever-emerging questions led me to realise that I was less fascinated with the idea of collection than with the **possibility of creating a situation and conditions where knowledge arises**. Against the static quality of a taxonomic organisation of knowledge, I resonated instead with **the choreographic and dynamic quality of managing the possibility of making things happen**.

In the middle of the process of re-thinking *Special Handling*, I co-curated the *Evening School on Care* with Chiara Organtini and Daniele Ninnarello. The *Evening School on Care*, especially the *Souk of Knowledges*, where some people from Collegno were invited to share their knowledge/skills/experience, triggered my interest in **a situation of co-existence in the same space and point of relation where a kind of knowledge can emerge**. People from Collegno were invited to sit at their own table, each of them encountering one member of the audience at a time. What was happening was not

just a transmission of knowledge from the invited local person to the audience member, but rather a negotiation of something in between: **another kind of knowledge in the intra-action** (Karen Barad) of the two people.

Making Things Happen

In order to revisit the project and eventually destroy it, I asked Silvia Bottiroli to bring her dramaturgical advice to the research.

I had to organize my memories of the process of *Special Handling* in a *research trajectory*, written on paper and deliverable to Silvia in order for her to enter in some way the evolution of the research.

The tool for establishing a new basis to transform the project was pleasure: what point of pleasure I could recognise in the research trajectory? What kind of knowledge could I discover in the encounter with people? Could we call that knowledge invisibilized or would we need other words to define (or not define) that knowledge?

We came up with an **ever-emerging list of qualities of knowledge** related to the stories of people encountered during the previous research – not abstract knowledge but embodied and situated.

Useless, invisible, improbable knowledge. Hidden-in-plain-

sight knowledge, discovered by an accidental observation that provokes astonishment by the mere fact that it has always been present under the radar, and, once it is noticed, a shift in perception happens, an almost abrupt slip. Knowledge that can be intercepted but cannot be transmitted and perhaps not even enunciated, that eludes the possibility of categorisation, remaining in the opaque. Minimal units of knowledge that are useless without the rest of the knowledge complex or context. Fantastic re-organisations of knowledge that do not respond to any need other than pleasure. Knowledge that emerges only from the co-presence of people practicing a mechanical action. The list could go on and on; whenever a new *fact of knowledge* appears, a new way of describing or naming it occurs.

Gathering this knowledge, calling those subtle and indefinable aspects *knowledge* and not being able to answer the question *what's the use of this useless thing I know* means turning our gaze to a non-productive dimension of knowledge. It means blowing up the criteria by which knowledge is organised according to centre/margin or vertex/base distinctions. Attention becomes the tool that allows knowledge to be an ever-open horizon.

While they were preparing the hemlock, Socrates was learning how to play a new tune on the flute. "What will be the use of

*that?” he was asked. “To know this tune before dying.” – Emile Cioran, *Drawn and Quartered**

The attempt to organise this ever-emerging flow of *facts of knowledge* brought about an attempt to avoid the immediate application of a taxonomic approach and prioritise the creation of a platform or playground that left the flow of knowledge free to keep on emerging.

Observing what happened in the previous project, Silvia and I created a list of a few exercises to propose to some local communities: a secondary school class in Collegno, some groups of people gathered through an open call, a group of folk dancers active in Torino. The practices proposed had some aspects in common:

- a **derailment from logic into the territory of ‘not-knowing’**.

- Deprioritising logic to create a **non-existent but plausible knowledge/world** through an act of fictionality

- situations for a **collective negotiation of meaning**,

- situations where a performative act of negotiation of meaning to something that does not exist is established, i.e., a scientific claim of something absurd

- **pleasure as a drive to knowledge**

- **not-knowing as a condition for something new to emerge**,

- not-knowing as a form of truth

- the accidental recognition as knowledge of something that was not, a **form of sub-power instead of superpowers**.

In one of the workshops offered in Lavanderia, I had the chance to meet Alessandro Tollari, a former teacher currently doing a PhD in the performing arts and pedagogy and an expert in fiction in the educational environment. We decided to proceed in the research together and then the Platypus appeared!

How to Become a Platypus

When this animal was discovered in the late 18th century, a skin was sent to Britain for examination by the scientific community. At first, scientists were convinced that the at first sight bizarre set of physical features must have been a fake, produced by some embalming process. Instead, it was the platypus. (Wikipedia)

As the story found in Wikipedia states (the veracity of the story is not relevant), the Platypus is a weird, impossible composition that is actually possible. The Platypus is an act of making the impossible possible via a leap of the imagination.

How to Become a Platypus is an environment with several stations. Each person enters the space following a score of directions that is different for each participant, and joins a constantly different constellation of people engaged in different ways in a plausible negotiation of meanings. The stations – of which there

are currently eleven – have been named, with great pleasure taken in the naming, with titles that recall the dynamic of knowledge connected to each practices: *fictio magistralis*, *stefe di rosetta* (*lost in translation*), *scac-casual* (*chess by chance*), *frattempo* (*meantime*), *non è mai troppo tardi* (*never too late*), *sub-poteri* (*sub powers*), *innumerevolità* (*uncountability*), *a fin di bene* (*for good's sake*), and *reception*.

Attention is displaced and surprised; what we consider our knowledge loses its balance, leaving room for intuitions or knowledge that we did not believe to be such. The environment that is created is a kind of training for releasing a part of one's knowledge from having a utility. The criteria that place one knowledge at the center and the others at the margins fall away. In the vertigo of not-knowing, possibilities open up and worlds are created: even the platypus becomes possible.

Some collective moments of usual pause are pl within the sequence of stations. The conclusion of the performance is yet another task for the group: to collectively create a possible ending. The format is constructed so that the stations/exercises can change in number and quality, allowing the project to keep the research open in the encounter with local groups. Furthermore the criteria for defining what can be a 'technique for becoming a platypus' (a situation that challenges the

concept of knowledge) are simultaneously so precise and so free that the flow of creating new exercises is ongoing.

The Platypus's Realm of Knowledge

During the process, the research question transformed from a search for invisibilized knowledge to an open question about how to define what is knowledge and what is not.

In the 'platform to become a platypus' activated through the project, knowledge is something that needs an *as if*; a game of pretending that something is real when we know it's not, a procedure of absurdity, "a grammar of possibility" or a grammar of the hypothetical instead of "a grammar of pronouncement" (Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*)

The 'platypus's realm of knowledge' is made up of the minor knowledge of the infra-ordinary in life: "a thicket of subjugated knowledge that sprouts like weeds among the disciplinary forms of knowledge, threatening always to overwhelm the cultivation and pruning of the intellect with mad plant life [...]" These forms of knowledge have not simply been lost or forgotten; they have been disqualified, rendered nonsensical or nonconceptual or 'insufficiently elaborated'. Foucault calls them 'naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges,

knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity' this is what we mean by knowledge from below." (Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*)

The 'knowledge of the platypus' is neither serious nor better; it is serious and rigorous in not being serious and aiming for the impossible. Halberstam's text seems almost to describe what we did: "the desire to be taken seriously is precisely what compels people to follow the tried and true paths of knowledge production around which I would like to map a few detours. Indeed terms like serious and rigorous tend to be code words, in academia as well as other contexts, for disciplinary correctness; they signal a form of training and learning that confirms what is already known according to approved methods of knowing, but they do not allow for visionary insights or flights of fancy."

'Platypus knowledge' is against truth or against the truth as norm and imperative, against the claim that knowledge comes from one truth. Anti-truth (not post-truth) is an opportunity of give up on the intention of grabbing the complexity of knowledge, a "giving up on mastery" (Halberstam), a getting lost instead of finding our way, an unlearning "to untrain ourselves so that we can read the struggles and debates back into questions that seem settled and resolved" (Halberstam).

'Platypus knowledge' doesn't need a process of understanding; understanding is off the table. In opposition to the legibility which is, as James C. Scott notes, "a condition of manipulation" (*Seeing Like a State*, 1999), illegibility may in fact bring us somewhere else: "we may want new rationales for knowledge production, different aesthetic standards for ordering or disordering space, other modes of political engagement than those conjured by the liberal imagination. We may, ultimately, want more undisciplined knowledge, more questions and fewer answers" (Halberstam).

Starting then from an *as if*, taking the path of the possible, embracing 'disqualified' knowledge without being serious and with great discipline, remaining on the side of anti-truth, jumping between undisciplines without understanding and continuing to ask questions, the Platypus is an act of worlding.

