

URBAN HEAT CITY LAB

ART DATA AND ACTIVISM

27/31.07.2016 WORLD BREAKERS
Drodesera XXXVI / Centrale Fies, Dro, TN

Co-organizers CENTRALE FIES / SAAL BIENNAAL
Project supported by Creative Europe

Guests Ursula Biemann / Brave New Alps / Daniel Vaarik
with the intervention of Juri Bottura / Manola Corrent (Dolomit)

Curators Mali Weil (for Centrale Fies) / Annika Üprus (for SAAL Biennaal)

Urban Heat labs facilitator Sodja Lotker

Artists Sonya Lindfors (FI) / Maryan Abdulkarim (FI) / Marko Bulc (SI) / Flora Detraz (FR) / The Inner Ear/Thorgerdur E. Sigurdardottir (IS) / Kathryn Hamilton (UK) / Krista Burane (LV) / Francesca Marconi (IT) / Edit Kaldor (NL) / Maria Gil/Teatro do Silêncio (PT)



Welcome.

We are in the biggest European landslide. 250.84 ha, "Marocche" in Italian. We are in a natural park (so, please, respect the environment).

What you see around you is unnatural.

It is said that here, once upon a springtime, it looked like Japan: white flowers as far as the eye could see, thousands of plum trees of an autochthonous variety that is characteristic of this area - and from which it takes its name. Nevertheless, today vineyard and apples master the area and they have completely ousted the plums.

The black pine (*Pinus nigra*) that you see all around you -and that seems characteristic of the alpine flora- is instead a typical example of late-nineteenth-century biological pollution, that is why now they are all diseased.

The nice stream that flows right here has actually been humanly adapted -both its path and flow rate- to accommodate the water flow to the production of electricity.

Bear has been recently re-introduced by import it from Slovenia. Such a historical animal does belong to this latitude; however, it was wiped out in the second half of 900.

Even the climate is actually anything but alpine. As you can see, some specimens of palms rest peacefully in front of Centrale Fies, but we also have olive trees and other species that are typical of the Mediterranean climate, not the sub-alpine zone.

Behind almost all these unnatural things, there are clear economic and anthropic choices.

Stories of diverted rivers, banned-and-then-recalled bears are always stories of how to read and interpret data from the landscape. They are stories of actions on the landscape.

About a year and a half ago, when we were writing the first guidelines of this City Lab, several questions were dear to us, and some narrative elements seemed to fit well those instances. Then, things moved forward, but some of those questions have led a fairly-long process of research to find the right people who -through their work and thinking- could be the 'objective correlative' of such queries.

One of the major issue from which we started was: what kind of impact can an individual action have on the landscape? And then, how can its obvious limitations (performative, but also factual or legal) be turned into its propelling elements?

From this question of the challenges of individual's action -or better, challenges of artistic action- we went on and got to ask ourselves how to build, performatively and visually speaking, not only artistic but also political and social territories. Art is obviously an hosting space. Therefore, rather than make it simpler as it would normally be desirable, we have raised the bar and started to think how to explore together the conceptual and aesthetic tools that artists devise to cope with our epochal challenges.

Given the Anthropocene as our general framework, such challenges are also realized by imagining our ability to re-narrate/re-build the relationship with the landscape, more specifically with its inner alterity, which is anything but a background. Such a relationship is thus personal: one-to-many, where I am the 'one' and 'many' is all the other non-human elements that make up that landscape.

Raising questions on how images and video can portray the non-human, and how they can represent places, areas and territories through a relational approach, or else, questioning how art can "think with" a landscape, whose perception is constantly redefining, is a challenge that we decline both on the theoretical and operational level, moving from the general to the specific, from far away up to close.

Hence, there is a desire to drop these general conceptual guidelines into a specific territory and socio-economic geography, into an area where identity fluctuates between urban and rural, belonging intermittently (and thus surpassing them) to both of these categories.

There is also the need to go beyond art, towards apparently-distant fields such as communication, understood here as a practice of world making that reflects on how to actually make sense-shifts, to guide divergent thinking, and to make new narratives viral in reference to these issues.

