

Márton Kabai

1

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

I push you into the void of hopelessness by showing you
the wounds of the world, and I catch you with the care
and the love of the world – that we are.

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for Natela, Balaton, Alma & Május

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Introduction	6
Attunement	8
Chapter 1: Theory	11
Ontological Design	12
Post-Anthropocentrism	16
Affirmative Ethics	19
Post-critical Pedagogy	21
The wound	25
Wound-centered approach	28
The architecture of the	
Wound-centered educational design	30
1. The Farm Animal Industry	32
Human-Animal Divide	35
Farm Industry as	
normalization of violence	37
The need for Confrontation	38
2. The Farm Animal Sanctuary	40
Absent referent: reveals	42
Support Structure: Towards	
a need and care-based design	44
The need for healing	47

CHAPTER 2: Practice	
Study year 2020-2021	49
Context of the Institution	50
Context of the DOWOD module	51
Context of the School Year 2020-2021	53
Research Design	55
Overview of the Methods of	
Wound-Centered Educational Design	56
Method of Confrontation	
(Semester 1)	57
Introduction of DOWOD 1	59
Exposure	60
Investigation	64
Individual Testimony	70
Method of Healing	
(Semester 2)	73
Introduction	76
Recognition	77
Togetherness	82
Collective Testimony	86
Afterthoughts	89
The need for affirmative-ethics	
in design education	90
Follow-up on practice	91
Follow-up on theory	93
Gratitude	94
Bibliography	96
Appendix	98

Introduction

6

Through the Wounds of Design, We May Find Each Other is an educational research project outlining a *Wound-Centered Educational Design* (WCED) through the reflection of the study year 2020-2021 elective module *Designing Our Ways Out of Design* (DOWOD) at the *Master Institute of Visual Cultures* (MIVC) in Den Bosch. The purpose of the thesis begins with the question of what theoretical and educational framework can support the reconfiguration of design away from itself, away from the centrality of the human, and what pedagogical strategies and tactics can come out of this.

The school year of 2020-2021 was extraordinary due to the coronavirus pandemic. I held online classes, which took place in relatively safe, private rooms, studios, and other intimate spaces. This strange, temporary “educational architecture,” happened alongside multiple states of emergency. The impact of the pandemic on the educational sector deserves an in-depth analysis, which it will not receive in this thesis, although it will be reflected upon at points. Even though we were forced to abide by this situation, I experienced it as more intimate and real.

In the first part of the thesis, I outline an educational design centered around the wound metaphor – inspired by my BA graduation work, *The Confession of the Flesh*¹ – for embodying the collective trauma of the human-animal divide. It aims to address and respond to the crisis of design within the crisis of the Anthropocene through the theories of post-anthropocentrism, ontological design, post-critical pedagogy, and affirmative ethics. Inspired by my artistic practice at Oddkin, the wound-centered educational design has two main educational subjects, two opposite but tightly entangled and discursive infrastructural, designed, socio-political spaces: a) the industrial factory farming and b) the farm animal sanctuary. Based on these subjects, this thesis will elaborate on two main methods: confrontation, and healing, (to help me evaluate and reflect on the educational practice.)

The method of confrontation, inspired by specifically the research of the board game *Today's Success is Tomorrow's Disaster*², argues that we must face the violence and negativity of design through which the unsustainable

1 The confession of the flesh is a three-channel video installation that departs from the posthuman theory, placing catastrophe, crisis, decay as a defining condition in today's pessimistic techno-capitalist status quo. It features the mouth as an open wound that feeds the Anthropocene condition.

2 Today's Success is Tomorrow's Disaster is a four-player board game aiming to demystify intensive animal agriculture's complexity by revealing moral and man-made environmental disasters, through two activist and two capitalist players.

human subject emerges to demystify, critically understand, and navigate through our situated knowledge the unbearable complexity of this crisis. Nevertheless, it is naïve to believe that critique alone can generate something new or cultivate a long-term sustainable relationship with our times' brutal uncertainty and irrationality. Therefore, the method of healing argues that design educators are also responsible for showing, creating, and holding empowering, generative spaces, where design is centred around the needs of the wounded, traumatized, and oppressed, which might awaken the attention, and the need to care and listen to each other, to become with each other. It might empower the love with the world through the wound in which the world unfolds.

In the second part of the thesis, I reflect on and evaluate the educational practice of my elective module, *Designing our ways out of Design 1 and 2* (DOWOD1 & DOWOD2) in the school year of 2020-2021, taking place at Master Institute of Visual Cultures in Den Bosch, The Netherlands. Both were ten-day semesters, with 3.5-hour classes every Monday morning, including assessment. Students were required to sign up for the modules separately, as they were technically two elective modules (DOWOD 1 and DOWOD 2).

I will go more in-depth into both methodologies of *confrontation* (in the first semester) and *healing* (in the second semester), further developing the theoretical foundations and categorizing my pedagogical strategies into three sub-methods, each of which helps me reflect and evaluate my educational decisions and experiences, bringing in student voices where possible.

I will expand the *confrontation* method into these sub-methods: *Exposure*, where I discuss my lecture series on mapping and counter-mapping and my disappointment of being unable to play my boardgame; *Investigation*, where I include a new materialist pedagogy, to reflect on the Miro board exercise series, called Material Witness; and *Individual Testimony*, where I'd like to empower the student's situated point of view, to turn their narrative, into a meaningful, transformative event, by redefining it as a testimony.

The method of *healing* similarly has three sub-methods: *Recognition*, in which I juxtapose the experience of Ruth Levy's online tour guide on Freedom Farm Sanctuary, with their collective struggle to find common ground, subject or angle for their collective project; *Togetherness*, where I reflect on my intention to give the students an open space during the module, where they can experiment or test out ideas. This turned out quite differently: the students set up their own open space to have lunch together, which served as a sanctuary for them. Last of the sub-methods of the healing method is *Collective Testimony*, in which I reflect on the collective project *Lunch-Table-19*.

Attunement

8

In 2013, I moved (with my partner) to the Netherlands, The Hague, from Hungary, Budapest. I experienced a cultural shock during my first year at the Royal Academy of The Hague (KABK) because it made me confront the stark socio-political differences between the two worlds. Over time, I embraced the multicultural, tolerant, inclusive, and vibrant social life around the Academy, and contrasting it with the toxic norms of the Hungarian Academy made me feel ashamed but empowered to embrace the change. Today, I view Hungary in its own context; I acknowledge its socio-political complexities. The historical divide of the Iron Curtain still influences the separation, itself a wound, between Western and Eastern European life-worlds. I am now dedicated to fostering a pluralistic middle ground where these identities coexist harmoniously rather than in competition.

I wonder if the need to make bridges between the identities I carry turned me towards relational ontology and an affirmative reading of the wound as a metaphor.

Before moving to the Netherlands, I spent three years at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts (MKE), at the Graphic Design program. The Academy, especially my department, was not a safe place; I often encountered abuses of power. Patriarchy, sexism, misogyny, and homophobia thrived, often masked as jokes. Female classmates were objectified and graded based on their appearance. The efforts to address this toxicity, such as Gizella Anna Varga's project on sexual harassment within the academy, were not enough.¹ Assignments were given with explicit right-wing political intent that I had to reject and resist.

I wonder if these experiences led me to appreciate liberatory, critical, and post-critical pedagogies, as well as counter-design theories and practices, to counteract systemic institutional injustices and oppressive teaching methods.

My experience at the Graphic Design department of the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (KABK) was a breath of fresh air. I explored designs ethical and political dimensions and its often overlooked, problematic history. I found that design research as a specific form of knowledge production could offer navigational tools for shaping new- or deconstructing old narratives. I

¹ Gizella Anna Varga's graduation project, titled Not OK, was a series of posters, a publication, and a black folder containing anonym collected stories of sexual abuse within the academy from graphic design students.

recognized design as a force that makes our world, and that this world shapes our identities, ideologies, and actions. I realized that conventional ‘design solutions’ or ‘design thinking’ perpetuate problematic systems like neoliberal capitalism, colonialism, racism, white supremacy, and anthropocentrism. In response, I began creating my own critical ‘cartographies,’ centered around animals in the context of ecological collapse, to decenter the current politics of human subject and agency. I identified patterns in how various industrial complexes (e.g., animal, non-profit, and beauty) served as strongholds of capitalism, colonialism, and anthropocentrism that could also be looking at as a critique on design. My ethical commitment evolved into a design program, resulting in publications, videos, and a board game that I will discuss here at length.

I wonder how these experiences led me to discover the potential of ontological design that contests and challenges not only the normative order of the social but also the very coordinates and inherent structures of design.

In 2018, after graduation, I joined forces with my life partner Natela Lemondzhava. We named our art duo ‘Oddkin’, derived from the work of Donna Haraway. Oddkin draws attention to the urgency to “become-with each other or not at all” because “alone, in our separate kinds of expertise and experience, we know both too much and too little” (Haraway 4) We formed Oddkin with a shared desire to respond to the unique condition of the Anthropocene, with a post-critical, affirmative attitude, that pushes you into the void while capturing you with loving attention. We distinguish two directions inside Oddkin: *Clarion Call* and *Ground Zero*. *Clarion Call* is where we develop critical cartographies of the wounds of the Anthropocene; an example is the board game *Today’s Success is Tomorrow’s Disaster*, which is a catalyst of this thesis. We are committed to providing critical maps, in various forms of the violent world to empower agency, subjectivity for intervention, and resistance. *Ground Zero* is a personal acknowledgment of the anxiety of being a human, expressed in writing, language, and 3D graphics; for example *Confession of the Flesh*, which also has a central role in this thesis. *Ground Zero* is a way to address the hardship of confrontation artistically, the unbearable weight of knowing and being vulnerable, and to confront ourselves with the dark hours of our collective soul.

I wonder how Oddkin’s aims motivated me to combine confrontation with healing as the two main methods within the wound-centered education design.

Chapter 1: Theory

The theoretical foundation of this research began with my fascination with post-anthropocentrism, a term coined by Rosi Braidotti. I often label my module as a quest to outline a post-anthropocentric pedagogy, recognizing the human as a species, as an animal. I wanted to decenter the human and question design and designing that perpetuates the separated human, so I needed the theory of ontological design by Tony Fry, which criticizes and holds design accountable for the structural injustices and the ecological crisis in our world. The experience of reading Braidotti's essay on affirmative ethics gave me goosebumps, because it builds a theory in which we can be in relation with injustice, violence, and death generatively and affirmatively. It does not depart from critique but builds from it. It naturally followed my interest in post-critical pedagogy because it also asks for an affirmative turn toward love and care, not without but through critique in the context of education. I am particularly in awe of Jan Masschelein's writings on 'attention' and Gert Biesta's concept on 'formation'. Below, I will expand on these theories one by one.

11

Below, I will expand on these theories using four headings: Ontological Design, Post-Anthropocentrism, Affirmative Ethics and Post-critical pedagogy.

Ontological Design

12

Ontology is the study of existence and how we determine if things exist or not, what is real, and what is not. I share an ontological materialist design viewpoint in which reality exists without any human observer. Particles, chemical processes, and energy are more real than the concept of the human mind (? Kent). Ontological design asks questions about the existence of design, which can't be separated from our world, which is in a permanent state of crisis (Tony Fry). How does Design, design the crisis? How does Design, design us back? How does design make and unmake the world? In this section, I will rely on design philosopher Tony Fry, anthropologist Arturo Escobar, and design theorists Beatriz Colomina and Marc Wigley to outline what I mean, how I relate to design, and what concerns it gives to the structure and practice of my modules and what actions it requires to respond to it.

The current global crisis requires all disciplines and practices, including design, to self-reflect. Design, which involves the deep entanglement of meaning and matter, must be examined closely. In our investigation of how material cultures contribute to creating an unsustainable world, we have discovered that the traditional concept of the human and its ideologies are redundant and harmful, mainly due to dominant design practices. According to Tony Fry, the planetary ecological crisis is a "crisis by design" (Fry and Nocek 4) and vice versa, "this planetary crisis puts design itself in crisis" (Fry and Nocek 4). The main idea is that design, on a global scale, has created an unsustainable world. The problem becomes more complex when we acknowledge that human survival depends on design as much as on nature. Since everything is designed, everything is impacted, altered, or influenced by design, and we are essentially living within it.

"Design is the most human thing about us. Design is what makes humans. It is the basis of social life, from the earliest artefacts to today's exponential expansion of human capability. The human radiates design in all directions."(Colomina and Wigley 12) The more we are involved and dependent on design, the less room there is for alternative human or non-human perspectives to emerge and address design's negative, critical impacts. Colomina and Wigley remind us that humans are not a stable concept or category because "the more malleable and indeterminate the species, the more extreme the impact. In redesigning itself, it redesigns the planet. But equally and simultaneously, the redesigned world redesigns the designing animal." (Colomina and Wigley 25)

These propositions urge us to take seriously what ideas and meanings we are materializing through design in the first place that have direct or indirect results in injustice, violence, and oppression on a systematic scale. Design is a critical domain in engaging with the crisis since design “designs the very conditions of the human (homo habilis, homo economicus, homo digitalis, etc.), and is for this reason responsible” (Fry and Nocek 2). for the crisis. This responsibility comes with no surprise when we consider naming our new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, as a turning point where human history and Earth’s history intersect and can no longer be treated separately.

The Anthropocene is a term that fails to recognize, to deliver justice to those who did not count as human, still the term is accepted as a universal demarcation line. Here, we need to listen to Arturo Escobar, an Argentinian anthropologist who also recognized that “as a form of agency, design/ing is central to this historical conjuncture [of the Anthropocene]. It has been squarely situated within that world—hetero-patriarchal, modern, capitalist, racist—today in crisis; it has also been a paramount agency of that crisis.”(Escobar 25)

Both Fry and Escobar note that the negative connotation of the Anthropocene has a particular historical frame that needs to be acknowledged and addressed. Fry asserts that “this categorisation (of the Anthropocene) is the product of geopolitical power, and is symptomatic of a much more insidious colonial tendency to erect universalisms (a ‘universal humanity’) that disavows that the ‘human’ is itself a racist and patriarchal design whose meaning ultimately determines which lives are more grievable than others; and in so doing it implicates those lives in the colonial violence that violates them.” (Fry and Nocek 2) We should be concerned with the epistemologies that produced the crisis in the first place and attempt to investigate the concepts and practices that feed our pervasive, exploitative, and oppressive economies.

“Design must un-design its own designing, but in so doing, it cannot make this a design project. In short: design must become unrecognisable to itself”. (Fry and Nocek 10)

Fry’s phrase ‘undesigning design’ is so broad that it gives space to experiment and speculate on what that could be and how that would look. It is a project to recognize and actively resist contributing to - by maintaining an anthropocentric order and to give attention and care to post-anthropocentric conditions, where an ‘unrecognizable’ design emerges. Here Fry notes that we have to “envision the possibility of designing new conditions for being human” and “the human and non-human ontologies cannot be reimagined without rethinking the very being of design.” (Fry and Nocek 3-4)

Therefore, ‘undesigning design’ is about decentering the human and actively re-learning to be in relation with the wounded world as a relational, codependent, and thus a responsible species. It is a project that requires a break from the common assumptions of traditional humanism, that keeps us in the binary of the nature-culture divide, and requires us to be exposed, confronted, and embodied with traumatic spaces that might open up the hidden capacity for accountability and thus to be attuned for change. Arthuro Escobar asks: “Is the onto-epistemic reorientation of design possible?”(25) He argues that design can become a ‘futural praxis’ that doesn’t give ‘solutions’ but heals, repairs, mends, and recuperates in an embedded and embodied way. “The praxis of repairing, healing, and caring for life’s web of interdependencies might be constituted as a pluriversal strategy to keep in tension the natural and the artificial and as a means to overcome the most destructive aspects of the technological construction of worlds, perhaps in tandem with those social groups not yet fully instrumentalised and with ongoing efforts worldwide at resisting such instrumentalisation in the name of making and living otherwise.” (Escobar 30) The question is: How do we respond to this overwhelming task and address our design crisis? Design’s go-to answer is to solve it. Solutions tend to reduce, simplify, and narrow the deep intersecting problems that are prone to establish extra confusion and can perpetuate hidden acts of violence. Design has always followed the desire to create a comfortable, clean, rounded, functional world without friction that makes life easier. Design has been associated with covering things up to hide the messy structure beneath. What we see with the Anthropocene is that this frictionless utopia is not sustainable, and design needs to come out of the anesthesiology department and discover pathology or the palliative department, where the “real” things happen.

Escobar states, “relational ontological designing will require a renewed awareness of how the creation of conditions for life-sustaining co-existence will necessarily have to engage with the dominant logic of defuturing and unsustainability. Working against the grain of such logic, design could become a key agency in the transitions from toxic to healing existence.” (Escobar 29)

If design is confronted with the wounds of its own designing, and finds value in discomfort, it might find emergent non-solutionist proposals. If this crisis is by design, there is hope for the human subject to ‘redesign’ itself, co-dependent and responsible for the natural world. We ought to embrace the world through relationality, interdependence, and co-dependence, and restore and heal the relations that have been harmed, wounded, or cut loose.

I chose the ontological design philosophy for my module, *Designing our Ways out of Design*, because it encapsulates that design is one of the most underestimated, under-recognized agencies in our planetary crisis that possesses political, cultural, and ecological force which is shaping the human subject back in return. This opens up a clear position for me as a tutor, in which I am acknowledging a relational ontology, where design is inseparable from the socio-political and ecological web of life. It allows me to draw on a transdisciplinary field of knowledge and methods.

15

The module, from the ontological design perspective, offers 1) an analytical, investigative journey by confronting and responding to the wounds of design (factory farm and other industrial complexes) and 2) to be present, to listen, play, to embrace what emerges through communities of care, –where design also place a crucial role – (in our body and our minds) through the restoration, healing of these wounds through design. The only way through this crisis is to confront the crisis. The only way towards healing is through pain.

Post-Anthropocentrism

16

“..the core of the post-anthropocentric turn: it is a materialist, secular, grounded and unsentimental response to the opportunistic trans-species commodification of Life that is the logic of advanced capitalism. It is also an affirmative reaction of social and cultural theory to the great advances made by the other culture, that of the sciences.”

Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (60)

In this thesis, I will rely on Rosi Braidotti’s articulation of post-anthropocentrism from her posthuman critical theory. Braidotti’s attempt to decenter the human comes from two directions: an epistemological and an ontological one. (*Posthuman, All Too Human? A Cultural Political Cartography*) The first is a feminist critique of the classical humanist image of the man, represented mainly by the Vitruvian man, as the measure of all things. Today, the ‘measure of all things’ is associated with patriarchy, heteronormativity, white supremacy, Eurocentrism, ableism, and speciesism. It comes as no surprise that the identities and human bodies that don’t fit into the political category of the human project are excluded from being human, such as women, children, elderly, indigenous, black, queer, disabled, poor etc...

Braidotti, based on her French post-structuralist lineage, argues to label these excluded human voices, who have been hunted, denied, and silenced, as post-anthropocentric epistemologies.¹ By operationalizing posthuman counter-epistemologies, such as embodied and embedded knowledge assemblages such as Indigenous studies, Black Studies, Queer Studies, Feminist/Woman Studies, Critical Animal Studies, Disability Studies, and Post-Colonial Studies we aim to make a rupture on the continuity of epistemological uniformity that contributed to the world in crisis.

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Of course there is no such thing as post-anthropocentric

Embodied and embedded knowledge assemblages are essential because the lived experience of the Anthropocene is highly disparate and unequal, where the need for change is utterly different from place to place, body to body, culture to culture. From these points of view, the Anthropocene reveals the politics of the dominant human subject, because the world's end has already happened for so many bodies of culture. This view emphasizes the position to acknowledge our identities, privileges, ancestry, and other relevant relations where we speak. It is a demanding task to do, it needs practice and humility. In my module, I aimed to amplify voices, pieces of knowledge, and lived experiences that have been systematically suppressed. It is an epistemological liberation, a revival of the silenced voices to enable a more just and authentic critique of the politics of the Anthropocene. It is essential in my module content and interactions with and among the students.

The second ontological direction comes from the theory of Darwin, who informed us that our species' ancestry goes back to the great apes, opening up the subject of the human-animal divide as a primordial wound. The human is not a biological category but an ideological concept (Calarco). *Homo sapiens* belong to the order of primates and the category of the animal kingdom; therefore, the human isn't a distinctive species of its own. From this perspective, human superiority and speciesism must be questioned and problematized. What bubbles up is an ontological uncertainty that inflates into an existential panic (what it means to be a human) that extends the list of exclusions (that I addressed above) towards the subordination and war against non-human animals (Joseph Wadiwel).