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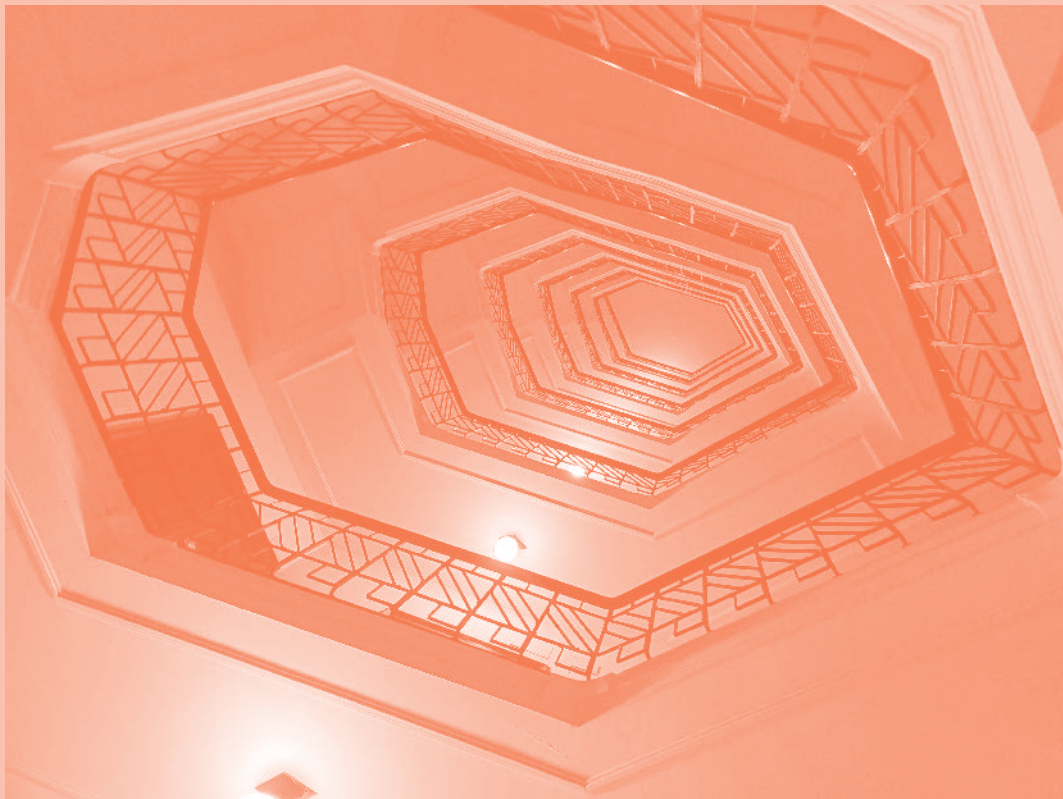


Lessons Learned

During the entire duration of the performance I was mostly moved by a pleasant disorientation. While participating in each activity I could enjoy the playful challenge of engaging in a game with no predefined rules, negotiating them with the other participants and therefore going from complete lack of orientation to the experimentation of something new, still undetermined, but able to provide comfort, sharing and fun outside the ordinary scheme of interaction. This feeling was the same in the moments between the activity: I couldn't know what to expect while going from one practice to the other but I was curious about the next step and the general meaning of the performance, and that condition kept me open and receptive.

ghosting
Elisabetta Consonni

**Immagini Fantasma
da Torino**



“Useless, invisible, improbable knowledge. Hidden in plain sight knowledge, discovered by an accidental observation which provokes astonishment by the mere fact that it has always been present but without attention and, once noticed, a shift in perception happens, almost an abrupt slip. Knowledge that can be intercepted but cannot be transmitted and perhaps not even enunciated, that eludes the possibility of categorisation, remaining in the opaque. Minimal units of knowledge are useless without the rest of the complex of knowledge or context. Fantastic re-organisations of knowledge that do not respond to any need other than pleasure. Knowledge that emerges just out of the co-presence of people practising a mechanical action.”

– Elisabetta Consonni, “Making Things Happen”

1 –

Images from the lavanderia in Collegno, patients handling the laundry of the psychiatric hospital. Grand white sheets, dressing for ghosts.

2 –

Elisabetta colour-coding the schedule and the stations of “How to Become a Platypus.”

3 –

Taking a break from planning to attend a market where chess pieces for a platypus station can be bought. Pattern recognition: coloured fabrics and a tentacled octopus, both found in the market area. An octopus has nine brains, eight of them are in the tentacles. Two-thirds of the knowledge of an octopus is distributed between the tentacles.

4 –

An image from the Collegno asylum and hospital grounds: inmates listening to the radio together. The radio is transmitting speeches by Mussolini.

5 –

Going with Anna to visit the university campus in Torino, occupied by the students. The main corridor functions as an open studio for a radio station, transmitting a schedule of protests and debates and where to find them.

6 –

A tent city for the occupying students, inside the university corridors.

7 –

An image from the Collegno asylum and hospital grounds: Padiglione par criminali, where the criminally insane were locked up. I was told that the inmates took the staff as hostages, up on the roof, and demanded reforms.

8 –

The same building today, now a squat. The flag above the door says No Tav, the name of a protest movement against a tunnel for high-speed trains through the Alps, in the Susa Valley. The forms of protest, over a period of 23 years, range “from theatrical works to hunger strikes, from assemblies

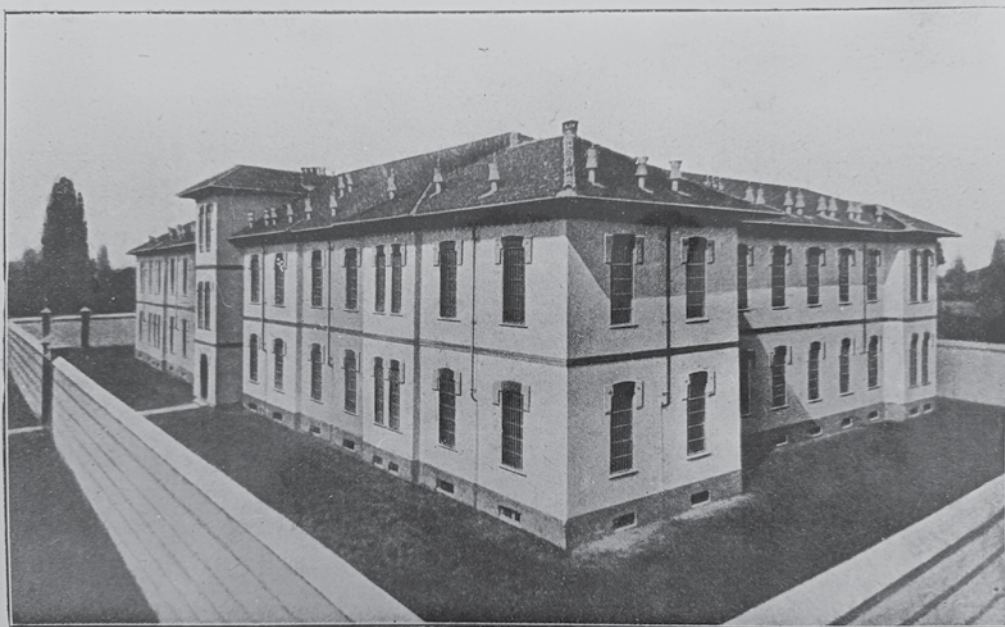
and conferences to polenta dinners, and from races around the work site to spells cast by a circle of women at night.”

9 –

Images from the Collegno asylum and hospital grounds: Artworks made by the patients are collected in the hospital archive, the Centro di documentazione sulla psichiatria. This drawing in blue ink seems to portray large machines boring through the ground, or submarines underwater, or airships passing through dense clouds.

10 –

In Piazza Statuto: A monument to the workers who built the Frejus railway tunnel through the Alps in 1871. In folklore, this monument stands above a gateway to Hell. The monument is crowned by a winged genius, representing reason.



Padiglione per criminali a Collegno.



11 –

Poster of Santa Rita, the patron saint of impossible causes. She is sometimes pictured with the image of a thorn, burnt or tattooed into her forehead (sharing the pain of Christ on the cross, we could also interpret it as an image of ‘painful knowledge’, or the ‘pain of knowing’). She was celebrated on the day I arrived in Italy, May 22nd.

12 –

Image from the Collegno asylum and hospital grounds: A member of staff cleaning the headboard of a hospital bed. Hard to determine what the stain was made from.

13 –

Image from the market: A hand black with ink from an octopus, with a gold ring shining through. Some of the fingertips have been cut off in an industrial accident, any knowledge located within them now lost.

14 –

Ex-voto paintings in Santuario della Consolata, made by people who survived accidents, illnesses, bombings and wars, as a way to thank the Virgin Mother or the Holy Ghost for looking out for us. In these images: someone survived airplanes bombing the city of Paris (my hands reflected in the glass, also with a gold ring), a baby was dropped down a stairwell, but miraculously survived.

15 –

A beautifully conceived stairwell in the building where I spent my first night in Torino.

All the places visited and images encountered are thanks to the guidance of Elisabetta Consonni, Anna Estdahl or Chiara Organtini.

Images from the asylum and hospital in Collegno are courtesy of Centro di documentazione sulla psichiatria ASL TO3 Collegno, curator Lillo Baglia. The more recent photos are taken by photographer Enzo Ricci.

Lessons Learned

A kind of joy that came from meeting – unexpectedly – with other people who were grappling with issues close to my own, in that elusive territory between reflection on knowledge and performing arts practices. Right from the start, I felt the electricity of a common language, or rather, the common desire to seek and invent a language to approach certain states of knowledge and its transmission that (rightly) do not allow themselves to be captured. And indeed, over the months we invented a lot of words and idioms, which were not there before and which enriched my way of thinking.

The willingness to conceive, build, test and modify playful activities, in a posture of serious euphoria, typical of anyone who dedicates themselves to a game. Finally, sustaining the process was a certain taste for suspense, for that expectation of the unexpected: a ‘who knows what might happen’ that was stronger than any fear of failure.

→ Alessandro, participant in the first workshop by artist Elisabetta Consonni during a residency at Lavanderia a Vapore, who later became an important part of the *How to Become a Platypus* team





Lessons Learned

10 —

I didn't know what I was doing during the experience of *How to Become a Platypus* but it was fun. This sense of being off balance for the entire time during the experience. A kind of leaning out of something you know and you understand, and, in this vertigo, the possibility to grab onto something new: new ideas, a new way of thinking. And then it was not important anymore why I was doing what I was doing.