That is, in a nutshell, the path that took us here and from here on we continue exploring together. A clearing of thought, in a wooden house in the middle of an unnatural park.

Welcome among the World Breakers.

Mali Weil
Annika Üprus

GUESTS BIOS

URSULA BIEMANN (CH)

Ursula Biemann is an artist, writer, and video essayist. Her artistic practice is strongly research oriented and involves fieldwork in remote locations where she investigates climate change and the ecologies of oil and water. She works the findings into multi-layered videos by connecting the micropolitics on the ground with a theoretical macro level, proposing a reflexive exploration of planetary and videographic organization.

Biemann's pluralistic practice spans a range of media including experimental video, interview, text, photography, cartography and materials, which converge in highly formalized spatial installations. Her work also adopts the form of publications, lectures, and curatorial as well as collaborative research projects. She is a member of the World of Matter collective project on resource ecologies.

Her earlier writing and experimental video work focused on the gendered dimension of migration. She also made space and mobility her prime category in the curatorial projects "Geography and the Politics of Mobility", "The Maghreb Connection", and the widely exhibited art and research project Sahara Chronicle on clandestine migration networks.

With Black Sea Files (2005) she shifts the primary focus to natural resources and their situated materiality. The recent projects Egyptian Chemistry and Forest Law examine the ecologies among diverse actors – from tiny water pollutants to major desert developers, from copper deposits to International Law. With Deep Weather and Subatlantic she engages the larger temporalities of climate change.

geobodies.org

BRAVE NEW ALPS (IT)

Brave New Alps produce design projects that engage people in discussing and rethinking social, political and environmental issues. By combining design research methods with radical pedagogy, conflict mediation techniques and DIY making, project outputs are produced that combine pedagogical spaces, publications, websites, photographs, videos, guided walks, urban interventions and other public events.

Brave New Alps' work is focused upon developing projects that are based on a careful and exact evaluation of the cultural conditions surrounding a given project. By inhabiting the specific time and place of a project, and gaining insight from a variety of different subject specialists, an in-depth analysis of the given project's social, political, physical and economic conditions is developed. The resulting design process aims at creating a situation or a product, which sets off a change in modes of thinking about, and operating within the identified conditions.

brave-new-alps.com

DANIEL VAARIK (EE)

Daniel Vaarik is an Estonian communications thinker, blogger and author who has worked for several governments and companies advising them on building public and internal trust. He also co-authored a major political theatre project in Estonia that pretended to create a real political party and ended with a megaconvention with 7.200 participants. He is also member of Estonian President's think tank.

JURI BOTTURA / MANOLA CORRENT DOLOMIT (IT)

Supporters for the Speculative hike.

Manola Corrent and Juri Bottura spent most of their adult lives studying - anthropology, history and much more - and working across three continents. In 2014 they moved back to their homeland - Trentino and the Dolomites region - to create "Dolomit - Learning Experiences for the Curious". The project aims at welcoming international students in this unique corner of Italy, and offering them the opportunity to study the environment, the arts, history and culture in a relaxed atmosphere and through an active learning approach.

dolomit-learning.it

CENTRALE FIES

Centrale Fies exists as an articulated centre for creating and producing contemporary art.

Since more than thirty-five years, Centrale Fies investigates the evolution and mutations of Live Art without limiting its own research to a specific genre; instead, it opens up its commitment to various requests that artists bring up without any restrictions in terms of media, language and genre. From performances and shows production to designing of region-specific cultural projects, art is always the fulcrum and pivotal mission, but also the background that has seeded liminal visions which bring us closer to other disciplines.

The Festival is the oldest project, and today it coexists alongside Live Works, a performing arts prize and free school; Fies Factory, the resident artists' network and production house; and Fies Core, the cultural hub which offers physical and mental work spaces, shared by cultural entities, research centres and entrepreneurs operating in non art-related sectors. The aim is always to identify and trigger processes that could contribute to the development of new culture-based, social and economic models for cultural enterprises. Here, the creative and reflective residencies, called Augmented Residency, offer to those who undertake them all the region's amenities: from rafting to tandem B.A.S.E, from climbing and hiking to the best producers of local wine as well as safe and secret swimming spots in the river.