We need to ask urgent questions: What is human, what is animal, and what is design? We live in a planetary crisis that has shaken the ground of assurance or trust in any of these terms. Asking these ontological questions also provokes the widely held belief that these categories are fixed and stable. It is not, and the proof lies in the way we treat animals (animals like us). That portal is where we can interrogate these turbulent, uncertain waters to find clues. What the post-anthropocentric thought offers to design is an intensive momentum, a window of possibility to ask: 1) What animals can teach us about design? But before that, we ought to ask: 2) What can design teach us about animals? We are going to find very different answers. These questions can bring us back to the deep primordial wound, the split between humans and animals, the separation between body and mind, nature and culture.

Nevertheless, post-anthropocentrism in my educational work is a navigational tool: on the one hand, I use it for claiming my ethical direction of educational design (the theory of post-anthropocentrism was not directly part of the content of the lectures; it was more an ethical framework for the educational design); on the other hand, post-anthropocentrism has been the guiding principle for me in selecting and defining the subject matter of the module. The post-anthropocentric thought is concerned with the epistemological and/thus an ontological question of the human. Who gets to define what is human? What realities and experiences can form new knowledge that can be turned into institutions, infrastructures, industries, and, in short, material governance? Post-anthropocentrism offers an intensive space to speculate on authentic, relational epistemologies and experiences that can pave a more integrated, just, hybrid position of the human-animal subject to rise, placing it into the wound of the nature-culture continuum.

Affirmative Ethics

“Oppositions cuts in two directions: it means both “I reject this” and “I desire otherwise”. Both motion mobilise reactive resistance and active resources, including our desires and imagination. This is not the denial of negativity but a generative way of dealing with it.”

Rosi Braidotti, *Non-Fascist Ethics: Learning to live and die as Affirmation*

All that live are relational species, co-dependent on the Earth's complex ecosystems. Resource extraction is faster than the needed time for nature to regenerate, causing dire catastrophes where life will no longer be in favour of any organic, living entity. Relationality and relational ontology can be a robust outlook to address these irreversible planetary collapses entangled with human action and design that have been complicit ever since. How do we cope with the overwhelming power of negativity (racial violence, xenophobia, new-age fascism) in extreme ecological crises? Rosi Braidotti, in her essay *Non-Fascist Ethics: Learning to live and die as Affirmation*, attempts to locate a desired way of being, acting, and living with and in a world that takes relationality as an ontological baseline. She proposes an affirmative ethics that does not deny “negativity but [offers] a generative way of dealing with it.” (25-39) Affirmative ethics strikes a political pose while saying, “I reject this” way of relating with this violent world, “I reject this” way of thinking with this violent world, “I reject this” way of becoming.

This rejection, first of all, “requires an adequate understanding of the critical conditions one is attempting to resist,” and second, it says: “I desire otherwise” with all my imagination and creativity (25-39). This desire aims to “actualize[s] the unrealized (or virtual) potential of what “we” are capable of becoming” through the mobilization of “collective power (potentia) to counter-actualize alternatives that are both untimely and necessary - like injecting hope into a socially-depressed field or turning exhaustion into an opportunity for radical transformation.” (25-39) In practice, affirmative ethics helped me to structure and align the two semesters' intentions. The first semester orients what relations with the world I don't want to

participate in (“I reject this”), and the second semester is about how to transform it (I desire otherwise).

20

These ethics have been very influential in creating my educational design because it has not only an affirmative position towards negativity (crisis, pain, suffering, and anxiety) but also a dedication towards the promise of the not-yet. It does not deny the power of the negative, nor allow the negative to become the only reality, but instead acknowledges it, respects it, learns from it, affirms it by transforming it, translating it into something generative and collective, that is geared towards both the “creation of sustainable alternatives..[and to] the construction of social horizons of hope”(25-39). Affirmative ethics is for times of crisis, where we need to remain in relation with the world that is vanishing; however, at the same time (more than ever), we need to be able to uphold meaningful relations with human and non-human others, driven by care, imagination, creativity, desire, trust, hope, and love. We can't lose each other. This ethics provides a particular subject position for me as a tutor, gives ethical guidance for setting up my education design, both content and form, and informs my students and colleagues how I wish to be in relation with/to design, art, knowledge, experience, and the world. There is a need for affirmative ethics because it “aims at increasing the individual and collective relational capacity in a productive and mutually enforcing manner.” (25-39)

Affirmative ethics is mainly at the core of my wound-centered education design because it aims to take seriously and not be afraid to 1) confront the wounds of the world , and 2) attempt to transform them into generative potentials. As I situate design in the center of this crisis, I argue that the tasks ahead is twofold because design needs to be confronted with both 1) the consequence: the ecological devastation, and 2) the cause: mattering of the nature-culture divide (cause). Affirmative ethics is 'responsible' to perform both because it has the ethical apparatus to deal with complexity without a reductionist attitude and has enough resilience and perseverance to be both the parrhesiastes, who speak truth to power, as well as the visionary steward who cares for/with/about a common, relational world. “Affirmation produces a sense of belonging and an understanding of the common world “we” are sharing, through the multiple ecologies -natural, cultural, affective and heterogeneous - that constitute us.” (25-39)

Post-critical Pedagogy

"It is time to acknowledge and to affirm that there is good in the world that is worth preserving. It is time for debunking the world to be succeeded by some hopeful recognition of the world. It is time to put what is good in the world – that which is under threat and which we wish to preserve – at the centre of our attention and to make a conceptual space in which we can take up our responsibility for them in the face of, and in spite of, oppression and silent melancholy."

21

Naomi Hodgson, Joris Vlieghe Piotr Zamojski, Manifesto for a Post-Critical Pedagogy (19)

"...We have to learn to attune to the world in ways that go far beyond the humanist restriction and cease pretending that while humans are engaged in learning and teaching, all other things are mere background."

Nathan Snaza, Re-Attuning to the Materiality of Education

Arguing for a desirable coincidence between educational content and form is a central thrust of post-critical pedagogies (Masschelein and Simons, Vlieghe and Zamojski, Biesta). Positioning themselves against progressive pedagogies and their general obsession with educational techniques and pedagogical methods (i.e., the pedagogical regime of competence development), as well as against orthodox-Marxist critical pedagogies and their obsession with educational content (i.e., the pedagogical regimes of knowledge acquisition). Post-critical pedagogies draw our attention to a radically different educational trajectory, where the formation of the subject is at stake (subjectification, to use Biesta's words). Formation of our subjectness means becoming in relation with the world (being-with) without being in the centre of the world (de-centring). Post-critical pedagogies thus distance themselves from the mainstream educational discourse (which promotes learning outcomes and competence goals); what post-critical pedagogies offer is a non-instrumental, non-solutional educational thinking, where the unity between the subject matter (content) and the way it is made to speak (form) is at the centre as opposed to educational goals, ends, and solutions. Gert Biesta argues in his book *World-Centered Education*, that one of the

basic forms and gestures in teaching is ‘pointing,’ which comes with a double meaning: pointing to someone or something and pointing somewhere. (78) Pointing is a gesture without judgment that mobilizes attention and sparks the imagination. It also provokes emotions and possibly makes us confused affirmatively. One of the most critical consequences of education interested in ‘pointing’ is that its educational content (curriculum) and educational form (pedagogy) come together in an inseparable dialectic relation, where content determines form, and form determines content. (Biesta 75-89)

For example, the module I teach has two parts, divided into two semesters. In the first semester, I am pointing towards the factory farm, intending to investigate nonhuman materiality’s responsibilities in creating the Anthropocene. Pointing with an intention means “Look at this or look at over there with ‘this’ in mind,” where I necessarily influence how students interpret the subject. It is a dialogue where I point with an intention to investigate, narrowing the possibilities for intervention; however, this influence ends there, and I leave the students to figure out themselves. So, the pointing needs to be impactful and transformative enough to have a lasting effect that can generate new subject formations. In the second semester, I am pointing towards the farm animal sanctuary as a proposal for a post-anthropocentric, multispecies care practice that might point us away from the hegemony of the Anthropocene. Here, I am pointing without an intention because I am waiting for the intention to emerge among the students.

Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons, in their book *In Defense of the School*, distinguish between learning and formation. Learning is a “strengthening or expanding of the existing ‘I’”, whereas formation is where the “‘I’ is suspended into a confrontation with the world (lifted up, put in brackets), which allows for a new ‘I’ in relation to that world to take shape and form” (45) Formation is a transformative process, even the authors call it “the step following an identity crisis.” (45) Formation can’t be controlled or measured but instead noticed. It’s a process I aim to strive towards, but we can never fully reach it as there is no defined endpoint. It is open for interpretation and fits very much with my intention of an affirmative, post-anthropocentric educational design, where transformation and decentering are at the core. However, it is not about me hunting for transformative events but rather think-with ‘formation’ as a confrontation with the world for a different ‘I’ to emerge while I recall and analyze the school year.

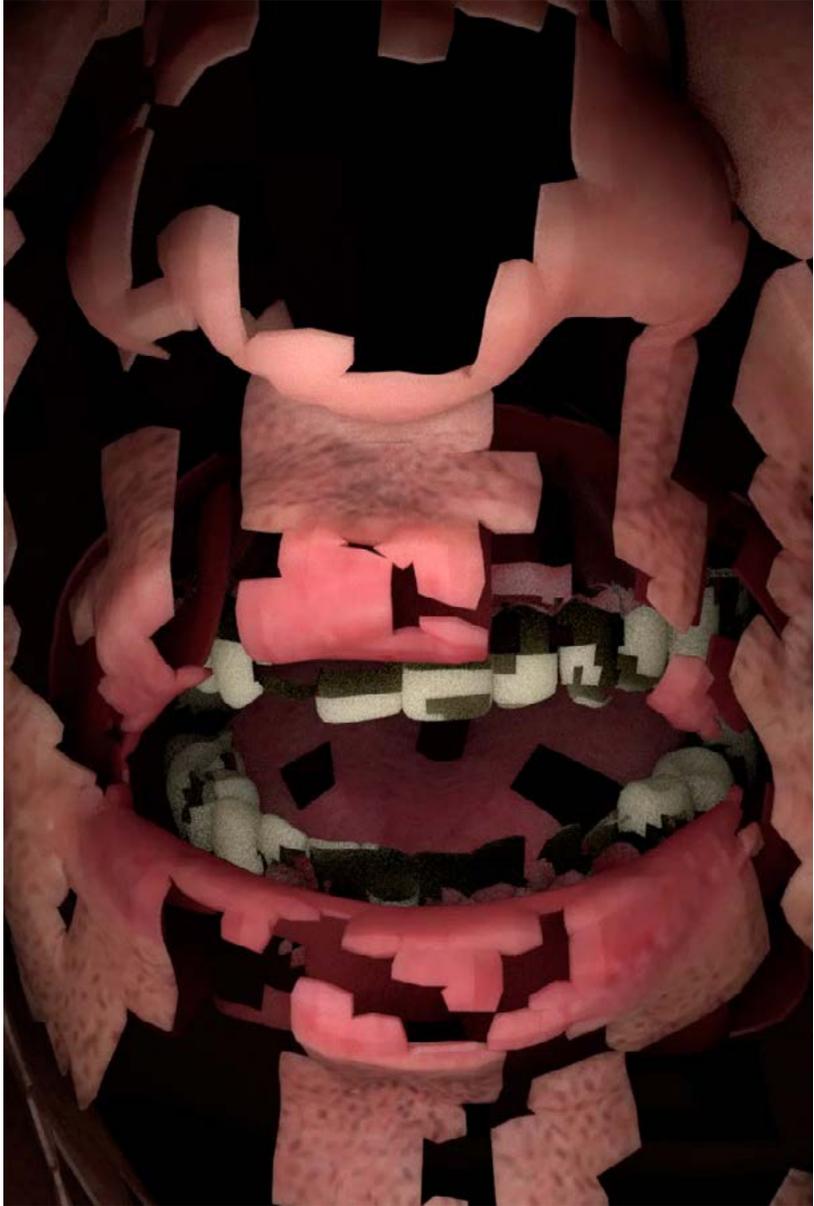
Nathan Snaza, in the introduction of the book *Pedagogical Matters*, argues how new-materialist philosophy can problematize anthropocentric positivism in humanist education, where “most pedagogies taken for granted that only human beings can learn or can teach.” Snaza emphasizes

the need to decenter the human subject through attunement to nonhuman materiality – as an educational project – not only being part of the mattering of education but also contributing to it, profoundly affecting the web of life. He argues, like Masschelein towards ‘attention’, what we need is a “new politics of attention, that moves beyond a simple anthropocentrism in order to dwell with the non-humans that are entangled with humans in educational encounters.” (Snaza) Considering the online learning environment in which this module was held, the attention towards these technological devices that facilitated our class isn’t part of this thesis. However, it has been a great concern of mine, and I’d like to acknowledge its affective presence. I am interested in new-materialist pedagogy within the individual investigation, how objects, and pieces of stuff they find along the way can be affective within their research, that can produce this ‘new politics of attention’.

Snaza writes “We might begin to ask of the objects that surround and shape us how they have come to be here and what material and economic processes were required for their arrival. We can ask what they do to us, and even what they might do that has nothing to do with us.” (Snaza) By placing materiality at the core of our educational encounter, we can examine in novel ways how defuturing (the wounds of the Anthropocene) takes place through the mediation of materials and design interventions. This approach allows us to understand the material environment and the complex interconnections that create, sustain, and intensify oppression. Therefore, we turn our attention to design and material cultures as enablers of the defuturing of the world. To what extent do architecture, objects, and technologies – within industrial complexes – enable and perpetuate defuturing or can be used as sensors to uncover injustice? Is it possible to emancipate, liberate, empower, or show solidarity with the suffering subjects by redirecting our investigative gaze to the material context in which the abuse is taking place? How does this attention to materiality empower or emancipate the investigating students?

Designing educational encounters and relations means a particular way to draw things together. As Jan Masschelein argues, educational design is interested in transforming ourselves and the way we deal with the world and each other, so as to safeguard the potential of a new subject, a new agency, a new beginning to emerge. The wound-centered educational design I present is “interested in pointing, practices of taking care and paying attention, rather than in practices of fabrication and production”; thus, it is “a quest for re-designing pedagogy in the face of contemporary challenges.” (Masschelein 2015, 98.)

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other



The Confession of the Flesh, (spanshot)

The wound

“Wounds cannot heal... the wound will always be there... wounds transform, mold into other wounds, merge into bigger ones or shred into pieces, but they will always matter”

Rick Dolphijn, *The Cracks of the Contemporary VI: The Wound*

Wounds are portals, gates for untold stories in the process of transformation, in motion, in pulsation, in constant intense becoming in our critical times. Wounds usually refer to painful, bleeding openings on soft tissue. It has a bodily and material quality, a particular aesthetics. However, the wound exists in many forms, such as a thing, a space, an event, or a concept, but mainly as a metaphor that can virtually create a sense of attention and care in the classroom. Since my educational subjects, such as the Anthropocene, the nature-culture divide, or the human-animal divide, are complicated to relate to, the wound for me is a spell that helps me to put these concepts into (an embodied) perspective. Besides, the wound appears not as a metaphor or concept but in the literal sense, in different conditions, forms, and intensities during the module.

Rick Dolphijn’s 2017 lecture at Sonic Acts Festival eloquently revisits Haruki Murakami’s sharp attention to the wound as a generative and poetic phenomenon in demanding times. It is a reminder that the living world is made of vulnerable, sensitive, intelligent matter and holds meanings and histories. The wound is a matter in crisis, in deterioration, a scream, a process, an event that signals pain and suffering to prevent continuation, act, stop harming more, or do something. The wound is a cut, a crack that lets us see and feel inside the matter, inside a theory, inside an idea, so it also questions the integrity of the surface, the skin, and the many layers of desires that govern our reality. The wound reminds us of the bottom of existence, where everything radiates. We are born and possibly die through pain. The wound is a reminder that we have bodies and other bodies out there. The wound is an embodied, intimate container concerning the crisis of this world through the power of vulnerability, where we are allowed to reach the bottom to find the connection with the wounded because that’s where we find the real. This wound is also erotic and pulsating, which we usually ignore

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

and are afraid to acknowledge because it can uncover us, bleed us out, and make us seen. However, “the wound is never present. It does not take place and is always already here.” (Dolphijn)

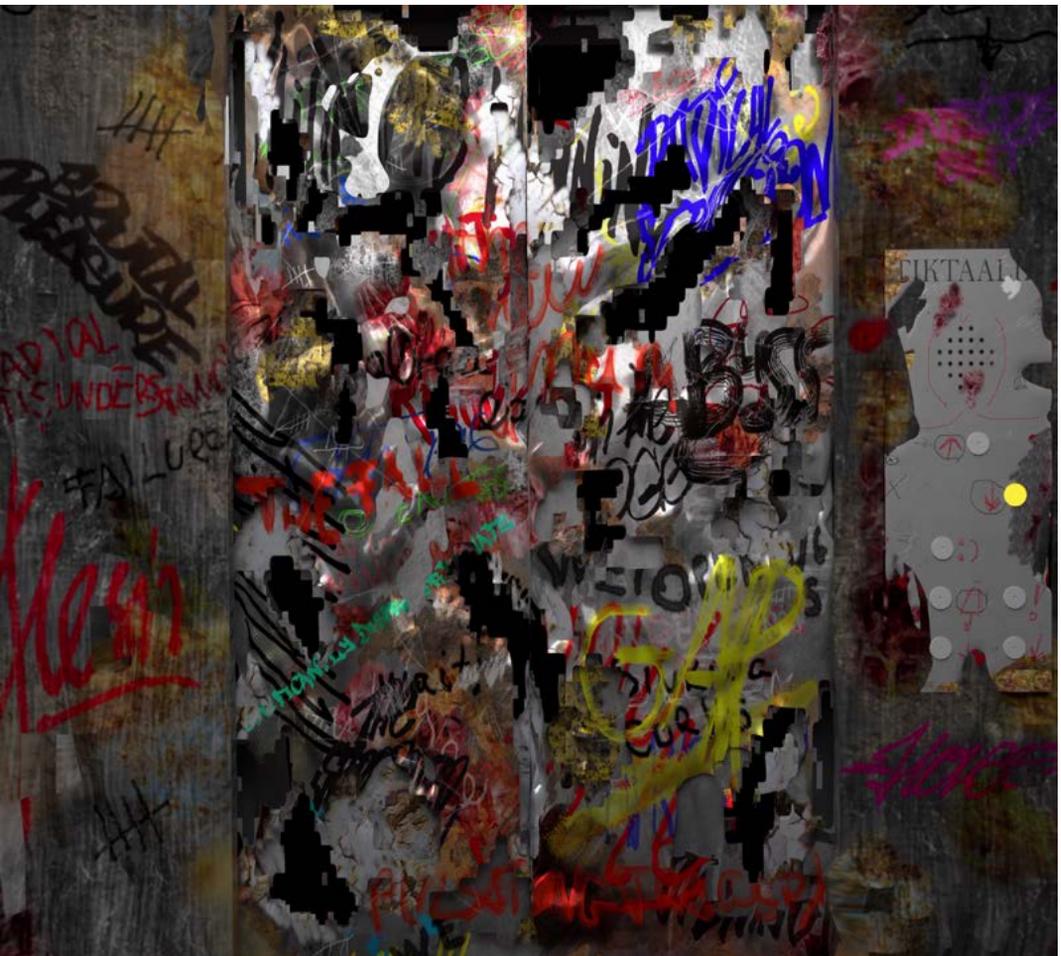
26

When making my BA graduation work titled ‘The Confession of the Flesh,’ I explored various forms of openings as symbolic manifestations of the wounds perpetuating the Anthropocene. Wounds, whether on sentient beings or non-sentient objects, embody time, experience, traces, histories, and stories that often provoke discomfort and challenge society’s capacity to cope with them. I delved into the concept of openings – cracks, holes, dissections, and depths – both as bodily experiences (discomfort and pain) and theoretical explorations (in the realm of new materialism and post-humanism). These openings ranged from doors, portals, and caves to the speculative voids serving as metaphors for decay, extinction, and death in the context of the Anthropocene trauma.

I mainly focused on the human face, viewing it as an intricate network of cracks and openings, with the mouth as a pivotal, ambivalent feature. It symbolizes the complex relationship between mind and body, where the spoken word often contradicts the living tissues comprising it. The mouth, a conduit for concepts expressed as sound and voice, raised questions about its inherent interests as a material entity. Can we misuse our mouths – these vibrant matter collections – by employing them for speech acts that harm the material world despite their primary evolutionary function for sustenance? As a symbol, the human mouth reflects a unique wound of anthropocentrism, prioritizing the mind and ideas while neglecting its fundamental role in nourishment. I pondered how to engage in speech acts that align with the interests of our mouths and vocal cords, fostering mutual flourishing between the human concept and the natural world it has pushed into crisis rather than perpetuating further defuturing. My exploration involved voicing concerns, anxieties, and reflections on the wound, treating it as a door enabling actions and movements, irrespective of its ethical implications.