→ Silvia, participant in a workshop and studio presentation of *How to Become a Platypus* by Elisabetta Consonni, at Lavanderia a Vapore during one of the residencies

On Mobilisation
and learning
focusses on.
alternative
learning models

that can engage
and empower
communities
whose voices often
remain unheard.

wpZIMMER

**Practicing
Through Tension**



In recent years, the world has witnessed tectonic geopolitical shifts marked by escalating conflicts, increasing authoritarianism, and growing social and economic inequalities. These developments have led to the dehumanisation, marginalisation, and extermination of entire communities, deepening class divides, and a rise in poverty and social exclusion. At the same time, we are also witnessing the emergence of powerful grassroots movements that resist these hegemonic forces — united students, teachers, public employees, miners, farmers, social and cultural workers — asserting collective and transnational forms of solidarity and action.

On a local level, public funding priorities are shifting in ways that undermine democratic values. Budgets are being increasingly redirected towards militarisation and security, often at the expense of culture, education, and support for minority and marginalised communities. This reallocation of resources represents not only a form of structural censorship but also a gradual erosion of civic space and critical discourse.

Within this context, the cultural sector is particularly vulnerable. The consolidation of power, reduced transparency in decision-making, and shrinking public support for culture are reshaping the conditions of cultural labour. Artists and cultural workers face growing precarity, limited access to resources, and heightened psychological strain.

We navigated these tensions throughout *On Mobilisation*, orientated by this question: *How can we respond to these challenges and address systemic problems within the sector, while positioning culture as a vital space for democratic engagement, solidarity, and resistance?*

Realignment

wpZimmer has initiated a transformative process within the organisation, running in parallel with *On Mobilisation*. Through critical self-reflection on its operations at both micro and macro levels, wpZimmer

has undergone an internal realignment — reimagining itself as a *living organism* rather than a fixed structure. This shift aims to stimulate a multivocal and transparent way of working, one that is responsive to the complexities and multiplicities of the people who work with or within the organisation. Curiosity, agility, and criticality, as much as softness and generosity, are fundamental to this approach. This opens up an incredible and vast landscape of collective learning, rooted in the micro- and transnational communities of which we all are part.

Practice Through Tension

As an echo of internal processes, for the *On Mobilisation* project wpZimmer focused on the connection between *mobilisation* and *learning* by collaborating on and facilitating two artistic research projects: *The Institute for Anarchic and Artistic Language Learning (IAALL)* by Ahilan Ratnamohan, and the long-term artistic research project *The Practice of Democracy, specifically An Attempt to Devise a Democratic Assembly* and *The Adversaries*, by Danae Theodoridou.

IAALL was hosted by wpZimmer over two years, welcoming adults who want or need to learn a language. The space would transform into a classroom. Tables, chairs, laptops, and a projection

screen were set up in a theatre or an atelier. After welcoming everyone, Ahilan would take on the role of teacher or coach. However, the course did not begin with the shared desire to learn a specific language. Instead, the focus was elsewhere: for the participants, it was about collaboratively learning in a democratic, inclusive, and experimental way; for Ahilan, it was about co-developing and documenting artistic processes and performative methodologies that emerge from language learning. What was possibly shared was an understanding of the power of language and the value systems it enforces, particularly in how it shapes who is deemed deserving of participation in social, cultural, and political life, and who has access to the labour market and who does not. The peer-to-peer alternative language learning model, while playful, absurd, and funny, is a critical commentary on the hegemony of languages and the often hidden, violent language-learning processes that strive for proficiency and promote elitism. These processes unintentionally expose the colonial and exploitative histories of nations that fund and promote only certain language-learning courses.

Danae's scripted performances *An Attempt to Devise a Democratic Assembly* and *The Adversaries* challenged the notion of publicness within wpZimmer as a publicly funded organisation. They questioned how the organisation's

work could be part of a political public arena while still functioning as an art residency. Alongside the partly scripted score, the set design of both projects subtly choreographed the way the participants inhabited the space and related to each other – both as individuals and as part of an assigned collective body – transforming wpZimmer into a political public arena.

Both participatory performances, in their specific ways, operated through tension in relation to micro-community members, collaborators, and the organisation. In the case of *The Adversaries*, conflict and unease were not only allowed but actively invited, creating space for political and democratic dialogue to emerge within the group. This dialogue did not arise from shared points of view but rather from a confrontation with the unknown, the misunderstood, or opposing positions. It offered a glimpse into the possibility of direct democracy – practiced by the people, for the people.

Here, tension shifted from a negative connotation to an emotional, and at times even physical, state of productivity. It became a force rooted in understanding and challenging the contradictions between ideas, values, or practices – rather than enforcing violent assimilation into a dominant position.

Both Ahilan's and Danae's projects are developed through public

try-outs followed by feedback from participants. This approach underscores the ever-evolving nature of these artistic works and their capacity to actively respond to changes unfolding beyond anyone's control.

Being part of these two artistic processes as either a host or a facilitator has enabled wpZimmer to reclaim its political self, resisting external pressures to depoliticise culture. More importantly, new alliances grew out of this project that can easily be activated when needed.

Celebration and Slowing Down

The closing *On Mobilisation* symposium and exhibition were organised by wpZimmer in collaboration with Out of Sight towards the end of the project.

What it means to be a host, and how we can practice care rather than simply discuss it, were some of the guiding principles that shaped the preparation. Special attention was given to the findings of the project partners and artists, integrating them in ways that would gradually become part of the organisation's infrastructure, thereby promoting a sustainable and inclusive way of working (e.g. providing free babysitting during public events, preparing a prayer room, designating a calm space for rest, suitable for breastfeeding).

The symposium and exhibition brought together a diverse group

of artists and cultural workers whose work reflects, supports, and amplifies practices of bottom-up civic mobilisation. A space for artistic reflection, public dialogue, and engagement with the political and social questions was created.

The exhibition showcased works by Kalle Brolin, Siniša Ilić, Psychedelic Choir, The Agency of Singular Investigations, Danae Theodoridou, Davide Tidoni, and Zorka Wollny. The works engaged with and documented citizen-led movements, collective memory, and grassroots resistance, and encouraged visitors to consider how art can be a tool for political imagination, protest, and community building.

The dramaturgy of the symposium reflected the six artistic processes that have evolved throughout the *On Mobilisation* project. Besides presentation of artistic research projects of six trajectory artists, the symposium invited: de Kompaan — a neighborhood kitchen, a food studio, and a community garden, Ana Kutleša — a curator and researcher who is a co-founder of BLOK's *Trešnjevska Neighbourhood Museum*, Anamarija Batista — an interdisciplinary researcher and curator working at the intersection of art, architecture, and economics, and Milutin Milošević — one of the students involved in the ongoing student protests in Serbia.

Emphasis was placed on creating situations that would stimulate experiences and meaningful

encounters. Storytelling, as a practice, ran as a continuous thread throughout the day. This experience was punctuated by shared meals, with the “kitchen” table serving as a space for sharing stories and engaging in debates.

The natural rhythm of the day was reflected in the curatorial approach, beginning with a morning breakfast and baking bread together, playing, learning, resting, practicing and sharing what we learned, and concluding with a celebratory dinner while listening to two stories, one about the past the other about the present as a way to fall asleep and dream collectively desired futures.





Lessons Learned

11 —

My experience from taking part in the project was very special. It was nice to come together with other young people in the preparation workshop with one common goal: to share personal stories of how we understand our social coexistence, and incorporate them into a live act. This not only made the performance with the rest of the participants in the assembly more real, but also much more meaningful. This collaboration made it clear how important it is to listen to each other and show empathy. We gained insight into what others are thinking and feeling, and this created a sense of connection. The project showed how art can bring people together and the value of building something together from different perspectives. This created a special unity and reinforced the message of the work.

→ Chahd Nasib, participant in *An Attempt to Devise a Democratic Assembly*, creation Danae Theodoridou.
Chahd is a marketing and communication student living in Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

Appearances of the Public Body

**Mobilising micro-communities
through performance**

In this text, I try to think about my work and the way it tries to mobilise micro-communities across Europe through words that come from the vocabulary created as part of *On Mobilisation*. The words are as follows (here in alphabetical order):

appear
embody
negotiation
paradox
pleasure
practice
public time

They were selected with two criteria in mind: words that I also use often when talking about my work, namely words that I feel more attached to, and words that I have not used much so far, but which emerge more and more often in what I do and I thus wish to explore further. In this sense, the words used as subheadings below to provide a structure for this text are words through which I think about my work but also words that appeared through the work that I have done in recent years on the *Practice of Democracy*. Well, what do you know?! It's started already:

Practice

What does it mean to approach democracy as a 'practice' instead of, for example, an abstract institutional context (of political parties, governments etc.) or a mostly language-based intellectual exchange of ideas and ideologies? What changes when we see democracy primarily as a practice and, moreover, as a practice that belongs to the people (and not to institutions of power)?

In 2017, Konstantina Georgelou, Efrosini Protopapa and I proposed an understanding of 'practice' that contrasts with the way that 'practice' may be

understood – especially within the cultural sector – as one’s individual work (‘my practice’) carrying an individual signature (Georgelou et. al. 2017). Similarly, we suggested that practice should not be seen as opposed to theory. The kind of practice we were interested in takes place in thinking, doing, making, and writing, without privileging any of them. Thirdly, we criticised the use of ‘practice’ as a flattening term that concerns every mode of human action in an abstract way (as any activity that one ‘does’). Instead of succumbing to an understanding of practice as an individual, uncritical, abstract and generalised human activity, then, we addressed (artistic) practice as a public activity that involves concrete, collective, and critical modes of working with space, the body, language, and the mind.

