The Journal of
Civic Media

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Civic Imagination

Mission Statement

The Journal of Civic Media, a semiannual electronic journal published out of the Engagement Lab, Emerson College, in November and April is directly linked to the Media Design's Master's program at Emerson College. *The Journal of Civic Media* focuses on the art and practice of civic media and technology to facilitate the democratization process around the world by means of both local and global digital platforms and community-based media initiatives that promote participatory research methods and give voice to diverse communities. Its objective is to provide an open forum for scholars, practitioners, students and the general public, to harness civic engagement and rethink the complex and ever-changing landscape of the field in the digital era.

Cover:

Maria Zervos / *Sky and Earth (Olympus)* / 7′25″/ HD video still / Color / Sound / Courtesy of the artist and Ileana-Tounta Contemporary Art Center / 2019

Editorial Policy

The editors of *The Journal of Civic Media* Project seek original columns between 1,500 and 2,500 words on a determined theme that contribute new ideas to the field of civic media and provoke further conversation research around the designated theme. Submissions will generally be submitted by academics, students or practitioners in the civic media field, however, all submissions will be considered. Requests and proposals regarding potential submissions are encouraged.

To be considered for publication, papers should be emailed as attachments in .doc, .docx or Google doc format, double-spaced, in Chicago Style, with the author's name and contact information. Submissions should include relevant academic or practical references, cited at the end of the text. A brief biography (50 words) should be submitted for inclusion at the end of the column. Columnists are encouraged to include visual additions such as photos, videos, gifs, data visualizations or screen captures related to their content. There is no determined limit on number of submissions that will be accepted per issue. The editorial decision-making will be based on the quality and relevence of content. Also, cover art submissions are welcome.

Become a Regular Contributor:

Regular Contributors are asked to commit to writing four original columns over a two-year period (once per issue). These columns are meant to pose thoughtful or provocative questions for discussion, debate or future research and should follow the above guidelines for one-time contributions. Regular Contributors are encouraged to include visual additions such as photos, videos or screen captures related to their content.

Digital/Multimedia Projects: *The Journal of Civic Media* encourages submission of digital, multimedia or design projects. These submissions are screened for quality and appropriateness by our editorial staff. Scholars wishing to share their digital work with *The Journal of Civic Media* community are encouraged to post them on Vimeo, YouTube, SlideShare, or other free services, then send us a URL and a short statement to accompany the submission.

Editorial Review Process

All content is reviewed and managed by the editorial team. Generally, it will review each submission, critically analyzing the content and style and providing a rating for the submission. If the submission meets the editorial standards and aligns with the issue theme, any necessary revision requests are sent to the author prior to the editing submission deadline. Once necessary revisions are made, the project goes through a final evaluation by the advisory board.

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EDITORIAL

When we placed the call for this issue of *The Journal of Civic Media,* dedicated to civic imagination, we were far from anticipating the global COVID-19 pandemic that changed the course of History. Yet, it is precisely now than ever that civic imagination, that is, "the capacity to imagine alternatives to current cultural, social, political, or economic conditions," in Henry Jenkins' use of the term, becomes even more relevant, as we are all urgently seeking to imagine our post-COVID-19 future. Coming out of the pandemic exhausted yet wiser, humanity has reset its priorities and, relying on the synergy of scientific research and the arts, it can envision a better global society, with less greed and less pain. In this issue, *The Journal of Civic Media* presents *twenty-four* original, multi-formatted contributions from a wide spectrum of disciplines, inviting its readership to jointly ponder that the impossible can become indeed possible. This is suggested by the human bridge featured in our front cover, "*Sky and Earth (Olympus),*" by award-winning artist Maria Zervos that John Corrédor designed and whose meaningful symbolism art critic Andrea Gilbert highlights in the beginning of this issue.

Multidisciplinary at its core, this special edition of *The Journal of Civic Media* emerges stronger from its forced idleness, with the support of the *Citizen TALES* Commons research team, several members of which share their research here, as the focus on imagining equitable futures lies at the heart of their research. Additionally, the call for submissions on the topic of civic imagination appealed to several other scholars, graduate students, artists and civic leaders and practitioners and we are thrilled to have their contributions included here. We are especially grateful to Sangita Schrestova, Director of Research of Civic Paths Group at the University of Southern California under Henry Jenkins's guidance, who kindly responded to our invitation to contribute to this issue

with her research team. By honoring innovative civic paths, rigorous research and practice and artistic creation in various forms, we hope to further inspire similar humanistic inquiries interwoven with civic practice and cultural exchanges. Also, we are thrilled to include here contributions from distinguished Professors Peter Levine, Georges Contogeorgis and Louis Arthur Ruprecht, Jr., and we express our gratitude to them. Here is what you will find in the pages that follow, after this editorial and the "about the artwork" of the cover section:

a) articles; b) op-ed; c) artwork in various forms and media; d) reviews and e) interviews.

Boundless gratitude to all contributors to this issue who come from various parts of the world (Austria, Canada, Greece, Germany, France, Russia, the Netherlands, Turkey, UK and the United States) and who are the following scholars, artists and graduate students in alphabetical order: Juan Carlos Carvajal Bermúdez, Peter Bottéas, George Contogeorgis, John Corredor, Meral Ekincioglu, Chrysanthé Emmanouilidou, Ilana Freedman, Isaiah Frisbie, Andrea Gilbert, Ifigenia Gonis, Peter Klapes, Paulina Lanz, Peter Levine, Elena Mancini, Christa Oliver, Hiva Panahi, Tyler Pauly, Sean Peacock, Antonis E. Psarakis, Tyler Quick, Dionysis R. Rigopoulos, Louis Arthur Ruprecht, Jr., Richard Santos Raya, Sangita Shresthova, Elizabeth (Betsey) Suchanic, Wyld Tha Bard (Phillip Scruggs), Zenovia Toloudi, Hannah Trivilino, Eli Turkel, Anna Winestein, and Maria Zervos, Many thanks also to the editorial team, the advisory board and its chair Eric Gordon, and, of course, Emerson College's Engagement Lab and its current director Vinicius Navarro, for their continued support.

Let's contemplate together a better future through the pages that follow and let's create unbreakable human bridges in the here and now. Let's practice civic imagination!

Imaginatively yours,

Vassiliki Rapti, Ph.D.

Editor

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About the Artcover

Maria Zervos is a poet and visual artist, who works primarily in video. Although her poetry stands as an autonomous practice, Zervos frequently incorporates her own verses and, on occasion, those of the ancients, in her visual work. The one form of expression complements the other; the metaphorical image conjured by the flow of words fuses with the visual image of the movie to form a non-linear narrative.

Since the beginning of her career, Zervos has been involved with the boundaries of human physicality and emotion, particularly as they fall within the juncture of Nature and Culture. For example, in one of her early videos she juxtaposes the organic metamorphosis of a silkworm from larva to chrysalis with the religious and social rite of passage of a young woman as she struggles to put on her wedding dress. She flaps her arms like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. The title of the work in Greek is also a metaphor and play on words. Nymph *(νύμφη or νύφη)* in Greek

Sky & Earth (Mt. Olympus) by Maria Zervos:
Human Presence Reconciles Nature and Culture

Andrea Gilbert

figures 2-4 / Maria Zervos / Sky and Earth (Olympus) / 7' 25" / Courtesy of the
artist and Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center / 2019

mythology is spirit of nature imagined as a beautiful maiden inhabiting rivers or woods, as well an immature form of a winged insect such as a dragonfly. The word also means bride.

The notion of transition is a constant feature of Zervos' practice. Personal emotional passage is made visible through the physical experience of travelling: leaving one's culture, traversing the unknown, and finally arriving at a new place of (self)-discovery in a natural environment. These passages and journeys typically take place in otherworldly landscapes such as the barren stretches of the Atacama Desert or the highest peak of Mount Olympus, obscured by mist. The journeys under harsh conditions and through remote terrains that Zervos chronicles in her videos are likewise challenges to her own physical and emotional endurance as well as intimate spiritual quests.

They can be experienced by the viewer as a personal adventure, as a political or environmental struggle, as a measurement of time or intimation of timelessness, as an initiation ceremony, as a project of self-discovery, as a collective religious procession, or as trans-cultural research. Zervos' images and poems often refer to the idea of disappearance, which is inherent in any departure, and to the notion that something is left behind with every new beginning. Nonetheless, she rewards her traveling companions – we, the viewers – with itineraries and arrivals full of anticipation, enchantment and astonishing beauty.

For her video project *Sky & Earth (Olympus)*, Zervos was inspired by her recent ascent to the top of Mount Olympus. The verses as subtitles to the video are those of Telesilla (5th century BCE), the ancient Greek poet and great political leader, noted for saving her native city of Argos from attack by the Spartans. Telesilla's lyric poem is translated from the ancient Greek by the artist.

Characteristically, the female presence of strength and power is a protagonist in Zervos' work, as she mirrors the forces of Nature and Natural order. In *Sky & Earth (Olympus)*, however, Zervos veers from the single feminine force to present twelve gender fluid performers who trek up the mountain in a colorful procession. Contemporary deities very much of this earth, they embody all the artist's conceptions of nature and culture. Along the way they dance, execute various acrobatic feats, relax by a stream, and mimic architectural structures with their bodies. Their movements alternate between ritual and play in a world where the ancient myth coincides and reflects our own modern reality.

Andrea Gilbert
Athens, May 2019

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Abstract

This essay provides an overview of the methodology and theoretical orientation of the Civic Imagination Project, an initiative of the Civic Paths Group at the University of Southern California. Here, we recount our approach through a case study of a workshop we ran in Stevens Point Portage County, Wisconsin in February 2020. Our workshops aim to help communities collectively tap their imaginations to envision alternatives that are difficult to achieve right now. Since 2000, Portage County has been a hotly contested political "swing county" within a "swing state" in presidential, gubernatorial, and U.S. Senate elections. We ran our workshop in Steven's Point knowing that the partisanship and politics were likely divisive for our workshop participants, which is why we facilitated brainstorming sessions that empowered local activists, artists, and academics to articulate creative possibilities. In this summary, we have documented how one semi-rural, Midwestern community used popular culture imagery and storylines to constitute a shared vernacular of the future.

Introduction

We use the term "civic imagination" to describe the capacity to imagine alternatives to current cultural, social, political, or economic conditions. We cannot change the world unless we can imagine what a better world might look like. Using our civic imagination requires us to see ourselves as agents capable of making change in our communities, and therefore as part of a larger collective which has shared interests, as an equal participant within a democratic culture, and as empathetic to the perspectives and experiences of others different from ourselves. Established in 2016 as an outgrowth of Henry Jenkins's Civic Paths Group at University of Southern California (USC), the Civic Imagination Project

Of Fruit Trees and Old School Houses: Activating Civic Imagination in Stevens Point

Paulina Lanz, Tyler Quick, Sangita Shresthova

explores, develops and tests our ideas and approaches to public-facing research and action. We conduct workshops and brainstorming sessions with people from diverse grassroots communities, and use these as case studies for the development of our theories. We engage with scholars and practitioners across disciplines in seminars and brainstorming sessions and use these insights as springboards for analysis, writing and further workshop development with community partners. In all our endeavors, we engage in an iterative participatory process where we constantly return to, and build on, our approaches to create an ever evolving understanding of the civic imagination in theory and practice.

We situate our approach within our long-lasting interest in participatory cultures, popular cultures, and participatory politics as we help communities "forge a sense of collective voice and efficacy through larger networks that work together to bring about change" (Jenkins et al, 2016.) Building on the value placed on participation in all of these approaches (see Carpentier and Jenkins 2013), we explore how engaging with popular cultures can allow people to adapt and repurpose discourses to support bottom-up collective action. Our work aims to overcome the "tyranny of the possible," as discussed by Stephen Duncombe (2012) – – that small voice inside each of us which discourages us from imagining alternatives that are difficult or impossible to achieve right. In our work, we encourage people to think beyond current limitations towards long-term visions that empower activists, artists, and academics to articulate and work towards achieving alternative agendas and creative possibilities. We document how communities tap popular culture imagery and storylines to constitute a shared vernacular that helps them to share their aspirational visions with each other.

While our initial efforts grew out of studying fans and fannish practices, we built on what we learned to develop a workshop-based approach that can support communities interested in expanding on their own shared narratives. Instead of following traditional storytelling models centered on developing linear narratives, our workshops engage world building, a creative approach where participants work together to brainstorm shared visions of heterogeneous worlds and then find and share stories about how social change takes place within those worlds. In the creative industry, these stories might then take multiple different forms – novels, comics, games, Virtual Reality, audio dramas, etc. – but might all draw on the common world engendered by the collective. Building on the work of Alex McDowell's World Building Lab Media (WbML) at the University of Southern California, we utilize world building to inspire a collective civic

imagination through storymaking. (Cechanowicz, Cantrell, and McDowell 2016). Speculative fiction practices, such as world building, offer a way to work beyond Duncombe's "tyranny of the possible." These collaborative and speculative approaches to world building offer different ways of forging interconnections between cultures, systems of thinking. As Ann Pendleton-Jullian and John Seeley Brown (2018) suggest, working together offers new modes of cultural analysis and production for social change. We have also continued to expand our conceptual research alongside our more community facing work. In *Popular Culture and Civic Imagination: Case Studies of Creative Social Change* (2020), we documented 30 instances where the imagination played a crucial, and at times ethically ambiguous, role in constructing shared civic spaces and practices. These instances ranged from Smokey the Bear becoming a symbol for environmental concerns to Bollywood dance becoming a site of cultural and political struggle for South Asian Americans.

When we talk about civics, we center on the shared values and aspirations that allow communities to work together towards common ends. Despite segregation and fragmentation within certain communities, not to mention unequal access to power and other resources, stronger civic connections within and between social communities can help us think through issues of systemic racism and democratic disparities. Added on to this, we need to tap the imagination to surface civic aspirations as participants describe and debate the best paths towards social justice. The "ordinariness" of popular culture, its place in our everyday conversations, makes it a welcoming language through which to conduct such exchanges. Our workshops invite participants to share and build upon their individual and collective civic imaginations. All our workshops include collective brainstorming, personal reflection, small group work, and seminar-style, community discussions of session outcomes. We see our workshops as spaces that support communities but also support our own research and learning. Whenever possible, one of our team-members functions in an observer role for the duration of the workshop, recording in as much detail as possible our participants' ideas, as well as the processes leading to their development. We also consider how our facilitation shapes the insights we generate. As such, we see our workshops as participatory research sites situating with our research team playing the role of facilitator-observers who guide the workshops, observe participants, record the generated content and pay attention as participants reflect on their experiences.

Our soon-to-be published book, *Practicing the Futures: A Civic Imagination Action*

Handbook (forthcoming), offers detailed instructions on how to conduct our workshops and provides narrative accounts of our early testing of this method. This essay provides a quick sketch of the workshop process. The Origin Stories workshop uses memory and imagination to connect personal and social identities as people think about their own capacities for social action. In the Infinite Hope workshop, we invite people to construct utopian and dystopian narratives set in imaginary future worlds to help them think about what they are fighting for as well as what they are fighting against. In the Step into the Looking Glass workshop, we engage popular culture story worlds as an entry point into exploring collective identities, imagining communities, and shared histories. Using real places as a departure point, the Monuments from the Future workshop intersects cultural geography, memory, and the imagination. Working with the stories that inspire us, the Remixing Stories draws on remix as a practice that can help us forge connections with disparate groups during struggles over political and social change. In the Creating an Action Plan workshop, we take an imaginative approach to civic action tactics and strategies. Together, these workshops offer a toolkit that educators, activists, and community builders can use to audit and inspire the civic imaginations of those they serve.

Stevens Point

In February 2020, we (Henry Jenkins, Tyler Quick, Paulina Lanz and Sangita Shresthova) traveled to Stevens Point, Wisconsin to conduct our Infinite Hope future world building workshop through a partnership with CREATE Portage County, a local nonprofit that, according to the mission statement on their website, "accelerates creativity, connection, and collaboration to advance vibrant and welcoming communities." At the time, we didn't know that this would be the last in-person session we would run before the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to move all our activities online. As luck would have it, Henry Jenkins, our founder and principal investigator, reconnected with a graduate school friend, Dr. Leslie Midkiff DeBauche, professor of Media Studies at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, leading us to perhaps the best possible field site for conducting research on civic imagination during this dark moment in American history.

Wisconsin is a cipher for the United States of America's political dysfunction. Since 2000, it has been a hotly contested "swing state" in presidential, gubernatorial, and U.S. Senate elections. Al Gore and John Kerry both actually won the state with smaller margins in 2000 and 2004, respectively, than Donald Trump's roughly 23,000 vote, half-a-percentage, margin of victory in 2016. In off-year elections, Wisconsin has also been a political

battleground. Controversial former Republican governor Scott Walker won three close races for election, including one recall election, between 2010 and 2014, succumbing to the Democrats only very narrowly in the wake of a massive, nationwide Democratic "wave" that brought current Governor Tony Evers to power in 2018.

Political polarization is acute in Wisconsin, in many ways serving as a microcosm of the greater Midwest and perhaps the United States as a whole. Like the rest of the country, it falls along predictable, geographic, gender, racial, and generational divides. 2016 exit polls conducted by CNN found that Donald Trump won men but lost women in Wisconsin. He won voters over the age of 45 but lost younger voters. He won white, especially working-class, voters, but lost both non-white and college-educated voters. He won both (although much more narrowly in the former case) suburbs and rural areas, but was crushed in deep-blue Milwaukee and Madison. However, these statistics nonetheless mask a more complicated picture: "Those warring tribes account for a little less than 60 percent of the Wisconsin electorate, the polling suggests" (Gilbert, 2018).

"If they made up the whole electorate, then elections here truly would be nothing more than turn-out wars, won by whichever side was more angry, fearful, excited or organized," Craig Gilbert writes for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.*

Indeed, places like Stevens Point and its larger community in Portage County complicate simple polarization narratives. Stevens Point is a smaller city in Central Wisconsin with a population just above 70,000. Located about halfway between Milwaukee and Minneapolis, it is the kind of place that we Americans are often told by our national media is "Trump Country." However, Stevens Point, home to a campus of the University of Wisconsin, and Portage County have voted reliably --albeit sometimes narrowly-- for Democratic candidates in the vast majority of the past federal and gubernatorial elections. The city is represented by a Democrat in the State Assembly, in a district that only includes its immediate metropolitan area. But its State Senate district, which includes much of the surrounding rural areas, is represented by a Republican. Polling and election data, as well as what we heard from our research participants, suggest that the town leans progressive in an otherwise more conservative part of Wisconsin. But even that doesn't paint the full picture.

In 2016, Bernie Sanders won Portage County by a large margin over Hillary Clinton in the Wisconsin Democratic primary. Four years later, the tables were turned when former Vice-President Joe Biden crushed Sanders in the Wisconsin primary, effectively ending the socialist's presidential campaign. Biden won

Portage County along with every other county in Wisconsin. Stevens Point is whiter than the state of Wisconsin as a whole, but more diverse than the surrounding areas with a large and growing Asian-American population. But it is also far younger than the state as a whole, as it is home to a university. Progressive groups believe that activating young voters is key to winning Wisconsin in 2020, perhaps more than any other state (Dohms-Harter, 2020). This means that places like Stevens Point and Portage County are likely to receive disproportionate national attention throughout this election cycle and beyond, and will likely serve in national discourses as case studies of contentious American politics in our present zeitgeist.

Located close to downtown (though everything is nearby in Stevens Point), our research site CREATE Portage County runs a community center that supports the idea that "creativity, connection, and collaboration builds vibrant and welcoming communities." (website) Through the IDEA center, CREATE "encourages residents to invest in their creative ideas and expand entrepreneurship to include the arts, business, community impact, and personal development" (website). By making meeting spaces, maker tools and other technologies accessible, CREATE explicitly strives to overcome "demographic barriers that have historically limited access to creative work." Through conversations with the leadership at CREATE, the

IDEA center and Leslie Midkiff DeBauche, we identified "female entrepreneurs" as the people we primarily wanted to include in the workshop session. We defined entrepreneurship broadly to include people advocating for change as well as those who ran their own small local businesses. Our decision was informed by the hope that "entrepreneurship" would be inclusive of, and appealing to, potential participants representing a broader array of political views. CREATE felt that this term cut across political divides and could be inclusive of people with both conservative and progressive world views.

In hindsight, we feel that this attempt was partially successful though we probably ended up with participants that skewed towards being progressive on the political spectrum. We did manage to have diversity in terms of occupations (entrepreneurs, farmers, educators, representatives from the League of Women Voters). We failed to have diverse participants when it comes to race and socio-economic categories, a shortcoming that was mostly attributable to a self selection bias among those who responded to the invitation that we mostly extended to female entrepreneurs. The people who did show up were mostly connected to CREATE and our other affiliates the Central Rivers Farmshed and University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point in some way. Some of our 32 participants knew each other, but many were meeting for the first time.

What We Learned in Wisconsin

We ran our session in Steven's Point knowing that the partisanship and politics were more than likely divisive for our workshop participants. Confirming this and despite their seemingly unanimous progressivism, the group was very uncomfortable talking about government and politics. Much of this could be chalked up to a general malaise settling across America in the early months of 2020 as the Democratic presidential primary turned nasty and rumblings of a coronavirus pandemic started to put the country on edge. As one of our participants, Ann, said, "I think the silence around the government question also stood out, because that tells me that there is either a sense of despair about that, I don't know what the heck we're going to do about that? And how do we envision when we're in the place that we're in? Or that people are fearful of saying. So, either we're despairing or more fearful of speaking in public."

Her fears correspond to a wider breakdown in civil political discourse in Wisconsin in the aftermath of a series of contentious gubernatorial elections. The Center of Communication and Civic Renewal at the University of Wisconsin observes that "a widespread breaking down of political talk occurred in Wisconsin, reminiscent of significant political polarization, but in fact extending beyond it" (Wells et al, 2017, 133) in the aftermath of Scott Walker's four campaigns for Wisconsin governor. Historian Dan Kaufman (2018) writes that in the aftermath of signing Act 10, a law that ended collective bargaining rights and a host of benefits for public sector union workers, Walker quipped that his governing strategy was "divide and conquer." Since then, the Center of Communication and Civic Renewal has noticed a change in local political discourse:

Our data indicate that the politicization of certain experiences, especially occupational identities and perceptions of economic hardship, led many citizens to experience this moment in painfully personal terms. For others, the magnification of political difference, such as by being a political minority in a workplace or home county, led to avoidance of disagreement by cutting off talk. In short, we saw several avenues by which talk communities that had once accommodated substantial social and political difference were strained, sometimes to the breaking point.

According to them, Act 10 represented a culture war, and "enabled social identities to mediate political identities, channeling polarization into social networks." Like most of the rest of America, Wisconsin has seen political polarization affect private relationships (Pew Research Center 2020).

Read in this context of polarization and silencing, our session in Wisconsin yielded important insights into the aspirational narratives that excited our participants and also allowed them to skirt partisanship. Three themes, in particular, stood out as they were suggestive of the ways that activating the civic imagination could allow for new approaches, new language, and perhaps even new collaborations around issues that clearly mattered a lot to our participants, regardless of their political affiliation.

These three themes were the goal of stewarding the land, the need for community spaces, and the desire for localism.

Stewarding the Land

Land stewardship was a frequently-discussed topic during this workshop. Many participants spoke about their ties to the land. They described the texture of soil and how it smelled. They expressed a desire for planting seeds and harvesting crops. They spoke about how the land reminded them of real and imagined ancestors. They also saw their relationship to the land as crucial to their individual and collective futures. Almost all advocated for more public lands, which would allow a greater number of farmers to steward smaller plots. Our participants connected the notion of stewardship to a commitment to place-based identity and a commitment to land-based connections. Their advocacy for greater access to and education about land stewardship was often inflected with environmentalist rhetoric.

For Kate, a long-standing resident of Stevens Point, stewarding the land brought up a present day tension between small organic farmers and larger commercial farmers. She described a storytellling project that she initiated where people could submit stories about farming that would then be shared at a public event. She shared that in future she would like to use a similar approach to bring together "local organic farmers and big agricultural farmers." She hoped that she could use such conversations to help the members of these communities "understand each other" and "bridge the gap."