In the video installation, another significant opening takes the form of an elevator that rhythmically opens and closes, mirroring the act of breathing. This elevator, a metallic vessel of desire, draws inspiration from J.G. Ballard’s novel ‘Crash’ and David Cronenberg’s film adaptation. In Cronenberg’s vision, the car is an extension of the human body, engaging in sexual, erotic, and material intercourse when it collides with another vehicle. This results in literal material and bodily transformations, entanglements, damaged cars, disfigured bodies, wounds, scars, and prosthetics. In one scene from the film, a character named James asks Vaughan about his project, to which Vaughan responds that “it involves the reshaping of the human

body by modern technology.” (The Crash) This idea serves as a central theme within the narrative. The elevator symbolizes the vertical dimension that descends into the wounds of the Anthropocene. It serves as a device, a designed entity, a metallic, everyday vehicle embodying the pulsating wound. This elevator reflects our designed anthropocentric world, much like the mouth; it creates, shapes, and transforms our existence in arbitrary ways while also taking away, harming, and violating. The elevator is an extension of ourselves, highlighting the interconnectedness of our existence with design. There is no external perspective in the realm of design; we are as vibrant, alive, and vulnerable as the elevator itself, recognizing its profound material significance in our human experience.



The Confession of the Flesh, (spanshot)

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

Wound-centered approach

28 The *wound* shows us what is real because the real is always wounded. That is what we should focus on, which deserves our attention, care, investigation, and imagination. Wound-centred is not pain or suffering-centered; it is centred around exposed, oppressed, exploited bodies of cultures and their chance for transformation. Dolphijn stresses that the “aim is not to heal the wound”; rather, the “aim is to find a way to live it, to be worthy of the wounds, cracks, and crises that matter in our times.” The wound teaches us the responsibility to understand the cracks and to resist being overwhelmed by the pain, both personally and collectively.

The *wound* is a liminal space, a cave system that hides our embodied and embedded knowledge, wisdom that urges us to express it by all means. Dolphijn suggests that true artists “must address these wounds in their writings, artworks, and walk of life.” and “the goal is not to analyze or give form to wounds but to live the void they represent, embracing a form of creativity that maps these wounds.” In my understanding, the wound is dangerous because it can expose, reveal, and disclose the lies, the biases, the inconsistencies, and the manipulations because it can’t be suppressed for too long. We need to be worthy of this gift to be wounded and easily wound others. Wound-centred means a fertile, intensive space in which we can feel connected with the crisis not conceptually but as a vulnerable body of knowledge that is uncertain but learns to be accountable. This is what I mean by wound-centred.



The Confession of the Flesh, (spanshot)

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

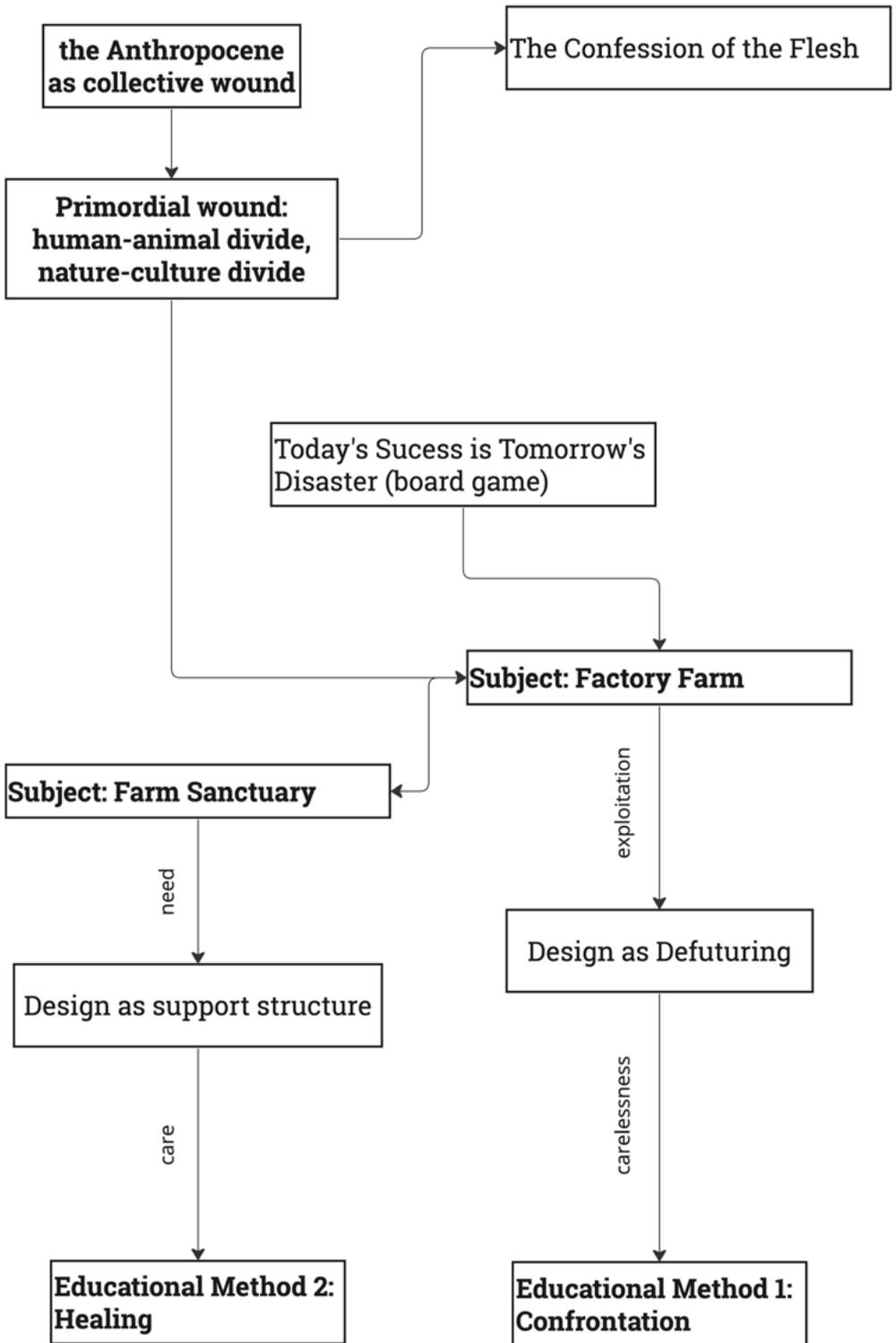
The architecture of the Wound-centered educational design

30

In the following two chapters, I will introduce the two main educational subjects, that foreshadowed the pedagogical methodologies and the strategies shaping my educational practice.

In the first educational subject, I argue how and why Factory Farming determined the 'confrontation' method within the wound-centered educational approach in this chapter. After positioning the term and myself, I introduce our board game as a catalyst of my module, *Designing our Ways out of Design*. First, I approach the issues of factory farming as a present-day case study of the human-animal divide, investigating the ontological split from nature through the start of agricultural practices, quoting Tim Morton. (This philosophical outreach helps keep the subject wide and open for interpretation.) Second, I will argue that the Factory Farm is a primordial ontological design of the human species in which the unsustainable human and the Anthropocene emerged, using Tony Fry's term, design de-futuring. Here, I will elaborate on how factory farming normalizes violence, quoting Barbara Noske, Alice Crary and Lori Gruen, Damien Mander and others. At last, I will give a plea on how and why we need to be and seek confrontation with the Negativity that the effects of factory farms generate, but always through thorough critical understanding and Listening to our Concerns. I will end with how this research helped me to come up with the method of confrontation.

In the second educational subject, I am arguing how and why the Farm Animal Sanctuary becomes the second main wound-centered educational subject and how it influences the 'healing' method within the wound-centered educational approach. After a short intro of the term, I will go through three segments: The escape, through the concept of the 'absent referent' by Carol Adams, where the traumatized, objectified, commodified animals are revealed as a conscious subject with needs; The support structure, a concept by Celine Condorelli, I argue how farm animal sanctuaries show an emergent design strategy, that is based on the recognition of the needs of the othered, the fugitive, Closely looking at the transformative potential of care by Maria Puig de la Bellacasa through rehabilitation of the oppressed subjectivity of the farm animal, a process where the affirmative potential of healing and recovery generates a new language of play, friendship or joy. Along the way, I will include examples from the conversation with Ruth Levy, a volunteer at Freedom Farm Sanctuary (who I will introduce more in length later during the analysis of the second semester). In conclusion, I will end with how it motivated and inspired me to develop the pedagogical strategies for the healing method of the wound-centered educational design.



Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

1. The Farm Animal Industry

32

“Farming is the most destructive human activity ever to have blighted the earth.”

George Monbiot

Let me give a short summary of what is the farm animal industry, as a way to confront us, to expose us to a general description of the practice of industrial animal exploitation. First, the farm animal industry is a profit-driven agricultural system, which includes mainly two separate operative facilities: the factory farm, where the animals are reproduced and raised, and the slaughterhouse, where the animals are transported to be killed and processed for human consumption. In factory farms, animal bodies are regarded as commodities and units of economic resources within the needs of the farm business. Animals are kept in confined spaces, unable to move freely, exhibit natural behaviors, or have the fundamental need for love, care, play, and social life. The farm controls not only reproduction, feed, or movement but also modifies genes, or uses growth hormones to maximize production based solely on productivity and economic output, regardless of adverse health or environmental consequences. Farm animals are regarded as biological machines, often subjected to overexploitation and abuse, which results in sickness and pain. Factory farming significantly impacts the environment and is prone to epidemic outbreaks due to excessive consumption and pollution of natural resources. This is just the tip of the iceberg, but I hope it is a summary enough to catch your attention. Shall we dig deeper? Come with me, and I'll share what I have discovered and how this subject helped me uncover an assemblage of relations.

My deep concern and fascination about this subject or phenomenon come not only from the anger and sadness I felt toward the abrupt injustice against animals or the pollution of the natural environment. It originated from my desire to critically understand – through designerly ways – from a structural, relational perspective. I wanted to know how it is possible to maintain such unsustainable and immoral industrial activity despite the many signs of negative outputs and dire consequences. I couldn't accept the economic reasoning. So, I mapped out how the farm animal industry as an assemblage of matters, bodies, actors, roles, relationships, dynamics,



Play-session with Today's Success Is Tomorrow's Disaster, at MIVC, 2018

actions, and politics are formed, and being formed. A critical cartography emerged that took the format of a board game called *Today's Success Is Tomorrow's Disaster*. It became a board game because of the complexity of navigating these dense relations of critical cartography. It needed to become an interactive, participatory system in which information is contextualized, situated, and linked to specific actions, roles, and dynamics. The content found an inherently pedagogical, educational format in which the subject can be discovered. The form and the content are inseparable; they empower, change, and play with each other.

The game has an essentially confrontational, provocative role in exposing players to challenging ethical questions that show the contradictions between economic and social values regarding the life of animals, based on players' roles. The game comprised four characters: two activists — an animal rights activist and an environmental activist — whose roles are identical but for different reasons. They must investigate and collect evidence to reveal pieces of evidence that prove the injustice, suffering, and exploitation hidden behind the pro-farm propaganda. They need to reveal this truth to disrupt the growth of the animal industry. Next, there are two capitalists — a farm owner and an agricultural minister — whose responsibilities differ,

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

Human-Animal Divide

“Agrilogistics promises to eliminate fear, anxiety, and contradiction—social, physical and ontological—by establishing thin, rigid boundaries between human and nonhuman worlds and reducing existence to sheer quantity. Though toxic, it has been wildly successful because the program is deeply compelling. Agrilogistics is the smoking gun behind the (literally) smoking gun responsible for the Sixth Mass Extinction Event.”

Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology*

According to philosopher Timothy Morton, the invention of agriculture is the driver of a certain agricultural logic. He calls this agrilogistics, in which the human becomes in control of the land and animals. He refers to the shift from a hunter-gatherer society to an agricultural society, some 12,000 years ago. This shift is also an ontological, epistemological, ideological, and existential shift from nomadic to settlement. The evolution of the agricultural society systematically contributed to removing or distancing humans from nature, subordinating (domesticating) plants and animals, and normalizing management – exploitation and violence – of other non-human species. It made the human an architect, a designer, a breeder, a manager, and an owner of plant and animal life, extending them into a moral superiority that solidified into an anthropocentric socio-political order. However, it makes sense how the gesture of enslaving animals to serve and work for humans could be the most significant historical event, underscoring the condition of the Anthropocene and the ecological crisis in which we find ourselves.

In the context of this research, the board game and the research on the farm animal industry have been a vehicle, an educational tool for me to draw attention to the responsibility, accountability, complicity, and guilt of design in the Anthropocene: it represents a design attitude that sits right in the middle of the human-animal divide. My primary intention was to think about how the oppression against farm animals not only leads to issues of intersectional and ecological injustice but also how philosophically, it opens up critical questions about anthropocentrism. The interactive format of a board game invites players to comprehend the dynamics of structural injustice surrounding industrial animal farms. It also encourages them to ask fundamental philosophical questions about the separation between humans and animals, and how design plays a crucial role in perpetuating this divide.

These ontological questions can empower us to think-with the farm industry as an opportunity to discover what it is to be or not be a human animal and how to respond to it as a designer or artist. Factory farms can be seen as the embodiment of the division between humans and the environment. It is a place where this separation begins, and where we can start to challenge our anthropocentric views and examine how they operate. Maintaining this level of abstraction is important for me because it allows for additional pedagogical strategies, such as new materialist pedagogies, to intervene. I will introduce these strategies in the practice section.

In the case of the human-animal divide activated by the subject of the factory farm, the tension between the human and the animal and what is not (yet) the human and the animal could open an affirmative proximity for generative possibilities in an educational space. We have lost the affirmative intention of being human, and we need new ways to reconnect with this tension. The identity of being human and the hubris that fuels the politics of difference we have with other animals must be questioned.

Farm Industry as normalization of violence

In her book *Beyond Boundaries*, Dutch anthropologist Barbara Noske finds that, “animal industries are embedded in a capitalistic fabric” (Noske 22), pointing to the mechanism of capitalism and its normalizing potential. She uses the term “animal industrial complex” (22), which refers to a network of institutions, industries, and practices that exploit and commodify animals for various purposes, such as food production, clothing, entertainment, and scientific research laboratories. The animal industrial complex includes not only the agricultural and industrial sectors directly involved in animal farming but also the legal, regulatory, and cultural infrastructures that support and perpetuate these practices. What Noske is pointing out is that there is a structural, economic machinery that maintains the normalization of violence against animals.

Alice Crary and Lori Gruen, in *Animal Crisis*, argue that the animal industry is the origin point for all violence against others who are deemed less valuable. They argue that violence against non-human animals permits violence against human groups that are considered less valuable. Thus, the normalization of such violence against non-human animals (and the indirect pollution of the environment as a consequence) profoundly affects and influences our understanding of what it means to be human, which humans and animals are ‘more equals than others’, and what sacrifices we make, to sustain running our anthropocentric agenda. Lastly, it indirectly limits our imagination and determines what actions are available for change and transformation.

Noske, Crary and Gruen shows how the defuturing practices of farm industries are conditioning our society, our very selves, to accept and to normalize violence. They warn us that we must take the defuturing farm industry seriously because this practice shapes our relationship with the world and each other. It represents a model in which the human image is reflected. Design and material culture render the factory farm and the slaughterhouse possible, making the idea of mass extermination of animals a reality. We must confront it from the perspective of ontological design, even if it is difficult and uncomfortable. We must “interrupt the static and acquiescent replication of established norms and values” (Braidotti, “Non-Fascist Ethics: Learning to Live and Die as Affirmation”).

The farm animal industry feeds not only large populations but also the negativity of the world. Design education has a responsibility to question its complicity in normalizing not only violence and the human-animal divide, but also to question the emergence of the Anthropocene condition, in which we find ourselves captive like an animal.

The need for Confrontation

38

“Defuturing, ‘the new naming’, as a mode of inquiry seeks to disclose the bias and direction of that which is designed and how it is totally implicated in the world we conceptually constitute, materially produce, waste (rather than consume), occupy and use as an available material environment.”

Tony Fry, *Defuturing*

The term ‘defuturing’ by Tony Fry positions design as an ontologically unsustainable, harmful, and net negative. It is useful in the case of the farm industry because defuturing can “disclose the bias and direction of that which is designed and how it is totally implicated in the world we conceptually constitute, materially produce” (Fry, *Defuturing* 10). In other words: the farm industry reveals itself by being empirically and materially available for investigation. The farm industry can be seen from the angle that it aims to negate the futuring of world. In one way, it exposes us to the paralyzing force of negativity; on the other, it shows the unjust way of relating to the world that we must reject. That means we must confront it, experience it, investigate it, learn from it, know how it functions, and how not to design it.

Confronting the negative is challenging. We are all unconsciously feeling the trauma of the Anthropocene together; together, we feel the countless injustices in the world; together, we feel the anxiety of the climate crisis; together, we feel stuck, ignorant, dismissive, and afraid. I regard the term ‘trauma of the Anthropocene’ as a shared responsibility that we must attend as a human species. Considering the Anthropocene as a collective trauma, a shared wound, according to Thomas Hübl, it “fragments and fractures. It disowns and silences. It creates denial and forgetting. To assist in its repair, we must choose to acknowledge, to witness, and to thereby feel together, what has actually occurred, even the most horrific details we would rather close our eyes to. Because to look away — to dismiss, deny, minimize, or willfully forget — is to uphold the institutions of inequality, of inhumanity, that created them.” (Hübl 80). Hübl reminds us that we must be ready to confront the institutions that uphold the injustices and the beliefs in certain norms and values that keep deepening our collective wounds, the emptiness that keeps us captive. He unites the political, the social, and the mental as a Guattarian gesture, pointing to a collective consciousness.

To be in a relationship with the “world within the world” means we may be able to transform it. Suppose we can figure out a way to be in relation with the negative, the violent, and the traumatic that is not harming us. In that case, we have the potential to effectively change it, influence it, and transform it “to sustain the project of actualizing virtual possibilities” (25-39). Change needs to happen from within. Confronting negativity and the practice of defuturing through the example of the factory farm is one of the central foundations of my wound-centered education design, because we need to be affected by it, and learn how to respond to it generatively. What will we find when we face the negativity of factory farming? What authorizes the human to subordinate animals? How does the factory farm maintain and uphold anthropocentrism as a realized, actualized, materialized facet of the primordial wound – the human-animal separation? The negativity of the factory farms offers an affirmative opening toward understanding the negativity of design itself. If the human has shaped every design that is shaped by design, making human and design inseparable, we are foreclosing the human as negativity.

The educational subject of the farm animal industry and the board game has helped me to formulate the method of confrontation into a more elaborate pedagogical strategy, including the phases of Exposure, Investigation, and Individual Testimony. In the evaluation section, I will expand upon these phases.

2. The Farm Animal Sanctuary

40

“Sanctuaries can help us reimagine our relationships with animals and serve as models for new ways of living together with animals and the environment.”

Elan Abrell

During the redesign of the board game in 2018, with my life-partner Natela Lemondzhava, we spent a few months collecting textual and visual evidence of the ‘crimes’ in factory farming industries. After reading numerous articles, watching documentaries, and seeing countless pictures of violence against farm animals or atrocities against protesters, we experienced emotional exhaustion. We could not distance ourselves from the content, but fortunately did not go beyond the tipping point where it became traumatic. We concluded that this level of confrontation with normalized violence – although it enables compassion and solidarity – can’t be sustained for long. We realized we need an approach that is affirmative and generative towards co-existence. We begin looking into ways to heal ourselves, to be able to cope with the pain of compassion, and to release the tension that grows over our capacity for sensitivity and attention. We asked ourselves, how can we combine confrontation with healing? How can we combine a critical attitude towards relations that are unthinkable to create a space or ideas that allows us to be with that open wound? Because we can’t unthink this violent world if we don’t attempt to go beyond its repressing and paralyzing force of negativity.

A Farm Animal Sanctuary is a place dedicated to providing refuge, care, and protection for farm animals rescued or saved from various forms of abuse, neglect, or slaughter. These sanctuaries offer a safe and compassionate environment where animals can live free from harm, exploitation, or the threat of being used for human consumption. In a conversation between Elan Abrell and Lori Gruen hosted by the Center for Place, Culture and Politics, Abrell describes that the “sanctuaries are places of captivity where animals that were rescued from conditions of mistreatment or violence or exploitation are cared for and given good lives.”