Professor and researcher in Dance and Performance Chrysa Parkinson (2011) has also distinguished between ‘practice’ and notions such as those of ‘training’, ‘process’, or ‘product’. Identifying three different definitions and usages of ‘practice’: as an active thought; a habitual or regular activity; or a repeated attempt at something until one gets it right, Parkinson focuses on only the first of these definitions. As she explains, practice as an ‘active thought’ is also what underlies the decisions one makes in the training or processes that one is involved in. Such practice concerns how

one gives and receives attention and the specific ways through which one processes information. Practice, in this sense, constitutes the volatile substructure one develops in order to navigate this world, according to Parkinson.

For the artistic research that I have been conducting in recent years as part of the project I call *The Practice of Democracy*, I pursue a similarly understood *practice*-led inquiry that I propose as the ground for investigating the relation of performance to politics. Seeing democracy as a ‘practice’, namely as an active, collectively constructed navigation system to approach the current socio-political state of democracy in Europe, in collaboration with inhabitants of different European cities who respond to the open calls we do there, we experiment on the creation of a common thinking space that all involved agents construct. To do that, we approach our encounters materially, in a very literal and careful way: how is the space we meet in structured? (Is it a formal room in a city hall, for example, or a small studio space?) How are our bodies placed in this space and how does this affect the way we relate to each other there? How many are we and how do we position ourselves in relation to each other in the room? What is the relation of objects and other human and non-human agents in space? What changes when language enters the room? What changes if we change the given arrangement

of the room and create a new space for us? How do we enter a discussion? How do we listen? How do certain thoughts we have or decisions we take change by what the group does? How do we find our voice in the group (again starting from a literal understanding of the voice as something that has a certain pitch, tone, level)? These and other questions gradually form the different practices of democracy that we co-construct in a different way each time in the different contexts we work in, always in close connection to those involved in them.

Negotiation

Political theorist Chantal Mouffe (2013) has spoken extensively about the need to acknowledge that conflict and disagreement are inevitable in politics and that they should be dealt with through radically democratic practices. The current crisis of democracy, according to Mouffe, is also partly caused by the fact that there are no frames in which citizens can confront each other and negotiate their differences. Instead, these differences are hidden and suppressed in a public space that becomes more and more segregated and homogenised. Real democracy, though, for Mouffe, is the democracy that acts in an ‘agonistic’ (not ‘antagonistic’) way, bringing the adversaries of different positions into contact, and proceeding through a constant,

constructive negotiation among these positions.

Following the work I had previously done on public speaking and assembling, inspired by the ideas of Mouffe, for *On Mobilisation* I decided to focus particularly on the creation of one such ‘agonistic’ space and look for performative ways to mobilise our skills for negotiation through it. After months-long testing, in Athens, Antwerp and Brussels, of different participatory processes, *The Adversaries* emerged in September 2024 as a participatory performance installation. Two small groups of four people (‘adversary teams’ 1 & 2) are brought into conflict with each other in a performative, playful manner. A third group (eight people), the ‘witnesses’, follows the discussion and shares its perspective on the conflict. Through a series of instructions given to them via a powerpoint presentation that is projected in the space, participants are invited to share personal experiences from conflicts they have had, detect a disagreement they have from them, and negotiate around this disagreement, working with the practice of conflict as a vital part of democracy. In this way, they try to create a new, third space together based on a synthesis of their different points of view.

In the open rehearsals we did in order to arrive to the final score of the work (which still changes

THE ADVERSARIES

ON THE FRONTLINES OF CONFLICT





every time we perform based on the feedback we get from the participants), we experimented once more with a material, literal approach to the practice of conflict: should one or more people come into conflict, should this be a one-on-one performance or a group one? Does it help if others witness the conflict or does this place more stress on the state of discomfort that is part of a conflict for those involved in it? If there are witnesses, what should their role be? Given that we (as citizens) are not trained to come into conflict, how could the performance encourage this act without creating an aggressive context or an excessive politeness that would avoid the conflict? How can we protect participants (and how can they protect themselves and each other) in a frame that risks exposing them in uncomfortable situations (due to the fact that personal experiences of conflict are shared)? How can this conflict vividly mobilise participants through their life experiences (without becoming a pre-constructed, impersonal debate on a given topic, for example) without transgressing (psychologically and mentally) sensitive limits? In other words: how can we retrain ourselves in democratic negotiation?

Public Time

Philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis (1997) introduces the term ‘public

time’ – closely connected to the term ‘public space’, which is more commonly used – as the time given to a community to reflect on its past actions as directly connected to its present condition, and decide on its future activity based on this reflection. Time, for Castoriadis, is a social issue, something we learn *through* and *with* others. Time is the temporality where we construct our subjectivities and position ourselves as society.

When approached through its social dimensions, time and its use in capitalism becomes another crucial factor for the crisis of democracy in the western world. In societies where ‘time is money’ and everyday life is characterised by having ‘no time’, hectic rhythms, fast (and mostly commercial) exchanges, dizzying attention dispersion, and constant time-related stress due to ongoing precarity, it comes as no surprise that, as political scientist Danai Koltsida (2021) has argued, the first and constitutive part of ‘democracy’, ‘demos’ (the people), is more and more absent from it. People’s indifference towards politics, their absence from elections, social movements or other civic actions, is due to the fact that they have no time for it, but also because we, as societies, do not invest time in training citizens on such uses of time. If democracy is a practice of constant negotiations, then it goes without saying that we should spend much more time on such a practice in order to train ourselves

in it. Democracies based only on financial capital and the speedy rhythms of the stock market also cultivate subjectivities moved by individual economic profit. Far from a social issue that we learn through and with others, then, time becomes individual capital that has nothing to do with community or collective positioning, the premises of any real democracy.

The projects of *The Practice of Democracy* aimed to experiment with the social dimension of time, as discussed by Castoriadis. This was the case for *The Adversaries*, but also for the previously made works, the *Analogue Campaign* (2019), which focused on public speaking, and *An Attempt to Devise a Democratic Assembly* (2023), which focused on assembling, both of which were re-worked as part of *On Mobilisation* with groups of young participants aged 15 to 25.

Stefano Harney has talked about ‘speculative’ uses of time that produce new kinds of intensities by neglecting normative ways of doing things. As he has described, when one or more people stick to something they do together, deepening their relationship to each other and to the processes they are involved in, they produce actions that do not align with capitalist productivism. They create a delicate, gentle, relaxed activity that provides a social rest from dominant working intensities. It might involve, for example, walking around and talking to one another in public, or

considering ideas that take place in public, coming into contact with our bodies as we walk, sharing the feeling of being in a space with others. And while this happens, we begin to experience time as a kind of speculation, pointing to something that is perhaps still not evidenced correctly yet but which suggests alternative ways of using time (and space) in our encounters, i.e., less ‘properly’ and more imaginatively. By developing opposite (to those imposed by public space) ways to meet, exchange, be together, and work with time, a set of complicities is developed. Because then we can begin to imagine that others are doing this all the time too, on the street corner, in the café, and the park; we can imagine other speculative practices that are around us all the time. From there, other social imaginaries can pop up. But wait a minute! We have already started to touch the area of the next word, which is:

Paradox

Approaching community-building and its mobilisation in a speculative way (rather than normatively) means practicing unexpected associations among human and nonhuman agents. Inviting people to engage in other ways of thinking and acting means asking ‘how do we do things?’, ‘what goes wrong in our habitual way of doing them?’, and ‘how could we do them differently?’ Such an

approach means setting processes in motion by means of interruption, unfamiliarity, and the search for paradoxical new connections. When done in a systematic way, these processes, beyond or alongside speculation, activate and invent themselves from within the co-presence and relationality of human and nonhuman bodies, material conditions, protocols, infrastructures, and positions on publicness. It is in this way that such practices repoliticise themselves and time becomes public and social again. In spaces that set into motion paradoxical actions, forming common spaces of negotiation, agonisms, dissensus, dis-orientation, and un-knowing, it is possible for social and political change to take place.

In the frame of *The Practice of Democracy*, we experimented with the paradoxical and the unfamiliar on different occasions. We placed the unexpected (without previous announcement to those who were there) public speeches of young people (who rarely speak in public in this way) in cafes and other places where people gather, proposing to treat these otherwise segregated social spaces (where we usually neglect each other) as spaces for social exchange. We placed people in the rooms where city councils or governments meet (rooms we rarely – if ever – enter as citizens) and proposed another way for assembling in them. We thus tried to explore the potentiality of the paradox for reactivating

democracy, and respond to performance scholars Ana Vujanonić and Livia Andrea Piazza's invitation for the performing arts not only to address the people but to contribute to reinventing democracy through works that invite them to engage in *alternative* ways of thinking and acting (Vujanonić and Piazza 2019: 13).

Embodiment

Interestingly enough – I realise by looking at my notes – the start for the work I do for *On Mobilisation* did not begin in an artistic context, but in an educational one. This comes as no surprise. In my work, the artistic always goes hand in hand with the educational. My creation has always been informed by the work I do with art students and I have learned enormously in my encounters with them. During my residency at wpZimmer, in autumn 2024, the Masters programme in Dance at the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp, invited me to work with its students as part of a course called 'Unravelling Embodiment'. The title touches the core of my interests. If we are to question current (institutional but also citizens') practices of democracy and propose alternatives to them, we have to start by criticising the neglected role of the body in them and look for ways to activate and emancipate its presence.