The focus on "stewarding" land articulated by our participants echoes Candis Calliston's research on climate change among Christian communities. In her work, Calliston, an environmental journalist and scholar, observed that when it comes to climate issues, "the argument and appeal for evangelicals has to be on "moral" grounds" (Calliston 2014, 123). She draws on the work of C. S. Lewis who argued that scientific methods "can't tell a lot about the world because they limit how and how much one sees the world (124)". In contrast, a moral argument related to notions of "stewardship" and "individual and

collective responsibilities to care" allows Christian communities to embrace an alternative approach to climate change. The appeal of these approaches was confirmed by our workshop participants, though, most of them did not openly identify as religious during our workshop session.

Our participants also presented an almost text-book perfect case study of Calliston's additional observation that "climate change thus provides an opportunity to reinforce norms about how Christians should respond to issues of inequality and poverty" (126). "We all don't need to own land for our communities to live well," Sara, an avowed environmentalist in her early thirties, explained: "Even that idea of owning land to me is weird." Our participants clearly spoke about the need for expansive notions of belonging, not necessarily tied to family ties. Planting, caring for and passing on fruit trees became a salient metaphor for this desire, as the land was an enduring inheritance from the past that we need to pass on to our descendants.

Need for Community Spaces

The need for shared spaces also emerged as a key theme. In one of stories created by the group, we learned about an imagined future world where there were no public spaces. In this story change was triggered by three children who threw rocks at an abandoned factory with a beautiful fruit tree. Peering in through broken windows, they saw a basement and dreamed of setting it up as a clubhouse. Though they initially scolded them for trespassing, adults eventually gave in to their demands and offered to help them by sharing their knowledge. The group then described how the youth started to work on their project. Eventually, other people learned about what they are trying to do and helped them create a space that they could all share. Much like the characters in their story, our participants dreamed of public spaces where they could see each other, exchange information, seek emotional support and more generally pool resources. They imagined spaces that could integrate multi-generational housing, leisure and commercial space, and food production. Their exchange of stories allowed them to better understand each other's visions of social change as they emerged from personal life experiences and as they took shape in dialogue with others from their community. Through this process, participants surfaced shared values even in the absence of explicitly political discourses. Our participants iterated the need for "friendly" neighborhoods, where diverse family constellations would live side-by-side harmoniously. As the idyllic visions of such a world grew, participants dreamt of more front porch interactions in neighborhoods with smaller houses and more shared spaces.

Like almost all of his fellow research participants and a wealth of empirical research, Rick understood sociality as important for "social and mental health." Without social support it is either impossible or needlessly difficult for individuals to overcome hardship. The adage "it takes a village" came up more than once, particularly in relation to elder care and parenting. Our participants imagined a return to a society where connections to elders and ancestors played a greater role in the formulation of one's identity. However, they also imagined that this would be achieved through material methods. In addition to the kinds of multi-generational, community structures described above, they also described a need for more libraries, communal kitchens, and indoor public squares (for gathering in winter months). They wanted schools to be open to the public on the weekends. They wanted aging adults to have homes and "families" to stay with. In their ideal 2060 world, "family" would be coterminous with community, and not one's assigned nuclear family. All children would have homes and "parents," though not necessarily biological ones. Regardless of their configuration, families would be acknowledged legally and would be supported by communities, including local governments.

As our participant Jane reflected on these visions for the future, she noted that to her, valuing the notion of family was very much aligned with her understanding of 'Midwestern' values that 'stress' being there for family." She admitted that she had not previously thought of such values as related to civics as "we just don't think about it that way." She noted that a story another group had created about teleporting to see your loved ones captured "what people really value in this community is being there for their family and being able to maintain a relationship even if you're in different places or different areas of life." Rick agreed: "People jumped immediately to the idea of family being – you can choose your own family. That was the thing we wanted to throw out there immediately. It was well supported." Throughout the session, participants kept on returning to their desire for community. They wanted to feel connected to each other and to have spaces that would foster such enduring connections.

Desire for localism

Against the backdrop of a viciously competitive national election, our participants wanted their community to become more self-reliant, and their lives to be more organized around local concerns and priorities. As we

talked about it more, we learned that this concern was closely related to their sense that their community is "very spread out." When they brainstormed what they would want their government to look like, our participants shared that they wanted more local control and less federal oversight, a concern usually associated with the political right but long standing among elements of the left as well (see: Bookchin, 1990; Harvey, 2013; Conn, 2014). A greater emphasis on local politics, they believed, would provide a better space to facilitate healthy debates around issues of common concern. They also connected this desire for a more localized government to a sense that living more locally was safer, and better for the environment, as revealed in a story one of the groups created.

The story was set in the year 2024, and Mary, a woman from Stevens Point, traveled to the White House for an official dinner. While there, she ate some cheese shipped from California and died because it has been contaminated with cancerous chemicals from the transportation trucks. Incensed and mobilized, the attendees of a Portage County community meeting demanded that they be allowed to grow more food locally. They asked for permission to keep chickens, make

lawns into gardens and open a community kitchen on the site of a distressed mall. Fast forward ten years, the country grew into a sustainable hub where farms were subsidized and urban gardening was supported. A center offered free courses for sustainable gardening and livestock rearing.

As Sara reflected on this story (which was created by another group), she noted that the solution in this story was to go "local." She agreed and furthermore said that she and others in the room are "already doing that" and just needed to "ramp that up, get more support for it." She shared that the session had reaffirmed her commitment to organizing a "block party" for her neighbors to build a sense of community because "we really have to make an effort in this country to actually build community because we are pushed to be so independent." Other participants shared that they were considering similar initiatives ranging from growing their own vegetables to creating a fruit sharing group with their neighbors. Living locally and building community needs to be a conscious choice, one that the participants felt was both desirable and necessary in the current moment.

What do our learnings in Wisconsin mean?

Of course, our workshops are not meant to be ends as much as they are means. Ideally, the worlds imagined during our brief hours with our partners become the blueprints for the communities they work to realize every day. "These are the issues we need to work on," Caroline, scholar and community member said: "We need to be reminded that it's okay to be hopeful; we're not just spinning our wheels or daydreaming. We're actually engaging in something that could be productive and healing." As is often the case, the shift from worldbuilding to world-realizing is accomplished when ideals are turned into goals, and assigned to individuals as responsibilities. Some already saw potential for a vanguard in Portage County in our hosts: "I would like to tap into CREATE more because I understand more of what I think they're trying to do. And again, we've kind of followed them but I think I would like to at least pay more attention to what they're doing and different opportunities to maybe be part of this group or support them in other ways."

However, even CREATE's staff saw the need for a larger vanguard in order to really affect progressive change. Their willingness to listen to people's passions and desires materialized into helping them find the resources to make that happen. Rick, an employee at CREATE, called for impromptu leadership from those that personally identified with the conversations during the workshop, which came at a time when it is obviously lacking in American civil society: "'I'd really like for each group to just pick one thing and do it and make it public, and be very open about talking about it." Beyond the leadership question was the question of whether even that would be enough to increase civic engagement. "I don't usually think of civics when I talk about shared Midwest values," Julie, an intern at CREATE, added. There is a shared feeling among the participants that the community needed to agree with a project, and act on it. Rick continued, gesturing at two of the gravest contributing factors to the decline in American political and civic participation, apathy and lack of information (Amandi, et al., 2020):

That gap between the passionate people that were here today and more apathetic, for whatever reason, can be because they don't have the time or energy to discuss this stressful work-life balance or they don't have the ability to engage in a community-level project like that. That's something that I'm concerned about. And I don't know if that's a valid concern

or not, because there's probably enough people out there who have the time and resources that can support it. It's just getting them aware that it's happening.

Kate thus astutely observed, "I am not sure to just go forward and say, "this is an actionable item,' without having more widespread awareness of this process," meaning, presumably the process of getting involved in activism. "It was a breath of fresh air", Donna, an academic and member of the community, added. That metaphor showed up more than once.

However, the silences were an inherent part of the conversation, for the contributions did not focus on practicalities but rather on structures –social structures that got the participants to using their imagination, "my brain is captured by the notions of these structures and imagination, and then what happens when we really try to change those structures; how people react to that when we use the imagination on a smaller scale," said Donna. As the participants departed the space, some mentioned how the structure of Applied Leadership and Decision Making could be a resource for students and the redesign process of MBA programs. Several others talked about using their stories differently such as continued projects that build on local food, giving people

more options for local food, having mentorships for teacher-led younger kids, and a space for sharing teaching skills for aspiring educators.

While we know that the realization of these imagined projects can be pursued only by those who imagined them, the main takeaway from our experience in Wisconsin is that collectively imagining civic transformation is an important, even crucial, catalyzer for progress and change. When we arrived in Wisconsin, late at night while winter winds blew icily and ominously across the polarized state, we could sense the creeping uncertainty, the fear of futurity that grips so many Americans' imaginations and consciousnesses right now. Nonetheless, in the morning, as we began our exercise and a winter sun shone through the cold, we saw again the importance of this work. More importantly, we saw the need to expand its scope and to arm more individuals and communities with the theories and practices to develop their own civic imagination workshops and projects.

Where do we go from here?

Since we began the Civic Imagination Project, we've worked with a diverse array of communities and organizations to better develop our sense and understanding of the role imagination plays

in the development of civic life. We know that forming personal connections to stories about global, national, or, in this case study, local issues can inspire the kinds of dialogues that aspire to social change. In encouraging our research participants to think about these issues through personal lenses, we hope to encourage the kind of intersectional, political coalition building first described by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her landmark "Mapping the Margins" essay: "With identity thus reconceptualized, it may be easier to understand the need for and to summon the courage to challenge groups that are after all, in one sense, "home" to us, in the name of the parts of us that are not made at home" (1991, 1299). In conducting these conversations, we strive to guide individual world-building and daydreaming toward the visualization of shared goals and a utopia where all can imagine themselves welcome. We were thus very glad to hear that our workshops create a "safe space." We follow Paulo Freire (2000) in understanding that in articulating a common vision of the common good, or what he calls hope, can only be produced through the synthesis of various individual dreams and aspirations into a singular, co-elaborated vision of the future.

This goal has been at the core of our work.

Throughout this year, the Civic Imagination Project launched several projects centered around activities and workshops where participants are encouraged to share stories that inspire them in order to visualize a future together. Our 2060: Reflections from the Future template uses our current and contentious political/social moment to initiate a process of reflection and intervention, so as to bring our imaginative selves forth to confront the realities we face today. On Instagram, our #ThroughMyWindow initiative challenged our network to use the vision of whatever was beyond their window while trapped in quarantine as a source of imaginative speculation. Our prompt asked participants to capture their current mood and aspirations, and offer through the introspection solutions to the despair of the current moment. And our most recent project, the Popular Culture and Civic Imagination Toolkit, provides a set of activities meant to inspire parents and children to creatively and critically engage with the media already coming into their homes as a springboard for brainstorming about how to address social challenges in our communities.

The Civic Imagination Project has also served as a source of inspiration and support

to other projects that seek to use imagination for social change. Romanian transmedia artist and Civic Paths member, Ioana Mischie, has been working on a trans/multimedia project called "Government of Children," in which children are asked to design and imagine the kind of future world they want to live in. Magalis Videaux-Martinez, a member of our advisory group, is developing an extension of our work through her Imagination Lab to bring together experience design, immersive storytelling, and experiential learning towards critical play and social dreaming in a high school setting. Here, students are collectively empowered to build imaginary universes through a method that respects and honors multiple identities and multiple narratives.

Looking back on the past few months, we are more certain than ever that civic imagination is a social necessity. When living in isolation, people have to imagine their connections with the larger public. We have seen civic imagination come to life in Latin America through the cacophony cacerolazos or panelaços–pounding of pots and pans– to recognize essential workers, to denounce police brutality in Colombia, or to protest Jair Bolsonaro's authoritarian government in Brazil. We have seen a flourishing of art activism in response to the #BlackLivesMatter protests resurging after Minneapolis police murdered George Floyd, an unarmed Black man. From Lebanon to Hong Kong, we have seen how crucial the co-articulation of better worlds is to the furtherance of progress in this one. We have also seen how differences in our civic imagination generate conflict, particularly when individual choices are contested by social contracts, e.g. the wearing of masks splits between public health versus personal freedom, where discourses around pro-life/pro-choice movements have been switched in order to fit the current narrative, "my body, my choice." We have seen these conflicts boiling over both face to face and via social media; as these divides illustrate a deeper erosion of shared norms and infrastructures in any given society. But that only makes us more undeterred in our goal: to provide the spaces and methods for people who may seem to have little in common to co-create a future that is bright and hopeful for all of them. We believe success of our adventure in Wisconsin is a sign that this is as worthy of a pursuit as possible for academics and practitioners right now.

How you can participate

We welcome participation! Get in touch with us. Here are some of our current projects:

Atlas of the Civic Imagination – Draw on what inspires you, respond to our prompt, and contribute to a collective brainstorm that taps our imagination at a time when imagining takes courage. All responses will become part of 2060: Reflections from the Future, a public and shared collection that connects our current hopes, concerns, and aspirations. Artists, thinkers, and community leaders working in various fields and formats will also bring our collective visions to life. www.ciatlas.org

Popular Culture and Civic Imagination Toolkit: Here we tap the stories, TV shows, games, movies and folk stories we love (and love to hate) to activate our imaginations as we work through the social challenges our communities face. Our playful easy to do activities engage popular culture, imagination and issues of collective concern. The toolkit is intended for a broad age group – parents and children (5+), peer-groups, those working in educational settings and really anyone interested in watching, remixing, creating, and having fun with popular culture! https://www.civicimaginationproject.org/toolkit

#ThroughMyWindow: Conceived by our graduate students, #ThroughMyWindow builds on these efforts and uses the window as a metaphor that invites people to look past their immediate spatially constrained reality and reflect more calmly and deeply on how they are connecting to the past, experiencing the present, and anticipating the future. We then ask them to make note of what they would want their future-self to remember. To build a sense of connection, we then encourage people to share their reflections with others and through this help build our #ThroughMyWindow collection, capturing the mundane, yet poignant, poetry of the current moment. https://www.civicimaginationproject.org/throughmywindow

Practicing Futures Workshops: Our workshops aim to harness civic imagination towards action. Organized around the functions of the civic imagination, the workshops can be followed in order, but are also modular by design so that they can be taken individually or in various configurations to fit diverse communities and needs. https://www.civicimaginationproject.org/workshops.

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Abstract

Motivated by the context of large-scale developments and discussions taking place at Harvard Square (around 2017), lacking civic imagination, Dr. Zenovia Toloudi designed and taught a course at Dartmouth College Studio Art, on Art, Architecture, and Public Space (Fall 2018), which reimagines the public space of the square with an emphasis to engage the less privileged groups of society, as well as address civic concerns that are often neglected. The course focused upon how physical design and transformation of the environment could inspire civic imagination, even temporarily. Through their installations, interventions, and designs, students employed a variety of media aiming at improving (within the urban context of Harvard Square) general and specific conditions related to the public(s), such as the psychology of the individual, the inner-circle relationships among family and friends, face-to-face interactions as well as conversations among strangers, and equality for education in relation to the broader topic of undocumented students. What became clear through this investigation can be summarized in three recommended approaches a) improve human relationships and retreat from superficial ones; b) in response to current challenges, establish a design language that can better enable human potential; and c) start small (scale), so we can experience some change quickly (civic imagination), hoping to eventually inspire larger scale developments (policies, planning, etc).

When Public Space Meets Civic Imagination: The Case of Harvard Square

Zenovia Toloudi

Figures 01-03. A Permutable Trail, student project by Ethan Rubens. Art, Architecture, and Public Space Course, Architecture II/ III, Dartmouth College Studio Art (Fall 2018). © Images: Ethan Rubens.

Some Problems around Harvard Square

On February 16, 2017 (Cambridge City Hall), I attended one of the Cambridge Historical Commission meetings regarding a large-scale development in Brattle Street that included plans to demolish the building at 9-11 JFK St. (Corcoran's/Urban Outfitter's building with frontage also on Brattle St.), and to construct a new infill building, modify storefronts, and to build an upper story extension.[1] Much of the architectural discussion during that evening centered around topics such as the materials to be used for the infill building (a brick or a glass façade), or illumination of the square during late hours. There was obviously not enough architectural depth in the discussion and leaving the room left me rather puzzled, and full of thoughts. Of course, the solution could simply lack design creativity. I also wondered...why weren't there, in the City Hall, more architects/academics from the two large academic institutions in the area to critique the design, or to shift the direction of the discussions away from the P&L (driven development)? Ever since, a few further changes have been implemented in the plaza,

1   Minutes from the meeting in Cambridge:

https://www.cambridgema.gov/~/media/Files/

historicalcommission/pdf/meetingminutes/

CHC/2017/minutes_CHC_20170216.pdf?la=en

including the closing of local businesses (cafés and shops), and the opening of franchise restaurants, resulting to what we experience today, that is the creation of a typically sterile square, made for tourists and the well-off, similar to airports or malls.

In the impossible task to rescue the square, even if architects, planners, and academics were involved in an 'activist' role, there has been neither higher people diversity, nor integration of programs. The damage in Harvard Square extends beyond the responsibility of a singled-out discipline. It is in, fact much, deeper, rooted inside inequality, inefficiency of present institutions and systems, and more so the overall ignorance, and the lack of civic imagination.

I decided to address some of these concerns as part of my Art, Architecture, and Public Space course at Dartmouth College. Earlier, I had worked with students on similar issues in areas such as Athens, Greece, and Manhattan, NY. In the Fall of 2018, I dedicated the course to Harvard Square and worked with students to rethink it. Typically, architects, designers, and planners transform public space by means of generic propositions for plazas, parks, waterfronts, and monuments in order to create spaces for aggregation, and to possibly reenact social, cultural, and historical collective memories. These designs are often large-scale and top-

down. I took a different approach, which generally favored the artistic model, focusing more on installations and interventions, and small-scale projects that could affect problem situations via bottom-up initiatives and 'guerrilla-like' tactics, to potentially instigate interaction, participation, and civic engagement.

Instead of starting from the entire site itself, I proposed a methodology in which students undertook the following steps: they first studied the theory; they then identified a topic on public space or 'public-ness' about which they personally deeply cared; they subsequently created physical models that addressed the issues concerned; they undertook a fieldtrip to Harvard Square, Cambridge; they discussed with experts; they identified a site and/or a demographic within Harvard Square to develop more specific designs for; they developed additional models in the context of the known issues of Harvard Square; they created prototypes to test their hypotheses; and they finalized their designs by proposing installations/interventions aiming at affecting positively a particular demographic, whose needs were rather overlooked, or underserved.

The purpose of this pedagogy was not to
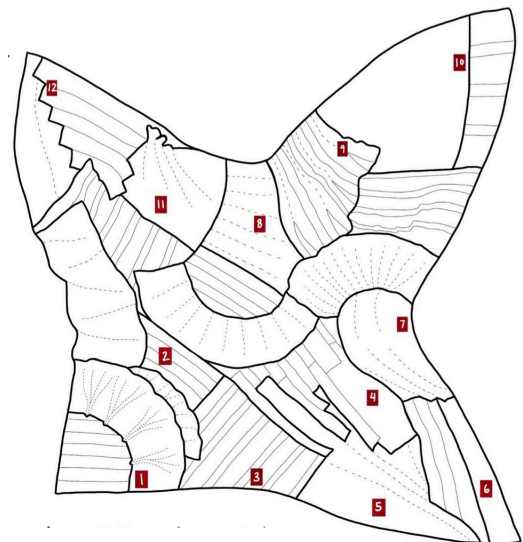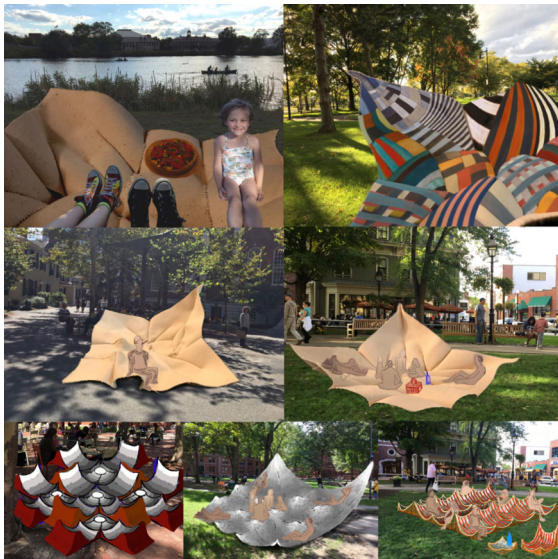
suggest that design for public space should rather be small-scale as opposed to large-scale (or bottom-up rather than top-down), but to stimulate students in thinking that public space should not only be approached as an opportunity for design beautification, but instead as an occasion to also engage the less privileged groups of society, as well as addressing civic concerns that are often neglected. Consequently, in order to address public space, we need to employ civic imagination, which could cultivate new ways of engagement with multiple publics, and to rethink our priorities.

Transforming the Square Bottom-Up: A few Proposals

The course essentially focused upon how physical design and transformation of the environment could inspire civic imagination, even temporarily. Through their installations, interventions, and designs, students employed a variety of media aiming at improving (within the urban context of Harvard Square) general and specific conditions related to the public(s), such as the psychology of the individual, the inner-circle relationships among family and friends, face-to-face

Figures 04-09. Pattern Picnic, student project by Olivia Champ. Art, Architecture, and Public Space Course, Architecture II/III, Dartmouth College Studio Art (Fall 2018). © Images: Olivia Champ.

interactions as well as conversations among strangers, and equality for education in relation to the broader topic of undocumented students.

Through *A Permutable Trail*, student Ethan Rubens, claimed that by designing uneven elevated pathways (inspired by crawling caterpillars) and placing them in existing commuter paths, we could offer each pedestrian, not only a way to avoid the slush, snow, mud, dust, and ice, usual components in other words of long New England winters, but also provide a "mental" mechanism that could help them disrupt their rather "depressing" and monotonous daily routines. In doing so, they would experience their familiar surroundings in unusual ways, essentially helping them feel better. To achieve this, the designer proposed to build based on contrast (use of round geometry as opposed to the known rectilinear shapes of Harvard Square), uneven surfaces requiring balance and attentiveness. Also, temporality, and by rearranging the parts of the path and its formation sporadically, to offer pedestrians the excitement of "hiking" that requires their full attention and cognitive skills, but also provide a visual variety within the established landscape.

Figures 10-11. Contact Funnel, student project by Paula Lenart. Art, Architecture, and Public Space Course, Architecture II/III, Dartmouth College Studio Art (Fall 2018). © Images: Paula Lenart.

Student Olivia Champ hypothesized that if one nurtures one's inner circle relationships by means of moments of bonding and collective memory, then there is a better chance to deal with and resolve the larger community problems. She developed *Pattern Picnic*, with which, she reinvented the quilt as an architectural/urban object that provides structure for intimate moments within the hectic urban lifestyle, aiming to nurture the familiar circle of friends and/or family, and bring them closely together via: the immediate connection to natural environment, sitting on the grass, feeling the fresh air, enjoying the shades and sounds under a tree, the stimulation of senses, smell nature itself and the food, enjoy more delicious tastes since "things taste better outside," touch the earth and each other. cultivation of idyllic moments and therefore reenactment of collective memory through the ritual of events repeated in time trigger old memories and start new ones, and the pleasure of an informal setting, spontaneity, surprise, and improvisation typically required in such occasions.