The primary goal of a farm animal sanctuary is to provide a lifelong home for animals that have often experienced severe mistreatment in factory farms, slaughterhouses, or other agricultural settings. These sanctuaries prioritize the animals' well-being and happiness, aiming to create a space that allows them to experience life as close to a natural setting as possible. Sanctuaries fight with care and vulnerability, rebelling by embracing animal play as knowledge and language. They recognize the power of multispecies belonging and becoming.

The farm animal industry follows the logic of the Darwinian theory of evolution, which legitimizes conquering those deemed weak, inferior, beasts, or other as a form of subjugation of the farm animal, that serves as food, clothing and commodity for the human, the farmer whose hard work pays off as the fittest, the winner who keeps winning through subordination. The farm animal sanctuary exemplifies how mutual aid, proposing support, care, healing, and solidarity as the center of evolution. "Mutual aid is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle" (Kropotkin-1891). It can facilitate a place of emergence, cultural influence, and strength. The sanctuary wouldn't be able to uphold interspecies solidarity without the needed infrastructure of care-work that facilitates the transition from objecthood to subjecthood, from being an observer of the crisis to being an active participant in change, from enslavement to play.

In the second semester of the module (which I will introduce later in the thesis), Ruth Levy, a volunteer at *Freedom Farm Sanctuary* in Olesh, Hamerkaz, in the country internationally recognized as Israel¹, gave us an online tour during one of the classes. Before the online tour with the students, we had a conversation to learn more about the farm sanctuary and my pedagogical intentions and touch upon the practicalities. She sent me a couple of (unpublished) videos, introducing me to their four-legged residents' stories and their relationships with human caretakers or other rescued animals. Our preparatory discussion and the recorded online tour have been fundamental research for this thesis that shaped my understanding and situated this educational subject, from which I will include insights and examples in relation to the concepts.

1 It is well worth reflecting on the contradictions between the work that is being done in animal sanctuaries inside Israel and the ongoing genocide of Palestinians undertaken by the Israeli state with support of its Jewish citizens, but this deserves another thesis.

Absent referent: reveals

42

Carol Adams uses the term 'absent referent' in her famous book, the *Sexual Politics of Meat*, to explore how meat consumption and the treatment of animals are normalized and concealed within society's cultural and linguistic practices. She referred to the deliberate avoidance or omission of acknowledging the living, sentient beings behind the meat that people consume, calling the flesh of pigs – pork; cows – beef or veal; and sheep – mutton. We can distance ourselves from the reality of animal suffering and death by keeping the referent (the animal) absent from our thoughts and conversations about meat as if there were no link between the meat, the milk or cheese, and the animal, no link between the process that brought it to being and our politics. This concept highlights how language and cultural practices are used to normalize and legitimize the exploitation of animals for food, making it easier for people to consume animal products without considering its ethical consequences. It is easier to commit something unethical or immoral if we close our eyes or do not know what we contribute to. But what happens when the absent referent suddenly reveals itself?

On July 23rd, 2022 at approximately 1:00 PM, a cow was discovered wandering freely on the highway connecting Amsterdam and Utrecht. As a result, the highway had to be temporarily closed. The Dutch infrastructure agency, Rijkswaterstaat, posted on Twitter that the situation was akin to the Wild West, as the cow caused significant problems on the A2 highway in the direction of Amsterdam, between Vinkeveen and Abcoude. Traffic came to a halt, and two lanes towards Utrecht were also closed. This led to a six-kilometer traffic jam. The cow wandered away from its herd, and the highway was in her way. In this escape story, not only the cow became visible, but the whole industry of exploitation that makes her escape; it ruptured the integrity of our human-centric world.

This cow suddenly became an individual with needs and desires to break free to change her faith. What may be considered a "problem" by Rijkswaterstaat, in fact, exposes the flaws in our racist, speciesist society. The escaped cow reveals the absent referent, the wound of the Anthropocene, a suddenly appearing bleeding wound in the flesh of our human history, collective consciousness, that captivates our attention and imagination. As an economic property, a resource, asset, and commodity, the cow here becomes a sentient subject. Her subjectivity is not a given; it is created by society, the same way as women: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." (De Beauvoir) Her escape could spark a deeper conversation about the divide between humans and animals.



An escaped cow on the A2 highway,
between between Vinkeveen and Abcoude, NL 2017

I am interested in how unveiling something known but suppressed – or deliberately unseen – makes us question the integrity of our identity, beliefs, and ideologies. Where does she come from? Where does she go? Will she find her freedom? What does her escape mean for us humans? Unfortunately, most of the escaped farm animals return to their owner, whom they escaped from, but some lucky ones end up in a Farm Animal Sanctuary.

I am interested in these places because they make traumatized farm animals visible and worthy of recognition and care. It becomes an intensive place where the very bodies that used to be turned into food become a sovereign subject of their own right. The farm sanctuary, as an assemblage of these bodies who used to be in the shadows, without any recognition, reveals and discloses the wound of the Anthropocene in the context of hope, generative of subjectivity, and radical transformation. The sanctuary makes us see the wound as an opportunity, an urgent political territory enabling the discussion towards decentering the human. Thus, it could become a significant educational subject that can reveal the power of affirmative attunement towards negativity through rediscovering the wounds between the human–animal, and nature–culture divides. I'd like to situate the intention of the second semester in this hopeful understanding of the wound that we can't dismiss caring for if we want to achieve radical change.

Support Structure: Towards a need and care-based design

44

“We need new styles of thinking, new notions to name what we are thinking, to heal from the manic drive to dissect the togetherness that we perceive.”

Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care*

In Céline Condorelli’s photo series in her edited book *Support Structures*, we see scaffoldings that support the weight of a building waiting to be renovated or demolished. Thinking alongside Condorelli’s support structures, in Budapest, where I grew up, many neglected, old buildings need these ‘temporary’ support structures until a ‘permanent solution’ ought to replace, erase, or remove it. I was fascinated by the variety of shapes and constructions of these quick and intuitive temporary scaffoldings because they appear odd, unusual, and inconvenient. It somehow gives subjectivity to a non-human object assemblage that needs care, and a physical, temporary support structure occupying public space. It holds weight; it bears witness; they become-with-each-other. In Budapest’s central city park, numerous new trees were re-planted and relocated. Most of these trees are anchored to the ground with long metal cables. These cables help the trees stabilize their weight and protect them from strong winds. It is a considerably unusual experience to walk in the park and encounter many trees that need these kinds of assistance. I am captivated by the details of this controversial care structure, the leather or textile-covered metal hooks to prevent damage to the branches of the trees. I was still determining whether I was walking in a sanatorium or a prison for trees. These strange images of trees fastened into human-made structures ask me to rethink the material entanglements: where the tree ends, where the metal cable begins, thus where culture ends, where nature begins.

During the online tour, Ruth Levy showed us a goat, Billy, who was rescued, paralyzed in his back legs. They started teaching him how to stand up and use orthotics, and later, they fitted him for a wheelchair. Since then, he has run like a maniac, playing, and having fun with other goats. This is an example of how recognizing the animal’s needs fosters innovation and creativity in care practice, because of the limitations of the knowledge in



A tree in Budapest City Park
support with wires, anchored to the ground

traditional vet practices. Ruth mentioned that the vet always needs to come up and experiment with new ideas to meet the needs of the farm animals. Juxtaposing the anchored trees in the city park of Budapest with the special care that Billy and other animals receive in Freedom Farm Sanctuary reveals that design is fundamentally about recognizing the needs of the oppressed, the voiceless non-human animal bodies who require assistance, support, and care, or otherwise can't survive. The trees would fall, and the rescued farm animals would die without a support structure and a specialized, situated design strategy to meet their needs. The support structure is a metaphor for the design to meet needs that seem impossible, strange, or out of place.

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

I consider not only Billie's wheelchair but the entire infrastructure and the multispecies community around the farm animals as a support structure. What it does is not only provide them with the necessity to live a life but also empower a fugitive agency and epistemology that can positively impact how to imagine a different design ontology.

Support structure function through care, a synonym for support. It provides a structure in which the needs can be met. Care exposes relations with the world that were unseen, neglected, or ignored by attending to them. To care for or about a building, a tree, or a rescued farm animal, the event in which the care manifests will transform the subject's meaning, role, and intensity. Interventions of care change the assemblage in which it was previously embedded. The scaffolding, prosthetics, and infrastructures make the weakness and vulnerability of the subject visible. Care is an intervention that needs to have ethics. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, in her book *Matters of Care*, argues that care is not solely a human-centered ethical practice but a fundamental aspect of our interconnected existence with the natural world. "Matters of care" refer to the entities, processes, and relationships that require and deserve care in our complex and interwoven world.

"All these animals knew previously was that the human touch is unkind. And here we work, just as hard to restore their trust in humans. That human hands can be kind, and we do that by offering them respect and caring for their needs, but never pushing ourselves onto them or forcing them to be our pet." (Ruth Levy)

I assume that the support structure (through needs and care) of the Farm Sanctuary might be able to interrupt the ontological defuturing of design by transforming vulnerability into power, wound into possibility, and hopelessness into a collective flourishing. Support structures are hybrid entities representing and signaling a particular need to look at the vulnerable, the wounded, and the neglected in relations such as networks, assemblages, and communities. Places like farm sanctuaries provide space for profound transformation. Through this support structure, through fulfilling the needs with care-work, a radical subjectivity emerges: from an economic object they become a sentient, political subject. This transformation is based on recognizing their needs and establishing the care work required to meet and fulfill those needs. It is pointless to analyze the farm animal without the support structure in isolation, as separate entities, because they become with each other: therefore "we must take care of things in order to remain responsible for their becomings." (Puig de la Bellacasa)

The need for healing

I am interested in what places, and counter-practices exist and operating already that can teach us how to *live-with* the wounds of the world. I am interested in affirmative responses despite the harm and trauma, despite the paralyzing force of the crisis we live by. What place and practice can counter the authority of the factory farm? Where will we learn how to enact a *different, mutually supportive* relationship with the wounded human and non-human world? Where do we find affirmative practices that pragmatically respond to harm and violence without pronouncing anything into the future but settling in the 'thick present'? I chose the farm animal sanctuary as the second educational subject of the wound-centered educational design. This temporal, emergent space responds with care to the desperate need produced in the production economy. It is not a solution, but rather an urgent, immediate, and necessary vital response to revive the subjectivity of traumatized farm animals. The Farm Animal Sanctuary proposes a radical hope: not in the future, but in the present. It shows the effort, dedication, perseverance, and creativity needed to not only heal disabled farm animals that would otherwise be regarded as waste, disposable, and non-grievable, but to transform them into part of a community where they can play and have social life. I think it is a new frontier of radical multi-species politics and pedagogy.

Healing as a method, inspired by the farm sanctuary, is also about letting live, giving space, setting boundaries, and to create the conditions in which life can be lived. It is not about healing the wound, because it can't be, but it is possible to not deepen it, to acknowledge it as a condition in which we must find ways to live. Healing is a positive transformation, a change, a practice that requires one to be present, recognize needs, and care. If we care, we are in relation. If we choose to be in relation with the wounds, we must find the conditions that do not hurt us, to which we are able to contribute.

My questions were: What happens after the confrontation of revealing the truth? What do we do with the wounds seen, heard, explored, and understood but still hurt? What happens after holding someone accountable, after speaking truth to power? How do we imagine what true justice is? How do we attend to our collective trauma? I was confident that I not only wanted to awaken the individual, critical mind, who speaks truth to power, but I also wanted our animality to be recognized, awakening the body and nourishing the collective self that cares for, with, and about the world.

My intention was a transformative educational impact that not only confronts injustice and the trauma of being human, but also proposes an affirmative potential through becoming-with each other.

48 The research on the farm sanctuary has led me to develop a method of 'Healing' in my second semester. I wanted to depart from the creation and maintenance of the wound and turn my attention to what happens with the wounded, how to be in relation with the world and each other in a wounded world. The farm animal sanctuary could allow us to look at ourselves from an affirmative perspective on shifting our human-centric, individualist priorities into a collective, generative potentiality. The healing method has three phases: 1) Recognition, 2) Togetherness, and 3) Collective Testimony. I will go in-depth on these one by one in the practice chapter.

CHAPTER 2:

Practice Study year

2020-2021

49

Context of the Institution

50 The Master Institute of Visual Cultures (MIVC) is in an old postal distribution center near Den Bosch train station. Organizationally, it is managed by the Avans Creative Innovation (ACI) cluster, financed by Avans Hogeschool, one of the most significant contributors to the educational industrial complexes in the Netherlands. MIVC has two master's programs. I am a practice tutor at Master Fine Art and Design (MAFAD), comprised of three interconnected pathways: Ecology Futures, Post-Contemporary Visual Art, and Situated Design, in which I am part of the core team. The three pathways share common curricula, that can be grouped under the following subjects and themes based on a list that I received from Una Henry, the former head of MIVC (an email in 2019):

- Decolonizing the art school & migrant aesthetics
- Heterodox personal and public identities (The rubric of gender in a digital age)
- Economics of production (indebtedness)
- Emerging technologies and the ethical dimension of Big Data
- Ecological Sustainability (Anthropocene) Gentrification (Creative Industries)

While the three pathways have distinct visions and goals, they still share a common ground based on these themes mentioned above, which orients the selection of elective modules. I would locate my DOWOD module at the intersection of Ecological Sustainability (Anthropocene) and Economics of production (indebtedness) with a particular focus on ethics. The elective modules are open for all pathways; students come from all three pathways.

Context of the DOWOD module

In 2018, during the *Beyond Change* conference in Basel, in the spacious auditorium of the FHNW Academy of Art and Design, Mark Wigley and Beatriz Colomina gave a splendid lecture presenting their book *Are We Human?: Notes on the Archaeology of Design*. They essentially rediscovered Tony Fry's ontological design narrative but told through the lens of archeology and architecture. During the Q&A, a bearded, confident audience member walked to the microphone. He said something like this, in paraphrase: 'Suppose design designs the human and other sentient beings into extinction; then we must design our ways out of design. We can unearth a new concept of the human through a new way of designing that might be the key to coping with the rapidly unfolding planetary crisis.'

I wrote down in my journal: Designing our ways out of design. This phrase has been like a spell, a curse, or both; I am not sure, but it gives me both confusion and certainty. It cuts through the flesh of hopelessness, and provides an impossible window of possibility and potential to imagine change. Can we design our way out of design? How do we think ourselves out of the current planetary and human condition? What is our relationship with change and transformation? How to think with hope through the hopelessness of today? How do we change design without changing the human? How do we change humans without changing design? Where do we start? How do we address the overwhelming entanglement between the human subject and design, when both in a state of crisis?

It all began with a workshop we held with Natela Lemondzhava for graphic design students in May 2019 at MIVC, invited by Una Henry, the former head of MIVC (currently the dean of Willem de Koning Academy). We titled our workshop "Designing Our Ways out of Design" and used our board game "Today's Success is Tomorrow's Disaster (TSTD)" as an educational tool to play and also to introduce the subject. During the workshop, we focused on how the designed world perpetuates social and ecological injustice and contributes to the narrative of the Anthropocene. We invited Bart van Opzeeland, environmental activist and (now former) member of the Milieudefensie, to share his experience, participate in playing the board game, and respond to it. We built a three-day program that draws attention to the farm animal industry as a wicked problem that needs to be questioned ethically. We asked the students to respond to it based on their concerns, to uncover and expose the manifold ways anthropocentrism is maintained through violence and subordination against animals.

After the workshop's success and due to the positive feedback from students, I was offered a position as a practicing tutor within the team of situated design, starting the following study year in 2019-2020.

52 My first elective module started in the fall of 2019, the same time I began my study at MEIA. I was asked to develop a ten-day course held every week. I aimed to outline a post-anthropocentric design paradigm to problematize what sort of humans we are becoming through design. Still, putting it into pedagogical means was challenging, so besides my lectures, only the assignment represented this goal. As a practice tutor, it was the first time I faced several challenges: a) I had to balance how much theory was needed for the practice to begin, b) how to expose students to post-anthropocentric theory, how to lure them into the subject and c) what practice we are going to do in the classroom? The cohort of my students came from diverse backgrounds (USA, India, Italy, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, and China, and me as a Hungarian), which I immensely enjoyed. It was a subversive educational event in a good way, forming a group of only 'foreigners' in a Dutch art academy. It was subversive because it felt a bit secretive, hidden from the eyes of 'local control'. I felt safe with them; we connected through the identity of the 'outsider'. I was able to learn from them and was constantly reminded that it is only through diverse voices that we can make a difference in the world. These questions are still relevant today.

After completing the first semester I was scheduled to continue the module in the second semester unexpectedly. I decided to develop a partnership with Baltan Laboratories, problematizing the image of the Homo Economicus. I included the students' diverse backgrounds in the assignment, asking them to research industries that contribute to their countries' ecological crisis and social injustice. In February 2020, the Netherlands experienced the first lockdown; our school had to quickly transition to online education, for which we needed to prepare at the time. It slightly changed the overall morale, yet empowered us to continue debunking unjust economic realities. The first year of teaching my module was an enormous and valuable experience that gave me the confidence to come up with a much more precise educational design, to work out how to deliver classes online, and to develop new pedagogical strategies.

Context of the School Year 2020-2021

In the 2020-2021 academic year, education faced an unprecedented shift to online learning due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic amplified many hidden structural injustices, socio-economic disparities, and the fragility of the neoliberal capitalist system. Remote education has transformed our homes into workplaces, and confused the boundaries between personal and professional roles. In the digital context, teaching and learning have been reinvented, exploring new ways to foster collaborative knowledge production; unfortunately, this happens through proprietary broadcast software. It was a very challenging time for me; the constant uncertainty overwhelmed my mental capacity to stay focused. Within this turbulent but withdrawn, intensive but isolated context, I begin my second year of teaching the DOWOD module. The abundance of online meetings has helped me execute ideas to facilitate safe, intimate, caring spaces. Despite the disembodiment, I paid a lot of attention to the ritual of opening and closing to notice and address how we form a space online. I am grateful for the many personal stories shared in these circles, including uncomfortable and positive feelings, which helped our learning community trust each other. Even though it was overwhelming, the pandemic was not a distraction for students to contribute to the module.

The DOWOD modules had an online classroom in the form of an MS Teams channel that was available 24 hours a day and was only for us. I customized it a lot to make it accessible for students to find files, like the module assignment and the schedule, as well as lectures and recommended readings for further research. The main feed of our digital classroom was frequently used to provide links relevant to the module. I also used it outside the module hours; it was easy to contact the students this way. It also supported many connected apps, like Google Docs or Miro boards. It was pretty satisfying setting up the digital classroom before each class. I compiled a syllabus in Google Docs for each lecture to provide further links and readings. I called it an 'organic syllabus,' giving editing access for the students to include the resources that they found helpful. During this study year, I discovered and began using the Miro board, a collaborative digital whiteboard, to develop the research for this educational design, lectures, workshops, and exercises. I introduced Maphub.net, a collaborative mapping app that allows marking and managing geographic locations. I asked the class to fill in their hometown and the actual location from where they connected. I wanted to remind them that we are not only a diverse group, but also a disembodied group, connecting from different places.



screenshot of the class of DOWOD 2 2020-2021

My elective module, Designing Our Ways Out of Design 1 and 2 (DOWOD1 & DOWOD2), was a two-semester long module, ten-day long each, once a week, including the assessment on the last day. We had one 3.5-hour class every Monday morning, from 9:30 to 12:00. The two elective modules were technically separate, so students were required to sign up again after the first module was finished. I will draw on the experiences of six students who were present in both semesters: Valeria (IT), Elena (ES, RO), Vanessa (SK), Yang (CH), and Nike (NL). Both the first and the second semesters had more students, but I wanted to streamline only those voices who followed both modules.