I proposed a workshop focused on the Public Body and on generating public space through its

performance. The departing point for the Practice of Democracy is Rebecca Schneider's definition of politics as a primarily bodily practice, closely related to the forms bodies take in front of others in public space. As she writes, politics is the act of "appearing to others as others appear [to me]" (2017:51). Connecting politics with appearance means also connecting it closely with performance, which is primarily concerned with the public forms and appearances of the body in space and time. In the workshop, the students and I explored forms and operations of the 'public body', namely the everyday citizen's body (our body), the body that takes (a more or less active) part in contemporary democracies. The body that is sensing the world, that affects and is affected by it. What are the gestures of this body? What is its position in relation to the other bodies in (public) space? When was the last time that you *felt* part of democracy? When was the last time that you heard the sounds of a community? These are some of the questions we were busy with during our work.

Mouffe (2018) has emphasised the decisive role the body, its affects and emotions, play in the construction of the people. She suggests that the people cannot exist as an abstract entity ahead of its actual performance; nor can the people be wholly locked in a rationalist framework, unable to grasp the embodied affective

dimension of politics. For Mouffe, a successful political strategy today should take into consideration the way in which affects manifest as emotions and become (political) understanding. In order to resonate with the problems encountered in their daily lives, people need to start from where they are and how they *feel*. And, once more, this brings us already in the area of the next word:

Pleasure

At the start of The Practice of Democracy, I would never have imagined that I would use the word 'pleasure' to think or talk about this work. This probably has to do with the apolitical connotations the term has in neoliberal contexts. As the research touched on more and more embodied understandings of democracy, though, and involved affects, emotions, senses and sensations in it, 'pleasure' gradually started to emerge. Black feminist tradition and the writings of adrienne maree brown in *Pleasure Activism* (2019) have been decisive in this case. If artistic practices – those practices that work on and with the body and its affects – can play an important role in activating the 'demos' and democracy today, how can we build new narratives about how politics can feel good, and about the complex politics of feeling good? How can we repolitise 'pleasure' and understand it as something different from the commercial neoliberal 'individual

happiness' seen as the ultimate life goal of capitalism? How can we awaken within ourselves the desire to settle for nothing less than a fulfilling social coexistence? How can we practice a politics of healing and happiness? As the research continues to its next phase, which is to apply and expand the tasks and processes that emerged from the Practice of Democracy so far to existing institutional contexts (political parties, municipalities etc.) and test the impact this work can have on those contexts, pleasure is a term that I would like to explore more in my work.

Appear

Drawing on Schneider's understanding of politics as an act of public appearance, I would also like to close this text by proposing that...

if we are to shift current declined democratic practices and construct more pleasurable alternatives to them;

if we are to mobilize ourselves (as artists, citizens, planetary beings) and the micro-communities around us;

then, we have to start from an utterly urgent public act:

APPEAR!

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Lessons Learned

12 —

This process helped me understand how much I missed civic participation. It made me feel like a member of a community again, and it reminded me how much I needed to escape from my microcosm to exchange thoughts and concerns with people outside my own social circle. These actions can really mobilise and problematise since they are open to interaction and therefore to the influence and cultivation of common thought. I believe that in an era when ideologies do not exist as multi-potent mobilisation concepts and political parties as institutions cannot function as such, these artistic actions are an important proposal. Critical thinking and reflection is the resistance to darkness and the obscurity of the digital age we live in. Such artistic proposals should perhaps be more frequent and more targeted, mainly on issues that have to do with basic values of our culture, such as justice, education etc. Such actions could also mobilise the world with their themes, the perspective they offer, and how they affect our everyday life.

→ Eleni Metaxa, participant in *An Attempt to Devise a Democratic Assembly*, creation Danae Theodoridou. Eleni is a clothing manufacturer living in Thessaloniki, Greece.

ghosting
Danae Theodoridou

**Being the Ghost of a House
You Never Lived In**
Excerpts from a diary

Day 1

Arriving in Antwerp, I am struck by the central station, its structure and decorations. It is raining, but I decide to walk to wpZimmer. Upon my arrival, Danae and Tim are there to welcome me. We immediately take a tour of the place together and they show me the theatre spaces, the common areas, and my room. I instantly like everything—the spaces are spacious and welcoming. We then take some time to observe the residency space, thinking about how to organise it and how to schedule the sessions for the coming days. Afterward, Danae and I headed out for dinner at a Korean restaurant. Korean cuisine is one of my absolute favourites. My feeling is that of a pleasantly disoriented body. I am here as a ghost.

A question keeps persisting in my head: What does it mean to be or act as someone's ghost? Where does one learn to be a ghost?

I feel in the dark. "Ghosts move in the dark", I think. Maybe.

And more questions: Does a ghost manifest independently? Or is its presence variable in relation to the other, depending on their willingness to be put at the centre?

I decided to proceed by intuition. My ghostly being takes on an interrogative, curious presence. Danae's artistic process fascinates and speaks to me. It concerns me.

Day 2

The next day, I have breakfast with Danae and Dušica at a beautiful café very close to wpZimmer, before starting the residency as a ghost in Danae's work, titled *The Practice of Democracy: Experimentations of the Public Body*. Danae and I enter the room. We talk and confront each other. I like staying in the position of the listener, learning to create a space of silence in order to listen to the other person and the intuitions that arise. In my head, several connections begin to form between her research on the practice of democracy and my own choreographic research. It feels as though, on both sides, there is an attempt to bring out a kind of collective consciousness that mediates relationships and distributes bodies in space.

Danae arrives in the room with all the script sheets for the next day's assembly, still to be rearranged. We divide the scripts and sort them very carefully by numbered pages and roles. This organising and piecing together becomes a good practice for beginning to understand her work. During

this moment, many questions arise for me, along with a curiosity to see how this script, which will later be handed to the participants, will succeed in building a dense network of relationships in an attempt to practice democracy together.

Day 3

Once each script is assembled, we place it in a designated folder. We organise the space and arrange the seating to welcome the participants to the event *An Attempt to Devise a Democratic Assembly*. We arrange all the scripts on the chairs, ready and waiting for the guests.

Besides being here as a ghost, I find myself among a group of unfamiliar faces, as though I were one of them, invited to participate in the assembly. There are about 15 participants of different nationalities. It's beautiful, I think—we should do this once a month. I feel like a “ghost” as I somehow blend into the group. I leave the experience with an energised and refreshed mind. I have a feeling of having supported something larger than myself through the performance of a role, while at the same time clarifying something within me. This brings me closer to the public space and takes me outside of myself; together, we break down the self-defences that we tend to activate in confrontation with others.

Day 4

Move with a peripheral view,
Waiting,
In the silence of the body,
Some thought stopped between the temples,
Like a noise,
Outside,
Where one does not know,
In some moments, it happens that one can connect huge distances in a flash,
Swap places, exchange lives, exchange words.
Negotiation is a place to get to,
From which to depart,
To be the ghost of a house in which one has never lived,
And yet recognise some of its details.
I understand, afterwards, through talks and meetings with assembly participants, in moments of pause or feedback with Danae, during walks in the city, at dinners, in silences, and in waiting, that being a ghost is, for me, first of all, to

be a silent but also a curious presence – a presence charged with questions that sometimes become explicit. To become a soft point of observation, a sustaining presence. To accompany, to stay by the side. Being close enough when needed. Opening new questions and not providing answers. Experiencing the willingness to listen.





Lessons Learned

13 —

Society is conflict. In our daily activities, we negotiate the principles of the world in which we live / want to live. The clash of different people, biographies, socialisations, views, opinions, ideals, and languages is a logical part of this and not so easy: how to deal with different opinions, wishes and sometimes not even the same basic values. HOW can conflicts be negotiated so that we can live together – peacefully – as a society? I believe that being able to argue well is a prerequisite for this and that we urgently need places and settings in which practical strategies for relating can be tried out. Playful settings in which we can reflect on, project, and, in the best sense of the word, even change our own argumentative behaviour. That's why I was delighted with Danae Theodoridou's proposition in *The Adversaries* to immerse myself in a conflictual situation in this protected setting with people who are sometimes strangers and to be given the opportunity to take a closer look. One question has occupied me even more since then: how can emotions also have a place in a good argument? I would find it interesting to do further research on this point. And I would be happy to do so.

→ Tanja Krone, participant in *The Adversaries*, creation Danae Theodoridou. Tanja is an artist and activist living in Berlin, Germany.

**Institute for Anarchic
and
Artistic Language Learning**

Manifesto

The Institute for Anarchic and Artistic Language Learning is a solution to the imperialistic*, hegemony-perpetuating, economically-biassed language learning structures offered by the Goethe Institute, Alliance Francaise, Instituto Cervantes and the British Council and, more recently, by popular websites such as DuoLingo. It is an attempt to spread the skill of language and language learning in a free, non-hierarchical, non-hegemonic manner. In doing so, The Institute for Anarchic and Artistic Language Learning questions pedagogy as a canon.

The Institute aims to develop into a p2p, web-based institute for the proliferation of language-learning techniques which expand the current understandings of how one must learn a language. It starts as documentation of possibly anarchic practices which I have performed in my artistic research into the process of learning a language and – through collaboration with other artists and language learners – grows into a community and a platform for sharing all types of techniques to defeat the powers that be.

** The Institute for Anarchic and Artistic Language Learning acknowledges the fact that it has been conceived and created in an imperial language. The Institute pays its respect to the other languages that exist and are being silenced in this space and to the languages deceased and dying as a consequence of linguistic imperialism.*

THE GOALS

The goal is to create a community-run institute, which will eventually be accessible in all languages. To use this platform to research and promote alternative language learning techniques.