Finally, the designer developed an object which both literally and
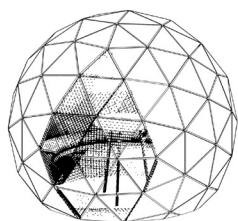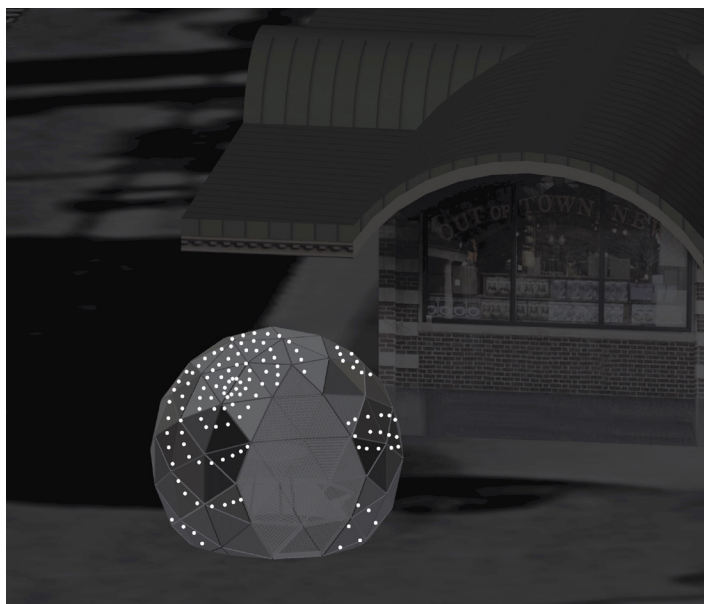
Figures 12-13. Conversation Bubble, student project by Isabel Burgess. Art, Architecture, and Public Space Course, Architecture II/III, Dartmouth College Studio Art (Fall 2018). © Images: Isabel Burgess.

metaphorically emphasizes history and tradition—New England and the pride of carefully crafted homemade objects, which belong to the family and potentially passes down to generations, in new unfamiliar locations. The object provides story-telling opportunities, reminds us the spontaneity of a dress or jacket to be shared by people sitting on the grass, and promotes the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas or different stances in life through a collage of patterns, inspired by Cambridge facades. The wistful quilt provokes connections across art forms and animates many interpretations. The visual language of patterns is both specific and ubiquitous, while the experience of patterns is habitual and evolving.

Three projects focused on re-building our social skills. *Contact Funnel*, *Conversation Bubble*, and *The Listening Bench* dealt with aspects of improving our interpersonal relationships such as being able to have eye contact and conversation with strangers.

For the *Contact Funnel*, student Paula Lenart worked around the premise that the eye contact is the first visual cue for human interaction and acknowledgment. Therefore, she has developed a design
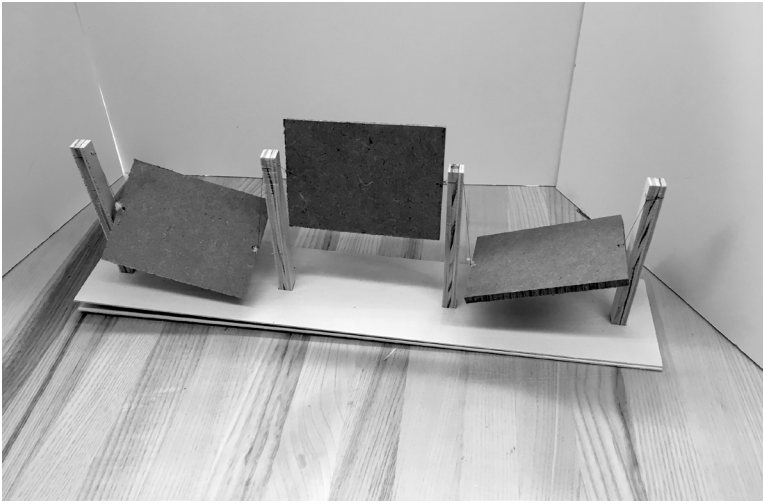
Figures 14-15. The Listening Bench, student project by Albert Mitchell. Art, Architecture, and Public Space Course, Architecture II/III, Dartmouth College Studio Art (Fall 2018). © Images: Albert Mitchell.

which utilized a meandered/maze shape for the path, mirrors and kaleidoscopic filters, multiplicity and patterns to intensify the visual contact among strangers. By reimagining the flow of people in Harvard Square, the project aimed at embracing and familiarizing us with "another person."

For the *Conversation Bubble*, student Isabel Burgess focused on exploring interpersonal communication as a strategy for healthy relationships. Her critique, in the increasingly digital age of continuously Conversing over smartphones, led her in finding ways to instigate face-to-face communication, which is far richer and more complex. To achieve this, she employed Faraday Cage technology disabling Wi-Fi and mobile wave transmission, and therefore she created a "quiet zone" that offers opportunity for interpersonal connectivity. An unusual dome space, dim lighting, evening programming, and rather tall tables discourage people from using the dome as workspace, as it typically happens in college campuses and libraries. Instead it encourages them to enjoy each other's company and to potentially interact with each other.

Having a similar goal to reinforce conversation among strangers, student Albert Mitchell took a more drastic
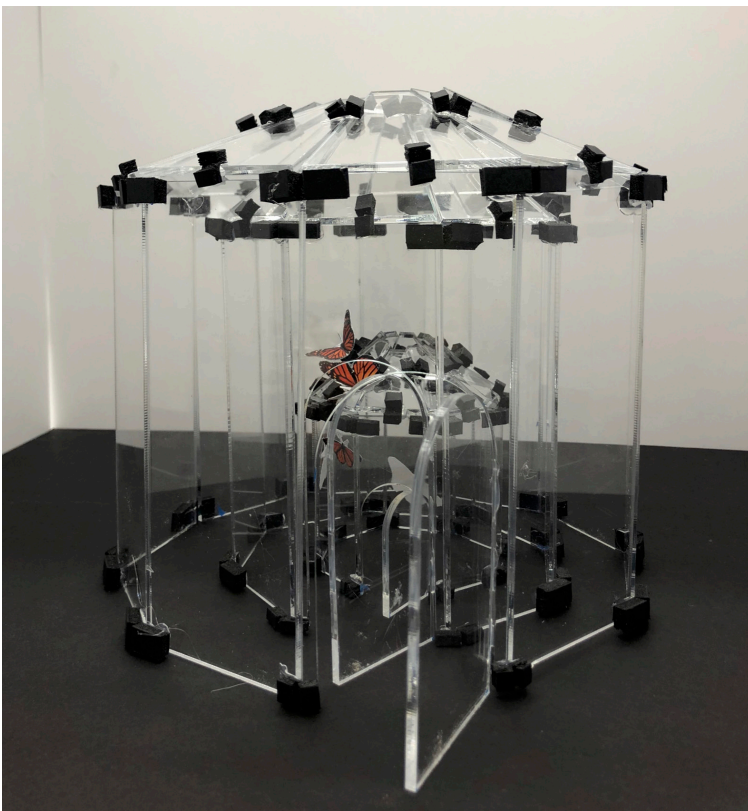
Figures 16-17. Sanctuary, student project by Nelly Mendoza-Mendoza. Art, Architecture, and Public Space Course, Architecture II/III, Dartmouth College Studio Art (Fall 2018). © Images: Nelly Mendoza-Mendoza.

approach and developed *The Listening Bench*, a series of seating platforms attached by rope to each other, in a playful manner: Only if an equal force is exercised upon all of the seats simultaneously will the seats work in the conventional way. The normal seating is permitted only if people cooperate in balancing their chairs. The challenge to be able to sit down acts as an incentive for people to cooperate. The student hypothesizes that the aspiration of the same goal would create a shared sense of achievement when the objective is attained, which may spark conversation among all parties involved. In addition, the proximity of the seats themselves, and time spent on this unusual bench might reinforce the process of listening, often ignored in everyday life.

One cannot disregard that the history of Harvard Square is deeply embedded in the history of Harvard University and in education in general. Beyond students, faculty, and staff, it is well known that Harvard Square has always attracted a series of independent intellectuals, who live nearby without necessarily being part of it. Student Nelly Mendoza-Mendoza focused on connecting Harvard Square with bigger issues such as those of

immigration and undocumented students in higher education. For her project *Sanctuary*, the designer created a three-dome structure descending in size, all made of glass to convey fragility. The large-size dome to represent all the "marginalized," the mid-size to represent the families of undocumented students, and the small-size is for the undocumented students within Ivy League institutions. The smallest of the three dome, positioned in the center, features recognizable furniture from the particular Ivy League institution along with live monarch butterflies, which are often used by different immigrant advocacy groups to represent undocumented students. The structure was designed to be easily demolished and reassembled so it can be moved around, and be placed at various four-year college campuses in the US for a week at a time. The student hypothesized that the constrained shape will depict the limited opportunities of undocumented students allowed by their status, and the dome-shape will represent the high statute of an Ivy League institution unearthing the unfairness in the life of such students: being trapped in privileged places without access to privilege.

Thoughts on Developing Civic Imagination

What became clear through this investigation can be summarized in three recommended approaches: a) improve human relationships and retreat from superficial ones; b) in response to current challenges, establish a design language that can better enable human potential; and c) start small (scale), so we can experience some change quickly (civic imagination), hoping to eventually inspire larger scale developments (policies, planning, etc).

A) To improve public space, we first need to improve ourselves, and then our relationships to others.

Starting from the scale of one inhabitant or visitor, moving to the immediate circle of family and friends, then to the interaction of multiple communities in the area, and eventually connect with global populations, the students were able to suggest improvements by collectively rethinking the hierarchy of human relationships that we need to take care of and nourish within our society.

B) As a basic tool for public space, we need to develop a visual language, where spatial forms and elements of design can be paired with particular problems and not-so well recognized functions.

The selection of particular designs with specific

visual outcomes, geometries, shapes, patterns, and functions, aimed at developing a type of visual language in which specific forms inspire specific actions, or alternatively, in order to trigger and work towards certain desired actions, we employ particular forms that might be more fit to purpose. This visual language for public space is necessary to inform about the potential of good design, as well as to generate more complex outcomes. It is based on a hypothesis that our current vocabulary, when it comes to design and architecture, is not specific enough to relate and respond to the current "crisis." An instance of this ongoing research project was presented as part of *Listen! Speak! Act! A Kaleidoscope of Architectural Elements for Public Space* exhibition[2] during the Fall of 2016.

C) To inspire a "big change," we need to first implement small changes.

Small-scale designs, relatively easy to implement if opportunity arises, constitute a series of new typologies at the intersection of art and architecture, whose purpose is neither to comment, nor to fulfill utilitarian requirements. They are there to acknowledge needs and wants that may have been forgotten. Or, if expressed more physically, they could even instigate among experts and the public the values that maintain us, humans, as a whole. The physical designs proposed by the students are not necessarily feasible solutions, especially having been created within the context of a course, and without actual implementation. But they may become great opportunities to cultivate the civic imagination, and inspire accordingly a set of new values within a public, or even reenact a number of values that have been muted, being less about the individual, or profit, less about consumerism, and more about the social, the collective, the public, our civic self.

2   The exhibition investigates how design can act as agency to instigate or reinforce for the public a series of actions, such as communication, interaction, collaboration, playfulness, and empathy. Through responsive designs, ephemeral interventions, participatory events, collective experiences, and happenings, architecture can serve the commons, and therefore can become the catalyst for social space and public action. http://zenovia.net/Speak-Listen-Act.html

I

Abstract

In this article, I make a case for the role of play in the consolidation of an aesthetically and humanistically-informed sense of autonomous selfhood. I will introduce what I term the "play principle," by drawing on the psychoanalytic concept of the "true self" as promulgated by influential British Psychoanalytic School pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott and by the philosophical theories of the eros principle by Frankfurt School critical theorist Herbert Marcuse in order to demonstrate a psycho-dynamically and philosophically robust path to selfhood. Finally, I will illustrate the play principle in action by discussing Romanian-German novelist's Carmen-Francesca Banciu's genre-defying book, Light Breeze in Paradise.

Keywords:

Play principle; Donald Winnicott; Herbert Marcuse; Carmen-Francesca Banciu; eros principle; true self

Aesthetics of the 'True Self': Toward a Theory of the Play Principle

Elena Mancini

In the spirit of ludics, I'd like to bring together some insights from my experiences as both a literary scholar and translator, and psychoanalytic clinician. I want to explore the idea of what I call the "play principle," which I broadly conceive as a transformational consciousness in rethinking commonly adhered to norms, practices, and forms of self expression within the contemporary established social and cultural order. The play principle privileges individuality and authenticity of experience and expression over conformity, compliance and performance, the dictates of social being under the exchange value oriented strictures of post-industrialized capitalism. My notion of the play principle encompasses both an aesthetic orientation as well mental disposition toward everyday life. As a modus for promoting the emergence of an authentic sense of self, my thesis of the play principle is informed by the psychoanalytic concept of the "true self" as promulgated by influential British Psychoanalytic School pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott and by the philosophical theories of the eros principle by Frankfurt School critical theorist Herbert Marcuse. Finally, I will illustrate the play principle in action by discussing Romanian-German novelist's Carmen-Francesca Banciu's genre-defying book, *Light Breeze in Paradise*.

The Concept of the True Self

Derived from an object relational context, and Winnicott's clinical experiences with mother-infant interactions, the concept of a true self must be understood foremost in contradistinction to a "false self." In its most basic definition, the false self denotes a self that emerges as a result of unmet developmental needs and infantile impingements. Building upon Freud's drive theory, Winnicott recognized that the achievement of an integrated self depended upon caregiving in which the infant's most basic instinctual "id" needs were not only sufficiently satisfied, but that their emotionally expressive "ego" needs also be recognized and met. This was particularly critical for the first three years of the child's life.

According to this model, the primary caregiver's ability to provide an adequate "holding," which Winnicott understood as both physical and figurative, providing satisfactory care in feeding and handling the baby and empathic responsiveness to the child's moods

and expressions of internal states, would help the infant to integrate sensori-motor elements and to develop a healthy conception of self and other differentiation. As such failures and frustrations in delivering this dedicated nurturing of to the infant, Winnicott argued, would not only prove disappointing but give rise to personality distortions in the infant such as with the development of a false self. Constructed in response to the lack of responsiveness and attunement within the early caregiving environment, the false self is a defensive posture that the infant derives from the experience of failing to receive what Winnicott termed "good enough" mothering.

According to Winnicott, good enough mothering consists in a mother or caregiving figure being able to (not perfectly), but sufficiently meet the infant's spontaneous gestures with receptivity and compassion and to adequately moderate the experience of frustration, keeping them within a bearable range appropriate to the child's development, and never allowing them to exceed a tolerable level. In the absence of good enough mothering, the infant develops a false self, a reactive and maladaptive response to the maternal impingements and misattunements.

According to Winnicott, play occupies a significant role in the achievement and fortification of the true self. Caregiving that is characterized by good enough mothering "supports infantile gestures that give expression to spontaneous impulses."

Winnicott interpreted these gestures as the source of the true self. Failure to meet these gestures with recognition, encourages the infant to resort to compliance and the development of a false self. In this conceptualization, the security and freedom to play is also critical to the development of an autonomous true self as the child begins to gain awareness of the differences between "me and not me," or rather of the existence of an inner and outer reality. This capacity to distinguish internal from objective world, an achievement that enables an individual to engage in reality-testing, is preceded by what Winnicott saw as an intermediary stage in between subjective and objective reality, or a phase that was characterized by "a baby's inability and growing ability to recognize and accept reality." This intermediary phase is one in which

play, if encouraged, can support the baby's advancement toward a secure relationship to its caregiving object and a more realistic grasp of the external world. Winnicott noted that the infant seeks to maintain the quiet union between the infant and its attachment figure and the feeding breast by using its thumbs and fists to stimulate the oral erotogenic zone.

An essential aspect of good enough mothering consists in assisting the infant in their journey toward adjusting to decreasing availability of the primary object by initially offering almost perfect adaptation to the baby's needs to thereby affording "the infant the opportunity for illusion that her breast is part of the infant...as though it were, under magical control." Such near seamless responsiveness to the baby's needs gives the infant the developmentally important illusory experience of omnipotence, which must be carefully and sensitively decreased. Winnicott observed that as the infant develops, they would attach themselves to special objects such as teddy bears, dolls, soft and hard objects and become "addicted" to such objects, which he called "transitional objects" to soothe the infant in the absence of its attachment figure. In a good mothering environment, the child's wish to adopt a transitional object would be supported and accepted without question or judgment as to the choice of a particular object over another or whether the child sees it as real or not real. While transitional objects are not embraced by all children, such objects serve the important function to bridge the discomfort resulting from experiences in separation from the primary object.

Thus, Winnicott saw as one of the central tasks of good enough mothering, the ability "to gradually disillusion the infant." This would only prove successful if the mothering figure has been able "to give sufficient opportunity for illusion." According to this caregiving model, a robust well-enough start is necessary in achieving the ability to distinguish between subjective experience and objective reality. A consistently responsive early caregiving environment allows the infant to develop confidence that the mother's breast will be there just when they need it and this helps infant to feel creative and powerful. Thus illusion is a key aspect in the transitional phenomena of life that Winnicott described as buttressing the development of the infant's sense of self by supporting their sense of safety in their experience of the intermediate area between

"primary creativity and objective perception based on reality-testing."

A critically constitutive aspect of good enough mothering that facilitates the infant's journey toward the development of a stalwart sense of self, 'a true self' is the caregiver's ability to meet the infant's spontaneous gestures and expressions with enthusiastic recognition and involved responsiveness. Winnicott argued that acknowledgement of these gestures reassures the infant that they are accepted, and encourages them to play with their sense of creativity and potency. Lack of responsiveness to the infant's playfulness and achievements in the caregiver, often occurring with depressed and emotionally unavailable parents, inhibits the child's free expression of a true self. Such misattunements toward the child's attempts to communicate through spontaneous play according to Winnicott would cause the infant to become overly sensitized to the caregiver's sadness, through a process that Freud termed 'introjection,' which described the infant's capacity to internalize the mother's mood. This defensive adaptation on the part of the infant, Winnicott argued, causes them to adapt their behavior in accordance with the demands and expectations they learn to anticipate from their caregivers in order to receive positive responses and acceptance.

This compliant adaptation to the caregiving attitude and environment is what Winnicott referred to as the "false self." While the false self is not in and of itself unhealthy or aberrational, Winnicott recognized the importance and usefulness of this adaptive capacity to temper and restrain one's spontaneous expressions in certain contexts, and thus he did not see the false self as in and of itself pathological. Nor did he see the true self as a primary self. Rather he saw the true self and the false self as existing on a continuum. In the presence of "good enough mothering," the infant is encouraged and supported in their discovery of their true self, and the false self develops as a healthy response to a child's knowledge and understanding of social norms and contexts. In caregiving environments where good enough mothering is inconsistent, the child can manage to call upon the false self in order to protect the true self from being exposed to rejection, injury, and offense. In severely lacking and emotionally lacking caregiving environments, the child will resort to

a premature conjuring up of a false self and expending their energy and creativity in learning how to operate from primarily from the defensive false sense of self in order to feel safe and accepted. So severe is their preoccupation with feeling secure and avoiding hurt and rejection that these individuals never or only rarely ever manage to achieve, make contact with, or express their true self.

Winnicott observed that the long term effects of a sustained predominant false self is a chronic sense of feeling empty, dead, and phony. Such individuals emphasize "doing" over "being" in order to execute the compliance upon which they feel their survival or sense of acceptance depends. Whereas living from the position of one's true self, endows one with a feeling of aliveness and the security of having a unique and autonomous self and a sense of interiority that they can authentically and creatively express if they so choose.

The Eros Principle and Play

In his scathing critiques of the repressive cultural dictates of modern civilization, Herbert Marcuse elevated play and what he called the "aesthetic dimension" as central features of a mature and non-oppressive civilization. His argument impugns modern culture's reliance on the collective repression of innate erotic drives as well as the Marxist devaluation of subjectivity and how these unwittingly co-conspire to achieve the ends of industrial capitalism. By privileging de-eroticized sexuality and emphasizing the dominance of instrumental relation between and among people, Marcuse diagnoses a central dynamic of alienation in modern culture. Specifically, how individuals become subordinated to what he calls the "performance principle," or the adherence to norms and behaviors that cultivate the prevailing social reality. As Paul A. Robinson has argued: "the reality principle had assumed a particular form which demanded greater or, to be precise, more varied repression than was in fact necessary for the continued survival of civilization per se."

The salient insight here is that industrial capitalism requires what Marcuse termed "surplus repression" that is, the increasing need by capitalist society to repress the erotic, creative, life-enhancing drives inherent in the self. Subordination to the performance principle – or the compliance with the normative and practical

mandates of a society organized for the purposes of profit and the extraction of commodified labor – therefore constitutes an alienation between the dynamics of a true self and the maintenance of a false self. In his concept of the "eros principle" we are to see "play" as a central means to overcome the alienation individuals experience brought on by attending to the necessities of securing material gain and accumulation. Human activity is to be brought back into the domain of the "erotic": into the sphere of play where the hegemony of logic over sensuousness, and performance and productivity over eros is overcome.

A key means to this kind of psycho-social transformation is the power of the aesthetic. For Marcuse, art plays an essentially critical function in its capacity to undermine the forces of social repression. It is able to do this by disrupting the categories of consciousness that are manipulated by the reality principle. As he argues in The Aesthetic Dimension: "The truth of art lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who established it) to define what is real." Play and the erotic now become vehicles for emancipation. They play a central role in pointing individuals toward the sources of their alienation while simultaneously providing each of us with an emancipated experience of sense, reason and practice: "Art is committed to that perception of the world which alienates individuals from their functional existence and performance in society – it is committed to an emancipation of sensibility, imagination, and reason in all spheres of subjectivity and objectivity."

Here the Hegelian thesis of the sublation (Aufhebung) of reason and sense is achieved. For now, true reason will become embodied in the activities of everyday life. Freedom is no longer a formal procedure of law regulating our conduct, or some abstract ability to act and choose without external interference, but a lived experience, a concretization of collective forms of action and being that facilitate the unfolding of the self's deep potentialities. Play, the erotic, the aesthetic, now become means for shattering the reified world and a chance to reappropriate our true capacities for life-affirming creative drives.

What I am calling here the "play principle" develops out of the parallels between Winnicott's and Marcuse's analyses. From Winnicott, we can take the centrality of play in the process of

healthy ego-development. From Marcuse, we see the power of play in liberating consciousness from the prevailing socio-economic order and the kinds of repression needed for its maintenance. What I would like to do now, is show how the play principle is illustrated and enacted in the work of contemporary Romanian-German novelist Carmen-Francesca Banciu.

Carmen-Francesca Banciu and the Enactment of the Play Principle

Carmen-Francesca Banciu is the author of seven literary volumes, three of which constitute a trilogy of fictionalized memoirs. She has also authored four volumes of short stories, including *Berlin Is My Paris* in addition to numerous critical essays and an award-winning radio play. A Berlin transplant since the early 1990s, Banciu was born in 1955 in Lipova, in the province of Arad, near the Hungarian border in Romania, Carmen-Francesca Banciu was brought up the only child of a middle-ranking Communist party official and a mother who traded her bourgeois standing and education for a life of self-denial and submissiveness to her party-loyalist husband. Exposed to a host of European languages including Hungarian, Italian and French at an early age as a result of being brought up in a multi-lingual territory and adopting an early emotional alliance with her maternal grandmother, who cultivated a cosmopolitan outlook and eschewed intellectual identification with the Communist Party, Banciu's youth was shaped by a love of art and languages. So much so that as a young woman, she resourcefully applied her linguistic talents to her advantage by adopting English as the language of her diaries in order to secure them from the prying eyes of her domineering mother. Unwelcome as they were amid a host of opposing forces and repressive ideologies, Banciu's early signs of emergent individuality had not only taken root, but became so irrepressible as to decisively derail her from the predetermined course that her parents and the state had chartered for her.

Banciu's passion for art and self-expression placed her on an early collision course with both familial and political dictatorship. The child who had been singled out to carry out great things for the regime, was also targeted by the Securitate and spied upon by friends, and reported for participating in political demonstrations and depicting her country in letters and in her works of fiction in unpatriotic language. By the mid-

1980s, Banciu had become an established award-winning writer in Romania. Her short story, "Ghetou strălucitor," (The Beaming Ghetto) earned her the Arnsberg Prize, a distinguished Germany literary award in 1985.

"The Beaming Ghetto" is a critical depiction of the abysmal social and economic conditions that characterized life for many under Ceauseşu's dictatorship. Keenly attuned to the censorship practices in Romania of the 1980s, Banciu transposed the setting of the story plot, taking aim at the contemporaneous present, onto a geographically ambiguous locality called Prestonville. The only place and time markers that the nameless first person narrator offers are that Prestonville "is a place forgotten by God and people," and that it's Tuesday. In a detached and caustic tone, the story's narrator juxtaposes a family's resolve to continue to cultivate art and culture against the harsh realities of starvation, garbage heaps and sprawling rats. In addition to offering a window into the inhumane conditions, a searing irony and a non-defeatist posture are among the text's achievements.