Research Design

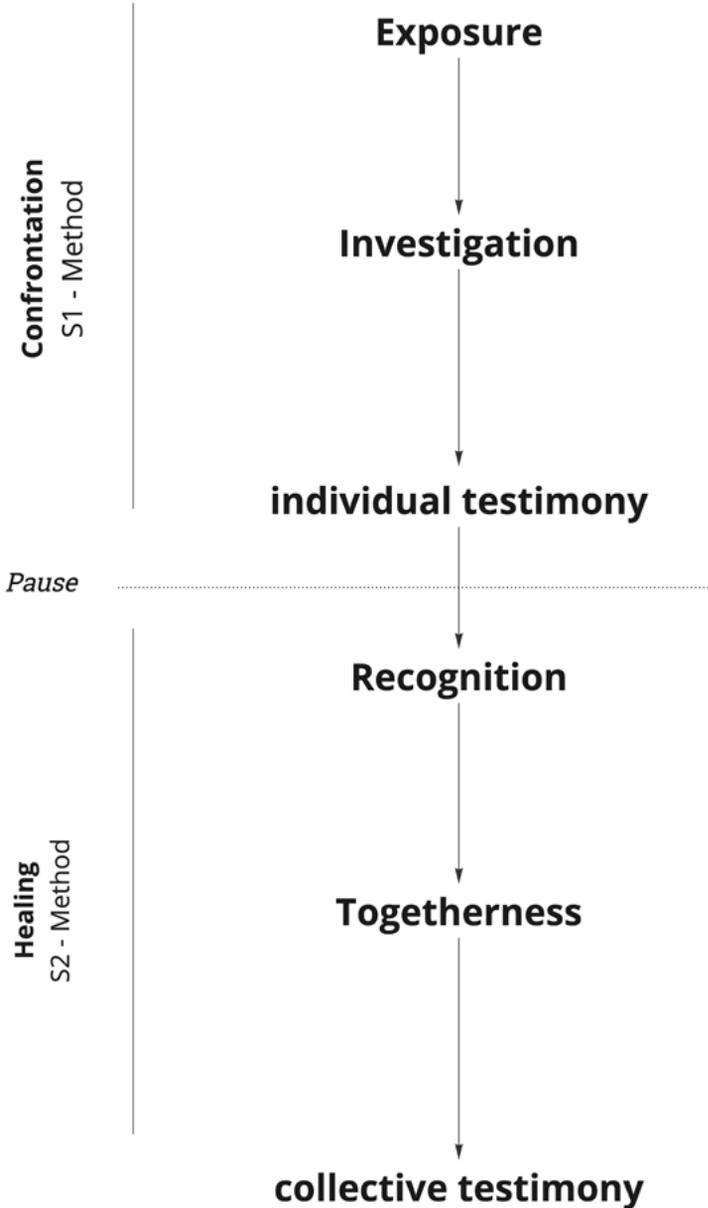
I am using various resources for my thesis, including personal notes, screenshots, screen recordings, and other documents from the academic year 2020–2021. I will also rely on my memory and recollection of specific moments and events. Since both semesters happened entirely online via MS Teams, I traced back and archived discussions and debates on the DOWOD channel's main feed before it was deleted, directly after the study year finished. The Miro boards are not meant to be published for the public; these are not outcomes but the registrations of a thinking, learning, and researching process filled with doubts, not knowing, and searching. They can't be used as convincing evidence to justify my intentions because these boards, to me, represent an intimate relationship with the wounds of the world; these are part of a learning process that asks to be handled without strict analytical attention, or with expectations of original knowledge production. I suggest looking at these boards as snapshots of a working desk, as a still life that has worth in itself, and not as the extraction of information.

For the evaluation of the first semester, I used screenshots of Miro Board's for the lectures I gave and the series of Material Witness exercises. I also feature snapshots and images of students' individual testimonies as their module outcomes that were collected and archived after the assessment. From the second semester, I rely on an extensive collection of screen recordings with invited guests, a series of collective lunch sessions made by students, and the collective reflection at the end of the module. Besides, a few Miro board reference about their collective project is used. I treat all images, videos, and digital and analog materials carefully. I question whether it is appropriate to use, and I have written consent from all six students to use their responses.

In May 2023, I realized I didn't have enough student voices available in the research, so I designed a questionnaire with about 50 questions on Google Forms, covering all aspects of the study, and asking the students how they related to my observations. Most of them were open questions to hear and amplify their voices and opinions, but there are few closed questions to measure the intensity of a subject. The questionnaire is available in the appendix. I distributed the form to all six students who attended both semesters and thankfully, they all provided their responses, although only five of them were used during the reflection. I will use their voices carefully and without bias to justify my arguments.

During the research, I was closely consulting with my best friend, Toth Tamas Majus, an educational philosopher, who gave me invaluable suggestions and insights. I screen-recorded most of our conversations, which I used to develop the wound-centered education design.

Overview of the Methods of Wound-Centered Educational Design



Method of Confrontation (Semester 1)

In the *Confrontation* methodology that I arrived at through the educational subject of the farm animal industry, backed by the theoretical scaffolding of the human-animal divide, normalization of violence and defuturing, I distinguish three phases: 1) Exposure, 2) Investigation, and 3) Individual Testimony. The connection behind these phases goes back to the research of the board game TSTD.

In the phase of *exposure*, I'd like to bring subversive subjects to the design. I aim to shake the ground under the comfort of design and strike toward an understanding of the critical conditions that make design complicit and problematic in the wounds of the Anthropocene and to begin investigating the normalizing power of design. Understanding starts with looking at what is evident to become attentive to its world-making and unmaking potential. I aim to expose the complicity of design and material cultures in creating and maintaining the wounds of the Anthropocene. This section introduces concepts and examples that not only expose design's role, but also expose me and the students to the political and existential responsibility of humans. Exposure prepares the ground, attunes us, and intensifies the urgency and importance of educational work, which I hope points beyond the module and plant the seeds of being actively engaged with the world.

In my reflection, I will focus on how my lectures aimed to expose how we got into this uncertain, wounded world of the Anthropocene and how it can prepare us to investigate 'design' and 'the human' from a critical lens. I will focus on Jan Masschelien's concepts on 'displacement,' the 'uncomfortable position,' and 'becoming attentive.'

In the phase of *investigation*, "You have to dig," – write Wigley and Colomina – not only to dig "deep into Earth," not only to "dig into the invisible layers" but to dig "into ourselves." The investigation is a vibrant, embodied, embedded, creative, and imaginative response to the overwhelming invitation of the exposure we are subjected to. Whenever we are digging, whenever we are onto something passionately, we are equally digging into ourselves. In the context of the first semester of the module, the method of 'investigation' asks how we can research industrial complexes through their machinic ecologies. How can the emergent practice of counter-mapping center truth over speculation and judgment? How can the 'normalizing power of design' be revealed through 'assembling truth claims' by attending to non-human materialities?

In my reflection I will focus on non-human materialities, how assembling truth claims can sharpen the focus of the investigation, and how these two are operationalized within the Material Witness exercise series.

58

The *individual testimony* is the third, final phase of the method of confrontation; through the exposure and investigation, we arrive at the need to address what we have witnessed and what has been assembled. Throughout an investigation, various pieces of evidence are uncovered that can be related not only to the materials involved, but also to how the witnesses, the students, perceive it. The Individual Testimony gives a platform to become a subject, a voice, to be heard, and to address what the student has witnessed. The individual testimony seems to be an 'end-project'; for me, however, it is an individual process of becoming in relation with the wounded world in pain through the wounds we share.

2020-2021 - Semester 1: Counter-mapping the industrial complex		2020 Sept 28. - 2020 December 7. every Monday between 9:30 - 12:00		
Method	Days	Semester assignment (individual trajectory)	Lectures	Exercises
Exposure	Sept 28.	Counter-mapping the industrial complex (in the Anthropocene)	Assignment lecture	
	Oct 5.	Choosing an industrial complex	Trauma of the Anthropocene ↓ Anthropocene: End of the world discourse	Q&A
	Oct 12.		Design as counter-practice	Q&A
	Oct 26.		Animal Industrial Complex	
	Nov 2.		Situating the tutor board game as lecture (game without play)	
Investigation	Nov 9.	Individual trajectory		Material Witness 1 - Objects, tools
	Nov 16.			Material Witness 2 - Architecture
	Nov 23.			Material Witness 3 - Policy, legislation, regulation
	Nov 30.			Material Witness 4 - Advertisement, communication
Individual testimony	Dec 7.	Individual presentation of the end project		

Schedule of DOWOD 1

Introduction of DOWOD 1

The first semester of the course started with a lecture on mapping and counter-mapping. This provided a way to analyze the impact of the Anthropocene and to do so critically. The first assignment involved creating a counter-cartography of an industrial complex. Throughout the semester, four more lectures followed, which aimed to place design within the context of ontological, post-anthropocentric, and justice-led philosophical discourses. The second part of the semester consisted of a series of Material Witness exercises, which allowed students to research non-human materialities. At the end of the semester, students presented their individual investigations.

Exposure

60

"I am exposed to it in such a way that I can be changed or 'cut' or contaminated, that my gaze can be liberated"

Jan Masschelein

Jan Masschelein introduces 'poor pedagogy' through the term 'e-ducere', meaning to understand ways to educate the gaze. He argues for critical "practices, which allow us to expose ourselves, practices which... displace us", that "take the position of the vulnerable, the uncomfortable position." (Masschelein 44). The moment of exposure makes us seen, heard, embodied, and embedded. We suddenly become flesh and bones; we have something to lose; we have skin in the game. Our relationship with the world in crises has been revealed and cracked us open. "To open our eyes is to get a look at what is evident; it is, as I would like to say, about being or becoming attentive; it is to expose oneself." (Masschelein 46). Teachers and students must be exposed to being attentive in the present, seeing what's around them, and being open to be transformed by it. We can't navigate, learn – let alone – transform if we do not 'open our eyes', and if we are not risking our sense of self, there is no formation without being present or attentive. Still, exposure is risky; it burns, and leaves a mark, and it must be treated carefully and cautiously, especially in the context of education: that is why I'd like to elaborate on how I'd like to use it. To me, exposure is an embodied experience; when our self is exposed, our values are questioned, and we feel 'displaced' from the relative comfort where we were before. I am particularly interested in exposure's sub-concept of 'displacement,' the 'uncomfortable position', and 'becoming attentive.'

I gave five presentations in the first block of five classes, to streamline how we got into this uncertain, wounded world of the Anthropocene and why we must investigate 'design' and 'the human' through a critical lens. This series of presentations began with the assignment lecture (titled *Maps, Mapping, Counter-maps, Counter-mapping*), where I delved into maps and counter-maps and their relation to truth, knowing, and justice. In the second class (titled *The End of The World Discourse: Against the Anthropocene*),

I covered the subject of the Anthropocene, which I presented from a critical perspective, highlighting what it normalizes and acknowledging it as a navigational tool. In the third class (*Design as Counter-practice*), I gave an outline of what design practice can look like if we can consider it to be a counter-practice that questions its own formulation or reveals critical cartographies on power. The fourth and fifth lectures were about my subject, the animal industrial complex, and my research subject, the factory farm, in which I presented the board game. Here, I would like to discuss the first and last lectures in more detail as they summarize my intention and what I could mean by exposure in multidimensional ways.

In the first lecture, where I presented the module assignment at the end titled *Maps, mapping, Counter-maps, and Counter-mapping*, I summarized the ambivalence of design, how it functions as a gatekeeper of our oppressive and violent world, yet still how it can be used to subvert the world it helped to make. In one way, I aimed to capture the onto-epistemic dimension of design, to reason how forms, content, and intention make and maintain our unsustainable world that keeps the human captive in a narrow definition. On the other hand, I also present examples in which design also has the potential to expose how this onto-epistemic injustice has been affecting and unfolding all around us and how it could be different, if design deployed in deep structural ways.

I have attempted to emphasize the potential risks associated with designing something and to anticipate the inevitable consequences that may arise. I encouraged a sense of caution and deep concern towards everything designed. We should analyze what has been done and how it has been done, identify any effects we can detect, and determine what actions can be taken to address them: this analytical research and the power of addressing is where counter-maps come in. Counter-maps serve as a response and reaction to traditional maps and mapping methods, subvert them, provoke their validity and authority, and question the lies we perceive as truth. They provide an alternative means of reflection, subverting standards, and thus rejecting traditional representation. Counter-maps also expose the costs and violence inherent in maps, mapping, and design in general. This is the power of a map in reverse. It reveals injustices, biases, and prejudices and questions norms by breaking standards.

The board game presentation gave me a platform to position myself as a designer, artist, and researcher applying counter-cartography's power. It is difficult, but I present the necessary entanglement of content and form, and how it was more emergent than planned. The board game is also an instrument in which I can introduce the subject of factory farming and the animal industrial complex, not as a scholar or expert but as a designer or artist who cares and is concerned. It also gives me credibility and authenticity to the

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

tutor position I am talking from, showing that I am not only a removed theoretician but also an active practitioner. However, in times of COVID-19, online education didn't work out well, because not everything can turn into a presentation, especially not in times of physical distancing when games and play are sensitive subjects that can touch upon suppressed needs for socializing, so I learned that it should have been facilitated, played rather than discussed, presented. I didn't hear any feedback from students about this; it's all my own recollection. I felt embarrassed after finishing the presentation because what I had just said had no utility; however, I can also see it as a profound exposure to the position of the vulnerable designer. I am not sure how it landed in the students, but as I recall, it didn't work in delivering the subject because the content turned from the board game to me, revealing the isolated designer, behind the role of a teacher.

Reading back the responses from students, I find that that the lectures induced a confrontation with the complexity and the complicity of design, as well as their own role; their own subject-position has also been exposed. Elena wrote that "It made me realize that design is about 'something else'. We didn't even focus that much on the visual outcome of our work, but the narrative around it." I'd like to stay with the phrase something else. It isn't defined; it is more like a feeling that something else has appeared, associated with design; design has become an uncertain territory that is *something else*; there is no definition yet to what it *is*, but different from what it *was*. If I look at it from the perspective of exposure as 'displacement,' something else can be a term that comes close, but If I like to look at exposure from a perspective of discomfort, Vanessa's reaction comes to my mind: "Sometimes the problems are so big there is not a way to "solve it." That is quite confrontational: how to find my place there, how to bring a change, or do I even need to (bring change)?" Vanessa is looking for a place that is familiar, but what she finds is the opposite: no easy place to be in relationship with design, and that can make us shiver. However, she later found solace in this and turned into activism,; "It made me feel more encouraged to speak up and also developed more interest in learning about the issues and injustice in the world." Even though it was discomforting and displacing, there is a way to stay with it, because we have the power to speak up, to learn more, to be more in relation with the wounds of the Anthropocene.

There was one occasion with a student where a conflict emerged from the content's exposure. I decided to include her example here; even though she did not participate in the second semester, her input regarding Masscheleien's 'displacement' that exposure produces is still relevant. I received an email after the first class about her concern that the subjects we explore (examples from anthropology, geology, psychology, and philosophy) are beyond our expertise and competency as designers and artists.

From: Marton Kabai

Sent: Wednesday, 7 October 2020 11:32

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Questions/Doubts about my participation in the module

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email! You are perfectly clear and I understand that I can't impose any 'activist' mindset onto you, although I am coming from that angle, showing one possible position within a 'situated design' landscape. It is perfectly up to you what position you take and I am glad that you have a strong position. Design is inherently a political matter, it makes and unmakes spaces, opportunities, includes and excludes humans and non-humans, so in that sense your decision as a designer has reverberation in the society and environment at large. But I guess you know all of this. This module is always creates a lot of tension and confusion, since confronts you with the hidden, inconvenient consequences of the design or creative industry and sometimes design as art practice. I have no doubt that you can use this module for your own advantage and take only those you need, however what you realized that you lack "qualifications", means that you are already a step ahead in thinking about collaboration, mutual inter-dependencies with other disciplines, to have more pluralistic research outcome. So it is not an obstacle rather a possibility of a new artistic strategy. Mapping the tea-Industry sound amazing, (colonial past) objects tells stories, stories makes worlds. You choose what stories and worlds you want to tell.

I hope you will stay!

Kindly,
Marton

She reminded me that I can't impose any 'activist' mindset onto her. She argued that lacking qualifications in these areas and subjects prevents us from fully engaging with them, as we are not authors. She highlighted that designers are responsible only for the form and function of things because that is what designers learn. It is a specialization, a service that shouldn't think beyond itself, according to her. I still remember the excitement I felt reading her lines because it was real; she not only questioned, exposed, and 'displaced' me but also reminded me of the main reason why I was doing that. Somehow, it was so obvious that I forgot to mention it during the class. She politely asked me if she could continue with the class or if I recommended her to quit. In my response, I didn't argue with her, because she was mostly right. Instead, I offered openness and care to make sure that I heard her and made it clear that she always had a place in my class, especially with these concerns and doubts. Below, my answer can be read at length.

Investigation

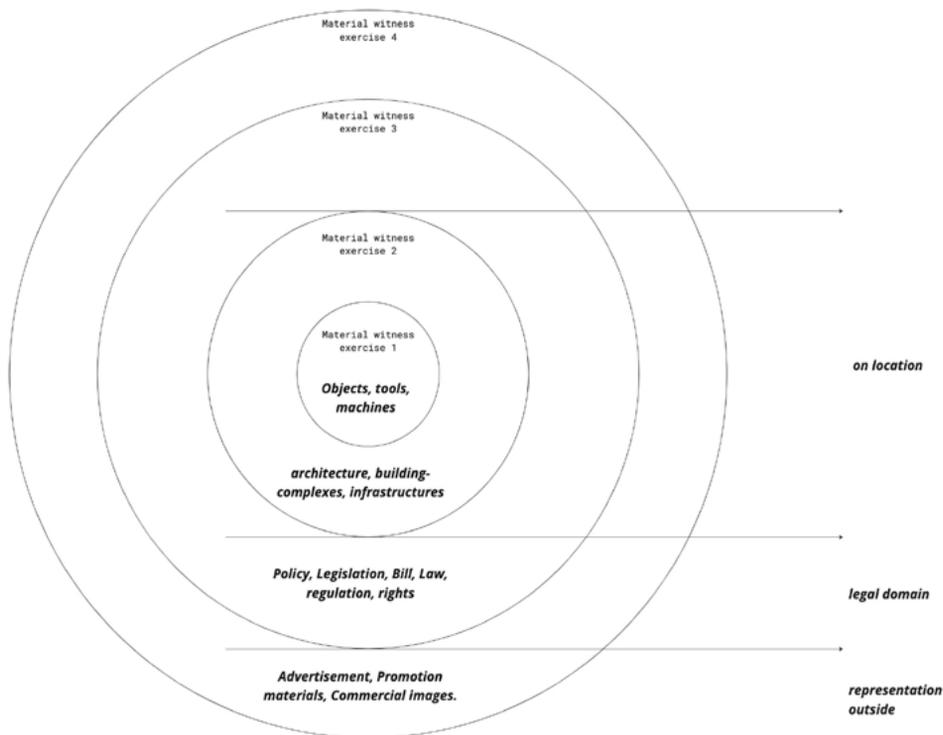
64

“You have to dig. Dig into the ground, underground, beneath the seabed, and deep into the Earth. Dig into the things sitting on the ground - buildings, cities, treetops, and antennae. Dig over the ground - into the air, clouds, and outer space. Dig even into the invisible layers - data storage, formulas, protocols, circuits, spectra, chemical reactions, chemical reactions, gene sequences, and social media posts. Digging, documenting, dissecting, discussing - digging, that is, into ourselves.”

- Mark Wigley, Beatriz Colomina, *Are We Human?*
Notes on an Archeology of Design

Eyal Weizman, founder of Forensic Architecture, considers buildings and objects as “sensors of the environment outside themselves” that “might be among the best sensors of societal and political change.” This approach links to the non-human turn and new-materialist philosophies that aim to highlight nonhuman materiality as inherently ontological, affective, and political, thus worthy of our attention. This sensing capability of the non-human matter, which always exists in a context – never in a vacuum – discloses its political agency, which allows us to reveal narratives, that might be kept hidden. Forensic Architecture is a counter-practice that manages to decenter the dominant understanding of the human, thus it enforces the process of decentering of the human. By bringing this particular attention, which recognizes the agential potential of non-humans, we can question the anthropocentrism that governs education.