This new asset of the production centre stimulates the meeting between artists, young professionals, businesses and the region.

Centrale Fies is both an ideal project for the development of artistic research and a physical venue capable of transforming itself according to different needs, which is also a hydroelectric power plant still in operation, never stopping generating electricity.

centralefies.it

REFERENCES TEXTS FOR THE LAB

Ursula Biemann

Check the two chapters from “World of Matters”, attached to the email.

Brave New Alps

Below, a brief intro to the BNA hike and then some text excerpts that will be used as basis for the “30 postcards”.

More-than-human – multispecies becoming – how forests think – matter – soil – companion species

On Friday, 29th July, as a group of multi-species assemblages, we will undertake two hikes exploring the landscape surrounding Centrale Fies. We will drift through a terraformed space, in which the interdependent doings of humans and more-than-human others have moulded the environment over centuries.

Extracts from texts that inspire us, historical documents, our place-specific knowledge, and insights that emerged from the first day of the workshop will provide multiple lenses, through which we will attempt to reflect-by-walking about this place and our roles and positions in it.

30 postcards, one per hiker, containing text extracts, historical images and factual information. Hikers can exchange postcards, and this will result in a variety of personal readings and thoughts.

There will be also different tools to enhance the gaze: some binoculars, lenses, portable microscopes – up for grabs for who wants. Participants can autonomously decide at what level they want to intervene in the landscape during the hikes – just by compressing plants and soil with their feet or in more permanent ways?

Alfred N. Whitehead

“The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation: it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation.” [Process and Reality, p.9]

Michel Serres

To see the photo that article refers, follow this [Wikipedia link](#)

“A pair of enemies brandishing sticks is fighting in the midst of a patch of quicksand. Attentive to the other’s tactics, each answers blow for blow, counterattacking and dodging. Outside the painting’s frame, we spectators observe the symmetry of their gestures over time: what a magnificent spectacle-and how banal! The painter, Goya, has plunged the duelists knee-deep in the mud. With every move they make, a slimy hole swallows them up, so that they are gradually burying themselves together. How quickly depends on how aggressive they are: the more heated the struggle, the more violent their movements become and the faster they sink in. The belligerents don’t notice the abyss they’re rushing into; from outside, however, we see it clearly. Who will die? we ask. Who will win? they are wondering-and that’s the usual question. Let’s make a wager. You put your stakes on the right; we’ve bet on the left. The fight’s outcome is in doubt simply because there are two combatants, and once one of them wins

there will be no more uncertainty. But we can identify a third position, outside their squabble: the marsh into which the struggle is sinking. For here the bettors are in the same doubt as the duelists, and both bettors and duelists are at risk of losing collectively, since it is more than likely that the earth will swallow up the fighters before they and the gamblers have had a chance to settle accounts. On the one hand there's the pugnacious subject, every man for himself; on the other, the bond of combat, so heated that it inflames the audience, enthralled to the point of joining in with its cries and coins. But aren't we forgetting the world of things themselves, the sand, the water, the mud, the reeds of the marsh? In what quicksands are we, active adversaries and sick voyeurs, floundering side by side? And I who write this, in the solitary peace of dawn?" [Natural Contract, p.1-2]

Starhawk

"From believing that we must work with nature, to seeing us working within nature, to understanding that we are nature working." [The earth path p.9]

"Scientists are very careful not to imply that this living planet has consciousness or self-awareness. Consciousness is not necessary to explain this process of life and evolution, and this becomes a messy and unnecessary part of theory." [The earth path p.43]

"The cells of our body are collectives. The atmosphere we breathe is a collaborative endeavor. Adaptation is not about one species triumphing over another, but about a whole system coevolving." [The earth path p.48]