Banciu's prize was immediately followed by the imposition of a publication ban for the thinly veiled ideologically dissident views implicit in her writing. Under publication ban, Banciu continued to write short stories and actively engaged in the protests and revolutionary activities that eventually culminated with the collapse of the regime. In 1990, Banciu received an artist's grant to Germany. It was the first time she'd ever traveled outside of Romania, and her experience led to uproot her young family and migrate to Germany. During the early years of her immigration, Banciu resumed writing in her native tongue and had a number of works translated into German, after enduring a period of writer's block in large part due to the psychic aftereffects of the events experienced on the historical stage.

In Germany, her writing continued receiving honors and awards. She debuted in German with a memoiristic novel, *Vaterflucht, (Fleeing Father)* in 1996, and from that moment on has adopted German as her primary literary language. The narrator-protagonist works through a painful and abusive upbringing in an authoritarian household and state and her fraught relationship to her party loyalist family. The novel is the first installment in a memoiristic trilogy, titled *The Trilogy of Optimists*. In her collection of short stories, *Berlin Is My Paris* (published in 2002), Banciu charts

her psychic journey into a new language, culture and identity—that of a Berliner and a citizen of a new Europe, undefined by east and west her newly adopted identity as a denizen of Berlin.

Against this biographical backdrop of rebellion and struggle for individuality, I will argue that it is not difficult to see how Banciu's prose functions as a co-conspirer in the rebellion. Her prose frequently enacts a playful rebellion against orthographic conventions and undermining truisms, conventional wisdoms and handed-down truths and familial lore by calling them into question. I maintain that her well-honed style also evokes Marcuse's eros principle. For Marcuse, the concept of eros was a creative principle that was rooted in the individual's spontaneous activity. This eros principle was constrained by the reality principle which is basically defined by the norms and life-patterns of established, bourgeois culture. He takes the concept of "play" (Spiel) from Schiller in order to show how aesthetic experience can be used to overturn and subvert this reality principle.

Some of the ways in which this rebelliousness presents itself in Banciu's work include the following:

- Minimalistic sentence construction (frequent use of short and/or one-worded sentences)
- Deceptively simple prose (childlike observations that express emotional and philosophical insights)
- Frequent word plays and use of puns and words with dual meanings
- Subverted use of idioms and parables
- Obsessive repetition and anaphora
- Irony
- Poetic Imagery
- Poetic language
- Stanzas instead of paragraphs
- Sustained repetition of a theme with variation
- Rich and varied use of interrogatives that appear as follows:
  - Variations on a theme of questions
  - The cross-examining question – where she subjects her assertions, common sense, conventional truths and truth claims to unsparing scrutiny
  - Questioning statement
  - Open-ended questions
  - Rhetorical questions
  - Unanswered questions
  - Provocative questions

A closer reading of her deceptively simple and straightforward texts reveals how her writing constitutes a revolt of its own through its imaginative way of presenting subversive content and use of playful form. How does Banciu's prose reimagine the status quo? She impugns the established order of things in language that is disarmingly simple and direct. Deploying a series of pointed interrogatives, her prose calls into question deeply entrenched cultural reflexes as well as corrupt social practices endemic to reified existence and repressed emotions with the untainted legitimacy of a child. Her language gives voice to a perspective that is unapologetic and bold in its quest for a more just and authentic alternative. In her trilogy, she uses short simple sentences interspersed with questions to indict her parents' willing embrace of small-mindedness and hypocrisy and their failure to model any true sense of autonomous agency to her since they had submissively ceded their own to a totalitarian system and mindset.

It is in this sense that Banciu's works achieve what Marcuse termed an aesthetic transformation of reality through "a reshaping of language, perception and understanding so they reveal the essence of a reality in its appearance: the repressed potentialities of man and nature. The work of art thus represents reality while accusing it." Interrogating the past, putting it on trial and recasting it through a kaleidoscope of perspectives, Banciu's work performs resistance in a Marcusian sense by estranging as well as contesting the established reality principle.

Banciu's celebration of play both as a thematic focus as well as well as in her writing style is also a feature of resistance in the Marcusian sense, and can be seen as a constituting a form of liberation from the dominant consciousness and the prevailing social relations. Playful prose in the sense of double meanings, word plays, teasing the reader by building up expectations only to divert or establish a conclusion other than anticipated, twists on words and idiomatic expressions, the use of irony can readily be located in all of Banciu's works, however it is prominently featured in her 2018 work, A *Light Breeze in Paradise*. A collection of reflections, vignettes, photographs and illustrations, the first person protagonist muses on what it means to observe and to be fully present in a moment, *Light Breeze in Paradise* is set in the Mani peninsula of Greece. Here, we witness said protagonist

embarking upon a meaningful journey in which the senses and presence of mind lead to an artistic consciousness in which the emphasis is on "being" rather than "doing." Creating a moment in time for herself in which she is unbound by the pressures of maintaining social and material existence untethered to technology, she discovers pleasure in the small, simple, seemingly ordinary and the seemingly insignificant during a solitary sojourn in the Southern Peloponnese. Effortlessly and without purpose, she begins to meditate on the preciousness of unstructured time and its unforeseen gifts in the forms of awareness and attentive observation and finds herself alone and never lonely.

Surrendering to the beauty of her surroundings and practicing a radical mindfulness, the unnamed protagonist here indulges her power of imagination to construct a real, yet alternative and enchanted world with the creatures, sights, sounds and sensory perceptions that she encounters on her appointed terrace overlooking the sea. Against this backdrop the protagonist muses on truths that are frequently taken for granted.

I want to see everything. But still, I overlook most things. I need time to perceive things. Since things hide right in front of me. Because things hide from me. They hide from strangers' eyes. They hide from the untrained eye. From the hasty one. From the interloper.

The text goes on to illustrate the practice of the intensive form of perception and attention that is being advocated in a charming scene that shows the protagonist engaging in a very detailed observation of ants crawling up into the kitchen garbage can and realizing that she had obstructed their entry and musing what it must be like for them. Lizards, grasshoppers, cicadas, locusts and other local insects captivate the protagonist's attention and imagination with an earnestness and intensity that transcends the ordinary. She does not oppose or resist the conventionally unwelcome creatures in her environment, but lends them her keen powers of observation and creates photographic and illustrated images of them. She plays with the idea of the presence of two locusts in her apartment, ordinarily undesired creatures and refers to them as pets, giving them the mythical names of Clytemnestra and Orestes. This seeming reevaluation of the mundane that Banciu seems to be performing is also simultaneously a turning away from the

quotidian reified forms of existence.

Curious and inwardly awake, she engages in both jovial and meaningful exchanges with the locals and transplants, and learns about them and their relationship to the place to this place which she has deemed "Paradise" in part because of its beauty, but also in part because she can be fully present in it to perceive and inwardly experience it.

"And suddenly I feel that I am here. And am now. That it is me. I know. And I feel. That is my plate. And the sea in the background is my sea. It is my sea too. The sea is mine. Because I perceive it. And as long as I perceive it, it is my sea. And the mountains behind it. And even the sky that still has room in my view, is my sky. As long as I perceive everything, it belongs to me. And so I am unspeakably wealthy. An unending wealth. As long as I look here and now over my plate with my fork. Over the sea. Over the mountains. At the sky. Over everything that is captured here by my view."

Disrupting the routinized ways of seeing and functioning in everyday life and discovering transcendence in the ordinary affirms the emancipatory potential of art and subjectivity as recognized by Marcuse. In defending the importance of subjectivity against the Marxist critique of individualism, Marcuse upheld that "The 'flight into inwardness' and the insistence on a private sphere may well serve as bulwarks against a society which administers all dimensions of human existence. Inwardness and subjectivity may well become the inner and outer space for the subversion of experience, for the emergence of another universe."

I have attempted to argue how the cultivation and exploration of inwardness and the transcendence of the ordinary are ways in which Banciu's prose, by reveling in the freedom of time, form and imagination, establishes a disruption of consciousness rooted in the reality principle. It evinces a form of aesthetic experience that allows the reader a sense of play and, in the process, puts the reader in contact with a nascent sense of true selfhood. By enacting what I have been calling the play principle, Banciu's prose demonstrates a way of understanding the capacity of literature, and art more broadly, to transform consciousness and place the concept of play at the center of the project of discovering and cultivating an authentic self.

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Abstract

Public transit in the United States is constantly maligned as dirty, inefficient, and unsafe. It is often provided as the most obvious example of an inferior good in microeconomic classes around the United States. Who would choose to use public transit if they had the means to use a personal vehicle? The online community known as New Urbanism Memes for Transit Oriented Teens or the NUMTOTs for short, view it differently. This is a group reclaiming the imagining of public transit through the use of engaging, funny social media posts and memes that allow public transit users to be proud of riding the bus, subway, and other public systems that make America accessible. The NUMTOTs and similar groups are important because they not only provide an outlet for transit riders to engage with one another, but they also provide a space for the creation of alternative meanings of public transit that open up new possibilities for future public transit decisions made by public authorities.[1]

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1   Henry Jenkins et al., "Superpowers to the People! How Young Activists Are Tapping the Civic Imagination," in *Civic Media: Technology, Design, and Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2016).

Reimagining Public Transit:
New Urbanism Memes for Transit Oriented Teens

Eizabeth (Betsey) Suchanic & Eli Turkel

Introduction

Founded in March 2017 by two University of Chicago students, Juliet Eldred and Emily Orenstein, the facebook group quickly scaled into a popular platform for dialogue on "peak transit", brutalism, and designing ideal amtrak routes. The group name, "New Urbanism Memes for Transit Oriented Teens" specifies New Urbanism. New Urbanism is a theory and movement focused on community design, that aims to reduce sprawl and effects of urban renewal with walkable, mixed-use communities.[2] The group name also specifies "teens," but the group is not limited to any specific age group. The name just follows a traditional facebook group naming convention, "Blank Memes for Blank Teens."[3] Eldred started the group after a number of jokes regarding Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs in another group she created, "I feel personally attacked by this relatable map."[4] In borrowing the group's acronym, many members now identify as "NUMTOTs."

Two years later, the group has almost 140,000 members, a dozen moderators, more than 75 spin-off groups, and t-shirts for purchase. The group moderators estimates they receive 100 to 150 posts a day.[5] These spin-off communities include place-based NUMTOT groups, such as "Brotherly Love Memes For SEPTA Riding Teens" in Philadelphia to "Deep-Fried Dallas Memes for Metroplex Oriented Teens" in Dallas. The spin-off communities don't stop at place, but also for specific topics within New Urbanism, such as "New Forestry Memes for Landlocked Teens" for Green Infrastructure to "Public Housing Memes for Socialist Teens" for Public Housing.[6] There is a spin-off group just dedicated to dating within the NUMTOT communities, "NUMTinder," with almost 6,000 members.

"F A C T S"[7]

From #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, social

2   Congress for the New Urbanism, "The Movement," Text, CNU, April 20, 2015, https://www.cnu.org/who-we-are/movement.

3   Carrie Golus, "New Urbanist Memes for Transit-Oriented Teens," The University of Chicago Magazine, Winter 2019, https://mag.uchicago.edu/law-policy-society/new-urbanist-memes-transit-oriented-teens.

4   Laura Bliss, "The Future of Urban Planning Might Be in This Facebook Group," CityLab, March 30, 2018, https://www.citylab.com/life/2018/03/new-urbanist-memes-for-transit-oriented-teens/556790/.

5   Bliss.

6   Tyler Walter and Benjamin Chandler, "Urbanism and NUMTOT Groups - Google Docs," Listing, Google Docs, accessed March 16, 2019, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gK7ISVLrslTpeMnSs6wm1Yqpegi8Ur11NfC3dqU6NRE/edit.

7   Carl's Jr Pasmina, F A C T S, February 11, 2019, February 11, 2019.

media has never been more relevant in engaging in civic and political dialogues.[8] The NUMTOT group shows the power that social media has to connect individuals with niche interests around topics across the globe. The group moderators, that approve suggested posts, found it was necessary to add additional moderators in different time zones to ensure that group activity was available regardless of location. The stated group rules say, "This group is really special to us and we're very proud of our little corner of niche content."[9] An international forum for New Urbanism niche content that allows individuals to share ideas, frustrations, and excitement through visual jokes would not be possible without these communication platforms.

The work of the NUMTOTs is one example of larger phenomenon identified by Jenkins et. al. [10] in which activists use Internet forums and popular culture as a way to deconstruct or reconstruct social narraratives. The authors cite examples of Superman, Spiderman, and Captain America, among others in contemporary activism campaigns that generally involve social media in the reimagining social narrative about political causes or marginalized groups. For instance, immigrant groups use of Superman's origin story as a way of relating their personal stories to a well-known American superhero. In another example, feminist activists replaced female superhero images with the mediocre male superhero Hawkeye as a way to demonstrate the demeaning ways in which female superheroes are often portrayed. While these examples offer interesting theoretical issues in and of themselves, the larger issue the authors raise in about the concept of governance. Citizen participation in governance is often portrayed as a special event. What Jenkins et. al. are arguing is that each of these examples offers a small step towards the creation of meaning that shapes public life and indirectly affects public outcomes. This paper makes a similar argument. Through the use of social media the NUMTOTs offer a place for individuals to express alternative narratives about public transit. In doing so, they introduce public participation into the daily lives of group members that allows for the possibility of shared identity and vision [11].

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8   Shelley Boulianne, "Revolution in the Making? Social Media Effects across the Globe," Information, Communication & Society 22, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 39–54, https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1353641.

9   Juliet Eldred, "New Urbanist Memes for Transit-Oriented Teens," Facebook, January 4, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/groups/whatwouldjanejacobsdo/permalink/1147877578705195/.

10 Jenkins et al., "Superpowers to the People! How Young Activists Are Tapping the Civic Imagination."

11 Josh Hendler et al., "Engines of Change: What Civic Tech Can Learn From Social Movements" (Omidyar Network, 2016), https://

Memes as Imagination

The concept of the meme was created by Richard Dawkins in 1976, where he compared popular cultural ideas spread in much the same way of genes. There have been trends of groups using memes for "attention hacking" or "weaponizing" political ideas to make hate-speech or aggressive and violent ideas go viral on platforms such as 4chan, Reddit, and Twitter.[12] When considering the history of memes in raising awareness of political issues and spreading ideas in a biological way, the NUMTOTs group makes logical sense. These are political issues and often complex issues that presented through a meme can be overly simplistic, but also accessible and relatable. While memes have been

www.omidyar.com/spotlight/what-can-civic-tech-learn-social-movements; Beth Simone Noveck, Smart Citizens, Smarter State: The Technologies of Expertise and the Future of Governing, First Printing edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015).

12 Emerging Technology from the arXiv, "This Is Where Internet Memes Come From," MIT Technology Review, June 11, 2019, https://www.technologyreview.com/s/611332/this-is-where-internet-memes-come-from/.

harnessed as a tool for exclusion and divisiveness, that's not to say it can't be an advocacy or educational tool to raise awareness about public services and needs.

In covering this community, CityLab boldly states that NUMTOTs "are coming to save your city."[13] Through memes, they are discussing deeply important issues for local communities. While the group started as a meme community, a place for humorous content, the dialogue doesn't stop at laughter. The group rules state, "Though there's frequently intense discussions in here on high-stakes, high-impact issues, please remember that at the end of the day, this is just a meme group about trains."[14] These high-stakes, high-impact issues include everything from zoning, public housing, racism, socio-economic implications, and land use. The moderators have had to put a number of rules and measures in place to ensure that conversations are inclusive and respectful. While the memes are intended to be light and humorous, they are addressing heavy topics, which may require moderation and discussion.

What is fascinating about the NUMTOTs is that they have built an international community around perhaps some of the most place-specific issues. The discussion points of transit access, pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and land use vary greatly from neighborhood to neighborhood within cities, much less in drawing comparisons across countries and continents. Members are applying the challenges and issues they see in their own transit system or neighborhood and using this platform to connect with individuals who have similar challenges and suggestions. While the larger NUMTOT group is global, the more than fifty place-focused groups are able to discuss specific celebrations or challenges that their transit system has and even host in-person meet-ups to discuss, building an active place-based focus within the larger community.

Reimagining the Dialogue of New Urbanism

While members have many suggested solutions to reimagine transit and mobility, what they have reimagined is the dialogue surrounding transit and New Urbanism. By using memes, they have engaged an entirely different population and created ways to celebrate transit, which often is maligned. Through this participatory forum, where individuals can create and submit memes, it makes the issues of transit and New Urbanism far more accessible and personal. These celebrations of transit comes with their own set of criticisms demonstrated through memes, around car-

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13 Bliss, "The Future of Urban Planning Might Be in This Facebook Group."

14 Eldred, "New Urbanist Memes for Transit-Oriented Teens."

ownership and lack of transit accessibility.

New Urbanism itself is a movement, as well as a specific academic theory and urban planning approach to community design. Due to the niche interests around the implications for New Urbanism as it relates to transit, bikeability, and housing affordability, many of the dialogues around these topics often occur in specific formats, such as national conferences with Congress for New Urbanism15. However, this group, often transit enthusiasts rather than planning professionals, illustrates how New Urbanism approaches to the built environment affect a much larger population of people, who are interested and engaged in these discussions. The NUMTOTs have created an accessible format, through memes, to quickly and easily share and engage in celebration, criticism, or further dialogue of what New Urbanism looks like in practice.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The founder, Eldred, says of the forum,

"We started it as a joke group. It was never intended to be a serious discussion group."[16]

This grassroots group, now international urban planning platform, illustrates the role

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15 Congress for the New Urbanism, "The Movement."

16 Golus, "New Urbanist Memes for Transit-Oriented Teens."

of visual pop culture references in spreading opinions and ideas. Whether it's superheros or trains, the creation of these new visual narratives serve a larger purpose and signal new approaches to public participation. These new methods of sharing ideas and concepts are increasingly relevant in our media-saturated world. While the group continues to grow in members and daily posts after two years, Eldred says, that memes have of their own life cycle and she doesn't know what the long term vision for this community will look like.[17] Regardless of the future of the NUMTOTs, they quite literally illustrate new possibilities for reimagining civic dialogues.

The next steps for this project include investigating place-specific NUMTOT groups to answer questions regarding specific issues these groups are discussing and the impacts they have on local governance. While the discussions that occur in NUMTOT Facebook groups are enough for the group's work to indirectly affect local governance, it may also be the case that there are direct ways in which these groups impact local governance. Following how place specific groups discuss certain issues will provide greater insights into how NUMTOT groups react to transit related issues that arise in specific places that allow for analysis of narratives constructed by the group. Furthermore, following place-specific narratives constructed by individual NUMTOT members will allow for investigation as to what these narratives mean for the individuals who construct them. Specifically, are the NUMTOTs narratives meaningful inefficiencies for those who engage in their construction[18]? That is, does engagement in online activism with the NUMTOTs contribute to individuals sense of efficacy?[19] Finally, following place specific dialogue will allow for analysis of whether NUMTOT activism is restricted to online settings or whether the narratives NUMTOT activists construct are taken offline in an effort to effect local policy.[20]

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17 Golus.

18 Eric Gordon and Stephen Walter, "Meaningful Inefficiencies: Resisting the Logic of Technological Efficiency in the Design of Civic Systems," in Civic Media: Technology, Design, Practice, ed. Eric Gordon and Paul Mihailidis, 1 edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2016).

19 Shelley Boulianne, Kaiping Chen, and David Kahane, "Mobilizing Mini-Publics: The Causal Impact of Deliberation on Civic Participation Using Panel Data" (American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, 2018); Erhardt Graeff, "The Need for Empowerment-Based Design in Civic Technology" (The Internet, Policy & Politics Conference, Oxford University, 2018).

20 Robert D Putnam, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

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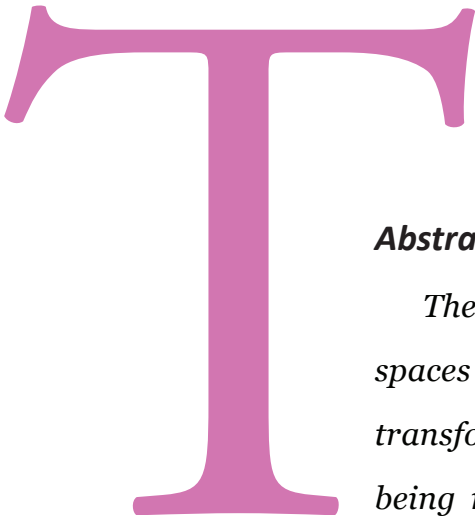
Abstract

The emergence of informal and spontaneous interventions in public spaces has opened new paths for citizens to participate in the design and transformation of their cities. At the same time, cities are increasingly being monitored and controlled through digital platforms. This text is situated at the intersection of both developments. It compares the practices of hackers and city makers and proposes "patching" as a dual technical and urban approach to fix the city. This concept is explored through a case study focused on parklets. A digital toolbox was developed for the case study. The toolbox facilitated the planning, design and approval process for parklets in Vienna. The usage of the toolbox was monitored using three data collection methods. The results show some limitations in the role of technologies and suggest some strategies to effectively trigger new dynamics in cities through the use of technologies.

Keyword:

Citizen-participation, urban-informatics, public spaces.

Patching the City: a Toolbox for Parklets in Vienna

Juan Carlos Carvajal Bermúdez

Figure 1: Parklet in Vienna.
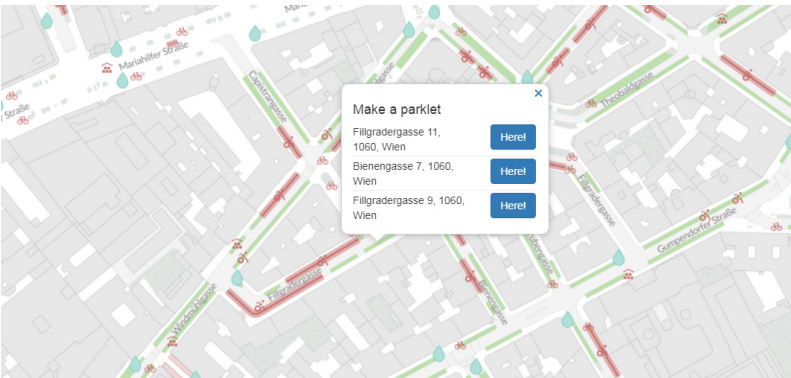
Figure 2: Parklet Potential Map.

Introduction

New informal methods of citizen participation have been mushrooming in different cities. One of the most prominent examples in this trend are Parklets (Figure 1), temporary constructions that transform public parking places into green areas or places to sit and enjoy the city. The concept of Parklets summarizes both the goals and the underlying reasons for the success of such interventions. A parklet transforms the city by offering sitting places or green areas in spaces that are otherwise restricted to pedestrians. At the same time they introduce diversity to the city and offer people the opportunity to discover new experiences in public spaces. This simple transformation addresses one of the most criticized results of modernist planning, namely, sterile and monotonous spaces that fail to attract people and create places to stay and enjoy the city. The popularity gained by the spontaneous and informal interventions in public spaces becomes hence symptomatic of the gaps left by modernist urban planning.

The trend towards informal citizen participation has been given different names such as Tactical, Guerrilla, Pop-up or DIY urbanism. There are certain elements

in common to all these methods. First, most of the interventions are temporal and are often labeled as tests, experiments, i.e. they are showcases of possibilities in the city that eventually can become permanent. The motto "short-term action for long-term change" summarizes this characteristic. Secondly, such interventions often explore gray areas that enable people to circumvent the complicated bureaucracy of many cities, creating pathways of actions for citizens interested to participate directly in the development of their cities. Finally, they propose a new role for citizens where they act as co-creators rather than spectators of urban development and are encouraged to transform cities on their own. Such elements account also for the rapid spread of such ideas to other cities: there are similar grey areas that can be transgressed, and the temporary, low-costs constructions can be materialized with limited resources. Citizens can quickly appropriate the concepts and reenact them in their own context.