To plant the seeds for pedagogical research on seemingly absurd topics, which can be legitimised through an artistic entry point and perspective.

METHODS/TACTICS/STRATEGIES

The following is a selection of methods, tactics and strategies on offer at the Institute.

Hacking Memrise

The courses traditionally offered on common language learning websites such as Duolingo and Babbel propound “universal” vocabularies, invariably influenced by the realities the people who create the courses find themselves in. But not yours. Creating a custom-made Memrise* course is one of the most efficient ways to develop and study a vocabulary that caters to your everyday needs with the desired language.

#learningnerd

#beginner-intermediate-advanced

** Memrise is an app, not dissimilar to DuoLingo.*

Convenience Language Lover

Language immersion, through a relationship. The oldest and best way to fluency.

#daredevil

#beginner-intermediate-advanced

Theatre Monologue

Work with a local artist, throw yourself in the spotlight, take your control of the language to the next level in pressure situations. Give yourself the ultimate test and boost through the creation of a monologue in the language you are learning. Confront the reasons why you are learning this language and the people you are going to speak it with in this extreme act of language learning.

#daredevil

#beginner-intermediate-advanced

Read-Meditate-Speak

Read your way to fluency with this technique, which feels like torture but liberates. Chain yourself to a public space. Commit to reading a seminal novel from start to finish. Throw yourself to the lions (the locals). Humanity will prevail, they will help you and by the end you will be reading fluently.

*EXAMPLES: In 2017, Venuri Pereira read the Latvian novel *Billē* at the*

Gallerija Istaba in Riga, Latvia during the festival Homo Novus. She read for 8 hours a day, for 3 consecutive days. Prior to this event Venuri had zero knowledge of the Latvian language, but managed to develop impressive pronunciation thanks to the soft guidance of the audience.

*#spiritual learner #experimental
#beginner-intermediate-advanced*

Language Dreaming

Find a way to access your subconscious and start dreaming in your desired language. Engage in vivid dialogues in strange places, which you never thought possible.

#spirituallearner #experimental

Self-Talk

Discipline your ass into talking to yourself in your desired language throughout the day. Resist the urge to think or speak your mother tongue. We talk to ourselves all day long, so why not hijack this common instinct and turn it into some language learning?

Start by setting yourself the goal of doing this for 5 minutes a day, and then slowly increase this amount. For example by 1 minute each day, or doing 5 minute blocks for the first week, then 10 minute blocks in the second week and so forth.

Choose a daily action or chore to couple with this exercise.

*#disciplinarian #spirituallearner
#all-levels*

Comic Books

Comic books have been unfairly categorised as low-brow by the world of literature. Use their blend of dialogue, descriptions and images to begin effortlessly reading in your desired language.

*#lazy-learner
#intermediate-advanced*

Extreme Immersion

No sleep, 5 or 7 native speakers, sugar and water, or sugar-water and caffeine tablets. A non-stop bombardment over a 70-hour period to taste the rewards of fluency and even the promised land of native speaker language levels.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS
TECHNIQUE HAS NOT YET BEEN
VERIFIED BY THE INSTITUTE!**

*#dare-devil #disciplinarian
#all-levels*

De-Imperialize Your Cultural Immersion

Many of us are trapped by the Imperial-language-dominance of the media. We consume the majority of our news and culture in these languages, and end up perpetuating this dominance. We also perpetuate

the decline, or non-progression of the new, less-dominant languages we wish to acquire.

“De-Imperialize Your Cultural Immersion” is one of the most difficult techniques at the Institute. It requires the language learner to trace all of their cultural sources of linguistic immersion and to change them to the non-dominant language.

Overcome the cultural and linguistic shock of leaving Hollywood and begin to feel the benefits of appreciating non-dominant language culture.

*#stubbornstudent #political-learner
#intermediate-advanced*

Common words & False Friends

Fuck grammar, fuck rules, just use what you’ve already got up your sleeve. Some experts estimate that 40% of English words come from French. Use what you’ve got already to get a running start in the language.

*#lazy-learner #experimental
#beginner*

Read with Amma

A technique specially designed for those of us attempting to learn a language taken from us through colonial or migrational violence. Get ready for an emotional rollercoaster as you acquaint yourself with untranslatable words from a past you and your mother/

father/grandparent/uncle/aunt never had.

*#diaspora #spiritual #learner
#intermediate-advanced*

App Walking

Integrate walking into the use of your favourite language-learning app to create a sensorial experience of remembering words and phrases.

#spirituallearner #all-levels

Their Mistakes

This is a technique which can be done very randomly on any occasion when the possibility presents itself, but if desired it could also be done systematically by searching for videos of native speakers of the language you desire who are speaking your mother tongue as a second language.

The idea is to observe the mistakes they make while speaking your mother tongue and to trace the roots of these mistakes and identify which grammatical phenomenon it is linked to. Hearing such mistakes in your mother-tongue can often greatly assist in understanding the grammar of your desired language.

For people who really thrive with this exercise, you can keep a mistake diary in which you notate these mistakes and their origins.

*#sfystudent
#intermediate-advanced*

Suzuki Learning

This slow-boil process is to be undertaken with one's children. Whether it's a language you've lost due to migration or an economically powerful language you believe will help your children to succeed in the future, learning together with your children can provide you with a beautiful experience and kill 2 birds with 1 stone.

*#spiritual-learner #beginner
#slow-boil*

Broken Journaling

Resolve to write any daily notes you make in your desired language. Be it TO DO lists, or journaling, or little reminders, this practice can help you to encounter a number of words and grammatical constructions which you don't often encounter in other scenarios commonly offered by non-anarchic and non-artistic language learning methods.

Start by just occasionally switching languages in your notebook and leave a space on the page for any words you don't know. If you are working with a personalised Memrise course these words could potentially be filtered into it later.

*#tinkerer #all-levels
#disciplinarian*

Esperanto Expand

Explained to Afilan by an Esperanto speaker, this technique has not been verified; proceed at your own risk.

A Spanish-speaking language learner told to Esperanto-speaker that he had always been bad at learning languages. He had wanted to learn English but had had a lot of difficulty. But after having learned Esperanto, admittedly with a lot of conscientious study, his ability to study English increased drastically. The Esperanto-speaker's theory was that because Esperanto is a fabricated/synthesised language, its grammar is more precise and that this allows the Esperanto learner to be able to get a more global understanding of how any language is spoken.

*#unverified #scientific thinker
#beginner intermediate*

Cross-Generational Reading Buddy

The Cross-Generational Reading Buddy technique is an exchange. An all-round cultural experience, which the Institute believes can have beneficial effects for all parties involved. The Cross-Generational Reading Buddy technique harnesses the innocence and non-judgemental honesty of children as a potentially more effective method of critique for language learners than that provided by adults, who have been tainted by the

disparate pedagogical experiences in non-artistic and non-anarchic learning institutions. This critique is often either (a) given in a heavy-handed, disciplinarian manner with little holistic regard for the language learner's personal and cultural situation; or (b) held back by the socio-political baggage of the empathy associated with the contrasting class and cultural situations of, for example a middle-class Western native speaker teacher and a recently arrived asylum seeker.

The Cross-Generational Reading Buddy technique is an exchange between a language learner and a child, based on the simple gesture of reading.

#experimental #political
#spiritual-learner
#beginner-intermediate

List of Shame

Put all of that pent up, good-for-nothing shame, which you have built up along your language learning journey, to use. A List of Shame works wonders when it comes to avoiding repeating the same mistakes twice or several times. To do this, the language learner keeps a list of the words they used incorrectly in funny or embarrassing situations. Re-wire that shame!

#slystudent #hacker
#trigger-warning
#intermediate-advanced

Embodying Words

It's so easy to let language become a cerebral thing. Let's reclaim our body when speaking a new language and dare to let those words permeate it and penetrate it deep into our pores.

Attach movements, grunts, tongue trills and sighs into your language learning-process in order to access a different type of memory: bodily memory.

#spiritual-learner #tinkerer
#beginner-intermediate-advanced







ghosting
Ahilan Ratnamohan

**wpZimmer's
Ghostly Memories**

After hearing at the first meeting of all the On Mobilisation participants in June 2023 in Visby, Gotland, that I would be ghosting the artistic research of interdisciplinary artist and performer Ahilan Ratnamohan in Antwerp, I wondered what had led the representatives of our cultural institutions to choose this connection, what possible intersections or ruptures they saw between our research.

Ahilan's project *The Institute for Anarchic and Artistic Language Learning* and my project *Parent-Friendly Culture*. I couldn't find any answers to the questions I had at this early stage of the project. I had no idea what it meant to be a ghost – to observe, to listen, to be the third eye whose gaze is reflected in the form of this text? Or does ghosting also mean being an active dramaturg for a week – asking questions of the artist in his creative process, giving feedback, sharing an opinion? Many themes, questions and keywords from the artistic research of people who had just gotten to know each other swirled in the air on the island of Gotland at that moment, as we wondered what this interdisciplinary international gathering could bring to the world and to ourselves.

Another joint symposium was held four months later at wpZimmer in Antwerp, where all participants had the opportunity to experience the progress of Ahilan's upcoming performance-lecture and to get a practical understanding of the vision and the form in which Ahilan is trying to realise it. According to the main project website, "Within the *On Mobilisation* project Ahilan's research starts with the question who has the right to learn and what resources are used for this purpose, and further looks into the link between performance making and language learning."