"Our usual response to a force is to try to block it. To shelter a patio, we build a wall. To withstand a criticism or an attack, we go cold, we shut down, turn to stone, or otherwise defend against it. You might have noticed in your downtown observations how the hard surfaces and high walls don't so much stop the wind as they redirect it. [...] The elements are our teachers, in many ways. Consider for a moment whether you've ever reacted defensively against a strong force in your personal relationship. Have you built a wall to keep out someone or some group you consider different or threatening? Have you tried to shut out a criticism or block an attack? What happened? [...] A windbreak is a great teacher of nonviolence. How do we respond to strong forces - anger, rage, even physical attack - without becoming violent in return? How do we respond to what might be well-meant but harsh criticism (whether well intentioned or intentionally harmful)? [...] if we can learn from the trees we can take in and transform the energy coming at us. [The earth path p.82-83]

"In this crucial time, we are called to be healers - of the earth, of the human community, of each other and ourselves. We speak of 'healing the earth' but what needs healing is our human relationship to the earth. Healing begins with listening..." [The earth path p.216]

Eduardo Kohn

"Recognize the fact that seeing, representing, and perhaps knowing, even thinking, are not exclusively human affairs." [How forests think p.1]

"These 'posthumanities' have been remarkably successful at focusing on the zone beyond the human as a space for critique and possibility." [How forests think p.7]

“An anthropology beyond the human is in large part about learning to appreciate how the human is also the product of that which lies beyond human contexts.” [How forests think p.15]

“To engage with the forest on its terms, to enter its relational logic, to think with its thoughts, one must become attuned to these.” [How forests think p.20]

“We need, in Viveiros de Castro’s words, to “decolonize thought,” in order to see that thinking is not necessarily circumscribed by language, the symbolic, or the human.” [How forests think p.41]

“This world beyond the human, to which we are open, is more than something “out there” because the real is more than that which exists.” [How forests think p.66]

“Why ask anthropology to look beyond the human? And why look to animals to do so? Looking at animals, who look back at us, and who look with us, and who are also, ultimately, part of us, even though their lives extend well beyond us, can tell us something. It can tell us about how that which lies “beyond” the human also sustains us and makes us the beings we are and those we might become.” [How forests think p.211]

Isabelle Stengers

“What now intrudes is here to stay. The intrusion of Gaia concerns everyone. Will the future be worth living?” [Cosmopolitics talk]

“Gaia is intruding with a message – not an intentional message – that undoes our habits of thinking. It’s a long time we have been told that what we do is dangerous. Pay attention to what have we have been taught to not pay attention.” [Cosmopolitics talk]

Donna Haraway

“It has become literally unthinkable to do good work in any interesting field with the premises of individualism, methodological individualism and human exceptionalism.” [Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene talk]

“An explosion within the biologies of multi-species becoming-with – to be a one you must be a many – and it is not a metaphor. Those who are have been in relationality all the way down. This are the cultural revolutions of our times.” [Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene talk]

“What happens when human exceptionalism and methodological individualism and their stories become practically unthinkable? How to make more liveable presents and futures? The matter is in our hands, if we asked for it or not.” [SF talk]

“It is not possible to stay with the trouble without the practice of joy. Part of the arts of living on a damaged planet.” [SF talk]

Dimitris Papadopoulos

“Making starts from what is there. Intensive recycling. Immediate caring. Generation M lives in a terraformed earth: climate change, toxic

environments, the 6th extinction, soil degradation, energy crises, increasing enclosures of the naturecultural commons. It encounters these harmful life thresholds with response-ability for the limits of productionism. Production does not characterise generation M's mode of life—coexistence does. Responsible terraformation. We make as we co-exist in ecological spaces.” [Generation M.]

“It is about making life with other beings and material formations. The organisational principle of this mode of existence is neither the singular subject nor the network nor the pack but the communities of species and things. The microbiome is a manifestation of this principle: to be invaded and to let oneself be invaded by bacterial communities, to become a host and a recipient simultaneously -co-exist, exchange, change- in order to form a sustainable life.