The Hackable City

Such exploration of gray zones and the playful transgression of the established regulations have many elements in common with the methods used by hackers to repurpose technologies to achieve goals different to those for which such technologies were originally intended. Just like contemporary city makers, hackers explore grey areas in systems and use such holes or exceptions to re-shape technologies. Priority is given to results and improvements are done through consecutive modifications of the software. Such an iterative patching of code resembles city making methods: experimenting with the available tools until a satisfactory solution is reached. This connection has been explored in depth in The hackable city, a short research manifesto and design toolkit that proposes a research agenda at the intersection of city making and the creative appropriation of technologies.

The basic premise is that the increased availability of open data and also city wide platforms offer opportunities to change the logic of cities by repurposing tools and shaping them according to urban paradigms different to those proposed by modernist planning. If the city is increasingly managed and operated through platforms, then changing such platforms or creating new ones, should also enable new dynamics in city. At the core of this premise is the assumption that there is a series of moral choices embedded in our everyday objects. For example, an app that allows to search for public parking spots is also presenting a series of moral choices that give priority to autos over pedestrians. Following this argument, we can propose that transforming platforms can also instigate citizens to change their own environment and increase their engagement.

Patching the city: itymaking.wien

The aforementioned suggested hypothesis lead us to create a platform that changes the lenses through which citizens see public spaces: instead of being seen as potential parking places, they can be presented as potential green areas and, at the same time, they can orient the citizens through the administration apparatus. The platform, called CityMaking.Wien, was conceived and developed as part of the Ph.D thesis, "New methods of citizen participation based on digital technologies." With this platform we wanted to observe to which degree technology can truly activate citizens and motivate them to become active in their cities, specifically, by facilitating the process to conceive and get permissions to build parklets in Vienna.

CityMaking.Wien tapped into larger policy of the city of Vienna that allows residents of Vienna to build parklets in most of the public parking places of the city. There are some particularities that make this policy interesting. In Vienna the concept of using parking spaces to create extra sitting spaces for restaurants, so called "Schanigartens," has been used for decades. Businesses should pay a fee to the city to build a Schanigarten, and, in exchange, they can demand consumption from the visitors. Parklets, unlike Schanigartens, are strictly for non-profit activities. Hence, with this policy the city administration opens a public discussion on which use of public spaces bring more benefits to society. Citizens can now decide if they want a parking place or spaces to sit and enjoy the city.

For the development of CityMaking.Wien we interviewed the responsible authorities to learn about the regulations and procedures that should be taken into consideration. This preparatory phase allowed us to identify aspects that are relevant to obtain a permit, yet are no publicly available. With this information we conceived an online toolbox that helps citizens to identify potential spots to build a parklet, create the drawings needed for the approval, and submit the documents through an online form. The toolbox should facilitate the process of conceiving and getting permits for building parklets in Vienna and includes four tools explained below:

1. Basic information regarding the construction of parklets explaining the requirements and suggestions of the city of Vienna for the design and construction of parklet. For example, some of the restrictions are: the use of parklets for commercial activities is not allowed; the location of the parklet should be in the immediate surroundings of the permit holder; the

maximal dimensions of the parklets are 10 meters or two parking places.

2. A parklet potential map that shows where it would be possible to build a parklet, by showing in red the different restrictions that apply for the use of parking places. The map has information regarding hydrants, reserved parking places, bicycle parking racks, and other layers of information affecting the installation of parklets. In this way, the map simplifies the understanding of the regulations. Once a visitor clicks on a potential area (in green) a pop-up comes out and invites the visitor to make a parklet in the selected location (Figure 2).

3. A design tool that facilitates the creation of the required drawings for the submission. The tool has considered the requirements regarding dimensions and security, yet it is very simple to use. It does not allow to create drawings that exceed the maximum dimensions allowed. People can also download the drawings and edit them according to their own ideas.

4. An online submission tool that facilitated the contact with the authorities. The form required all needed documents to obtain a permit for the use of parking places. It could be reached from the potential map and some field would be automatically filled for the user.

Data collection

The toolbox was used as a case study to observe how re-shaping tools and platforms could also change dynamics in the city and, especially, if such tools can increase citizen engagement. To this end, the following three data-collection methods were used: web-analytics, a survey and interviews. These methods allowed us to compare the actual engagement of the visitors and their perception about the platform, and to also get a deeper insight into the aspects that are relevant for citizens to actually become active in the city. The toolbox was promoted through social media and also through citizen organizations (geht-doch. wien, raumstation, Space and Place) interested in public spaces and the transformation of cities through interventions. While the toolbox facilitated various steps related to the process of conceiving parklets it did not provide financial support for their construction. The data were collected between February and July of 2018.

Results and discussion

The survey showed a strong optimism regarding the role of parklets in cities. A large majority agrees that parklets can improve social life in cities and that parklets allow people to participate in the development of their neighborhood. About three fifths agree that

parklets can alleviate the lack of green areas in the city. These results show that people recognize the potential of parklets as a tool for the development of cities and their potential to create nodes for social interaction. However, their potential for creating more green spaces is less acknowledged. The survey also showed that two fifths of the participants did not know about the possibility of building parklets in Vienna and about two thirds did not know how to get a permit to build one. These figures indicate that the toolbox contributed to inform people both about opportunities and procedures that allow them to become active in the city.

The actual usage of the platform showed that the parklet potential map and the general info page were the most visited pages, while the form and the design tool are the least visited. When looking at the navigation paths we registered also visits to the form that originated from the parklet potential map. Such visits show more interest in the toolbox as they require the user to first click both on the potential map and the subsequent pop-up. Regardless of the curiosity, the form was not used during the experiment data period. These results show that the toolbox did a good job of informing and awakening curiosity among the visitors, however transforming this interest and curiosity to actual action has been more challenging.

Finally, the interviews showed a discordance between the perception of what technology can do and the actual needs of citizen organizations. People acknowledged the potential of such tools based on their visions of the future. However, when asking about other obstacles related to engagement, other issues emerged. For example, a parklet was forced to change the planned location by other citizens that were concerned about the destruction of public parking places and the waste of taxpayer money. This obstacle was not taken into account when planning the toolbox. Whether technology can be used to address such obstacles is uncertain.

Lessons

The leading hypothesis of this study was that by changing or creating new tools for cities would consequently change the engagement of the citizens. This study has been showing that there are certain limits inherent to technology that require other elements to actually change or increase citizen engagement. Transforming curiosity, i.e. individual agency, into actual collective action demands more thanaccess to information and a guidance through the bureaucracy. Patching code can be done by one person, but patching the city requires a collective effort, and technology alone might not be able to create the social structures to support such action. We learned that the implementation of such technologies should come together with other measures that help people to connect with other citizens that can help to turn ideas into realities for cities. Hackathons bring coders together to quickly find solutions to a given problem. Perhaps cities need more hackathons, i.e. a coming together of citizens to create quick patches that help create more sustainable cities.

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Abstract

Children will be the ones that inherit the cities that we shape today. They will be the people who live with our decisions about how we want our cities to be, and our visions and plans for the future. Digital citymaking, specifically with children, is somewhat uncharted territory; but children have repeatedly shown us that they can use digital technologies to initiate social change and imagine better urban futures. As we see technologies making their way into cities and presenting new social justice challenges, and as children grow up more digitally literate than ever before, we must recognize the unique opportunity we have to involve children as equal partners in realizing better cities for the future.

In this article, I reflect on two research projects that have involved reconfiguring children's participation in citymaking. Both of these projects have stemmed from generative collaborations between the academy, local government, residents and educators in Newcastle, UK. I draw on these projects to offer some future provocations for the sustainable and meaningful inclusion of children in citymaking processes.

Key words

Children, youth, participation, research, citymaking, digital technologies

Digital Citymaking: Working with Children to Imagine Better Cities for Everyone

Sean Peacock

Figure 1: Participants making videos of their proposed ideas using iPads. Credit: author's own.
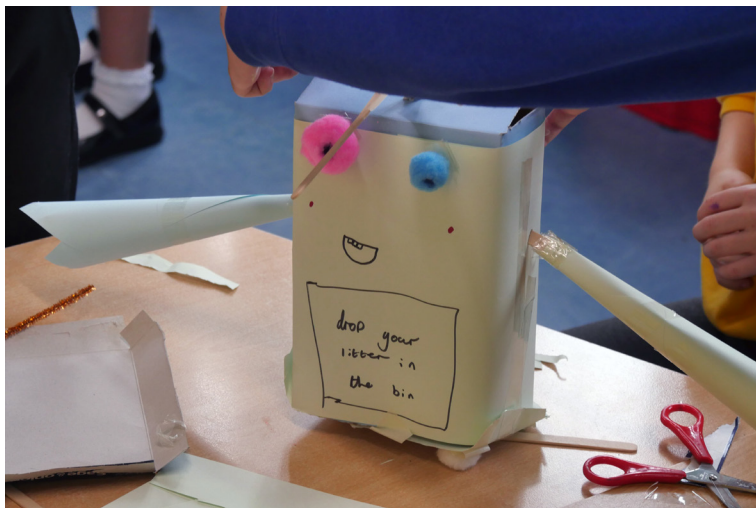
Figure 2: The 'International Robot Bins' prototype. Credit: author's own.

Children will be the ones that inherit the cities that we shape today. They will be the people who live with our decisions about how we want our cities to be, and our visions and plans for the future. Needless to say, cities should reflect the needs of its whole population, and figure out what these needs are through meaningful dialogue with its residents[1].

Including children in citymaking

But why are urban planners and designers not reaching out to children? Why are children, and particularly those from marginalized populations, not having their say in the visions and plans for their futures[2]? And why are we not drawing on their creativity, enthusiasm and civic imagination as a resource for envisioning better cities[3]?

1   Leonie Sandercock, Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 1997).

2   Victoria Derr et al., "A City for All Citizens: Integrating Children and Youth from Marginalized Populations into City Planning," Buildings 3, no. 3 (July 23, 2013): 482–505, https://doi.org/10.3390/buildings3030482.

3   Henry Jenkins et al., "Superpowers to the People! How Young Activists Are Tapping the Civic Imagination," in Civic Media: Technology, Design, Practice, ed. Eric Gordon and

Every child has a right to participate in decisions that affect them[4]. Moreover, breaking from the stereotype that youth is apathetic or apolitical, young people globally have been using social media to organize some of the biggest climate strikes the world has ever seen[5]. There has been a lot of previous work around children's potential role in citymaking[6]. But as we witness the disruptive effects of digital technologies on our daily lives[7], we might also rethink how we shape our cities for the benefit of current and future populations.

Digital citymaking, specifically with children, is somewhat uncharted territory; but children have repeatedly shown us that they can use digital technologies to initiate social change and imagine better urban futures[8]. As we see technologies making their way into cities and presenting new social justice challenges[9], and as children grow up

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Paul Mihailidis, 2016, 295.

4   United Nations, "Convention on the Rights of the Child" (1989), http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx.

5   Sanjana Varghese, "How Kids Organised One of the World's Largest Climate Protests," Wired UK, March 15, 2019, https://www.wired.co.uk/article/climate-change-strike-protest-children-social-media.

6   Claire Freeman, "Twenty-Five Years of Children's Geographies: A Planner's Perspective," Children's Geographies, April 4, 2019, 1–12, https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2019.1598547 and the continuing need for a greater presence for Majority world children in research. I ask if we as children's geographers can rise to the growing global challenges children face. To do so will require greater interdisciplinary work and recognition of the ever more complex and dynamic nature of societies if we are to create a robust forward-looking research agenda with and for children.","DOI":"10.1080/14733285.2019.1598547","ISSN":"1473-3285","shortTitle":"Twenty-five years of children's geographies","author":[{"family":"Freeman","given":"Claire"}],"issued":{"date-parts":[["2019",4,4]]}}}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}

7   Adam Greenfield, Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life (London: Verso, 2017).

8   Henry Jenkins et al., By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism, Connected Youth and Digital Futures (NYU Press, 2016), https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=tg_MCgAAQBAJ.

9   Maroš Krivý, "Towards a Critique of Cybernetic Urbanism: The Smart City and the Society of Control," Planning Theory, April 27, 2016, 1473095216645631, https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095216645631.transforming and supplanting planning. The first part of this article reviews current critiques of this notion. Scholars present three main arguments against the smart city: that it is incompatible with an informal character of the city, that it subjects the city to corporate power and that it reproduces social and urban inequalities. It is argued that these critiques either misunderstand how power functions in the smart city or fail to address it

more digitally literate than ever before[10], we must recognize the unique opportunity we have to involve children as equal partners in realizing better cities for the future.

Exploring this space is the challenge I have taken up as a PhD researcher and urban planner. My research looks into how children may be able to imagine better urban futures with and through digital technologies, and how we might build their capacity to critique and shape "becoming-digital" cities, as our urban centers increasingly transition to a digital age[11]. In this article, I reflect on two research projects that have involved reconfiguring children's participation in citymaking. Both of these projects have stemmed from generative collaborations between the academy, local government, residents and educators in Newcastle, UK.

Streets for People

Streets for People was a project to involve children in an urban design project ran by the city. They set up the Streets for People project in 2014 to identify and deliver small street improvements in three neighborhoods of the city. However, despite calling itself Streets for People, we had noticed that no children had shaped these improvements, or even knew what they were. This is all-too common in the UK[12], and we were keen to change this. Working with colleagues in Open Lab[13], we designed a civic engagement process that would invite children to reimagine their neighborhood and integrate their feedback into this project.

We realised early on that integration would necessitate translation – both of the rationale and the ideas emerging from the project, into something more inviting. We wanted to go beyond a planning consultation, and allow children to imagine the problems and ideas for themselves. For our research, we deployed our engagement in two Newcastle

as a specific modality of entrepreneurial urban governance. The second part advances an alternative critique, contending that the smart city should be understood as an urban embodiment of the society of control (Deleuze)

10 Michael Thomas, ed., Deconstructing Digital Natives: Young People, Technology, and the New Literacies (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

11 Greenfield, Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life.

12 Barry Percy-Smith, "Councils, Consultations and Community: Rethinking the Spaces for Children and Young People's Participation," Children's Geographies 8, no. 2 (May 1, 2010): 107–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/14733281003691368.

13 https://openlab.ncl.ac.uk/

elementary schools. We worked with fourth graders, and designed an engagement process consisting of three sessions. Each of these sessions were highly participatory, blended digital and analogue methods and, importantly, sought to generate real-world outcomes from the project.

The first session involved taking children to four local streets under scrutiny in the project to think about current problems and gather ideas for future changes. This structured exploration then enabled their ideas generation back in the classroom. The second session involved using a map-based platform we designed called Make Place[14] to 'pin' their problems and ideas on a map and provide peer-to-peer feedback using the tool's commenting functionalities. The third session involved a "Town Hall" meeting where the children discussed their ideas with project stakeholders, serving as an opportunity to enact real social change by bridging the classroom and the urban design project[15].

We gleaned valuable insights from our engagement process, which we discuss in our CHI 2018 paper[16]. What particularly stood out for us was seeing the children engaged in a collective endeavour of prioritising and strengthening the issues of importance to them. They showed support for each other's ideas as opposed to being competitive. They also went beyond their own embodied experiences to demonstrate empathy for other children and other road users. Finally, in advocating for change, we saw them heavily influenced by their own normative aspirations for their neighborhood. One group wanted to remove enforced restrictions on play: "Let children playing with anything they want", they said, as "we don't want to spoil their childhood."

But, at the same time, we experienced a couple of tensions when we put the children and the adults in the same room. At first, the children surprised the adults with grounded and feasible ideas – as one teacher put it, they were not asking for a zoo or a circus,

14 https://make.place

15 Ira Shor, Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change (University of Chicago Press, 1992), https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=IQiqAAAAQBAJ.

16 Sean Peacock, Robert Anderson, and Clara Crivellaro, "Streets for People: Engaging Children in Placemaking Through a Socio-Technical Process," in Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, CHI '18 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2018), 327:1–327:14, https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3173901.

they were asking for real changes to intersections and sidewalks. As the meeting went on, we saw the residents start to consider the value of children being involved – but in ways we had not expected. For example, a resident suggested that they may be able to leverage the symbolic capital of the children to advocate for their own ideas – blatantly admitting the local community "might feel more obliged [to support their ideas] if the kids approach them". The city official also admitted that they would not necessarily be able to take any of the children's ideas on board in the plans.

Overall, it was a positive experience and both the children and adults did see a lot of value in being involved in Streets for People. However, it left us with several critical reflections, chiefly the potential risks that children face in having their voices appropriated or ignored. How could they find their own voice in civic fora like the Streets for People project? And where would we begin altering the power relations in urban planning and design?

Sense Explorers

The second example I want to introduce is Sense Explorers, a project in its early stages that I am developing through my PhD. Newcastle has been forced to deal with worsening levels of air pollution, and the city has asked residents how they might do this. Once again, though, children have been left out. Working with Open Lab colleagues, we wanted to investigate how we could create a civic engagement toolkit for schools to invite children to be critical, both about their environment and with digital technologies.

We learned that the city are already monitoring air pollution using digital sensors affixed to lighting columns. In thinking about what the value of these sensors are, then, it struck me that the data they produce augment our embodied, human senses – for example, by making invisible polluting gases visible through numbers. Our senses serve as a shared point of reference and allow us to interpret critically the world around us – so, naturally, it seemed a good place to start thinking about the environment and their neighborhood[17].

Sense Explorers invites children to think about how technologies, in combination with their five, embodied senses, help us understand and shape our environment. We

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17 Michael F. Goodchild, "Citizens as Sensors: The World of Volunteered Geography," in The Map Reader, ed. Martin Dodge, Rob Kitchin, and Perkins, Chris (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 370–78, https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470979587.ch48.

piloted several components of this toolkit in an elementary school in summer 2018. Working with third graders, we structured several activities around using some handheld sensors from another toolkit called Sense *My Street*[18]. These tools comprised (inter alia) an air quality monitor, an environmental noise sensor and a radar speed sensor for traffic. In the spirit of this toolkit, we were not concerned about them using the tools exactly as prescribed in the manuals. Rather, we wanted the tools to serve as provocations to explore, and we saw the capabilities of the different sensing tools as an opportunity to open up the possibilities for what children could sense. Much like *Streets for People*, we wanted to stay true to the civic context, but also provide scope to imagine alternative civic futures with the help of technologies.

Across three sessions, we asked them to work in teams to explore the area around their school, make sense of the data they collected, and imagine ways of making it better. Their critical engagement centered on several simple questions: first, using your own senses, what can you see, hear, smell and feel? Second, using your sensing machines, what can you see, hear, smell and feel?

This pilot engagement generated valuable

insights around children's use of technologies for reimagining their neighborhood. They took up the challenge to be critical by casting doubt on the readings of the sensors and drawing on a combination of their five senses to help: "We can see only three parked cars here. But still, it's very noisy. Even though the sound recorder says it's quiet, it feels noisy." The air quality monitor reported lower than expected levels of pollution too, leading to similar apprehensions and provoking them to question the whole value of technology.

These apprehensions did not render the sensors useless. Rather, they provided them with an opportunity to test the limits and possibilities of the sensors (for example, using the speed sensor to record the speed of their own body movements). Beyond this, the sensors also enabled the children to draw links between issues in the environment and generate productive ideas in response. Confirming their suspicions that cars were going too fast and causing pollution, their idea in response was to replace roads with solar-powered moving walkways (the sort you would find in airports). Another idea, the "International Robot Bins," spoke to the value of technology solving a common urban

18 https://sensemystreet.uk

problem, with "detectors" for seeing trash and built-in drones for "reaching smaller places". Their ideas were utopian, but the issues they deal with are very real, and would not feel out of place in a "smart city" vision.

In our engagement, the sensing tools showed them the possibilities for using technologies to sense the environment and augment the city. We saw a clear desire to learn, experiment with and appropriate the tools to generate new forms of knowledge and "blue-sky" placemaking ideas. And while our insights point to questions of trust and legitimacy of the sensor-generated data, we found these to be productive rather than problematic. It speaks to the notion that data is spatial and timebound - it is not an exhaustive nor an objective measure of truth, and it was closely bound up with the specificities in which it was gathered[19]. Being portable, the tech could be easily critiqued and they were not relying on sensors "blinding" their observations of their environment. And by opening this space for critical challenge, it subverted the legitimacy of the sensor data as the sole authority on the environment – something that invites significant criticism when this principle is applied to "smart cities"[20].

Future provocations

Both of these projects serve as valuable participatory experiments for introducing children to the possibilities for digital citymaking. In these projects, children have used technologies for communication and expression, navigating the social and physical environment, participating in government processes on a level with adults, and gathering data to imagine better futures and initiate social action[21]. Speaking to Nordström and Wales' provocation that efforts to involve

19 Alex S. Taylor et al., "Data-in-Place: Thinking through the Relations Between Data and Community" (ACM Press, 2015), 2863–72, https://doi.org/10.1145/2702123.2702558.

20 Krivý, "Towards a Critique of Cybernetic Urbanism."transforming and supplanting planning. The first part of this article reviews current critiques of this notion. Scholars present three main arguments against the smart city: that it is incompatible with an informal character of the city, that it subjects the city to corporate power and that it reproduces social and urban inequalities. It is argued that these critiques either misunderstand how power functions in the smart city or fail to address it as a specific modality of entrepreneurial urban governance. The second part advances an alternative critique, contending that the smart city should be understood as an urban embodiment of the society of control (Deleuze

21 Thomas Maskell et al., "Spokespeople: Exploring Routes to Action Through Citizen-Generated Data," in Proceedings of the 2018 CHI

children often center on maintaining rather than critically challenging established systems of governance and participation[22], if appropriately developed at scale, technologies appear to have potential for transforming children's role in citymaking.

Key to this is moving beyond tokenism and simply inserting technology into these established, and problematic, civic processes[23]. Instead, structuring open-ended engagement processes where children can interpret digital technologies and imagine better city futures on their own terms is critical for practicing inclusive, transformative digital citymaking[24]. To do this, we need to find ways of relating to children's lived experiences and designing civic engagement that meets them closer to where they stand – using digital technologies as a means, rather than an end, for achieving this[25]. This continues to be my research mantra; however, several questions remain about how we could integrate this mode of engagement into everyday civic practices.

I wish to end by posing these questions, and inviting you to consider them with me, to think about how this may apply in your local civic context:

If we were to 'scale up' this work, how might interventions like these be made more sustainable?

How might we translate these engagements into everyday arenas of decision-making?

How might we meaningfully co-design digital technologies, and civic processes, with children? What would this look like, and how could we avoid tokenism?

Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, CHI '18 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2018), 405:1–405:12, https://doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3173979.

22 Maria Nordström and Mark Wales, "Enhancing Urban Transformative Capacity through Children's Participation in Planning," Ambio 48, no. 5 (May 1, 2019): 507–14, https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-019-01146-5.\\uc0\\u8221{} {\\i{}Ambio} 48, no. 5 (May 1, 2019

23 Patrick Olivier and Peter Wright, "Digital Civics," Interactions 22, no. 4 (2015): 61–63, https://doi.org/10.1145/2776885.no. 4 (2015

24 Mariam Asad et al., "Creating a Sociotechnical API: Designing City-Scale Community Engagement," in Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, CHI '17 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2017), 2295–2306, https://doi.org/10.1145/3025453.3025963.

25 Christopher Le Dantec and Carl DiSalvo, "Infrastructuring and the Formation of Publics in Participatory Design," Social Studies of Science 43, no. 2 (April 1, 2013): 241–64, https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312712471581.

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I

Abstract

In the time of unprecedented technological evolution and information flux, a lot of harmful governance practices remain hidden or unnoticed. People mostly argue about consequences rather than focusing on the root causes. Conflict prevails over collaboration, undermining governance instead of improving it. The Greek crisis showed how citizens entrust "leaderships" that are unable to adequately represent them. Most people remain passive; others feel the need for better governance but admit not knowing how this could be done. We are working on Philokratos®, a web-based ecosystem collecting and sharing information at any level of governance. Exploiting the wisdom of crowds, Philokratos aims to become a massive collaborative environment, open to everyone willing to contribute in bettering governance without wasting energy in conflicts.

Keywords:

Informational asymmetry, better governance, Philokratos, Greece, crisis, reforms

The Most Fundamental Human Right

Dionysis R. Rigopoulos, Antonis E. Psarakis

This article is intended as a conversation starter on the dominant problem in modern governance: informational asymmetry among those who govern and the citizens. Each day can be the start of another course. Governments and active citizens should be focused on sustainable choices, ameliorating our lives. Questions like who made the largest mistakes are for historians.