Forensic Architecture looks at material transformations as clues, providing traces for reconstructing an event. Any photo taken, video or sound recorded, medical records, testimonials, and munitions can be considered evidence that stores information. It is not about one compromising evidence but about a constellation of evidence that *matters*. How do these pieces of evidence work together, what they can say? “Rarely does any one piece of evidence operate in isolation” writes Weizman “what you need to create is an assemblage of evidence. These are intersections: time-space relationships between the individual pieces of evidence.” (23)



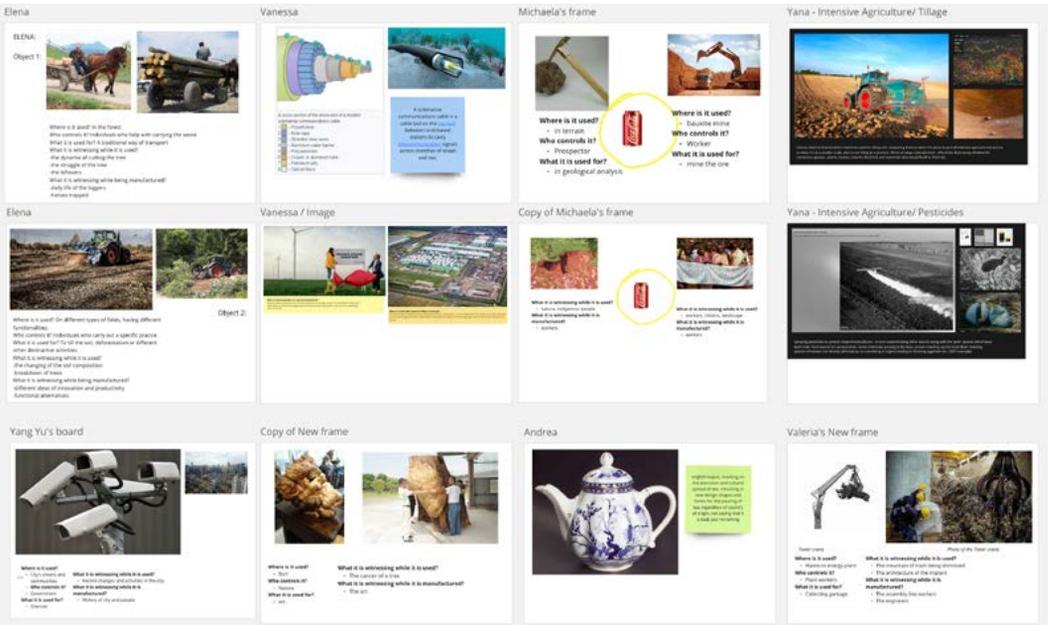
He points out that “the debate about truth is ... concerned with assembling truth claims from a collage of fragments, each of them precious for holding some form of inscription or other clue.” (24) *‘Assembling truth claims’* is a way to operationalize what Nathan Snaza beautifully calls a “new politics of attention”. It helps me form the intention of investigation, where concern and care are actualized. *‘Assembling truth claims’* invites students to collect evidence that the student considers vital, which might hold information for expressing and disclosing the truth.

Artist, researcher, educator, and member of Forensic Architecture Susan Schuppli articulated a concept called material witness, that “archive their complex interactions with the world, producing ontological transformations”. She introduces ‘witnessing’ as a deepened understanding of ‘sensing’ that gives a political agency of the non-sentient material world not only with the capacity of knowing but to influence, affect, and shape conditions. Instead of invoking a legal domain that is a bit foreign, too rigid, and hard to navigate in an art educational context, the material witness brings a new materialist epistemological dimension that extends ethical imagination, empathy, and compassion from a human to a non-human perspective.

The operational concept of material witness gave me an analytical and artistic framework to combine the act of ‘assembling truth claims’ by turning our attention to nonhuman materiality. It allows us to take seriously how the designed world we live and depend on is a witness of human exceptionalism and holds the inscription of the anthropocentric order in its ontological existence. All the questions I asked above are united by the concept of material witness. Although the concept requires more time and space to describe, I decided not to give an introductory lecture or presentation but to create an exercise series to utilize it.

The first-semester module assignment is titled Industrial Complex in the Anthropocene. The assignment investigates an industrial complex, chosen freely, that each student feels concerned about. The concept of the industrial complex offers a variety of socio-political struggles rooted in economic exploitation and extraction. I decided I don’t want to force my subject (the animal industrial complex) – especially the livestock industry – onto students, because I wanted the students’ subjects to come from within, so that the students can relate to it, are intimately entangled with, in some ways connected to their situations. I could only develop such dedication towards this issue because it wasn’t forced upon me or recommended to me; it genuinely emerged out of deep concern. The concept of the industrial complex is difficult to operationalize as it is too abstract and vague. I tend to describe it as an economic body that is deeply entangled with socio-political struggles, injustice, and violence without any clear solution in sight. During the investigation, students found different subjects to work on. I will not go into detail here because I will explore some of them in the next chapter in Individual Testimony. Yang focused on a specific housing crisis in China, where the government can ‘expropriate’ private property without a warrant. Elena focused on the forest industry in Romania, after a recent purchase of a national forest by Ikea. Vanessa picked the data center industry in the Netherlands and its explicit greenwashing propaganda. Valeria looked at the waste industry in Italy, comparing it with the threat of the Vesuvio volcano. Nike investigated the dairy industry in the Netherlands, focusing on cowmilk.

I designed a four-lesson-long exercise series using the concept of Material Witness, focusing each class on a different scale and aspect of the material culture that makes up an industrial complex. I developed an exercise series: 1) Objects, tools, and machines, 2) Architecture, building complexes, and infrastructures 3) Policy and Regulation 4) Advertisements and Commercial images. The sequence goes from small to large and from within a location, to outside of it. (fig) The titles already reveal what aspects of the material witness we focus on; below, I will elaborate on what the assignment was. Each exercise asks the students to conduct visual research from a specific investigative angle, using their chosen industrial complex as the subject.



The student's reactions on the first material witness exercise.

Images, photos, and graphs could reveal different truths than their written counterparts. Thinking in photos allows a more direct way of assembling truth because their aesthetic function is to represent the real, and that shapes what and how we recognize truth. Due to the difficulty of beginning an investigation on any industrial complex – let alone during the pandemic, self-isolating at home – to prevent the overwhelming entanglement of the subjects, I decided to spread it across four consecutive weekly classes. It is easier to focus on smaller chunks rather than being overwhelmed by the complexity, entanglement, and interconnectedness. “To make things smaller, more graspable, more tangible – tells Vanessa – in such an ‘easy’ way made me feel good. I realized that you could tackle huge meta concepts by making it smaller like this.” One of the benefits of limiting attention to a smaller section of complex research is that it gives us mental room for association and allows us to go in-depth. The material witness exercise was helpful for the students to recognize, notice, and think-with nonhuman materialities as political agents, and it did support them to understand the complicity of design in the creation of the wounds of the world. Only the assembling truth claims aspect of the material witness was less successful; due to the complexity of the exercise, half of them noticed this. (questionnaire). To the question of how the material witness exercise impacted their practice after the module, Nike responded that “it made me rethink how I create content.” Valeria responded, “to be more curious and open to learning.”

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

Copy of New frame

"Carcase splitting saw for cattle slaughterhouse"

Representative in a clothing

Image

Copy of New frame

Copy of New frame

Image

Copy of New frame

Use gloves for integration

My own interpretation of the exercise, based on the subject: animal industrial complex

The base questions for the Material Witness exercise series

- Find images, documents of **Tools, Objects, Machines** form your investigation, that has implicit or explicit relationship with slow or fast violence.
- Think about how designed **Tools, Objects, Machines** can be weaponised either intrinsically or by the frameworks and contexts in which it manifest? Find images, documents that can be used as an example.
- Think about ways how you can reveal, defamiliarise the object. How you can question the "normalcy", regularity of it?

Further questions:

- Why is it used?
- Where is it used?
- Who controls it?
- Who burdens?
- Who benefits?
- What it is used for?
- What it is witnessing while it is used?
- What it is witnessing while being manufactured?

During the series of material witness exercises, I used my research of the board game on the farm animal industry to give my visual examples of each exercise. This way, I could also participate in the class as a practitioner, performing the same work as they do. It was also a way to challenge myself and experience firsthand what it's like to investigate the subject matter. This gave me the confidence to support my students in their investigations by explaining my process. However, there is another side to this, when the rule to 'lead by example' maintains the role of the teacher as the center of attention, preserves the humanist educational moral, and this gives little room for students to break boundaries, to transgress the domination of legibility and aesthetic research clarity. It wasn't something I expected then, but now, looking at the Miro boards, I feel my examples somewhat limit their potential to develop an actual conflict with their subject, proper resistance, or friction that could result in surprising visual outputs. Good intentions or playing it safe can sometimes hinder even the most extraordinary subject. I needed control and legibility to feel confident, but this confidence flattened the potential for true engagement and discovery.

The material witness exercise was just a tool to create momentum and engagement with a subject that the students felt concerned about. It was not the exercise that mattered, but the attention they spent on their own and each other's investigations. Even though the process of investigations fails to provide (objectively) new insights, for a collective level, it was an exercise on also to being involved in each other's formation. Sharing this individual struggle made a difference, as Vanessa recalls that "through the small series of investigations, I could discover things on my own and share with the group, and I always felt like sharing because it was shocking what I was finding out about the green energy and data centres." Being together, relying on each other, and listening to each other in times of active exposure are what made the material witness investigation.

Individual Testimony

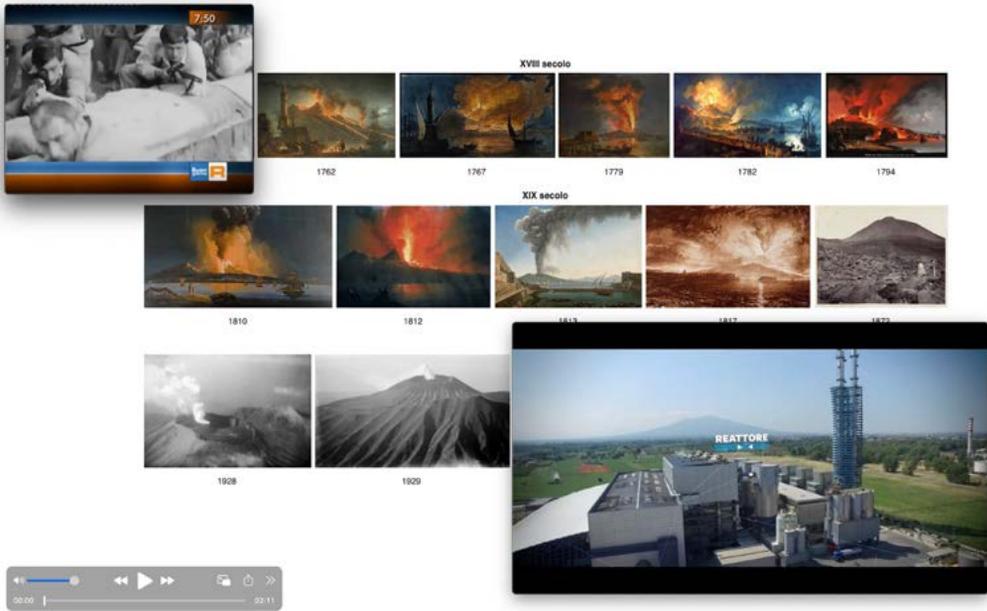
70

The students' assignment was to make an individual testimony, a narrative, by investigating their respective industrial complexes. The narrative had to respond to the wounds of the Anthropocene and the lectures I presented to them at the beginning of the module somehow. It was also advised to find an angle where their subjectivity could be pronounced, as for the work to become more situated and personal. The form was freely chosen, and it wasn't obligatory to use the material witness exercise; they could use it as a method if they felt it worthwhile. I will introduce two video works, the *Magma* by Valeria, and Vanessa's film.

The term 'testimony' elevates the situatedness of the work. Testimony comes from the Latin 'testis', meaning witness. Testimony is usually a speech act, in which one locates their truth in the truth of others in a legal discussion. It is part of revealing one's subjectivity and becoming an active subject. When you speak up and reveal your recollection, you expose the world with your truth. There was no pedagogical form, exercise, or lecture involved because it was a way to name the 'final output' to empower the voice, experience, and subjectivity of the student, which gives validation that the student indeed engaged with the project. Based on the questionnaire, the testimonies were indeed empowering. They all agreed that it contributed to their sense of speaking truth to power, by exposing the crisis normalized by design. Even three years later, they still care about what they have gone through; Elena included her testimony in her portfolio, and Vanessa, Valeria, and Nike still feel connected and want to work with their subjects in the future.

I picked two video works, one by Valeria and the other one from Vanessa, that touch upon the idea of the testimony and witnessing the most. In both cases, the films have a strong situated position, where the viewer feels like they are implicated or affected by the subject, more than just being concerned.

Valeria's video called *Magma* juxtaposes a series of paintings and documentary footage depicting Mount Vesuvius with the environmental and social concern over the Italian waste management industry in Naples. Valeria had been called into her own subject position by the crisis of the waste management industry. In this position, she compares the human-induced crisis with the cultural manifestation of living with an active volcano. She asks how the wisdom of the people of Vesuvio could be a way to begin addressing the institutional unsustainability of the waste industry. On the other hand, her testimony turns the waste management industry into an active volcano of capitalism, one that is an imminent threat.



Valeria Ferone - a scene from a video essay: Vesuvio



Vanessa Sekáčová - snapshot of the video essay: Data Centers in the Netherlands

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

Vanessa's video essay shows her video recordings of Dutch data centers, shot from a moving car. She aims to disclose the secrets of the Dutch 'green' energy industry through the problematic geo-political influence of Dutch data centers. She reveals a thread of systemic greenwashing in the partnership between the Dutch government and Google. In the video essay, she explains how windmills are sold to symbolize a sustainable future; however, they are all wired to US-owned data centers on Dutch land, in Eemshaven or Amsterdam. It becomes geopolitical, because the stored data is Middle Eastern/African. This complex story is presented through a meditative car ride through Eemshaven.

The individual testimony is a way to frame the final work. It allowed the students to be honest, to ask critical questions in their process of investigation and exposure, to locate the materials that are assembled, and see how it resonated with the student. Valeria's and Vanessa's testimony can be considered a fragment of their investigation, but this fragment represents their attention and curiosity and care. The method of confrontation calls you into your own subject position. The crisis is addressing them, activated by the module. The individual testimony will be revisited at the beginning of the second semester with five students who re-subscribed to the second part of the module.

Method of Healing (Semester 2)

The *Healing methodology* that I above expanded through the educational subject of the farm animal sanctuary, backed by the theoretical scaffolding of mutual aid and support network, I distinguish three phases: 1) Recognition, 2) Togetherness, and 3) Collective Testimony. The phases have an autobiographical origin, from the feeling of despair back in 2016, after finishing the first version of the board game TSTD during my study years at KABK. The exposure to institutional violence against animals I consumed during the investigation, and the making of the board game, had a lasting effect on me. The board game as an individual testimony exposed not only the tragic social, ecological, and philosophical context of the farm industry, but also my vulnerability, and the limits of cognition. I was no longer the same subject; the 'I' was suspended, lingering in nothingness and timelessness. I was numbed.

It was a *recognition* that this trauma of the separated, violent, hostile world we live in –by design – couldn't be embraced and sustained through critical analysis. I recognized I couldn't endure my compassion and the pain of being in relation with the world through this hopelessness, through design's complex and long-standing normalization of violence and the human subject that emerged from it. I recognized that if I follow this analytical logic of justice, I should be anti-human, which makes no sense. I also recognized that this level of confrontation could lead to anger, hatred, desire for revenge, or punishment, falling into the same violent regime of the punitive justice system, which perpetuates structural injustice. I recognized that dark times aren't dark in themselves; it is how they appear, and in this darkness, we need an affirmative approach that takes us beyond the logic of violence. Not denying darkness but affirming life, freedom, difference, and yes, hope through the darkness and the wounds of the Anthropocene. How do we nurture the vision of the human who emerges out of mutual aid instead of the 'survival of the fittest'? How do we recognize the world's wounds as affirmative, to learn from them? How can we fall in love with the world again? Where do I need to start? It led me to recognize I needed time, a pause, to look inwards, to notice, to be with it, to accept all of it, to breathe, to rest, and to sit down. It is not surrendering or accepting the injustice – even if it looks like – but accepting that it takes time to process it, as blurred vision needs time to readjust to clarity, as literary wounds need time to become scars, scars that remember. Giving time for oneself is an act of care. I recognized that receiving care is confrontational, and I can look at my board game as an act of care for the world, because we all need truth, but it requires aftercare and a support

structure built by love that can catch you while you're falling. Therefore in the phase of recognition, I will focus on the online guided tour at Freedom Farm Sanctuary; how it represented the wound of the Anthropocene from the perspective of care and the ethics of affirmation. Next, I will draw on how the group recognized the struggle to collaborate and to find common ground – a sanctuary – until they focused on finding it, and not living it, and letting go the pressure of intention.

To go back to my story, I haven't received aftercare; there was no support structure around me in the academy that could facilitate space for acknowledging the transformation I and my peers have gone through. I requested to hold collective discussions, but failed. However, this memory came back when I was setting up the second semester, that I needed a phase centered on collaboration, cooperation, collectivity, and togetherness. To acknowledge that if the world is so damn violent, what if we can be kind and care for each other. What can we do with each other? How can we embrace this togetherness? What do we need to do that? Let's recognize the affirmative potential and the capability we have together. Togetherness is the feeling of belonging when many 'I's are connecting, allowing me to have multiple perspectives. We are never alone; we are always together. "Existence is co-existence", Timothy Morton reminds us. Togetherness is an affirmative acknowledgement that I belong to this world, despite its critical condition, despite that it wants me or us out, even if it regards me / us as a resource; I am a plural subject, togethering, through the constant transformation, mutations, evolutions, and involutions. Togetherness is the capacity and potentiality of a generative collectivity. To hold space, be able to listen, to be in 'attunement' with the selves you consist of and the world that exposes you in the present. How do we attune to the sweetness of togetherness? Togetherness needs support structures, designs that emerge through solidarity. In the phase on togetherness, I will talk about my intention to give the students an open space during every other week of the module, where they can experiment or test out ideas, to give them control, agency, and authority to decide what they need and what they want to test out, which turned out differently. Contrary to how I intended, the class set up their own space – excluding me – organizing a series of lunch sessions together, which served as a sanctuary for them. This exclusion of the teacher from the formation of the togetherness is also an integral part of care ethics.

The third phase is the collective testimony, which is the event they form and present a collective voice, regardless of whether it's about agreement or disagreement, trust or doubt but somehow represents the struggle to collaborate. It was part of the assignment I gave to them to form one or a series of collective work "that takes the concept of the Sanctuary as

organizing strategy, ontology, attitude, tactics and find something common through your individual positions and situated knowledge.” (Appendix). The collective testimony I am referring to is not necessarily the representation of the outcome, but the affirmative potential of the form and content that emerge out of togetherness. The collective testimony is an event, a ceremony, a celebration of the shared mutuality, something in common, the feeling of ‘I am like us or ‘we are like me.’ The collective testimony is a promise, a potential, a hope, that we are capable of becoming together through the differences we share and the hardships of the world that wounds our wounded self. The collective testimony is a declaration that we never give up on hope, because the truth in which a new subjectivity can raise has always been with us, in us, around us. In the phase of collective testimony, I will reflect and evaluate their group project *LunchTable19*, a film and publication on their series of online lunch sessions, and one physical to conclude the project.

2020-2021 – Semester 2: Sanctuary: Design as Healing			2021 February 1 - 2021 April 19 (every Monday between 9:30 - 13:00)	
Method	Days	Semester assignment (individual trajectory)	Lectures / Invited Guests	Exercises / Discussions
Recognition	Feb 1.	Sanctuary: Design as healing Series of Lunch meetings	Assignment lecture: On Sanctuary: Design as healing	Revisiting the previous individual projects
	Feb 8.		We Are Compost (short workshop)	Miro play
	Feb 22.		Online tour with Ruth Levy at Freedom Farm Animal Sanctuary	care
March 1.	Open Space + talk with Elan Abrell		Introduction of Seelab by Jorick & Anke	cooperation
March 8				
March 15.			Open Space	
March 22.		Lecture and discussion with Aron Birtalan	Play	
March 29.				Open Space
April 12	Rehearsal			
Collective testimony	April 19.	Collective presentation of the end project		

Schedule of DOWOD 2

Introduction

In the second semester, the project title was Sanctuary: Design as Healing. The assignment was to respond to the concept of the Sanctuary with collaborative project. I set up three subjects: Care, Collaboration and Play. Each subject had at least one (online) guest. Under care, I invited Ruth Levy, a volunteer from Freedom Farm Sanctuary, and Elan Abrell, an anthropologist. Next to that, I invited Jorick and Anke, board members at Seelab studio house, where we had our studio back then, to introduce Seelab, an artist-run space, to symbolize collaboration and cooperation. Lastly, I invited a friend of mine, Aron Birtalan, who was talking about his Ph.D research, and transformation games, to talk about play. In between these external lectures, I set up an open space where students could come up with everything they want to do, discuss or initiate. From the entire plan, I will only include the online session with Ruth Levy, reflect on how the open space unfolded, and provide a thorough explanation of the collective presentation in my analysis.