From the sterile environments of network society, cognitive capitalism and the knowledge economy that characterised the previous generation to the wet, contagious involutions of interspecies and multi-material communities.” [Generation M.]

“Making is always located in mundane interactions and encounters across divergent ecologies. This is the unintentional gift economy of matter and cross-species action. The maker's worlds always contaminate each other laterally. Drifting matter. Stuck in translation, we believe in the one universal world of communication and value. This is the underlying trope of the anthropocene narrative -the ultimate popular story of ecological guilt and redemption-: We terraformed EarthTM! We have created this mess! Another world is possible. Another world is here: one that challenges the oppressive universalism of the maker-of-one-world. Generation M inverts terraformation: neither the making of one single ontology nor the making of multiple ontologies, but grounded making: the non-anthropocentric making of alter-ontologies.” [Generation M.]

“The hype of human-nonhuman mixtures cannot sustain the commitment to material justice. Posthumanism and actor networks are not good enough for this. An autonomous political posthumanism emerges in the infrastructures of the M era: calculating interdependences, knowing and naming one's allies, building communities of justice, that is action groups of committed humans and engaged non-human others.” [Generation M.]

“In fact, the universalism and reductionism of the category “nonhuman” may be even more dubious than traditional humanist categorizations because it can so easily be presented as a progressive move of including the hitherto-expunged nonhuman others into human business.

Can we develop an alternative take on this mainstream version of posthumanism? Can

we think of alternative forms of organization that challenge both humanism and the new universalisms of mainstream posthumanism? Can we think of an insurgent posthumanism, that is, of a posthumanism that is explicitly political and is grounded in current radical alternative political projects for global and ecological justice?” [Worlding justice p.2]

“The continuation of life through “commoning” the immediate sociality and materiality of everyday existence is a truly nonhumanist flight into a world where the primary condition of existence is the immersion into the worlds one inhabits and shares with other people and with animals, plants, and the soil. This is not only the social commons but a worldly commons, an ecological commons that emerges out of the process of commoning matter.” [Worlding justice p.7]

“And this making of alter-ontologies (i.e., the acting within alternative forms of life) points again toward a posthumanist gesture, perhaps one

more radical and deeply transformative than the previous ones discussed in this essay. It is crucial here that these alter-ontologies are primarily engaging with matter. This is probably the most profound dislocation of Left politics that posthumanism has effected, a postanthropocentric politics. It is a moment that has been aptly described in recent attempts to discuss posthumanism as the coconstruction of life with other species and technical apparatuses." [Worlding justice p.16]

"The real question facing posthumanist Left politics is how to move beyond anthropocentrism and humanism by maintaining a commitment to the problem of justice that pervades sociotechnical assemblages." [Worlding justice p.20]

"Rather, it is about the worlding of justice, that is, making alliances and engaging in practices that restore justice in the im-mediate ecologies that certain humans and certain nonhumans are inhabiting in deeply asymmetrical ways. These interventions are about building alternative forms of life and connecting them together into shared commons of matter. An association of such forms of life into common spaces—alter-ontologies—can ultimately account for the multiplicity of hybrid life-forms that contemporary technoscience and global capitalist production unleash. It is about acting within and against these conditions to fulfill the responsibilities that the world market constantly announces but cannot realize. The commoning of material worlds is the worlding of justice." [Worlding justice p.21]

Reza Negarestani

"But what is humanism? What specific commitment does "being human" represent?" [The labor of the inhuman]

Maria Puig de la Bellacasa

"The requirement and outcome of ongoing techno-haptic learning is not here mastery of dexterous manipulation, but a skilful recognition of vulnerability. This suggests that contrary to directness, implementing touching technologies entails awareness that learning (to) touch is a process. Developing skills is required for precise and careful touching, for learning how to touch, specifically. Ultimately, the experience of touch can serve to insist on the specificity of contact. [...] We can go further to affirm that touch is world making, a thought that resonates with relational ontologies for which being is relating. In this direction I think of Karen Barad's account of the seeing-touching made possible by 'scanning tunnelling microscopes'. These devices are used to 'observe' surfaces at atomic level, a procedure that operates 'on very different physical principles than visual sight'. [...] In this meeting, there is no separateness between observing and touching." [Touching Technologies]