Austerity in Greece: A crisis of trust that undermined democracy

Greece is an ongoing experiment in governance, useful to avoid pitfalls. Was the root cause of its crisis the deficit in the economy or a deficit in governance and democracy?

Since 1980, instead of strengthening the country's capacity, Greek governments have squandered EU subsidies and international loans, creating an illusion of easy prosperity. In 2010, the newly elected Prime Minister publicly tapped an EU/IMF aid mechanism.

A Troika of lenders (the European Commission - EC, the European Central Bank - ECB, and the International Monetary Fund - IMF) agreed to lend Greece 110 billion euros with low interest over 3 years, to restore macroeconomic stability and sustainable long-term growth. Until 2015, the Greek governments signed three "adjustment programmes" to be concluded by 2018, getting additional loans in return.

The first program (2010) recognizes that "*With the public sector responsible for many of Greece's woes, a reform of public administration is urgently needed and is a key element of the programme.*" Nonetheless, focusing on fiscal issues, it considered the public administration reforms as "*flanking structural policies*[1]."

All three programs overlooked that the systematic reorganization of the public sector should be at the core of the reforms, rather than a "flanking policy." It would create a better business environment, a better quality of life for the citizens and, in the end, a more sustainable economy.

For eight years, the Greek governments and the Troika did not succeed in reforming the public administration to the extent required. They disregarded the root causes of the crisis and austerity, which were mostly social and political. The fiscal problems were only the tip of the iceberg. The successive governments took care of the symptoms but did not address their cause. Although some administrative improvements were presented as key priorities, essential measures were constantly postponed.

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1   Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (European Commission), "The Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece," European Economy Occasional Papers No. 61, 26 May 2010, p. 25 and p.15, https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/64c89a77-ddc4-46f4-9bb0-18d7e80f6f0c/language-en

The Troika gave Greece a "large fish." Yet, contrary to the wise quote, not only they did not "teach Greeks how to fish" but also they sent away the most productive Greek "fishermen" (half a million well-trained professionals who fled the country) and sold out the best Greek "fishing boats" (exploitable public assets).

The last three-year program was scheduled to be completed by the summer of 2018. It was convenient for the government and the Troika to stick to the plan and announce the success of Greece exiting the crisis, on August 20, 2018. The next day, Paul Craig Roberts[2] presented his view of "the political and media coverup of the genocide of the Greek Nation[3]." Among many interesting remarks, three stand out:

- The austerity imposed on the Greek people was equivalent to America's Great Depression (with a decrease in GDP in excess of 25%).

- In the past, when a sovereign country was unable to repay its debts, its creditors wrote down the debts to a serviceable level. Greece had to pay the full amount of bonds held by European banks.

- Additionally, Greece was required to sell important public assets to foreigners (e.g., sea ports, airports, municipal utilities) and to decimate the Greek social safety net.

Some numbers speak for themselves. In 2009, the Greek debt-to-GDP ratio was approximately 127%[4]. In 2012, "*The [euro area] finance ministers and the IMF agreed on a [2nd] package of measures to reduce Greece's debt to 124% of GDP by 2020*[5]." But, in 2019 the debt-to-GDP ratio was 177%[6].

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2   American economist, author and academic. He was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy in the first Reagan administration until February 1982, when he resigned to return to academia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Craig_Roberts, accessed September 10, 2020.

3   Roberts, Paul Craig. "Genocide of the Greek Nation." PaulCraigRobertsorg, August 21, 2018. https://www.paulcraigroberts.org/2018/08/21/genocide-of-the-greek-nation/, accessed September 10, 2020.

4   Yannis Stournaras (Governor of the Bank of Greece), Speech, in Greek, at the presentation of the book "The public debt of Greece" by P. Kazakos, P. Liargovas and S. Repousis, February 6, 2017, accessed September 10, 2020, https://www.bankofgreece.gr/enimerosi/grafeio-typoy/anazhthsh-enhmerwsewn/enhmerwseis?announcement=9b7be76a-693f-40ec-b34f-aad3fd7154bc

5   Official website of the European Union, "Financial assistance to Greece," https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/financial-assistance-eu/which-eu-countries-have-received-assistance/financial-assistance-greece_en, accessed September 10, 2020.

6   Greek Public Debt Management Agency, http://www.pdma.gr/en/economic-indicators, accessed September 10, 2020.

Greeks should request ownership of the reforms

The "OECD Public Governance Review: Greece 2011" emphasized the importance of everyone's involvement in public governance reform: *"This will require strong commitment at the highest political level, as well as the involvement and support of all concerned parties, both within the government and beyond[7]."*

Within the programs agreed, the reform agenda was not sufficient, and its ownership was unclear:

- The Troika of lenders demanded a fiscal program and tried to sell it as a reform program. However, their goal was clear: to reduce the deficit immediately and avoid a bank run that would endanger the Euro. Reforms were not a priority, unless they resulted to an immediate reduction of public expenditure.

- The Greek governments consented to the requested fiscal measures, in exchange for loans, legitimizing the programs in doing so. They negotiated to mitigate the level of fiscal adjustment but did not pursue robust reforms. Politicians always used public administration for favors to their voters, serving their narrow-minded political perspective. They limited the implementation of reforms to the extent that would allow them to keep their privileges.

- For decades, the Greek people got used to a non-merit system of governance. As a result, they lost trust and respect for the political system. They turned hostile when unprecedented sacrifices were requested via fiscal measures sold as "reforms." Trying to survive, they reacted negatively to any such measures. Voting or not, they lost the right of choice. The July 2015 referendum gave a clear message. After 5 years of impoverishment, people followed the government's exhortation and voted a glorious NO (61%) to further fiscal measures. Nonetheless, the government and the Troika ignored the referendum and signed the third fiscal program[8]. The government was re-elected in September 2015.

The programs were incomplete, focusing mostly on fiscal measures, with some reforms. A robust reform program with dedicated funds and expert hands was never sought, although it would balance fiscal and developmental results. None of the programs provided a sustainable solution; they only bought time.

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7   OECD, "Public Governance Reviews: Greece 2011," p.31 https://www.oecd.org/gov/49264921.pdf, accessed September 10, 2020.

8   "Memorandum of Understanding Between the European Commission Acting on Behalf of the European Stability Mechanism and the Hellenic Republic and the Bank of Greece" https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/01_mou_20150811_en1.pdf, accessed September 10, 2020.

On 11 July 2018, the European Commission decided[9] "*to activate the enhanced surveillance* [...] *after the successful conclusion of the ESM stability support programme on 21 August 2018.* [...] *Enhanced surveillance is a post-programme framework adapted to Greece in view of the longstanding crisis and challenges faced.*" For as long as it takes, the Troika monitors the "*Specific commitments to ensure the continuity and completion of reforms adopted under the ESM programme*, [which were not finished at the program's] *successful conclusion.*"

In January 2019, former minister Stefanos Manos commented[10] about the defective first trimestral Enhanced Surveillance Report of the European Commission[11]: "*As a Greek who wants the interest of Greece, I require from the supervisors a complete, detailed and objective description of our situation. And let them press corns. Greek and European. As a Greek I want the whole truth and that alone.*" After another six reports[12], Greece's situation remains inaccurately evaluated and undocumented, e.g. organograms without the employees, i.e. not compliant with the existing law, are counted as progress, and reforms are impeded by the lack of an accurate unified depiction of the structure and staffing of public administration.

Greek people should demand an open debrief[13] on this matter. What we learn from the process should be used to plan the reform level required to overcome the problem.

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9   Official website of the European Union, "Financial assistance to Greece, Activation of enhanced surveillance," https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/financial-assistance-eu/which-eu-countries-have-received-assistance/financial-assistance-greece_en#enhanced-surveillance-framework-for-greece, accessed September 10, 2020.

10 "The supervisors of the Troika became too familiar with the supervised," article in Greek, January 6, 2019: https://www.liberal.gr/politics/paragnoristikan-oi-epoptes-tis-troikas-me-tous-epopteuomenous/235281, accessed September 10, 2020.

11 European Commission, Economic and Financial Affairs, "Enhanced Surveillance Report, Greece, November 2018," Institutional Paper 090, ISSN 2443-8014 (online), https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/ip090_en.pdf, accessed September 10, 2020.

12 Official website of the European Union, "Financial assistance to Greece, Enhanced surveillance framework for Greece," https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/financial-assistance-eu/which-eu-countries-have-received-assistance/financial-assistance-greece_en#enhanced-surveillance-framework-for-greece, accessed September 10, 2020.

13 Greeks should demand answers to the five debrief questions "What happened? What went right? What went wrong? Why? What can we learn from this?" Bill Crawford at TEDxRexburg "Kill and Survive: A Stealth Pilot's Secrets of Success" [8:10], https://youtu.be/rF5hDwZa7-0?t=490, accessed September 10, 2020.

The statement of the OECD 2011 Review[14] is fundamental: "*Public governance reform in Greece has to be designed and conducted in an integrated manner. Measures limited to one area of governance, or approached without a clear roadmap, are unlikely to achieve much.* [...] *This means that a "big bang" approach is probably the only option. It is only through a general restructuring of its administration that the government can create the scope to reallocate resources.*"

If accepted, the "big bang" should be clear as water and hard as ice. For everyone.

The most fundamental human right

The UN[15] claims that "*Good governance and human rights are mutually reinforcing*" and that "*without good governance, human rights cannot be respected and protected in a sustainable manner.*"

It is more than that: **Good governance is the most fundamental human right!** It should be the unceasing pursuit of citizens. Improving governance improves everything. However, the issue is downplayed, and most people do not realize its importance. An international survey by Business Insider[16] on "*The 10 most serious problems in the world, according to millennials*" is revealing:

1. Climate change / destruction of nature (48.8%)
2. Large scale conflict / wars (38.9%)
3. Inequality (income, discrimination) (30.8%)
4. Poverty (29.2%)
5. Religious conflicts (23.9%)
6. Government accountability and transparency / corruption (22.7%)
7. Food and water security (18.2%)
8. Lack of education (15.9%)
9. Safety / security / well being (14.1%)
10. Lack of economic opportunity and unemployment (12.1%)

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14 OECD, "Public Governance Reviews: Greece 2011," p.31 https://www.oecd.org/gov/49264921.pdf, accessed September 10, 2020.

15 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Good Governance Practices for the Protection of Human Rights," UNITED NATIONS New-York and Geneva, 2007 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GoodGovernance.pdf, accessed September 10, 2020.

16 Jackson, Abby, "The 10 most serious problems in the world, according to millennials," August 29, 2017, https://www.businessinsider.com/world-problems-most-serious-according-to-millennials-2017-8, accessed September 10, 2020.

Only the sixth problem has a semantic relation to governance. Yet, all of them stem from governance.

The so called "Greek crisis" is a game of external powers, imposing to a sovereign country their own economic, geopolitical, and political agenda in a manner that, in the past, would have required military force. However, it happened in a post-war Europe founded on democracy and human rights.

Greeks paid for the crisis by reliving the Great Recession. Even if the euro was in danger, co-responsibility of all countries of the eurozone would have been the right policy choice. It would address the deficiencies in the euro's design and give a clear message to the markets that there is no weak link in the chain. A harsh fiscal program designed to stimulate the Greek economy to recover, in exchange for a reasonable cut of the Greek bonds held by European banks, could have ended the crisis in a few years and it would have been more just.

Europe was created by its founders as a unique union based on peace and prosperity among all its member nations. If interests don't coexist with principles and ethics, it will end up as a jungle where the "survival of the fittest" reigns.

The UN Human Rights Council has identified[17] the key attributes of good governance: **transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation**, and **responsiveness** (to the needs of the people). And digital civic engagement could empower all of them. The Greek "crisis" is a unique opportunity to discuss about governance and learn how to avoid repeating mistakes.

Civic engagement is more effective when it is constructive[18] and preemptive, rather than reactive. Many groundbreaking changes stemmed from the people, not from governments. Inspiring leaders[19] can emerge at any level and make a positive change.

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17 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "About Good Governance, Key attributes of good governance," https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Development/GoodGovernance/Pages/AboutGoodGovernance.aspx, accessed September 10, 2020.

18 Commonwealth Foundation, "Constructive engagement" http://commonwealthfoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CF%20Commonwealth%20Insights%20Constructive%20Engagement.pdf, accessed September 10, 2020.

19 Richard Boyatzis, "Inspiring Leadership through Emotional Intelligence" https://www.coursera.org/learn/emotional-intelligence-leadership, accessed September 10, 2020.

Jane Elliot's "blue eyes/brown eyes[20]," the Asch conformity experiment[21], the Milgram experiments on obedience[22], the Stanford prison experiment on perceived power[23], are a few examples of how people can be easily manipulated, so that they lose their sense of responsibility and their motive to participate in governance as active citizens.

Almost 100 years ago, Nikos Kazantzakis[24] wrote: "*Love responsibility. Say: 'It is my duty, and mine alone, to save the earth. If it is not saved, then I alone am to blame.'*" Steve Jobs[25] believed that "*the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.*"

But if people are manipulated and their opinions don't make it through the channels of governance, how could they redefine their future?

Philokratos®

Many claim to love their county but they feel hostility toward its public administration. This is so common that the contradiction remains unnoticed: ready to risk their lives at the front but unwilling to improve their country's governance from the safety of their home.

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20 The Oprah Winfrey Show, "Jane Elliott's "Blue Eyes/Broωn Eyes" Anti-Racism Exercise," 1992, https://youtu.be/ebPoSMULI5U, accessed September 10, 2020.

21 McLeod, S. A., (,). "Solomon Asch – Conformity Experiment," December 28, 2018, https://www.simplypsychology.org/asch-conformity.html, accessed September 10, 2020.

22 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment, accessed September 10, 2020.

23 https://www.prisonexp.org/the-story, accessed September 10, 2020.

24 Kazantzakis, Nikos (1883-1957), "The saviors of God; spiritual exercises." Translated, with an introduction by Kimon Friar, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1960, p.68. The original "Ασκητική (Salvatores dei)" was written in 1922-23 and published in 1927. It was revised by the author until 1945.

25 Apple's "Think different" campaign 1997. Original video of the TV commercial, narrated by Steve Jobs (1955-2011) https://youtu.be/-z4NS2zdrZc, accessed September 10, 2020. (The version finally aired was narrated by Richard Dreyfuss). Steve Job introduced the "Think different" concept, in a memorable internal 15 minutes presentation: https://youtu.be/YM4If6YHN3s, accessed September 10, 2020.

For the first time in human history, the 6D's[26] of technological progression (Digitized, Deceptive, Disruptive, Demonetized, Dematerialized, Democratized) provide the means for people to co-shape governance.

People possess knowledge, skills, and experience that shape their views. Traditional means cannot harness the diverse opinions that are a treasure of information hidden within the crowds. People do know, but how can we benefit from the wisdom of crowds?

We have been working on the "Philokratos" concept for some time. The name comes from the Greek words "φίλος"-friend and "κράτος"-state. Philokratos will be a web-based ecosystem, collecting and sharing information at any level of governance. It aims to improve public administration, acting as a capacity multiplier of all parties involved.

The objective is to develop a massive collaborative work environment where everyone (citizens, businesses, civil servants, state officials, etc.) is welcome to contribute in formulating policy, instead of wasting energy in conflicts. People identify problems and propose solutions at any point within the administration. In return, they enjoy better quality of life and business environment. The highlights of Philokratos are:

Win-win ecosystem
(from interests to deals)

Scientific fusion
(tools to boost efficiency)

Third space
(neither public nor private)

Universal mechanism
(from single cases to policies)

Multi-scope focus
(applied in diverse areas)

Ongoing progress
(a continuous PDCA cycle)

Key elements:

- A Unified Digital Chart of Public Administration Institutions provides points of reference to localize any kind of information and knowledge.

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26 https://www.diamandis.com/blog/the-6ds, accessed September 10, 2020.

- The Institutions upload their organizational data (initially their organogram, staffing, outputs) in the digital chart.
- Citizens, businesses, civil servants, and state officials use crowdsourcing mechanisms to collect and share data, related to the activity of the Institutions, by exploiting the digital chart.
- Collaborative intelligence interface enhances the co-operation of people in working groups.

The Philokratos Cycle enables the participation of the interested parties throughout the following steps:
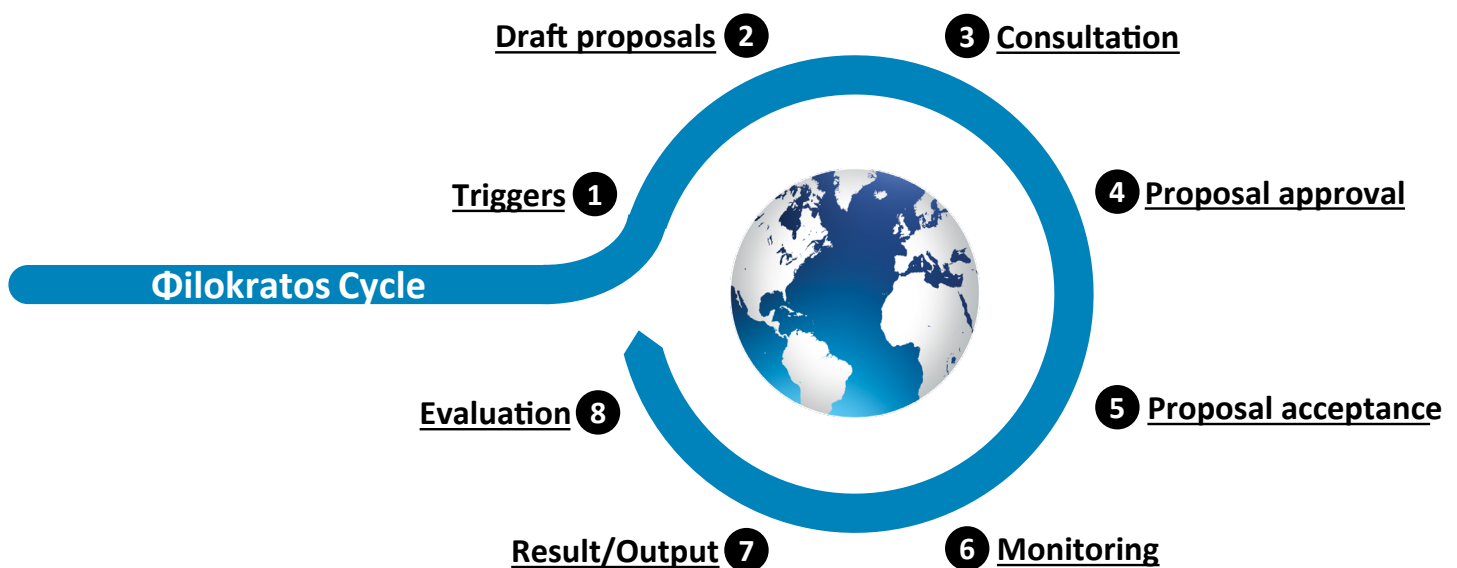
Philokratos is founded on transparency and open participation, documenting the activity throughout the cycle. It was conceived as a user-driven and result-oriented system, inspired by the participatory models of Wikipedia[27], reCAPTCHA[28], Stalk Overflow[29], and Duolingo[30].

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27 Jimmy Wales, "The birth of Wikipedia," TEDGlobal 2005, July 2005, https://www.ted.com/talks/jimmy_wales_the_birth_of_wikipedia, accessed September 10, 2020.

28 Luis von Ahn, "Massive-scale online collaboration," TEDxCMU, April 2011, https://www.ted.com/talks/luis_von_ahn_massive_scale_online_collaboration, accessed September 10, 2020.

29 https://stackoverflow.com/, accessed September 10, 2020.

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Epilogue

People should understand that being a citizen goes much further than just being a consumer. We live in an extraordinary time of exponential progress, offering amazing new tools for the advancement of knowledge and collaboration.

Inspired by the classical Athenian democracy, Philokratos aims to enable procedures answering the dominant problem in modern governance: informational asymmetry among those who govern and the citizens. Systemic shortcomings of current representative governance threaten democracy today, opening the path to extremists and populists.

With Philokratos, everyone should be able to contribute ideas and proposals to promote their preferred solutions over other solutions for the same issue. This "free market of ideas" is made possible by the eight-step cycle of Philokratos. Its mechanisms enable the exchange of documented arguments and counterbalance the informational asymmetry among all stakeholders.

Balanced information provides better decision-making criteria to all participants, returning a substantial part of decision power where it belongs: to the people.

ΦILOKRATOS

from electing governors
to affecting governance

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Abstract

The Irish poet Seamus Heaney died in 2013, but his poetry remains a selfsame trove for the disparate rhetoric of political separatism and rehabilitative humanitarianism throughout the past decade in Ireland, what the journalist Rachel Cooke calls "the Heaney effect." This paper traces Heaney's civic afterlife, asking why his posthumous image and work appeals to such a wide array of Irish readers—from nationalists and unionists, both to politicians on either side of the Brexit question and to those who work to foster depoliticized, civic spaces in Northern Ireland. Heaney's Nachleben is an ever-remade patchwork quilt—an exquisite corpse ripped one way, then another, only to be stitched back together to bridge these divides. These histories of appropriation, and the extent to which they misappropriate the poet himself, thus bring to light the splintered and, at times, overlapping civic imaginations in constant contestation, reconciliation, and self-examination within and beyond Ireland since his death.

Civic Imagination "The Heaney Effect": Seamus Heaney's Civic Afterlife

Ilana Freedman

Seamus Heaney is a poet claimed by many—the Irish, the British, Irish nationalists, Irish unionists, the province of Ulster, and countless others. Famously, when *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* made the decision to include Heaney as a British poet, his response, a 1983 rejoinder poem entitled "An Open Letter," penned the often quoted lines "Don't be surprised / If I demur, for, be advised/My passport's green. / No glass of ours was ever raised / To toast The Queen."[1] However, while undeniably Irish, Heaney continuously alluded to his liminal upbringing in Northern Ireland between unionist and nationalist sentiments. The line in "Terminus" from his collection *The Haw Lantern* "Two buckets were easier carried than one / I grew up in between"[2] references a childhood of divisions—"Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and unionist, south and north, Irish and British, Gaelic and English."[3] Heaney's public was therefore well-tuned to his conception of himself, as he puts it in his 1975 poem "England's Difficulty," as "a double agent among the big concepts."[4]

Consequently, during Heaney's lifetime there existed in Ireland, a large expectation—and not just among habitual readers of the poet's work—that, in times of public crisis or exultation, Heaney would prove capable (whether in poetry or prose) of capturing the public mood, eloquently articulating communal feelings, rising to an occasion with a cadenced, felicitous, elevated language.[5]

His 1991 verse drama *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes* responded to the Irish Troubles and the outbreak of extreme violence between IRA members and British soldiers in 1987. Heaney wrote the play after the playwright Brian Friel's appeal in 1989 that he contribute something to the theater production Field Day, which was attended by a number of the Irish working class. Similarly, he wrote the poem "Act of Union" in direct response to the Good Friday Agreement reached in 1999, which fittingly expressed for many involved the continued tension across Irish and British relations. Heaney's words transcended political divides and spoke to a common *pathos* felt across Ireland while similarly advocating a type of shared

1   Seamus Heaney, "'An Open Letter': A Poem." *Harper's 274,* no. 1642 (1987): 39.

2   Seamus Heaney, *The Haw Lantern* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1987), 4.

3   Roy Carroll, "Seamus Heaney's words heal wounds reopened on Ireland's border" *The Guardian* (April 2019), https://theguardian.com/books/2019/apr/14/seamus-heaney-helps-heal-wounds-ireland-border-brexit.