Recognition

“The absence of an empathetic listener, or more radically, the absence of an addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of one’s memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story”

77

Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*

“We are all animals treated with injustice,” wrote Elena in her response to the questionnaire in relation to the online guided tour of the Freedom Farm Sanctuary by Ruth Levy. Ruth was a central figure of the healing method, representing and embodying the educational subject. My pedagogical goal was to inspire the ‘recognition’ of an affirmative and post-critical wound-centered practice. This is how Nike remembers it: “The animal sanctuary is just a little side niche, but respond very well to the ‘wounds of the world’ because they are so telling about what we as humans find important and how we interact with each other and non-human entities.” Both Elena and Nike recognized that the care for farm animals goes beyond the farm sanctuary and can show us who we are, and how we interact with the world.

Ruth Levy gave us an online tour via her phone, walking around the sanctuary, introducing, and reflecting on each area of the sanctuary. The online tour was a semi-embodied experience, using only two senses (sight and hearing), but it still felt like I was there. Ruth was an excellent guide, showing the different areas through the stories of the animal residents. Each animal comes from a traumatic background. Some have escaped independently, others have been rescued, and some have been gifted or sold by nearby factory farms. To facilitate the care needed for these mentally and physically tortured animals, they have to be creative and experimental to see which conditions were preferable for everyone. “Whenever a new animal is brought into the farms, we need a place to keep them safe and to get them used to being around people.”(Ruth) The sanctuary is organized such that it respects individual animal’s needs. It matters which animals need solitude, which requires community, which need frequent care, and which need the least. “Billy is a goat who was rescued. He was paralyzed in his back legs. So we fitted him with a wheelchair, and now he runs around like a maniac...

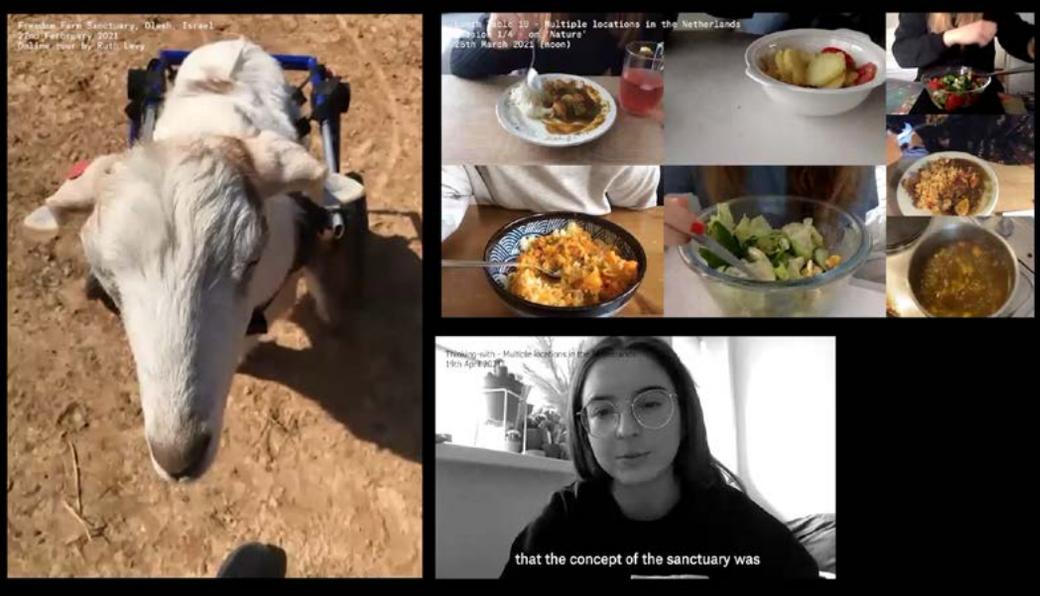
Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

playing and having fun with all the other goats.” (Ruth Levy) Ruth was kind, cheerful, and objective, not engaged in judgments towards the animal industry; however, she was very explicit in describing the conditions in which some animals arrived. “The industry doesn’t have a use for an animal who’s not in good medical condition if you can’t stand up.” She focused on the care they were giving and the recovery and healing of the individual animal. All non-human residents have a name, a story, a place to sleep, friends, characteristics, and a specifically designed medical treatment and care routine. Ruth was showing the farm animals as survivors who deserve care. This affirmative attitude – manifesting in hard labor – releases us from the captivity of blame, shame, anger, guilt, or hatred and opens our hearts toward hope, healing, and trust in transformation since an organic economic object becomes a body that feels, needs, and teaches.

The online farm animal sanctuary influenced the worldview of students. Elena reminded me that during the online tour, at some point, we were talking about how we can fight with care. How ‘care’ can be a form of activism, a strategy against ignorance and compassion fatigue. The concept of ‘care’ opened her eyes to look at activism differently. Activism has a lot to do with care, but in the context of the sanctuary, it manifests as simple and straightforward. Vanessa highlighted that the duration of witnessing animal joy matters as well. The longer you spend time with it, the more you understand, to put it in her words: “you start seeing the animals when you feel more for them.” In other words, we begin seeing differently if we experience care, joy, and freedom. Still, it is hard not to put the farm animal sanctuary in the perspective of the farm industry or the perspective of the domination of human design. Elena notes, “It made me recognize how the trauma of animals is directly having an impact on the trauma of human beings.” She recognizes the primordial wound, the separation between humans and animals, as “part of this system of injustice when it’s only us, the ones able to get out of it”.

Elena, during her reflection, explained how the research was different during the time of the module. She recognizes that taking a break and enjoying it is the research itself. “I think taking a break, and enjoying it is the moment when ideas flow more, especially now in these times, this is becoming research somehow. And yeah, it just felt like the perfect setting, where ideas could flow, like a research sanctuary, [...] where you could really research with your own rules” (Elena)

I recognized that the assignment, the attention for making, needs to shift from individual to collective, to practice sympoiesis, to practice how we are co-constituting each other and the world. I wanted the students to begin the second semester from where they left off in the first, using their testimonies to uncover the common ground.



Fragment of a video essay showcasing three different spaces within DOWOD 2, exploring how the sanctuary helped the group of students to experience an emerging sanctuary, video 1 ([vimeo link](#))

The common ground is an exciting concept because everyone has different expectations, needs, and ideas when something can be called a common ground. Is it based on agreement, consensus or the feeling of togetherness is enough? In a collective Miro board, the class began to map out their common ground. It was not only the students from the first semester, but a couple of new students who also joined the group. During the collective struggle to find their common ground, they are connected not only through their narratives but also through the devastating presence and tragedy of the coronavirus. It was the most significant, loudest wound pulsating through all communication channels at the time. Through the increase of attention to domestic violence against women, the group adopted a feminist standpoint theory through which they identified their emotions, desires, and needs. The group has recognized the mutual struggle of being a woman and a student despite being different from each other. "I found, in my notes, that the struggle leads to cooperation, but mutual support, not the struggle has the leading part. I think in the end, the sanctuary was about forming the community and helping each other. And yeah, even though there was a struggle, we still held together. I think that we went beyond the regular class, where you just meet and leave." Vanessa's quote by Kropotkin is quite fitting here: "the struggle leads to cooperation, but mutual support, not the struggle has the leading part" (Kropotkin). Each of them was called into a mutual, similar subject position with which they could share, relate, and feel compassion and solidarity.

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other



Fragment of a video essay showcasing three different spaces within DOWOD 2, exploring how the sanctuary helped the group of student to experience an emerging sanctuary, video 2 ([vimeo link](#))

Valeria was doubtful and skeptical about the obligation of freedom, regarding the concept of sanctuary, revealing that in the context of higher education, despite living in unprecedented times, if freedom and safety come from the position of 'power' or 'authority' – in this case from me – freedom can turn into an obligation. "I think the whole concept of having a sanctuary can make you upset. It's relaxing, and it is an open space, but you are constricted into a sanctuary. If you don't want to be in a free space, you are obliged to accept it. During the whole structure of our project we decided to meet, was exactly that. During the moment, it was great because we were living it, enjoying it. But in the end it has been difficult to reflect on it from a design perspective." It recalls Ruth saying that "all these animals knew previously was that the human touch is unkind. And here we work just as hard to restore their trust in humans. That human hands can be kind, and we do that by offering them respect and caring for their needs, but never pushing ourselves onto them or forcing them to be pet or anything like that." When they do therapy on the farm, animals are not mere instruments for the healing of humans, but the animals have the choice to decide whether they want to be in contact with humans or not. Based on Valeria's comment, I realized that placing the concept of the sanctuary into an assignment can be counterintuitive. Even if I am 'inviting' them, it doesn't make any difference because we still have an unjust and conservative educational infrastructure underneath us that could prevent us from trusting each other.

Nike recognized the need to care for her classmates, instead of feeling compassion with the animals. She highlighted that her position is to be in solidarity with her group, listen to them and supporting each other. It felt natural and more urgent for her. “I have been caring about animals before, during, and after the module but I cared more about my other classmates because we all felt united in our solitude, and everyone invested their time and energy in this project. We got to know each other differently than would have happened in real life, because, for instance, we prepared a dish that said something about what ‘care’ meant for us. This immediately led to personal and philosophical conversations and made me connect with all the others profoundly.”

To conclude, even though the farm animal sanctuary centered around sick, disabled, traumatized non-human animal bodies, it still managed to not center around pain and discomfort. Instead, it encouraged us to go beyond it and recognize what it emerges: healing, joy, play, and friendship. It shows that we can find utopia in real life; it is our radical ignorance and sadness that must be noticed first.

Together

“Existence is co-existence”

Tim Morton

I decided to provide an open space every other week after each guest we had the week before. I told the students that the open space allows them to experiment, test, and take initiative regarding their research and concerns. I did not tell them what to do, I did not ask them anything, I only said to them that this open space was yours to use, without any expectation from my side how to use it; but to focus it on the subjects and relate it to experiences of the module. I invited them to explore their ideas and encouraged them to just be together.

In the 1997 film *Life Is Beautiful* by Roberto Benigni, a father and his son are taken to a Nazi concentration camp. The father comes up with an imaginary tale to protect his son from the unthinkable Nazi torture. The father wanted to transform the obvious violence into an imaginary space in which life is beautiful. This affirmation of life over death has a strong, empowering message that I also had in mind regarding the open space. There are no real open spaces; all spaces are political, owned, controlled, and historically charged. The open space I am referring to needs a bit of imagination, letting go, and allowing a space to serve our needs. When something is open, it suggests that I am welcome there, I can go there, I can see it, I can do something there, I can discover it. I regard the wounds of the Anthropocene (including COVID-19) as an open space. To see the wound as an open space, provides an opportunity, a potential to be with, to feel with something painful or traumatic but in a way that it's generative like, in the Freedom Farm Sanctuary, they work with traumatized animals through care. David Cronenberg's wounds are examples of spaces where something lively, radical, and imaginary occurs; beyond pain, a language and knowledge emerge. If we can be open to listening to the wounds, we can harvest embodied knowledge. A wound heals when it breathes, when it's exposed to fresh air, when it's open, which also makes it vulnerable. Openness is a condition that allows things to happen, to move, to change, and to transform if we are ready. Open space will enable us to be vulnerable, to contribute, and to make us seen. I initiated open space not only for the students to empower them to speak up, but also for me to break from the pressure of human-centered education,



Fragment of a video essay showcasing three different spaces within DOWOD 2, exploring how the sanctuary helped the group of students to experience an emerging sanctuary, video 3 (vimeo link)

to lose control, and let the students, for whom I am still responsible, occupy the educational space. Besides the romantic idea of open space, I must acknowledge, to be precise, that we would rather imagine an open space via an online space that is anything but 'open.' The online platform we used was a proprietary product with an exquisite surveillance apparatus, collecting and controlling our data and selling them to other companies. I occasionally reminded the students about this fact. Still, the exercise was not about accountability but how to use something that we know is not innocent, biased, and unfair in a way that serves us and provides the technological support structure to empower the subversive potential of the module, "like injecting hope into a socially depressed field or turning exhaustion into an opportunity for radical transformation." (Braidotti)

I offered an open space, without any backup plan for students who got blocked, intimidated, or afraid to initiate. We had three open spaces, and in each, I had to take the central role of a coach, who gives feedback and a guide who motivates and believes in them. They wanted me to give them a direction in which they could continue developing their collective project during these open spaces, but all I could do was to listen and encourage them despite their feeling of being lost. Niké was doubtful about my encouragement; she recalls, "I felt very puzzled, and especially if Marton told us we were going in a nice direction, I was like: what? We have no idea. I don't know if he was just encouraging or genuine at the time, but at least it helped and got us continuing."

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

Looking back, I recognize that the support structure of the open space, in order for it to be efficient, was not carefully set up; I assumed that it would work by itself, and naturally emerge. I wished to let go of my dominant role, but I still had to become the missing support structure within the uncomfortable constraints of the MS Teams meeting.

84

Expectations to produce something to arrive somewhere didn't vanish for me; I had to manage them, which made these open spaces confusing for me, because it disturbed the conditions that we got used to. I still wished that something would happen by itself, just by supporting them, but there wasn't any breakthrough that I could feel satisfied with. It was difficult to be in this position of unconditional trust in not-knowing. I was worried that the whole idea of the open space was a failure. In general, the open space was confusing for students; some of them remember: "I am not sure what it means," wrote Nike, or "I really don't know anymore what it was," responded Valeria.

Until I had to realize that the open space that I wished to achieve with them during the class had been already up and running just without me, set up outside of the module. Looking back, I realized that my presence in this semi-guided 'open space' was a problem, an obstacle to achieving the generative, free, and easy way to be together. My presence prevented the group from being open, so they sought togetherness outside of the module, outside of the time. Students have created an elephant path; they got off the road to seek to create the conditions that are required for them to be together. They followed their needs and abandoned the 'official' open space, to create another space, a real support structure. They organized weekly lunch meetings online, with attention to what they cook, how they cook, but to spend time together while having a lunch, pointing the camera often to the meal. Nike admits: "I can't remember what the open spaces were really, but I remember we had the lunches and used the time just to connect and talk, because during COVID everything around the school was so impersonal, it felt surreal. This time with my classmates made me feel grounded and felt like I belonged somewhere." They set up a support network in the middle of the coronavirus crisis when social life was ripped away from them. In these lunch meetings, they could be authentic without the gaze of the teacher. Vanessa recalls the moment when they recognized that they created a sanctuary, without knowing it: "I don't remember the exact moment, but I remember at the beginning we were all confused and not able to find a moment to meet until we came up with the lunch and then it felt so natural and nice, that's where it was more like [a] collective in friendship" (Vanessa). I learned that togetherness is as much about inclusion as exclusion. The group had to exclude me and the regime of the school from the process to find each other and to allow togetherness to emerge. They claimed and established their own open space without the intention to practice becoming a collective or to find what a temporary sanctuary would be like.



Fragment of a video essay showcasing three different spaces within DOWOD 2, exploring how the sanctuary helped the group of student to experience an emerging sanctuary, video 4 (vimeo link)

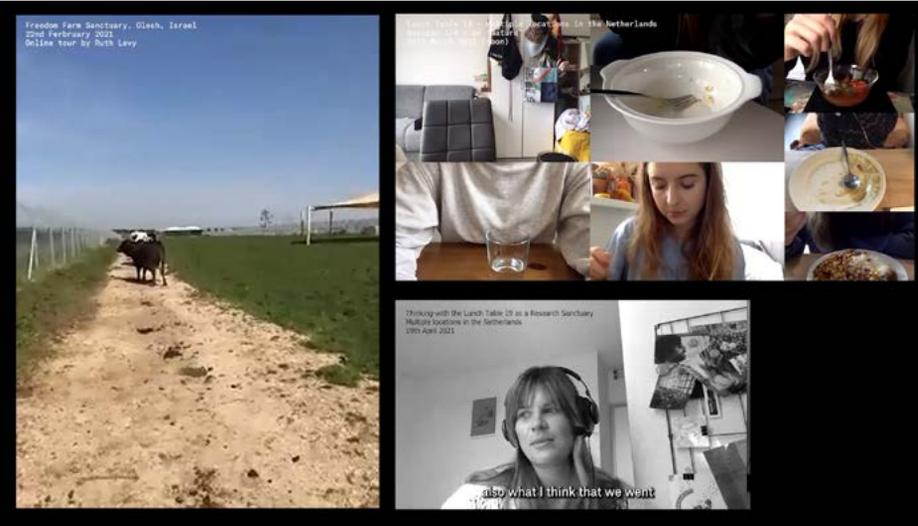
The time of the open space during the class became a space to share with me what had happened in their own open space. I noticed right away that what they were doing was precisely a natural response to the promise of mutual aid, care, and hope, represented by the Freedom Farm Sanctuary, in the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic, that perpetuated the need to create a safe, intimate space, where they felt supported, embedded, and embodied. They did four online lunch meetings where they cooked and ate together. They did screen recordings of each session without considering it as part of the assignment because they had an impression that the work they needed to produce still required to be developed. They had the impression that they were just having fun. Elena noted that the lunch sessions “felt like a celebration, like an in-person gathering that we have been all missed”, Valeria said: “We really created a group and a small community.”

Collective Testimony

86

The film *CovidLunchTable19* and the process publication are the collective testimony of the class. During the last session of the 'open space' with me, I observed their confusion regarding what to do with the recorded material of their lunch sessions. I reminded them that their collective testimony is not something they have to produce afterwards. They have all the pieces that they are looking for. The collective testimony is a collective voice, a statement by the group to present what they went through. Their collective testimony was a documentary piece, an intimate manifesto, a way to embrace joy and togetherness, not as a speculation, nor as a utopia, but as something that is grounded in the here and the now that already exist, but we are failing to recognize, notice, expand on, or theorize upon. Vanessa noted that their collective testimony "goes against the coldness of the school system, against being a small fish in an ocean, to being part of something, to normalize using classes just to share thoughts, and have a laugh and be human. And how there is beauty in simple things." The students found each other through the wounds of design by creating a sanctuary that empowered them to be vulnerable, to feel joy, and to care for each other. I think the genuine emergence of joy that the group has experienced comes through "pursuing freedom as a transformative collective practice of turning negative encounters, passions, and relations into affirmative ones." (Braidotti)

The group began to focus their attention on cooking, food, and ingredients because eating is a way to be in relation with the world, to connect with and nurtured by the Earth. Besides, they were worried about the delivery workers' health and their exposure to the virus and questioned their laziness in ordering while they had all the means to buy the ingredients themselves and to cook. They were seeking togetherness, being in touch with the world while sharing their homemade lunch with each other. In each lunch meeting, they introduced their food to one another, which revealed the need for care for the body. Cooking became a material practice that served both as an act of self-care and a shared event to bond, express, and listen. Nike responded that the lunch session worked, because it "really became like a safe space to get to see how we're doing, and everyone really listened to each other". Their dedication and authentic engagement surpassed the boundaries of an educational experience. Vanessa recalls that, "even though there was a struggle, but we still stick together and yeah, and also, what I think that we went beyond the regular class or the regular module where you just meet and leave, but that we really created the group and small community."



Fragment of a video essay showcasing three different spaces within DOWOD 2, exploring how the sanctuary helped the group of student to experience an emerging sanctuary, video 5 (vimeo link)

Based on their reflections, it becomes clear that they had to work for that to achieve such a level of togetherness, joy, intimacy, and vulnerability. This doesn't come by itself; it is not a given. It became especially a vulnerable subject because the essential workers who enable the conditions for the wellbeing of others at the time of the pandemic are being mistreated, unjustly ignored, or even subject to violence. I think their collective testimony and process mirror what has been going on around the economy of care, that is, to be precise, the economy of carelessness. Nike reminded me, that even "showing up is work." Indeed, they had to prepare for each session, get groceries for ingredients, prepare a meal, and be ready on time so they could listen to each other. Especially in times of the coronavirus, committing to something was an achievement, because the uncertainty of daily life was overwhelming. Nike continues, that we need to "acknowledge that consistency is important, and just doing, being there and talking can be the practice of care." Care work is a prerequisite for mutual flourishing. If the conditions are not right, we can't flourish, even though we do care. The care was the instrument through which they could experience collective joy and friendship. If I cook lunch, I will not feel hungry; if I go to the grocery store, I will have ingredients for cooking, same as in the farm animal sanctuary; if I clean the wound of the animal, it will heal faster; if I clean their space, they will feel better. Yang said that you "heal yourself by caring about other people's daily lives." If we want to design our way out of design, we need to rediscover the simple things in life that seem now disconnected or non-urgent. The recognition of simple things makes this collective testimony insightful and authentic.