"One of these crucial collective negotiations of still indeterminate commitments is happening today around multiple sites of ecological breakdown faced Earth's peoples – i.e. not only humans – raising questions of naturocultural justice rather than just 'social'; read 'humanist'." [Touching Technologies]

J.K. Gibson-Graham and Ethan Miller

"What if we were to see the economy as ecology -as a web of human ecological behaviors no longer bounded but fully integrated into a complex flow of ethical and energetic interdependencies: births, contaminations, self-organizing, mergings, extinctions, and patterns of habitat maintenance and destruction?" [Economy as ecological livelihood]

"We might begin to see the history of economic thought as a discursive enclosure of ecological space analogous to -and, in fact, historically parallel to— the material and legal enclosure of commons from the 16th century to the present (Perelman 2000). Just as the discourse of individual private property emerged with its legal rules of ownership, use and transfer, divorcing property (as a thing) from social relations, so the discourse of a separate economy evolved with and through terms, techniques and disciplinary practices that increasingly differentiated and distanced it from other spheres of human and non-human behavior and interaction. Economy, then, was produced when discursive boundaries, at once symbolic and material, were drawn around a particular configuration of ecological relationships -specifically those between certain humans and a world made into resources for their instrumental use. Diverse processes of human livelihood were reduced to narrow logics. Sociality was reserved only for those who count as "human." And all more-than-human life was relegated to the domain of passive objects." [Economy as ecological livelihood]

DAY 2 DETAILED SCHEDULE (29/7)

- 09:00-09:30 Introductions: who we are, short round in which everyone says something inside the Centrale or anyway in the shade
- 09:30-09:45 On the Centrale Fies roof, Manola & Juri give a short intro to the landscape of Trentino, based on what can be seen from there
- 09:45-12:00 Hike 1
- 12:00-12:15 Freshening up - In the park
- 12:15-13:00 Exchanging thoughts, impressions, questions - In the wooden box house
- 13:00-15:00 Lunch and relaxation
- 15:00-17:00 Hike 2
- 17:00-17:30 Freshening up
- 17:30-18:00 Wrap up, concluding thoughts - In the wooden box house

USEFUL INFOS

ACCOMMODATION

During the festival you will stay at Hotel Eden, Viale Trento 2 - Dro.

On the day of your departure, we ask you to leave the room before 10 a.m. and to pay before leaving any possible extra or any night at your expense.

FOOD

Lunch: At lunch there is a canteen service at Centrale Fies's park at 1.30 p.m. (you don't need to bring food stamps).

Dinner: During the festival you will have each night an amount of 11 € of food stamps, which you can use at the Lounge Factory at Centrale Fies's park. Food stamps lost will not be given you again – food stamps in excess will have to be given at the Logistics Office before your departure.

CANTEEN FOR OTHER GUESTS

Lunch: At lunch there is a canteen service for you and other guests at Centrale Fies's park at 1.30 p.m..

It's necessary to book and pay the meal at Logistics Office (ask for Shaila and Francesca) before 11 a.m. the same day, at the price of 12 €. Booking with the chef is not allowed.

Dinner: Every night, from the 26th July to the 3rd August, at the Lounge Factory at Centrale Fies's park, you will find different refreshment stands for nighttime snacks. There will be crepes, sandwiches and special plein-air restaurants run in turn by the best local restaurants.

BUS SHUTTLE

The audience can benefit of a free shuttle service active every evening departing from Piazza Repubblica in Dro (or opposite Hotel Eden, from the Dro direction, road side) from 6.00 p.m. to 3.00 a.m (stop 10.15 p.m. – 11.00 p.m.).

Considering that the tickets have to be collected 30 minutes before the beginning of the performance and that the journey with the bus shuttle takes 15 minutes, we ask you to be careful with the timetables.

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