For the first part of this main question, I immediately thought of analogies related to my research on cultural accessibility. The question of who has the right to learn is very close to the question of who has the right to access culture. And who has the opportunity to learn through culture because of accessibility. I am dealing with the issue of access to culture for



people who work in the reproductive sphere, or care, a sphere that is often not considered as work in the capitalist system, even though it involves working mostly in the evenings. Those who do – the carers – are largely unable to attend cultural programmes in the evenings, when events for adults working in the productive sphere most frequently take place, and so they do not have access to cultural education. In the context of Ahilan's research and in seeking answers to his initial question, I found that primary carers of other people (children under the age of teenagers, people with handicaps, elderly parents, etc.) often have less access not only to culture but also to continuing education.



During my ghosting week in June 2024, which I attended with my newborn two-month-old daughter Marína, we met and debated several times with Ahilan and his fellow dramaturg Enrica Comporesi. In addition to looking after his two daughters, Ahilan has been busy this week preparing for the launch of two more work-in-progress performance-lectures for two new and very different audiences. The first was foreign language teachers and the second was artists and promoters. Ahilan and I mainly talked about for whom this performance, combined with language learning through the various 'alternative' techniques that Ahilan had prepared for this performative format, would be ideal. Because there are many ways to reach different types of audiences, and thus many formal adaptations that this performance can take – from the philosophical-artistic, intended for an educated, artistically-oriented audience, to the ecological-social, intended for an audience that has no access to education, access to culture, or access to integration into the local society, because they do not know the local language.

Ahilan also spoke about this second possibility at the last On Mobilisation symposium, in Antwerp in autumn 2023. He mentioned the possibility of working with local immigrants, people who need to find work. This possibility raises curiosity in me as an observant, ghostly, socially-oriented artist, and I am very tempted to find out in retrospect whether Ahilan has taken this direction and realised a performance for the local

community living in the immediate vicinity of wpZimmer, especially with people from Morocco and the Middle East. And if so, how did he do it, and what kind of feedback did he get from the local people?

Every morning and evening during the long sunny days of June, during the week I came to ghost Ahilan at wpZimmer, I would put my two-month-old baby in a carrier and take a walk around the neighbourhood full of immigrants, mostly men, who seemed lonely in this country. I observed the local cafes and restaurants that local immigrant women rarely entered. As a foreigner from Eastern Europe with a newborn baby on my chest, I went to these cafes for cake and coffee and wondered how all the women with children in the neighbourhood spent their time. Whether they had access to education and culture not only for their children but also for themselves, access to learning the languages of the country in which they now live, whether they have contact with people outside the neighbourhood, what they do besides reproductive work – besides looking after the children and the elderly members of the household, besides cooking, shopping, doing the laundry, cleaning the house, washing the dishes, sending the children to school, and all the mental labour involved in organising a family. Whether they have the free time and opportunities to take a break from caring. I know myself how difficult it is for European-born women with children to defend their right to time for their own needs, for education, work, and culture, and how difficult it must be for women living with the double label of immigrant-mother in Belgium.

Near the neighbourhood was a huge park with playing fields for various team sports. I watched hundreds of

men playing in their free time after work or school, maintaining community relations and health through sport and play. Not far from these playgrounds was a playground for the youngest children, hidden behind a hedge. And it was behind this hedge that I discovered a group of dozens of women sitting in a circle on the grass, discussing and taking turns to look at the children in the



playground. I imagined many of these women sitting with their children in the wpZimmer, part of Ahilan's diverse audience. On the way back, or even while walking around town, I could catch glimpses of Ahilan riding his bicycle in public traffic, with his two daughters behind him. It was nice to discover that ghosting also works in public space, in the context in which Ahilan and his family live, think, work, care and create.

During the ghosting week I had the opportunity to observe the life of the wpZimmer, in addition to taking care of the newborn. I felt its friendly atmosphere through the help with Marina and the many smiling faces, the heartbeat of the cultural institution, the organisational and educational meetings, and the preparation of the upcoming public events – Ahilan's performances. Ahilan, Enrica, Dušica, Elisabetta (who had come to ghost me as I ghosted Ahilan) and I met and discussed the meaning of the concept of ghosting from different perspectives, making audio recordings of our brainstorming session. I remember that we also touched on the theme of stealing versus sharing, how we influence each other through ghosting, picking up new layers and consciously and unconsciously twisting and transforming them into new art forms or strategies. I look forward to listening to the recordings again in retrospect and enjoy how the memory of long debates is reduced to a single sentence, image or feeling. And also how our recorded debates were occasionally interrupted by unexpected funny sounds from my daughter which cleverly broke up the formality of recording the debate and helped us to relax more.

I remember the evenings when Ahilan performed and I was able to actively watch the performance from the outside because I had to take care of Marina so that she did not disturb the performance with her noises. The mother's position provided a safe framework for me to do this, otherwise I would have felt like a voyeur in this role and would have preferred to participate with the others. As an observer, I was better able to register the audience's reactions and behaviour, and to observe the building of trust between performer and audience. First audience – teachers, in my opinion, observed and evaluated very critically the credibility of Ahilan's teaching methodology or the credibility of the connection between his performance-lecture form as an art form. I enjoyed observing this performativity of the audience, which changed the framework of the whole performance,

since, at one point, I saw Ahilan not as a performer-lecturer but as a student whose project was being evaluated by the teachers as part of an exam that he must defend. It was interesting to see this twist.

The second performance, for the arts community, began with a communal dinner, continued with Ahilan's performance and ended with a discussion over wine in the garden of the cultural centre. This audience enjoyed



the collective experience of learning their dream language through the tools of art. In this constellation of people, Ahilan struck me as a philosopher and visionary, with new ways of thinking about language learning, especially through participatory performance. An absolutely brilliant moment came when one of the audience members, over a glass of wine, asked everyone if they would

reveal their mother tongue and the dream language they were trying to learn as part of the performance. Once again the audience connected with Ahilan in a collective, non-hierarchical listening to one another and discovered that almost everyone had a different mother tongue and a different dream language that they were trying to learn.

I had to return to Prague. I was looking forward to walking under the huge gate in Chinatown, just opposite the train station, and enjoying the multiculturalism of the streets and the variety of plants that are climatically and strategically scattered throughout the city in open spaces instead of dry, dirty micro-grass lawns. Before boarding the train, I caught a glimpse of a homeless man with a blanket draped over his head and body as he sat. After a week of the ghosting process, this image reminded me of the ghost and the paradox of visible invisibility. Who knows how this ghost, who has already lost not only the right to learn and access culture, but also the right to housing, perceives all of us around him, who can still fight for our rights as well as those of others.









Biographies

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Kalle Brolin is an artist and writer. He works with video installation, performance, and social practice, often in long-term, research-intensive projects. Within the formats of essay-film and essayistic exhibition-making, his works experiment with different methods, such as associative relationships and comparative image analysis. In video installations and stage performances, Kalle Brolin presents the collection, organisation, and arrangement of images in a montage. In the gaps or relationships between images within the montage, a third image is evoked.

kallebrolin.com

Elisabetta Consonni

choreographs everything: human and non-human beings, mobile and immobile objects, maps, interstices, and spatial holiday groups. She weaves networks of relationships, both subtle and strong, like sugar glass. Her research aims to expand choreographic practice and transform it into a tool for shifting attention, observing relational dynamics, reversing narratives, and critically rereading contexts. Accordingly, she continually invents new participatory formats. All of her artistic outputs result from shared processes that include the contributions of various people, such as Francesco Dalmaso, Masako Matsushita, Daniele Pennati, Sara Catellani, Cristina Pancini, Susanna IHEME, Marta Ciappina, Olimpia Fortuni, Alessandro Tollari, Barbara Stimoli, and Silvia Tagliazucchi. Her works have been presented in Europe and Canada. Combining relational practice, artistic sensitivity, and a desire to amplify voices and actions within a specific context, she took on the artistic direction of the Festival ORLANDO in Bergamo, driven

by the need to operate within a single territory and adopt a long-term perspective.

elisabettaconsonni.com

Petr Dlouhý is a curator of live art, dramaturg, researcher, cultural organiser, and co-author of the On Mobilisation project. Until 2025, he was a curator at Studio ALTA in Prague. Since 2017, he has been working as curator and researcher on diverse scales, including small community events as well as large international festivals and platforms. Together with his partner Anna Chrtková they founded an interdisciplinary platform Y Events. Apart from curating, he has developed his tarot practice and was a member of the research project RESHAPE. Throughout his practice, Petr works on both a hyperlocal and transnational level, merging an awareness of locality with the international mobility of knowledge, skills, and artistic practices. The core of his work lies in an international approach, seeking new boundaries and environments for the presentation of independent performing arts, as well as networking and building long-term connections between local and international organisations and artists.

linktr.ee/petrdlouhy

Duška Dražić is an artist and independent curator, as well as a co-author and project coordinator of the On Mobilisation project. She explores the interrelations between place and its users, rethinking these at the level of cultural continuity, symbolic irregularities, and individual actions. She is interested in methods of knowledge production related to social, political, and aesthetic changes in (public) space. Duška Dražić and Wim Janssen founded

OUT OF SIGHT in Antwerp in 2018. The programme is built around international collaborations among artists, curators, researchers, and the public at large. They strive for a critical and flexible approach, with the aim of supporting artistic development and experimentation outside of the logic of consumption and markets. OUT OF SIGHT seeks to uncover the hidden potential within what is often perceived as different, marginal, or even unwanted. Creating space for the ephemeral and the ambiguous, it is a space where the poetic and the political intersect.

dusicadrazic.com

Daniele Ninarello is an artist active in the field of dance and performing arts, whose choreographic language is articulated through the constant research of movement focused on the “living body” as a place of mediation. His works often consist of movement practices that unfold in a choreographic dimension, where bodies are oriented and kept alive by a collective consciousness. For several years Daniele has been involved in creative processes aimed at intersectional communities, sharing practices, and realising performances based on the concepts of cooperation and reciprocity. Since 2020, in collaboration with sociologist Mariella Popolla, he has been running the project “NOBODY NOBODY. It’s ok not to be ok/Collective Experience”, an open process aimed at adolescents, which investigates the memories and traces left on the body by the culture of control, violence, and offence. The project aims to replace rigid postures of defence and control with new postures that are fluid, permeable, and transparent.

danieleninarello.it

Anna Norberg has been the Site Manager and Project Coordinator at Baltic Art Center since 2014. As Site Manager, she is in charge of the administration as well as introducing residency artists to Gotland. She guides them to locations all over the island and connects them to local partners. As a Project Coordinator, she facilitates the production of the residency artists' projects and new works. She also works internationally as an artist but has been based on Gotland since 2004. She holds an MFA in Glass from the Rhode Island School of Design.