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other



Fragment of a video essay showcasing three different spaces within DOWOD 2, exploring how the sanctuary helped the group of student to experience an emerging sanctuary, video 6 (vimeo link)

Lunch Table 19 is an attempt to reclaim our humanity by embracing essential domesticity. Their online sessions navigated them unconsciously to form a collective through the care for, about, and with themselves and each other. Lunch Table 19 was a “research sanctuary,” using Elena’s term, where they produced temporary knowledge through joys, laughs, breaks, pauses, cooking fumes, and tastes because these small little gestures were where they could find each other. They created a tiny solidarity network with mutual care in the center, that cannot be repeated because it was so particular for that time. It was built on trust, consistency, persistence, and dedication which hold up under pressure.

I wonder if it could have happened without the method of confrontation, but I am sure, healing through the attention to the collective wounds we share, we eat, we cook, we care about, we are, we inhabit, and we live through can “create a space of thought that enables practice to happen anew.” (Joris). What I learned from the Lunch Table 19 project is that in times of alienation and rampant exposure to carelessness, education spaces, and classrooms, regardless of whether online or offline, need to respond and provide affirmative spaces for becoming with each other through the differences, challenges, wounds, and pain we share. Lunch Table 19 unfolded inside and outside of our online classroom and made me think of the propositions of the Manifesto for a post-critical pedagogy that allows pedagogy “not to debunk but to protect and to care” (post-critical). Within the conditions of higher education, where hope, care, and optimism are commodified, where the traditional humanist educational strategies are burned into the system as the branding iron in the skin of the farm animal that resists change, we must “ask again what education, upbringing, school, studying, thinking, and practicing are.” (post-critical).

Afterthoughts

The need for affirmative-ethics in education

90

I was part of an accreditation panel in late 2023, where I had to evaluate how a Design Masters program lays out its curriculum to address the complexity of the crisis of the Anthropocene – thus, the crisis of design and designing. I observed something missing during this one-day meeting with tutors, students, and the program director. Still, I didn't know what until I realized that my wound-centered framework, especially affirmative ethics and post-critical pedagogy, could be used here because I recognized that the curriculum they developed focused too much on the confrontation with the 'real world', and barely on affirmation. I must say, there is a chance that I am too biased by my own research to use it as point of reference; still, I decided to address it here in the conclusion, because it was the first moment when I felt that my educational research is not only a framework for my module but also could be operationalized and useful for other programs, to adopt an affirmative, post-critical curriculum or educational design. During the panel's final assessment, I felt this heat in my body that I had to address the 'incompleteness' of their curriculum, which leads to the question of why we educate. If we are not educating students for the care and love of the wounded world by emancipating and empowering them through hope and trust in themselves, with pulsating potentials of becoming and belongings, then it doesn't make any sense. I am convinced that design education has responsibility - besides confrontation - to attend with care and loving attention to the student and the world, while being affected by the bleeding wounds. I am confident that design curriculums addressing the wounds of the Anthropocene must also look after the existential weight of hopelessness it might generate and must facilitate a space in which it can be addressed.

How can we organize educational encounters, pedagogical strategies, that centers love with and care for the world, a world that worth to live in, despite the threat of the unthinkable ecological transformation? It was a transformative and grounded moment to see that the world needs affirmative and post-critical approaches to developing educational designs and curriculums, especially in design education. Suspending the experience with the world through only critique neither prepares us for the long-term, nor gives us the skills to reimagine a world based on care and love that we want to live in. Why we are educating, teaching, making schools in the first place, if not to re-establish or rediscover the potential of what we can become together?

Follow-up on practice

After the study year 2020-2021, we transitioned back to teaching on location. Since then, I have been experimenting with new pedagogical tactics for both semesters, intending to make the educational subjects (factory farm, farm animal, human-animal divide, ontological design) more embodied and experiential. Surprisingly, these new pedagogical strategies are in line with the theoretical scaffolding, and the practice could be analyzed through the wound-centered framework that I present here, meaning that I can imagine using this wound-centered approach to find new insights, compare and, in general, to track, reflect and evaluate on my subsequent educational encounters. It is very exciting to imagine that this wound-centered approach could become a framework for my own educational development, which could be developed even further; for instance assessment, which is now not in line with the ethos of this framework at all.

I feel the study year 2020-2021 was an incredibly transformative year as a tutor, that gave me the motivation to do more the year after and to test out new ideas, even if it takes a lot of unpaid time and energy because it is not only a job, it is an extension of the artistic practice of Oddkin. It is also self-actualization - as bell hooks would put it. I also have to acknowledge that my later educational experiences (after 2021) heavily informed and affected this research; however, those links and reflections are not yet clearly articulated. I haven't used the wound-center approach to evaluate these recent years yet, but I can't wait to do it; I am so curious how it will endure or if it is needed. I am curious in what direction it will mutate. One thing I am sure of is that this method is not yet ready for implementation by others to use it as a curriculum. However, I am open to sharing my findings and hope to inspire other tutors, artists, and designers with this research.

The first semester – the method of Confrontation - has evolved and matured the most. In the year 2021, I came up with the idea that students should investigate 'supermarkets', as the material witness of the economy of consumption. Since most students live in different cities, I encouraged them to pick one in their town of residence and do field-research without engaging in shopping. That was the first time I brought in the video essay as the format for concluding the investigations. The year 2022 was a turning point because I was asked to condense the module into 5 full days, and the start date was delayed until the beginning of November. That allowed me to organize a field trip to a traditional and biological dairy farm for the first time. I continued with the field trip the following year, 2023, when I



*DOWOD 1 - The material witness in the dairy farm - School year 2023-2024
(Ethnographic investigation)*

introduced sensory ethnographic filmmaking. The basic structure didn't change; however, the borders between exposure, investigation, and individual testimony became blurred because there was more space for transitions to occur.

The second semester – the method of Healing – departed from the leading educational subject (farm animal sanctuary) for the next two years, in 2022 and 2023, due to not receiving a farm sanctuary in the Netherlands and lack of educational time. I had to come up with another solution. I picked a 10-century, multi-faith tale, *The Animal Lawsuit Against Humanity*, to be the source of the module, where we collectively read and reflected upon the story chapter by chapter, and based on that, the group came up with a collective testimony. Interestingly, the Healing method still can be applied, although this will be the first year in 2024 when I have the needed educational time and to bring my students to a cow sanctuary, in late February. I am beyond excited about how it will unfold. Therefore, I will be thrilled to use the wound-centered framework again to analyze and evaluate the current study year 2023-2024 because that is the first year when I am organizing field trips to a dairy farm and later to a cow sanctuary with the same group of students, not to mention the many new pedagogical strategies and tactics.

It is a year of grief and letting go because the Master Institute of Visual Cultures (MIVC) no longer exists in the same form, with the same leadership, mission, and vision that I initially signed up for. Friends and colleagues are left due to burn-out or were fired due to a budget deficit. It is not the same place where I once started. As I conclude this thesis, it feels like a farewell to a chapter that is ending, and a necessary change that cannot be avoided.

Follow-up on theory

As part of the conclusion, it might be interesting to reflect on how I see the further development of the theoretical scaffolding of this current research. One of the most exciting and challenging parts of the research was to synchronize the theories into a particular constellation so it could be in support of the practice. To do that, I had to be intimately close to all these theories, such as ontological design, post-anthropocentrism, affirmative ethics, and post-critical pedagogy; however, synthesizing them together exceeded my capability a bit. Despite the exhaustive bibliographical research I conducted, I realized that these theories had not been used together in the context I wanted to use. Based on the hardship of putting them together, I realized it is not a small task, but it is a mission of its own. So I see two possible next steps, how these theories could be developed further into synthesis, that might be interesting for practice as well.

**Design theory + Critical Animal Studies + Animal philosophy
= post-anthropocentric design theory**

Design has been theorized from oppressed, othered, fugitive perspectives, including but not limited to feminist, queer, disabled, and Indigenous epistemologies and these intersectional versions, but somehow design lacks the critical animal studies analysis, let alone the lack of attention of design for any animal justice movement. I think the absence of theorizing design from the animal justice perspective needs to be complemented, and I argue that it should be done with the aim of erecting a post-anthropocentric design theory.

**Post-anthropocentric design theory + post-critical pedagogy =
Post-anthropocentric design education**

The other strange species is post-critical pedagogy, which looks at education already from an affirmative lens, so it has a lot in common with but also a lot dissimilar to a possible post-anthropocentric design theory. I think this proposal would be a similarly ambitious project, maybe the next adventure that is waiting for me.

Gratitude

When I applied to the Master Education in Arts (MEIA) program in 2019, I came to develop a post-anthropocentric design pedagogy. The same year, I started teaching at the Master Institute of Visual Cultures as a tutor in Situated Design. In the last five years, my teaching and this research have been in absolute entanglement, intensity, heat, hatred, and proximity, with the erotic sweetness of deep self-actualization. I have identified this research with myself ever since. I haven't ever done such depth of analysis that is also personal and so displacing at the same time, therefore honest and tender with the ingredients, intentions, and expectations that this research is made of. It was not only a way to analyse or reflect on what I do as a tutor, but it became a practice and space for confrontation and healing. As I went through the main structure of the educational design, it affected the entire writing process. Writing about- and thinking with- the method of confrontation and healing as a spiral was a pedagogical exercise that exhausted me and uplifted me so much that I had to take significant breaks and pauses in between to cope with my ambition to put this research together. It was a sweaty, unbearable, painful, traumatic process because I always strived to meet the criteria and the expectations that I had set for myself. These criteria were a feeling that the structure, the story, and the narrative I am waving across theories and practices need to be in the correct order, composition, and quantity. I knew it would take time, but I didn't anticipate it would be that long.

Reflecting on the last five years, I feel pride and shame, excitement and fear, but first and foremost, gratitude. What is a conclusion if you do not acknowledge the context in which the work unfolds? This is what this thesis is about; to confront and find the language of love and care. This context, nothing else than the people, the places, and the moments in which the research was come into being. My gratitude is far beyond me, beyond this research and any ambition, because I exist in a community of care, and intimacy. The condition in which this research has emerged is founded and bounded by love and friendship. This journey is the fruit of the eternal, unconditional support structure set up by my love, Natela, and my children, Balaton and Alma, who endured the hardship of witnessing the sweet terror of writing and un-writing, to cope with my absence and the bitter-sweet failures and breakthroughs, the waiting year by year, that ripped me open and grew me humble more and more to outline what a wound-centered education design could be.

I am grateful for Natela's honesty and clarity in confronting me at times to remind me what is at stake and that I have choice. For a long time, building this scaffolding was incredibly difficult; ingredients, materials, and ideas surrounded me, but I had no one who could help me to integrate, think with me, be with me, and encourage me, although I was a student of an educational master program, where I was losing confidence instead gaining it. I was waiting for help in the wrong place and direction.

My best friend Majus joined in submerging with me in the darkness of the early refraction of the research. He read my overwhelming ramble with care and love and supported me with hours and hours, days and days of discussion about how everything comes together, consistently trusting me and my experiences, placing confidence and friendship in the center, still not losing sight of the ingredients, intentions, and expectations. He became my co-constructor of the scaffolding of this research, my mentor, and my coach, who poured me with his sweet but sharp attention and filled me with confidence with his dedication to not letting me down.

To circle back, I am grateful that I ripped myself open for this thesis because that's the form it requires a wound-centered approach, to open up, to suspend the self to squeeze so hard that oil drips out from the concentration, dedication, and attention. I slipped so many times on these oily pages, but I never gave up on returning to it and squeezing more and more because the oil keeps the wound soft and accessible.

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Appendix

DOWOD 1

Designing our way out of design
By Márton Kabai

Semester 28 - 2020

99

Counter-mapping, Counter-forensics (1st semester)

Assignment description

The first semester we will focus on design as research, counter-cartography and counter-forensics to produce (activist), artistic evidence that could potentially be incriminating towards any state or corporate actors. You will choose an industrial complex that is responsible for many (economic, social, ecological, moral...etc) injustices and begin to research, collect, map...

The role of the designer/artist in our critical times (Anthropocene, Climate Change, Covid19...etc) gives deep concern and attention to social, political, cultural, ethical, psychological positions (viewpoints). The big difference between state forensics and counter-forensics, is that this personal position isn't hidden, it is part of the evidence itself because objectivity and universality is a myth. Our past experiences, places, people and the way we know, remember, imagine the world, has a direct influence on the way we access, use, categorize and produce knowledge, especially if we are designers. Profoundly the same as the artefacts (maps) that design create. You can't ignore and be uncritical about the place(s), ground(s) and time(s) you are speaking, acting from. You need to define that space along with the serious research of the event, even if it requires exposing your vulnerability. Locating yourself around the subject is essential.

By understanding the complexity and interrelation of negative and positive influences (affects) that we are constantly surrounded with (technological, historical, geopolitical, cultural, social, psychological...etc) we begin to realize the responsibility and the costs of design and designing. But this cost of course isn't fixed. It moves, changes with you. Donna Haraway argues that we have to "stay with the trouble" to be "truly present". The "trouble" isn't only outside, but also inside us. The "trouble" is obscure, and still needs to be articulated. If

you are truly present you can undertake the responsibility of knowledge production, being firmly aware of the uncertainty and fragility of our "damaged planet" that stands in front of us as a broken mirror, planetary-scale evidence or material witness. Because there isn't one history, but many histories and nows are clashing against each other all the time that possess not one but multiple futures and truths.

Two-fold purpose

1. Conduct a research investigation for a specific social-political-ecological struggle concerning the Anthropocene (wicked problem, systemic problem) that you feel engaged and connected to. Find a narrative that you will use as evidence.
2. Make sure your personal, epistemological, political, social, psychological position is articulated from where you are speaking, acting from. Imagine that "space", that "language", that "dynamics" within the making of your evidence.

The goal

is to not only make a statement or raise an uncomfortable question, or reveal truths in the age of the Anthropocene, but to contrast it with a radical analysis of your social-political ground (privilege...etc). The assignment aims to always think in two ways, one as a dedicated investigator and one as a relational, political being, exposed to the forces of dominant ideologies.

There are no formal requirements, but the format, material and media you choose have to be with the overall narrative of your project. The assignment is individual, however, it is highly recommended to reach out to each other in need. Make sure that the two aspects of the assignment are clearly articulated and also think about how to present it together.

DOWOD 1 Module description and assignment form

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

Lecture slides (Archive)

Material Witness Exercises (Archive)

100

Class 1 - Maps, Mapping, Countermap and Counter-mapping (assignment presentation)

Class 2 - The end of the world discourse: Anthropocene

Class 3 - Design as counter-practice

Class 4 - Animal Industrial Complex

Material Witness 1 - Tools, Objects

Material Witness 2 - Architecture

Material Witness 3 - Policy

Material Witness 4 - Advertisement

Syllabus

Organic Syllabus 2020

Individual Testimony

Valeria Ferova - Vesuvio

Vanessa Sekova - Greenwashing

DOWOD 2

Designing our ways out of design II. Semester

Module Outline

Designing our ways out of design II Sanctuary: Care, Collaboration, Play Module Outline

Where do we begin with?

Last semester, we examined industrial complexes as systemic extractivism designed for industrial factory farming. Our objective was to understand how designs can act as material witnesses, providing evidence of systemic carelessness that occurs on different scales, from local to global. We mapped how industrial complexes are a systemic apparatus that allows, makes possible, and normalizes extraction, exploitation, and social oppression. We used different counter-forensic and counter-cartographic methods to scrutinize and reveal the interconnectedness of the mainstream design paradigm and its eco-socio-political unsustainability, carelessness, harm, violence, traumas, wounds, death, and silence. We concluded this phase of mapping by emphasizing the importance of understanding our responsibility, accountability, and our own limitations as designers.

So, what next?

Starting from this current semester, we will be shifting our focus towards a post-critical, affirmative attitude. Our aim is to embrace the concept of "Sanctuary" both as a physical space and as a practice of resistance against injustices, extraction, abuse, oppression, and carelessness. On the other hand, it is a powerful concept that reinforces care and emerges from the necessity of interdependence with both humans and non-humans. It also reinforces the acknowledgement to join forces in a cooperative collaboration to mitigate stress, share knowledge, and build support networks. Furthermore, it reinforces play due to the safe and trustful environment. Sanctuary is an existing utopia where healing, recuperation, restoration, and transformation can happen in multiple ways and forms.

¹ Care Manifesto - The Politics of Interdependence by The Care Collective

Care (22nd and 1st of March)

Care is not only mean directly looking after the physical and emotional needs of others, Care is also a social capacity and activity involving and nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life. Care also means recognizing and embracing our *interdependence* with the more-than-human.¹ Care is more than a service, colonized by market logic, that we will see in the radical spaces of animal sanctuaries.

Guests invited:

Ruth Levy from Freedom Farm Animal Sanctuary, *Elan Abrell*, anthropologist and animal studies scholar, New York University

Co-operative collaboration (8th and 15th March)

There isn't any human or non-human agent on this planet who can survive in isolation on its own. There is nothing happens in a vacuum. Interdependence assumes passive or active collaboration. According to Lynn Margulis, the very driver of evolution isn't based on individual success and determination, being the fittest(Darwin), but *those who learn to cooperate*, living in symbiogenesis.² We will engage in many affirmative ways collaboration can manifests, especially focusing on examples of worker-cooperatives.

Guests Invited:

Anke & Jorick from Seelab

Play (22nd and 29th of March)

We will investigate the many layers of play both as a concept and a method to disrupt, to provoke our sense of collective self, to become multiple and different, to awaken our inner child. "Animals play just like man, however, play is not only a biological phenomenon but a cultural one. In play, there is something 'at play' which transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action."³ Play is inherent in life and is a necessity for the creation of culture; play structures human action and is a carrier of human cultural development.

Guest invited: *Aron Birtalan*, - artist, performer,

² Words as battle cries- symbiogenesis and the new field of endocytobiology by Lynn Margulis

³ Huizinga Homo Ludens

101

DOWOD 2 Module description

Through the wounds of design, we may find each other

Designing our ways out of design II
 Sanctuary: Care, Collaboration, Play
 Module Assignment

The assignment for this 2nd semester is to create one or a series of collective (as a class) research project(s) that takes the concept of the *Sanctuary* as an organizing, ontology, attitude, strategy, and tactics through all your individual positions and knowledge.

It is essential that you, as a collective, define and agree upfront on a situated context and struggle that will give you a lot of situated, concrete references of places, events, histories, agencies, and political ecologies.

I recommend “staying with the trouble”, closely investigating how the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our lives from the microscale to the macroscale and how much this virus makes us see and amplifies the neglected, ignored interdependencies of crises, emergencies, and systemic problems.

Since you are collectively working with a real context, actual events, and real agencies, I encourage you to invest time and energy to do *meaningful research* that helps crystallize your position and your contribution within the collective as an agent of change.

Listening is a skill, not a given. It needs to be practiced. Since you all influence, change, and transform each other’s opinions, be always polite, honest, and straightforward with each other.

The final format of the collective project will be presented by the end of the Module. There is *no restriction on what form it needs to become. However, it has to make sense concerning the context (response) and your collective subject position, the aim/goal of the project, the audience or participants, and the (public) platform of choice to present.*

During the meetings besides the module day, try to *document as many details as possible*. It can be invaluable in a later stage to see the process that you all went through. Using alternative ways of documenting, not only recording sound, or taking photos or videos are the authentic ways to save an imprint of a meeting.

Create a collective *online shared library to store and manage all your investigation documents*. Try to categorize wisely and keep it clean. Try to be accountable and respect each other’s time and energy.

During the module, there will be 3 occasions of *open space for experimentation*. During these classes, the collective must create an online experience based on the central theme (Sanctuary) and one of the current sub-themes (Care, Collaboration, Play). There will be an open and accessible timeslot of 2 hours without any scheduled activity by me. It is up to you what you do with this opportunity. This means that you will have at least 3 opportunities to test out ideas and concepts, ask questions from the research, or create fictional situations and speculative encounters from your evolving collective project proposal before presenting, performing, organizing, and designing the final project.

For specific dates, see the Schedule document.

Lecture slides

[Design as healing \(intro\)](#)

Recorded guests (Incomplete Archive)

[Ruth Levy Freedom Farm Sanctuary
guided tour](#)

[Group discussion with Elan Abrell](#)

103

Video Essay

[The Three Sanctuary](#)

Collective Testimony

[PostCovidLunch](#)

Questionnaire - 2023

104 [Raw answers for the the Google form questionnaire](#)

[Processed and categoriesd questionnaire and answers mapping](#)

Impressum

Through the wounds of design we might find each other

Written & Designed by Márton Kabai

Proofreading & editing: Emily Whitebread & Lua Vollaard

Graduation Project Supervisors: Irina Shapiro & Ingrid Commandeur

External Supervisor: Toth Tamas Majus

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Den Haag