4   Seamus Heaney, "England's Difficulty (1975)." In *Opened Ground: Poems 1966–1996,* 85. London: Faber & Faber, 1998.

5   Dennis O'Driscoll, and Bernard O'Donoghue, "Heaney in Public." In *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, 56-72. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

civic practice. The journalist Rachel Cooke recently spoke of what she called "the Heaney effect," asking "isn't there something about the late Nobel laureate that makes us all want to behave more generously, to try on his nobility for size?"[6]

However, today, nearly a decade after Heaney's death, what remains as the afterlife of his poetry, the power of his residual civic persona, and how have these echoes of Heaney been appropriated in the public discourse surrounding Brexit and other political points of high dispute? Beyond the ubiquitous nature of Heaney's work, his conception of his own civic responsibility as a poet and his continual voicing of his liminal positionality between nationalist and unionist divisions in Northern Ireland made him popular across various groups. As this legacy endures, Heaney has been projected posthumously as a common font of sentiment to fuel opposing political rhetoric but also as a save heaven, a symbol of removed neutrality and a civic emblem under which the Irish can unite themselves. Heaney himself spoke about the potentiality of poetry's civic imagination in his lectures entitled *The Redress of Poetry*:

Professors of poetry, apologists for it, practitioners of it, from Sir Philip Sidney to Wallace Stevens, all sooner or later are tempted to show how poetry's existence as a form of art relates to or existence as citizens of society--how it is "of present use…" Poetic fictions, the dreams of alternative worlds, enable governments and revolutionaries as well. It's just that governments and revolutionaries would compel society to take on the shape of their imagining, whereas poets are typically more concerned to conjure with their own and their readers' sense of what is possible, or desirable, or, indeed, imaginable. The nobility of poetry, says Wallace Stevens, "is a violence from within that protects us from the violence without." It is the imagination pressing back against the pressures of reality.[7]

The Civic Imagination: Making a Difference in American Political Life has described the concept of civic imaginations as ones that "underpin the processes of identifying problems and solutions, envisioning better societies and environments, and developing a plan to make those visions of a better future into reality."[8] Conceptually, then, Heaney's understanding of poetic imagination in the mobilization of change is not so

6 Rachel Cooke, "At home in Heaney country," *The Guardian (*November 2016), https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/oct/02/seamus-heaney-homeplace-review-bellaghy-co-down.

7 Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 1.

8 Gianpaolo Baiocchi, Elizabeth A. Bennett, Alissa Cordner, Peter Taylor Klein, and Stephanie Savell. *The Civic Imagination: Making a Difference in American Political Life.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014.

different. True, he stresses that such fictive imaginings are utilized, and realized to a greater extent, by governments and revolutions alike, which amass a collective hegemony far beyond that of an individual poet. However, he would not necessarily disagree with the idea that literature and art can fuel social cultural change and its creators, in turn, can be civic agents to a certain degree, although Heaney did not think poetry could "make things happen."[9] "It can," he believed, "eventually make new feelings, or feelings about feelings, happen, and anybody can see that in this country for a long time to come a refinement of feelings will be more urgent than a re-framing of policies or of constitutions."[10] His self-awareness, even during his lifetime, of his own capacity to serve as a larger than life persona, a civic agent that provided a voice to the pain and suffering of both sides of the conflict, in fact, weighed on him heavily. His poem *Flight Path* poeticizes an instance where Danny Morrison, a Sinn Féin leader, accosted Heaney on a train, imploring him to speak out about the hunger strikers: "When, for fuck's sake, are you going to write / Something for us?"[11] Heaney's reply? "If I do write something, / Whatever it is, I'll be writing for myself."[12] Similarly, in his poem "Exposure" Heaney carefully considers to whom he owes debts:&.

> How did I end up like this?
>
> I often think of my friends'
>
> Beautiful prismatic counseling
>
> And the anvil brains of some who hate me
>
> As I sit weighing and weighing
>
> My responsible tristia.
>
> For what? For the ear?
>
> For the people? For what is said behind-backs?[13]

He later emphasizes his between and betwixt identity in the poem as politically marginal yet continuously personal, writing, "I am neither internee nor informer; / An inner émigré, grown long-haired/And thoughtful."[14] In the phrase "responsible tristia" Heaney has at the back of his mind Osip Mandelstam's *Tristia*, which translates from the Latin as "sorrows" and itself takes Ovid's work by the same title as an intertext. However Heaney's modifying adjective "responsible" speaks directly to his struggle with his own notion of civic duty as a poet with allegiances to multiple individuals and groups.

One of those allegiances was the close friendship Heaney shared with Gerry Adams, a former leader of

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9   Marilynn J. Richtarik, Acting between the Lines: The Field Day Theatre Company and Irish Cultural Politics, 1980-1984 (Oxford English Monographs. Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1994), 6.

10   Seamus Heaney, *Soundings '72:* Annual Anthology of New Irish Writing (Blackstaff Press, Belfast, Ireland: 1972), 6.

11   Seamus Heaney, "The Flight Path." In The Spirit Level, (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), 25.

12   Ibid, 25.

13   Seamus Heaney, "Exposure." In North (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 67.

14   Ibid.

the Sinn Féin political party from 1983 to 2018. At the time of Heaney's death, Adams described him as "a national treasure." He claimed he first read Heaney in the early 70s when West Belfast was under British Army military occupation:.

> I was so busy reading [Heaney's] *Death of a Naturalist*, that he had published in 1966, that I failed to notice that the Brits had stopped the bus. It was the Parachute Regiment and they walked menacingly up and down, asking passengers their names, addresses where they were going, and checking this info with their Intelligence Officer and against cards of photos they carried with them of those they were hunting. One Brit stared at me for a second and then questioned the passenger behind me. Everybody heaved a sigh of relief when they got off. From that point on, Seamus Heaney became a sort of talisman for me.[15]

The notion of Heaney serving as a talisman, a protection from the British, in that historical moment tinges Heaney's ink with nationalist sentiment by association. In his own poem "From The Frontier of Writing" British soldiers similarly detain Heaney at a military checkpoint:

> The tightness and the nilness round that space
>
> when the car stops in the road, the troops inspect
>
> its make and number and, as one bends his face
>
> toward your window, you catch sight of more
>
> on a hill beyond eyeing with intent
>
> down cradled guns that hold you under cover.[16]

Heaney compares the experience of this real detainment to the imagined frontiers of writing, yet the two paradigms share the movement of free speech in demarcated spaces, which he describes as "the line that divides the actual condition of our daily lives from the imaginative representation of those conditions in literature."[17] Even in his homage to Heaney, Adams politicizes Heaney because he engaged with him in no other way. This hyper-political imaging is seen also in Adam's request to Heaney to borrow a line from his *Cure at Troy* "And hope and history rhyme" for the title of his book *Hope and History*, which discusses the 80s and 90s and the evolution of the Peace Process in Ireland. He claimed that "it seemed to me then and today that *The Cure at Troy* at once catches the despair of conflict and the hope of peace and justice."[18] Heaney's poem in fact responds to political circumstances in which Adams was involved that fueled violent outbursts in Northern Ireland.

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15 Gerry Adams, "Seamus Heaney – Gerry Adams remembers a national treasure" Anphoblacht (Semptember 2013), https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/23371.

16 Seamus Heaney, "From the Frontier of Writing.' In The Haw Lantern (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1987), 6.

17 Seamus Heaney, The Redress of Poetry (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), xvi.

18 Gerry Adams, "Seamus Heaney – Gerry Adams remembers a national treasure" Anphoblacht (Semptember 2013), https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/23371

John Hume, the leader of the constitutional nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), had met with Adams, who was then the President of Provisional Sinn Féin, which had been shunned from the political arena because it did not condemn the use of force by the Provisional Irish Republican Army despite sharing similar political republican agendas. This openness on the part of Hume to meet (in fact that the two men had been meeting secretly for months) created, according to Adams' account, "an immediate and generally hostile response from the [British and Irish] governments, the other political parties and sections of the media."[19]

The violence that followed, in which both IRA fighters and British soldiers were slaughtered, left Northern Ireland extremely volatile, with all sides mourning losses. These sides ranged from "the Ulster Defense Association (politicized unionist paramilitary) to the Reverend Ian Paisley's fundamentalist Democratic Unionist Party to the Official Unionists to the centrist Alliance Party to the constitutional nationalist Social Democratic and Labour party to Sinn Féin (the political wing of the Provisional IRA), with shades of opinion in between."[20] Heaney's Chorus speech that ended his *Cure at Troy*, then, was a message to all these opposing sides and made reference both to the historical IRA hunger strikes and the British soldiers' deaths, creating a *pathos* surrounding communal loss. However, it also integrated a message of hope, a utopic vision of a future Ireland no longer war-torn and fragmented. Below are the relevant stanzas:

> Human beings suffer,
> They torture one another,
> They get hurt and get hard.
> No poem or play or song
> Can fully right a wrong
> Inflicted and endured.
>
> The innocent in gaols
> Beat on their bars together.
> A hunger-striker's father
> Stands in the graveyard dumb.
> The police widow in veils
> Faints at the funeral home.
>
> History says, *don't hope*
> *On this side of the grave.*
> But then, once in a lifetime
> The longed-for tidal wave
> Of justice can rise up,
> And hope and history rhyme.
>
> So hope for a great sea-change
> On the far side of revenge.
> Believe that further shore
> Is reachable from here.
> Believe in miracle
> And cures and healing wells.[21]

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19 Gerry Adams, Hope and History: Making Peace in Ireland (London, England: Brandon, 2003), 57.

20 Marilynn J. Richtarik, 6.

21 Seamus Heaney, and Sophocles. The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes (New York: Noonday Press, 1991), 77.

But this un-politicized potentiality Heaney expressed during this highly fraught historical period has become the lines often quoted today in relation to Brexit and other political matters. Gerry Adams, who remained staunchly anti-Brexit, claimed that Brexit would be a disaster as it would shift the soft borders in Ireland, which were previously British Army checkpoints, into "the EU's only land frontier with a non-EU member" and consequently movement would become much more restrained and Ireland far more fragmented.[22] However, since Heaney's ending to *Cure at Troy* carries a utopic quality that is not politically specific or one-sided and a general appeal for civic conscience, it has come to provide cannon fodder for political rhetoric today in support of Brexit. A first instance of this appropriation occurred when Arlene Foster, chief of the Democratic Union Party (DUP) in Northern Ireland, claimed people must believe that a "united community" can be created, quoting Belfast writer C S Lewis who said, "there are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind." Weaving a patchwork quilt of Northern Irish writers, she next quoted Heaney's line from *Cure at Troy* "believe that further shore is reachable from here," adding "a further, better shore may

not always be the clearest to see or seem the easiest to reach. But it is there and it is not beyond us."[23] Similarly, Gerry Moriarty, a journalist for the Irish Times, described the DUP Diane Dodds as displaying "considerable chutzpah by quoting Seamus Heaney when anticipating the great day when the UK exits the European Union: "We must believe a further shore is reachable from here."[24] Clearly, the chutzpah in this case derives from the fact that Heaney himself would have presumably desired to remain in the EU and would oppose the inclusion of his poem in such political claims.

But the implication that the DUP appropriates this quotation to advocate for Brexit as an end to the Irish situation becomes even more misconstrued when we consider the section of Heaney's adaptation from which it has been decontextualized. The line comes from the last stanza quoted above. This "great sea-change," critics have argued, constitutes Heaney's utopic hope not only for a peaceful Ireland but, as Terry Eagleton puts it, "resolution, as Heaney's naturalising imagery intimates ("tidal wave," "sea-change"), arrives as a miraculous gift rather than as political construct, inarticulable epiphany rather than

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22 Gerry Adams, "'There is no escape from it'-Gerry Adams exclusive on Brexit result" Her, https://www.her.ie/life/there-is-no-escape-from-it-gerry-adams-299568.

23 Gerry Moriarty, "New DUP chief Arlene Foster seeks 'more harmonious' society," The Irish Times (December 2015), https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/new-dup-chief-arlene-foster-seeks-more-harmonious-society-1.2470292.

24 Gerry Moriarty, "No surrender on DUP's adamant opposition to withdrawal agreement" The Irish Times (November 2018), https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/no-surrender-on-dup-s-adamant-opposition-to-withdrawal-agreement-1.3709673.

political strategy."[25] In this regard, then, the very nature of Heaney's envisioned civic resolution to Ireland's unrest is one that removes itself from any political apparatus. Secondly, DUP politicians tapping into this utopic appeal of a shore just out of sight obscured by a slight curvature either seem to want to disregard or are unaware of the rest of Heaney's *Cure at Troy*, which expressed great frustration with unionism and DUP figures at the time. Philoctetes' lines in Heaney's adaptation even pejoratively captured a caricatured likeness of the then DUP leader Ian Paisley such that "Philoctetes' speech parallel[ed] much of the unionist rhetoric against the Anglo-Irish Agreement whereby Protestants in the North described being unceremoniously abandoned after centuries of loyalty to London."[26]

It seems then, almost paradoxically, due to Heaney's ubiquitous presence across Irish political, literary, and social spheres, his poetry has also come to demarcate a depoliticized space of communication. Just following the celebration of the occasion that marked what would have been Heaney's eightieth birthday, Rory Carroll published an article in *The Guardian* entitled "Seamus Heaney's words heal wounds reopened on Ireland's border." Carroll pointed out that both (Gerry) Adams and Jeffrey Donaldson, a Member of Parliament

for Lagan Valley representing the Democratic Unionist Party, tweeted condolences to RTE's Brussels correspondent and Brexit expert Tony Connelly when his mother died that centered around lines from Heaney's work.[27] Adams simply quoted a line from Heaney's *North* ("Compose in darkness. Expect aurora borealis in the long foray but no cascade of light") and Donaldson more overtly quoted a line from Heaney's "Clearances," in which Heaney pays homage to his own mother ("I remembered her head bent towards my head, / Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives – / Never closer the whole rest of our lives"). Heaney's poetry therefore constitutes a politically unmarked lingua franca among politicians who hold opposing views regarding Brexit and Northern Ireland more generally. These mutually understood gestures are recognized as a personal communication that transcends political, social, and geographical borders, and Heaney becomes a civic "agent" able to transmit messages of deep social engagement across an otherwise tense political schism.

Similarly, Carroll draws attention to the Seamus Heaney Homeplace located in Bellaghy, the village in Northern Ireland where Heaney is buried. The center, which is run by Heaney's nephew Brian McCormick, is viewed as a sort of Foucauldian heterotopia, a space

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25 Terry Eagleton, "Unionism and Utopia: Seamus Heaney's The Cure at Troy. In Eamonn Jordan, and Arts Council of Ireland, <u>Theatre Stuff: Critical Essays on Contemporary Irish Theatre</u> (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2000), 174.

26 Nathan Wallace, <u>Hellenism and Reconciliation in Ireland from Yeats to Field Day </u>(Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2015), 124.

27 Roy Carroll, "Seamus Heaney's words heal wounds reopened on Ireland's border" <u>The Guardian </u>(April 2019), https://theguardian.com/books/2019/apr/14/seamus-heaney-helps-heal-wounds-ireland-border-brexit.

outside of and removed from a surrounding location, despite being the place where the IRA hunger strikes took place—a *topos* thus inundated with Irish nationalism. Locals and visitors alike view the center as a type of utopian escape where politics are set aside and a more social notion of civic change can be promulgated. As Carroll points out, "the [Democratic Unionist Party] leader, Arlene Foster, and the then Sinn Féin leader, Martin McGuinness, attended its opening in 2016, a rare display of bipartisanship before power-sharing collapsed."[28] Heaney then becomes manifest—almost synonymous with—a spatiality in which different political figures co-exist and conform under a new civic agenda—a ritual far removed from any past parochial factionism.

The question, then, remains: who is Seamus Heaney in his afterlife as a civic poet "carrying two buckets?" How has his work and his own identity been stretched and manipulated to advocate for opposing standpoints and then conflated again to bridge the space between these political sides when it becomes necessary to humanize communications? How has he been upheld as a beacon for depoliticized social activism, an emblem under which any citizen is welcome to visit the Seamus Heaney Homeplace center? Does the civic message of his poetry lose its historicity, so deeply embedded in the Troubles in Northern Ireland, as time passes such that it

can be paradigmatically applied to current issues such as Brexit?

Leonid Gayev, one of the main characters of Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, famously asks, "if for some disease a great many different remedies are proposed, then it means that the disease is incurable."[29] If Heaney wrote his *Cure at Troy* in imaginative speculation over a cure to the disease festering in Northern Ireland (the wound of Philocetes) then his play purposely does not propose any remedies, political or otherwise, but rather offers at its close a utopic moment of hope. However, contemporary civic imaginations now propose Heaney *as a remedy* for various political divides and social unease in Ireland. They instill within his language more power to mobilize than he ever himself granted the figure of the poet. Thinking back to his statement from *The Redress of Poetry*, we might recall his claim that poetry "is the imagination pressing back against the pressures of reality." How would Heaney then react to his afterlife, what might be cheekily coined "the redress of Heaney?" It seems he would caution against poetry as fuel for political fire, but might herald imagination as kerosene to light the lamp of civic sentiment. In lieu of a conclusion, let us remember his rather uncanny prediction that "in [Ireland] for a long time to come a refinement of feelings will be more urgent than a re-framing of policies or of constitutions."[30]

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28 Ibid.

29 Anton Chekhov, and Michael Frayn, The Cherry Orchard: A Comedy in Four Acts (Methuen's Theatre Classics, London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), 18.

30 Seamus Heaney, Soundings '72: Annual Anthology of New Irish Writing (Blackstaff Press, Belfast, Ireland: 1972), 6.

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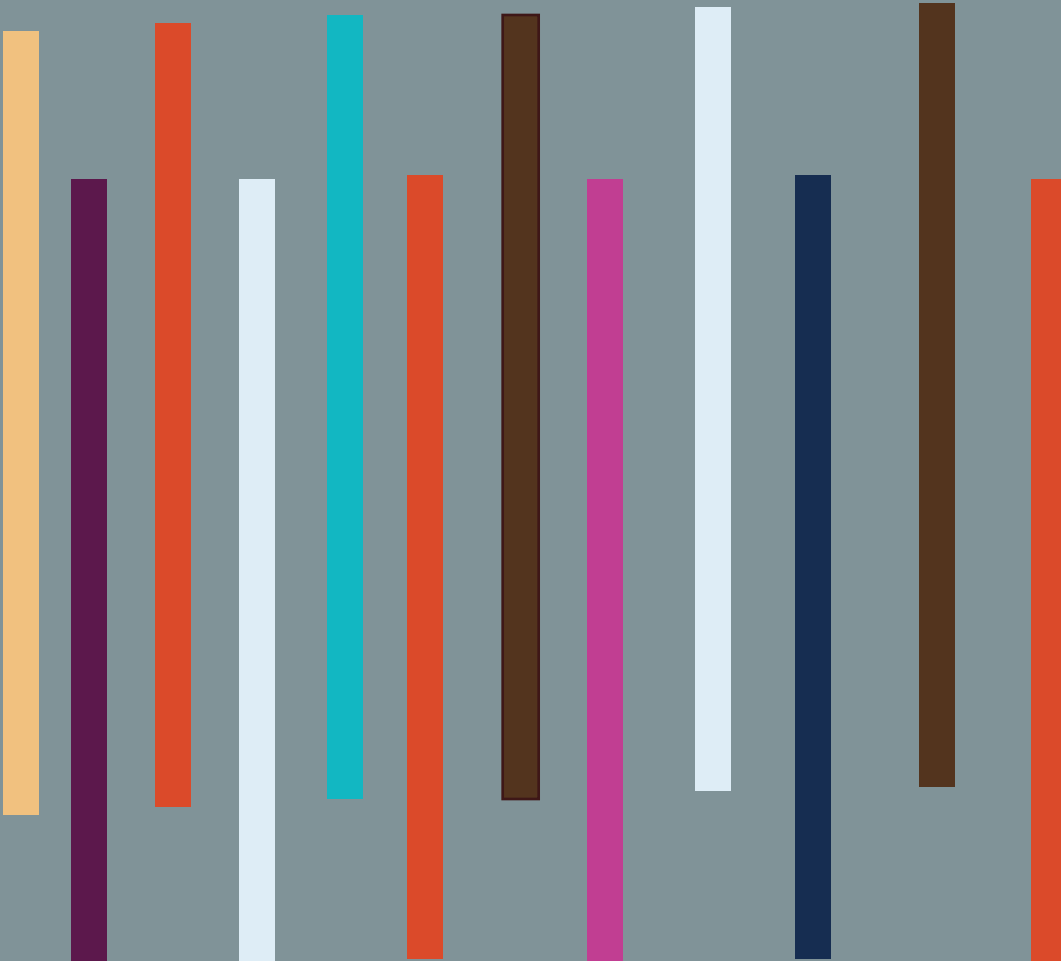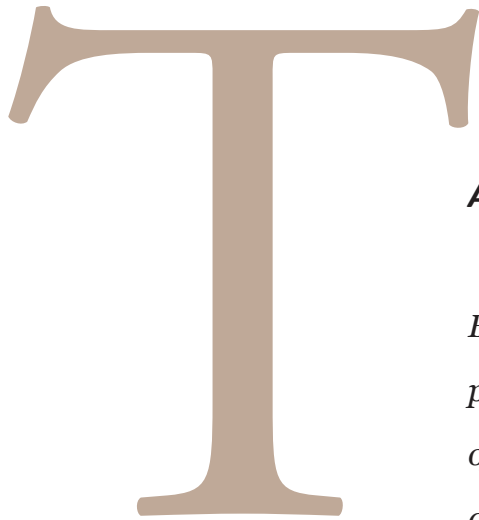
Abstract

The 1968 Paris student revolt was a movement, I claim, of desire. Based initially on the desire of young men and women to be granted the permission to sleep with one another, and carried out by philosophers of desire (Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Jean-Paul Sartre, Julia Kristeva, and Roland Barthes, to name a few), the 1968 revolt demonstrated the way in which desire (which is always an imaginative act, expressed through the granting of "power to imagination"[1]) serves as a mode of social change, progress, resistance, and revolution. The impossible is realized, or actualized, through and by the desire for desire (which is always, indeed, based on the desire for the impossible—the desire for the image, or the imagining).

In my current paper, I aim to consider the interrelation of desire, imagination, and revolution, demonstrating the way in which, especially during the 1968 student revolt, desire can lead to revolution. Through the text and the imagination—the philosophy, (street) art, and music that was generated by the movements of 1968—which is always of desire, desire (for progress; for the amelioration of societal conditions) can ensue. In my "reading" of the 1968 student revolt, which I claim is, itself, a Barthesian 'dilatory space', I consider the possibility of revolution through the desires of the civic imagination.

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1   'All power to imagination' was a common slogan heard in the streets of Paris in 1968.

Desire and Imagination in the "Text of 1968"

Peter Klapes

Much like—perhaps synonymous with—desire, passion takes the form of an automatic, autonomic, and autopoetic eternal flow. Desire and passion can indeed be understood as passive, the *hyle*—the canvas or clay—that allows for creative and imaginative poesis, or production. Not through an active search for fulfillment or pleasure, but, rather, through an act of desiring desire (or, desiring the impossible), creative production and societal progress can be realized. That is, desire, which is, as I will claim, always an act of imagination, and which is always for that which is not currently realized, makes the impossible possible.

At its omphalos a movement of desire—based on the desire of young men and women to be granted the permission to sleep with one another—the Paris student revolts of 1968 took a unique shape. Carried out in part by philosophers of desire: Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Jean-Paul Sartre, Julia Kristeva, and Roland Barthes, to name a few, and based on such maxims as "all power to the imagination," "it is forbidden to forbid" (Il est interdit d'interdire), and "Be realistic, ask for the impossible," (Soyez réalistes, demandez l'impossible), the 1968 movement was, indeed, an embodiment of a particular philosophy of desire: that desire is for desire, and not pleasure, and that this autopoesis of desire is always embodied in a ludic (creative or artistic) act. In

what follows, nonetheless, I address the "philosophy of desire" of some of 1968's "greats."

1968 featured, yes, a public revolt (the students were quickly joined by workers), where Paris witnessed a grand display of "activism in the streets" based on the desire to find the "beach under the paving stones" ("Sous les pavés, la plage!" was frequently uttered by the students). But, a textual revolution also ensued. Philosophy, art, music, and literature was prolifically produced, a result of the notion that the pleasure unexpressed in the streets (a certain 'remainder', in a sense, of desire) could be expressed in the text, in a sort of textual—or textualist—escapism from the streets. Even here—in this desire for text—we see an embodiment of 1968's notion of desire. That is, through the *hyle*, or material, of the text, the image of a just, "better" society can freely take form—the impossible can become possible. The desire for an impossible "perfect" society can continue to be a desire with the text; the desired Real can persist as an object of desire (and, that is, remain unfulfilled) in the text.