Chiara Organtini is a curator and project manager, and a co-author of the ON MOBILISATION project. For ten years she has been involved in the artistic programming of the Terni International Performing Arts Festival and the management of the CAOS Centro Arti Opificio Siri in Terni, a post-industrial site transformed into a centre of creation and multidisciplinary research. In 2019, she joined the Santarcangelo Festival working specifically on the coordination and curation of the large-scale international cooperation project BEPART funded by the Creative Europe Program. Recently, she was part of the Reshape Project and collaborated with WpZimmer in Antwerp in an immersive residency with seven artists on the notion of commoning. Since January 2022 she has been a project manager and curator at Lavanderia a Vapore, a research space whose mission is to support artistic development in the field of dance and embodied knowledge.

Ahilan Ratnamohan creates interdisciplinary performances in collaboration with non-classically trained performers. In his early twenties, Ahil attempted to make a career as a professional footballer, spending time in the Netherlands,

Germany and Sweden. Since 2007, he has focused on the performing arts, first in Sydney and later based in Antwerp. Above all, he is inspired by sport and language-learning processes. He is developing three trajectories in his artistic practice: research into the choreography of football, research into the performativity of language lessons, and collaboration with the Star Boy Collective, the performance troupe which grew organically out of his first production, *Michael Essien I want to play as you...*

aculturedleftfoot.com

Helena Selder has been the Artistic Director of the Baltic Art Center – an international residency for contemporary art on the Swedish island of Gotland – since 2016. In her curatorial practice she is interested in developing ways in which art institutions can facilitate exchange between artists and local and international communities and colleagues to develop new ideas, collaborations and art works. Recent collaborations include: The Red Herring Network with Contemporary Art Archipelago and Kordon Residency (2024-2025), On Mobilisation – with wpZimmer, Studio Alta and La Lavanderia (2023-2025) and the Swedish-Ukrainian Cooperation project Community of Communities with MARC, Urban Re-Public, Sorry No Rooms Available and Katya Buchatska. She is one of the initiators of the GRASS Fellow Programme, which invites artists with a special focus on sustainability issues to research and experiment in the academic environment on Campus Gotland.

Marika Smreková is a theatre director, performer, activist, feminist, and mother. As part of the UM UM - Community Festival

of Contemporary Arts in Stará Ľubovňa, which she founded and curated for ten years (2012–2021), she created dozens of performance art projects based on the principles of direct participation, enabling dialogue between marginalised and majority groups. She has been living and working in Prague for the past five years, where she has continued her artistic research into participatory forms of performance art. She has worked primarily with the Ostružina association as a co-creator (*Neényi* and *.tektoparty*) and led the Y: Parents project (Kutná Hora Theatre Festival 2021, Divadlo X10 2022, Jurányi Ház Budapest 2023), which directly led to her artistic involvement in the On Mobilisation project (2023–2025), in which she is working on the accessibility of institutions for the parents of young children in collaboration with Studio ALTA. The Parent-Friendly Culture research project raises issues that are beginning to resonate strongly in society and provides support for people to speak out. As a result, it has recently been invited to a number of conferences and symposia.

Danae Theodoridou is a performance maker and researcher based in Brussels. She completed her practice-led PhD in Roehampton University in London (2013). Her artistic research focuses on social imaginaries, the practice of democracy and the way that art contributes to the emergence of socio-political alternatives. She teaches in the MA Performing Public Space in Fontys Academy of the Arts (NL), curates practice-led research projects, and presents and publishes her work internationally. Currently, her artistic research is entitled *Performing the Public Body: Collectively Authored Participatory Performance*,

Democracy and Institutional Politics and takes place in Royal Conservatoire Antwerp as part of CORPoREAL research group. Danae is the co-author of *The Practice of Dramaturgy: Working on Actions in Performance* (Valiz, 2017) and the author of *Publicing - Practising Democracy Through Performance* (Nissos, 2022).

danaetheodoridou.com

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Baltic Art Center is a small-scale organisation on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea founded in 2001. It is a project-based residency for contemporary art with an expertise in long-term (1-5 years) facilitation of site-specific artistic research projects. Although based in central Visby – a mediaeval UNESCO World Heritage site on Gotland – visiting national and international artists often use the entire island as their extended studio, to research complex geopolitical context and connect to different local communities and sites. BAC strives to be a flexible organisation that follows the artistic process and adjusts its *modus operandi* to suit specific productions.

In 2021 BAC co-initiated Swedish artist-in-residency network (SWAN).

Within the On Mobilisation project, Baltic Art Center leads the *On the Language of Mobilisation*.
balticartcenter.com

Lavanderia a Vapore is a dancehouse, a research center for contemporary artistic experimentation, and a laboratory for the collective imagination of potential socio-political scenarios, through the transformative power of dance and its capability to reverberate and reformulate the inquiries of our present times.

Lavanderia a Vapore is a protected and permeable space-

time, nested in relationships; an area open to the multitudes that, through specific projects and presentation moments, opens its doors wide to diverse voices, cross-sectoral collaborations, and territorial involvement. It aims to contribute to social transformation and paradigm shifts through experience, emotion, and imagination.

The organisation inhabits the now-renovated former laundry of the Regio Manicomio psychiatric hospital. The boundary wall of the hospital—the dividing line between the world of “lunatics” and the neighbouring town—was demolished in 1979, a year after the hospital closed following over a century of activity, due to the enactment of the Italian law on “Voluntary and mandatory health checks and treatments.” The history of the building subtly influences programming and the way Lavanderia works, promoting and providing care and openness, supporting development and production, while subverting the site’s history.

Within the On Mobilisation project, Lavanderia a Vapore instigated processes of individual and social healing as part of the On Mobilisation of Care chapter.
lavanderiavapore.eu

Studio ALTA was founded in Prague in 2008 as a grass-roots initiative of contemporary artists, emerging from the local needs. It works beyond the traditional venues — in an abandoned stock house in the industrial area in Bubenská Street, in Invalidovna building (National and Cultural Heritage site) and now in Libeňský pivovar (Libeň’s Brewery) in Prague. The dilapidated magnificent buildings that Studio ALTA temporarily inhabits are immense, and cannot be actively used in their entirety as it would be too expensive and too demanding to maintain it. The

ghosts of empty spaces from all the histories of this site collide with the existing communities from the neighbourhood, and with artists, curators and cultural workers that move in. Studio ALTA makes all the facilities accessible to public, professional artists, and civil initiatives, and invites them to become cohabitants and co-caretakers of the space and each other through cultural, artistic, social and community activities.

Studio ALTA is a partner, case study and lab for the *On Inclusive Mobilisation* chapter.

altart.cz

wpZimmer is an international art workplace where development is central and artistic practice is the starting point. It offers time and space for in-depth and unconditioned research for both artists and art workers. wpZimmer is both an oasis and an open agora, hosting diverse (and future-oriented) visions.

The undercurrent of wpZimmer is the *Learnscape*. It drives the organisation’s content and is, in turn, nourished by it. The *Learnscape* is shaped by all practices that are present at wpZimmer, whether short-term or long-term. In this environment of peer learning, (collective) learning emerges from practical and situated knowledge—learning that is deeply rooted in doing and experiencing artistic processes.

For more than 20 years, wpZimmer has been located in the Seefhoek neighbourhood of Antwerp—a historically working-class area home to harbour workers, small local businesses, and various migrant communities. More than 60 languages are spoken in the neighbourhood, reflecting its rich diversity.

wpZimmer is the lead partner of the On Mobilisation project and is responsible for the *On Mobilisation and Learning*.
wpzimmer.be





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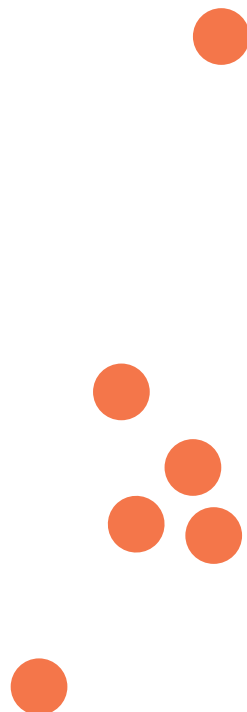
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Psychedelic Choir, On Mobilisation Exhibition, Out of Sight (Antwerp, February 2025), photo: M. Fischler — 186-187

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