Specifically, though, the text itself (as understood through linguistics and literary theory—both of the '60s and '70s and of today) is an embodiment of 1968's desire for desire. That is, the text (and narrative) always expresses, or articulates, desire. Implied in every linguistic

utterance is a statement of want—the statement of "I want to say" that necessarily precedes every iteration. But, furthermore, texts and narratives themselves make use of our own desire (or, desire for desire). The act of reading (or viewing or listening) is an act of desire—a desire to learn, or to be entertained. And the message contained in creative oeuvre is always delayed—but that's exactly what we desire. Language is always deferring, as Derrida established, and that is exactly what we desire in language: its inability to ever fulfill our desires. Roland Barthes—one of 1968's "great"—captures this notion in his concept of "dilatory space" (un espace dilatoire)—or, the "middle" of a text—which he describes as "the space between beginning and ending," where the text sets up "delays (obstacles, stoppages, deviations) in the flow of the discourse."[2] Through the "dilatory space", desire can live up to its autopoetic potential—it produces itself (and surely does not resolve itself, or provide fulfillment) in the text or creative oeuvre. In many ways, I would claim that the revolution of 1968 was constructed as a "dilatory space." The critic Jay Clayton holds that "desire

is a creative force"[3], and, in 1968, desire (for sexual liberties; for a just society) was, indeed, a creative force—bearing creative, to say the least, fruits. The act of reading or revolting (or Critical Theory itself) can lack determinate resolutions (Deleuze writes about the "indeterminancy" of "the event" of 1968 in his "May 68 Did Not Take Place"), but can, indeed, bear creative results. Was the textualist and semiotic turn in 1968 so much escapism as it was, perhaps, a different, but equal, brand of revolt? Reading, writing, and revolt all seem, nonetheless, to be founded on the experience of desire.

The break-down—the retardation, delay, or dilation—of the text (or narrative), which is always "slow to act" (as is denoted by "dilatory") is, indeed, productive (of desire), an embodiment of the "creative force of desire." Such notion of desire—wherein desire is productive, a "creative force", emanating from dilation—is also seen in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, both 'greats' of 1968. In the duo's Anti-Oedipus, it is explained that "desiring-machines work only when they break down, and by continually breaking down."[4] 1968's break-down (and

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2   Brooks, Peter, "Narrative Desire", Style 18.3 (Summer 1984).

3   Clayton, Jay, "Narrative and Theories of Desire", Critical Inquiry 16.1 (Autumn 1989): 35.

4   Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Felix, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, (London: Continuum, 2004

[originally published, 1972].) p. 31.

continual break-down) of machines seems, nonetheless, related. Through the break-down (delay, perhaps) of the desire-curtailing machines of society (for Deleuze and Guattari, the family, the law, and the psychiatric institution, to name a few), desire prevails. And this was, without a doubt, a goal of 1968 and of Deleuze and Guattari's oeuvre, which Foucault named a "work of ethics," teaching the "ethics of taking your desires as reality."

And, here, we see also a main point of Deleuze and Guattari's project, which, indeed mirrored a belief central to the movements of 1968: that the subject's experience of desire (or, on a larger scale, his own construction-of-self [the self is always constructed by the other; one views himself in relation to the other]) is always effected by the external world (the institutions or "situation" in which he finds himself). The duo described Judge Schreber, a German psychotic, who Freud diagnosed with repressed homosexuality, as having "sunbeams in his ass. A solar anus." They continue: "And rest assured that it works: Judge Schreber feels something, produces something, and is capable of explaining the process theoretically. Something is produced: the effects of a machine, not mere metaphors."[5] Here,

nonetheless, Deleuze and Guattari critique Freud's method: Schreber's psychosis is a result not of "mere metaphors" (Freud understood the judge's psychosis to be an expression, or metaphor, of his repressed homosexuality), but of "a machine." Society's machines, Deleuze and Guattari claim, produce psychosis. In a similar manner, for Deleuze and Guattari, the mental institution itself produces psychosis. Referring, it seems, to the psychosis-producing residential psychiatric institutions, Deleuze and Guattari articulate that "the glaring sober truth resides [emphasis mine] in delirium." The truth is, indeed, located in delirium (the schizophrenic out for a walk, say Deleuze and Guattari, is a "better model" than the neurotic on the psychoanalyst's couch), but what is accepted as truth (the "glaring [or brightly-lit—imagine here neon lights] truth") is also a delusion (which causes the delusion [or psychosis, or condition] of the schizophrenic). The realization is here, again, that society's machines produce problems. Judge Schreber's psychosis is a result of external, societal machines, not his own internal deficiency or lack. To make us aware of these dangerous machines seems to be the project both of Deleuze and Guattari's oeuvre

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5   Deleuze and Guattari, <u>Anti-Oedipus</u>, p. 25.

and of the demonstrations of 1968.

And, moreover, through 1968's philosophy of desire (which we are commanded to take as reality), the impossible becomes possible. Deleuze and Guattari establish that "revolutionaries, artists, and seers [...] know that desire clasps life in its powerfully productive embrace, and reproduces it in a way that is all the more intense." A realization of desire allows us to understand that "the real is not impossible; on the contrary, within the real everything is possible, everything becomes possible. Desire does not express a molar lack within the subject; rather, the molar organization deprives desire of its objective being."[6] Through the liberation of desire—our liberation from the "molar organization" that "deprives desire"—we will be able to produce. Yes, we may produce a better society (wasn't this the goal of the 1968 demonstrations?), but we will definitely produce (work, or oeuvre), as

those of 1968 surely did.

The 1968 Paris student revolt—a movement, I claim, of desire—demonstrated the way in which desire (always an imaginative act, expressed through the granting of "power to imagination)" is a mode of social change and progress. The impossible is realized, or actualized, through and by the desire for desire (which is always, indeed, based on the desire for the impossible—the desire for the image, or the imagining). Through the text—the philosophy, (street) art, and music that was generated by the movements of 1968—which is always of desire, desire (for progress; for the amelioration of societal conditions) can ensue. But only the liberation of desire itself—its liberation from the "molar organization," as Deleuze and Guattari elucidate—will lead to the "revolution of desire", or, perhaps, the "textual revolution," we see in 1968.

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6   Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, p. 50.

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Abstract

At the conclusion of her first book, <u>Eros the Bittersweet</u>, Anne Carson poses a stark thought experiment: "Imagine a city where there is no desire." Her catalogue of what such a city would have, and what it would lack, is instructive. Utilizing Carson's reflection on the love triangle, in Sappho's fragments and Plato's <u>Phaedrus</u>, I attempt to show what an erotic politics might look like. At a minimum, it requires counting to three, thereby pausing to reflect upon how a person in isolation, a person in love, and a person in the city are linked. I then attempt to demonstrate what such a conception of erotic politics may illuminate about our own fractious political moment.

Keywords:

Anne Carson, eros, Sappho, Plato, love triangle

Love and the Civic Imagination

Louis A. Ruprecht Jr.

"It seems to me that we should start over again from the beginning..."

Plato, Laws 632e

In her luminous first book, Eros the Bittersweet, Anne Carson poses a simple thought-experiment: "Imagine a city where there is no desire."[1]

First, she lists what such a city's inhabitants would still have: food, drink, mechanical sex-acts. Then she turns to the far more interesting question of what such a city would lack: theories, metaphors, gifts, even the avoidance of pain. "They bury their dead and forget where," Carson tells us. "The art of storytelling is widely neglected."

The reason for these occlusions, Carson believes, is that fiction would have become the equivalent of falsification, and delight is beside the point of the city's activities. Since she has already defined the philosopher as "one whose profession is to delight in understanding,"[2] the situation is serious. In short, this is "a city of no imagination." The picture is pretty grim, though certain aspects of it may seem eerily familiar to us. There is no punning or playing in such a city's politics, and there is no love lost among its citizens.

In this book, Carson attempted to construct an erotic philosophy out of a close reading of Sappho's poetic fragments together with Plato's erotic dialogue, the Phaedrus. One of the things that emerges from her dazzling juxtapositions is the power of the love triangle,[3] which first makes its appearance in Sappho's justly famous Fragment #31:

He seems to me equal to gods that man
who opposite you
sits and listens close
to your sweet speaking

and lovely laughing—oh it
puts the heart in my chest on wings
for when I look at you, a moment, then no
speaking
is left in me

no: tongue breaks and thin
fire is racing under skin
and in eyes no sight and drumming

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1. Anne Carson, Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay (Princeton University Press, 1986), 168.

2. Anne Carson, Eros the Bittersweet, xii.

3. I develop these ideas at greater length in "Anne Carson and the Erotic Triangle of Spiritual Ascent" (forthcoming), as well as in Reach without Grasping: Anne Carson's Classical Desires (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

fills ears

and cold sweat holds me and shaking
grips me all, greener than grass
I am and dead–or almost
I seem to me[4]

Here, Sappho observes, is the "sweet-bitterness" of erotic desire and despair. The presence of some other person (singular) who moves from the periphery to the center of your life and longing, will necessarily unsettle your former, illusory sense of completeness.

The brilliance of Carson's reading of this poetic fragment has to do with her conception of the three poetic characters as geometric points *in space.* "It is not a poem about the three of them as individuals, but about the geometrical figure formed by their perception of one another, and the gaps in that perception."5 The triangle is thus a city-of-sorts. Carson will translate this idea at the conclusion of her book, thusly: "Eros is always a story in which lover, beloved and the difference between them interact. The interaction is a fiction arranged by the mind of the lover.

No one took a more clear-eyed view of this matter than Sappho."6

The results of this triangular Sapphic reasoning are surprising, to say the least:

Eros is an issue of boundaries. He exists because certain boundaries do.   And it is only, suddenly, at the moment when I would dissolve that boundary, I realize I never can....

If we follow the trajectory of eros we consistently find it tracing out this same route: it moves out from the lover toward the beloved, then ricochets back to the lover himself and the hole in him, unnoticed before. Who is the real subject of most love poems? Not the beloved. It is that hole.[7]

The poetical, political and philosophical point of the love triangle is thus the startling realization of the self's radical incompleteness. We need an other to fulfill us. (Carson will later utilize tthe power of he pun to bring this point home: the soul is holy because the self has holes. Democratic politics hinges on the sacredness of the citizenry.

If Sappho made the love triangle central to her poetic purpose, then Plato made it philosophical. The Phaedrus is also haunted by

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4 Anne Carson, <u>Eros the Bittersweet</u>, 12-13

5 Anne Carson, <u>Eros the Bittersweet</u>, 13.

6 Anne Carson, <u>Eros the Bittersweet</u>, 169.

7 Anne Carson, <u>Eros the Bittersweet</u>, 30.

love triangles, which multiply as the dialogue proceeds. Phaedrus is poised *in between* the erotic attentions of Socrates who is here now, listening, and Lysias, who had been present earlier in the day, reciting an essay. That essay, which prompts this dialogue, hinged on a peculiar erotic artifice, where one person (a writer) argues on another person's behalf (a would-be lover) for the attentions of a third person (a beloved). The strange claim of this writer is that his employer will be the best lover Anne Carson, Eros the Bittersweet, 30 for the boy, precisely and paradoxically because he does not love him. Here is an alarming anticipation of the city without desire.

The brilliance of Carson's reading of Lysias's letter hinges on her consideration of the three poetic characters as geometric points in time. In offering this reading, Carson attempts to resolve the great interpretive dilemma of the Phaedrus: namely, how it is that a dialogue about *eros,* becomes a dialogue about the *soul,* and then a dialogue about *writing*. How do these three topics connect? What kind of triangle do they constitute?

For Carson, the triangle they make is one in which coming to love and coming to know are joined, first by Socrates's speeches and then by

Carson's reading of them. Since she is concerned to defend desire against its cultured despisers, Carson zeroes in on the concept of wooing. "In our readings of Greek texts, we have followed the traces of an ancient analogy between the wooing of knowledge and the wooing of love from its earliest relic in the Homeric [poems]."[8] The result of this erotic juxtaposition is the drawing out of an unexpected similarity between Sappho's poetic descriptions of coming to love and Socrates's philosophical descriptions of coming to know.

As Sokrates tells it, your story begins the moment Eros enters you. That incursion is the biggest risk of your life. How you handle it is an index of the quality, wisdom and decorum of the things inside you. As you handle it you come into contact with what is inside you, in a sudden and startling way. You perceive what you are, what you lack, what you could be. What is this mode of perception, so different from ordinary perception that it is well described as madness? How is it that when you fall in love you feel as if suddenly you are seeing the world as it really is?[9]

What Carson does with this juxtaposition is nothing short of extraordinary, replicating the

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8   Anne Carson, <u>Eros the Bittersweet</u>, 170.

9   Anne Carson, <u>Eros the Bittersweet,</u> 152-153.

"ah-ha" moment Socrates celebrates in the Phaedrus. In this last chapter, entitled "Mythoplokos" (or "myth-weaver"), Carson inserts herself into her own text, making a new triangle by placing herself in between Sappho and Socrates. It is deeply instructive that what comes of this commingling (of poetry and philosophy) is politics. Desire's place in the triangulated city is what concerns Carson now.

The Archaic Greek of Sappho's day, echoes of which we still hear in certain Platonic dialogues like the *Gorgias,* possessed a verbal form we no longer have: the *dual* voice. In other words, verbs had one form in the singular, a second form in the dual, and a third form in the plural (something like "I am, you be, they are"). What Carson is inviting us to consider, based on her belief that words are fossil philosophy, is that for the Greeks, the form of relationship you have with one other person will inform how you imagine yourself in relation to multiple others. Erotics is the necessary prelude to politics.[10] The Greek thought-experiment is as follows: show me the kind of lover you aspire to be, and I will tell you the kind of politics to which you have committed yourself.

Clearly, then, the civic stakes of a lack of imagination are daunting. In 2002, in the very last footnote that accompanied her landmark translation of Sappho's fragments, Carson put it this way: "Desire acts in lovers as a lure for the whole life of the imagination--without which neither love nor philosophy could nourish itself very long."[11] Nor, she might have added, could the city.

It has become clear that political arguments we have grown accustomed to calling "culture wars" operate through mutual mischaracterizations designed to keep a fight going, rather than to resolve one. Negative attack ads are the coin of this realm. They represent one of the vicious extremes to the virtue of charity, apathetic indifference being the other. The challenge presented by culture wars is to figure out what each side is getting out of keeping the fight going. In a political system dominated by the polemics of a two-party system, the answer is not far to find: fundraising. The degree of demonization of my opponent stands in direct relation to the size of my war-chest. Or such has been the reigning belief.

It has become a commonplace to say that we need to escape the overly partisan nature of our

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10 I developed this idea in Symposia: Plato, the Erotic, and Morale Value (Albany, NY: State Univeristiy of New York Press,, 1996), 36-
   37, 75-76, 82-83, 93-93).

11 Anne Carson, If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho (New York, NY: Alfred E. Knopf, 2002), 383.

current politics. In their Federalist Papers, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison observed that every democratic arrangement prior to their own had died by faction, which they took to be a form of democratic suicide. They attempted to create checks and balances to hold such factionalism at bay. The record has not been a happy one in the past two decades.

If our city today lacks the boldness and political creativity needed to imagine a multi-party system that would require coalition-building for our political purposes to proceed at all, then perhaps a more realistic and transformative thought-experiment is the one Carson proposes. Let us imagine that you voted for Donald Trump or Joe Biden. Now imagine that your lover voted for the other candidate. Notice that the thought experiment requires us to use the dual voice, not the plural. You voted for a candidate, a person, not for a party. Your lover did, too. You are called to imagine a single other voter, not a tribe, whether it bear the banner of Biden or Trump. This love relationship, too, is the necessary prelude to politics.

What would you and your lover do together after the election? How would you behave? Would you eat and drink in silence, or would you feast? Would you have sex, or would you make love? Would you give each other gifts for the holidays? Tell each other stories? Do anything in your power to avoid causing your lover pain? And, perhaps most importantly, would you revel in the sheer joy of talking with one another, of telling stories that are not lies or fictions, but the baring and the sharing of soul?

We currently seem to be living in this city without desire. Through artful imaginings, poetry and philosophy conjoined, we may yet restore desire to our city, and civility to our politics.

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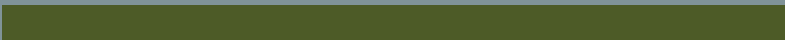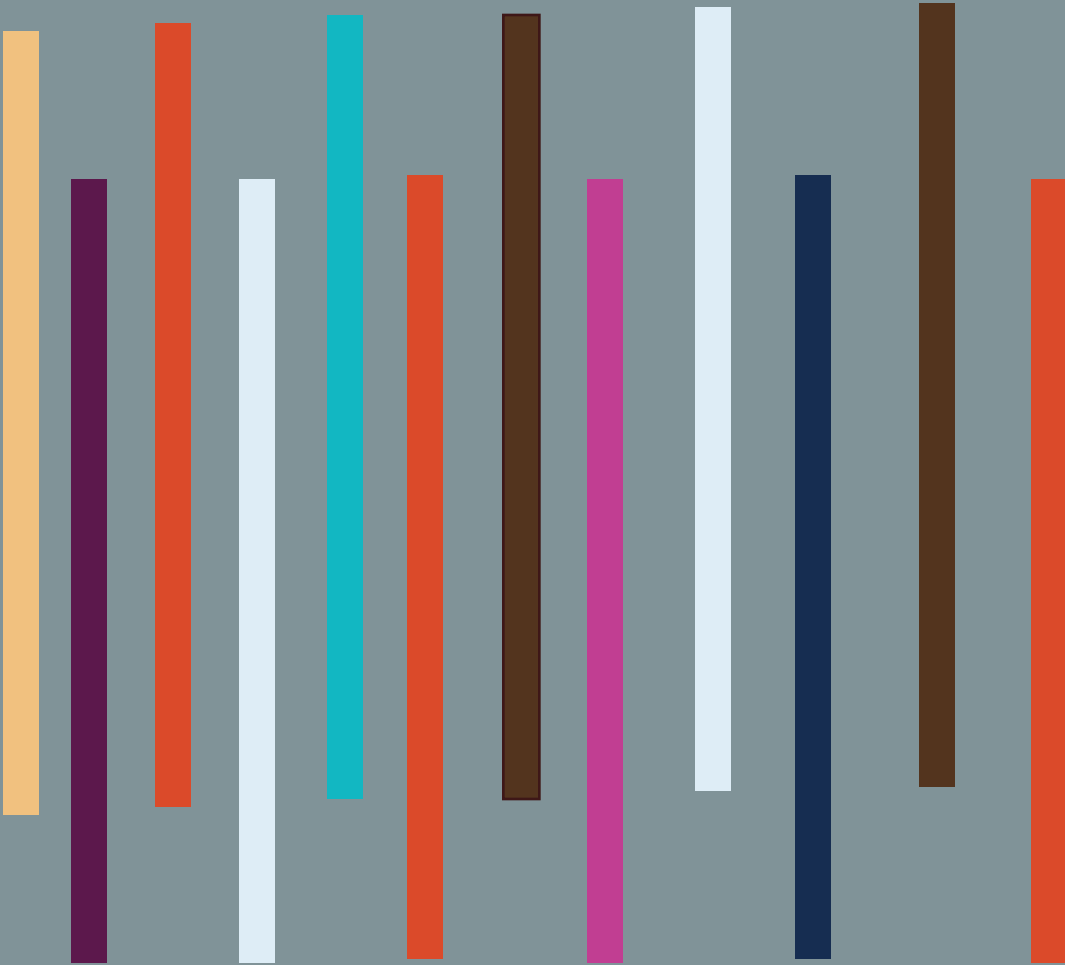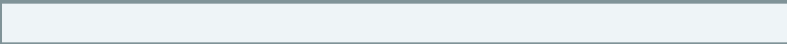
"We are performed beings...that is, we realize ourselves in the world – mentally, physically and socially – as performances..... we bring ourselves into form continually throughout the day. And we commit these performances with others," David Aldridge claims.[1] And he continues:

We are part of that forming the world together and that is why the arts are important. We have the ability to recreate forms. When this ability fails then we experience an existential loss. Performing ourselves back into the world, a world of others, is a vital activity of being alive and being human. Yet form is fleeting, so we must be continually present for a new performance. The reason behind this is simple. A fixed form is a fossil: it no longer has life. We are continuously forming (as living) and losing form (as dying) and the challenge is to see the bigger gestalt. (...) To put the being into human being we have to perform. (Ibid)

1   David Aldridge: <u>Music Therapy and Neurological Rehabilitation.</u> (2008). Jessica Kingsley; Illustrated edition.

CITIZEN *TALES Commons*:
Music Performance "After Covid-19"

Chrysanthie Emmanouilidou

Citizen TALES Commons:

Drawing on David Aldridge's concept of "performed being," I would like to stress that, from a neurological point of view, not only do we accomplish our communication by means of a constant exchange of performances but we are also defined by it. We constantly play a role that activates a number of reactions, which subsequently activate a series of reactions that operate on the level of hermeneutics. Likewise, every music performance is part of our communication. And for that, we need a dispatcher and a

receiver. Without this constant interaction, we can't talk about dialogue in music. Every other substitute of a live performance such as turning on the radio or listening to a link that we received from a friend, serve some of our needs to take a break, to relax, to concentrate, to alter our mood, to immerse ourselves in another world. All those aforementioned procedures by no means deal with an exchange of feelings or human interaction. They just sooth each one of us after a demanding day.

During the last months of the Coronavirus pandemic we have experienced a new approach to living. The pros and the cons is a matter of constant debate, but for our purposes here, what matters is that still our lives are organized around the pandemic and we don't know for how long this will last. In the following lines I will try to focus on some severe consequences which neither touch on the idea of lockdown nor do intend to criticize any political decisions around people's safety.

Many beautiful and remarkable videos made during this time have helped people throughout the world to overcome their desolation or their longing to virtually connect with others and progressively fill in the gap caused by missing seeing their friends

and relatives live or by going to the theatre or attending concerts, performing a concert, playing in front of big or small audiences. It was a huge development in our "analog" lives and gave us a great deal of opportunities to cope with the new conditions that were imposed on us.

This change brought about some other "diseases" as well. Longing for a fire escape plan made us (musicians) sometimes impatient to produce restless virtual music for YouTube channels because of the feeling we got that time is flying by and we have to react. Every single moment of exposure to the Internet is something we can't easily erase. And so this must be a conscious decision you make as an artist. You can hear a recording again and again and you can stumble on the same moment which was not

Citizen TALES Commons:

"perfectly" interpreted. So, to make things happen at will, one focuses sometimes on paths which are less risky but work out for the recording which might have never been chosen at a live concert. These tactics are becoming habits now, which means loss of spontaneity (such as the one inherent in a live broadcasting or in a live performance with others). The sense of art is changing or becomes twisted. Artists now primarily focus not on the subject matters they want to transmit but on how to perfection the way they present it. The authenticity of music is jeopardized and very often musicians don't let the pieces breathe. One needs the audience to breathe properly, because this is a process you enjoy together with others. It is part of the communication process.

Let's explore now the same situation from another point of view, that of the audience. Not always but sometimes, virtual concerts work like junk food. They are not expensive (artists are not getting paid or at least not all of them), they spoil our taste, they make us addicted, and after a while, after getting used to it, we are satisfied with a small spicy portion and we can't appreciate a long well-cooked meal. Some minutes are enough to get an idea of the whole! So we don't give the time to let the music speak to us. Time becomes tight at

home! If we compare this to what we mentioned before, that is, the lack of breathing, finally we understand why we are not willing to hear a longer piece. The dispatcher doesn't have the right feeling of time and the receiver doesn't let the time to work in himself/herself. After some time, we lose the sense of the need of the concerts.

For every musician, a concert means motivation to keep on flourishing one's skills. Last but not least, it is his income source! A great percentage of the artists had to find a new orientation

for survival purposes and use their main work as a hobby. Needless to say how many

artists experienced the loss of hopping onto the stage or moving to a bigger one, because most of us consider it as very common thing, something which we catch up later on in our life. We are about to witness a great loss in the quality of Arts, if we just continue let these things happen. This pandemic caught us by surprise. We didn't react regarding our human side but we were thirsty to find alternative modern ways through technology. All theatres reacted as a chain. There have been few concert halls which reacted individually.

Why not finding ways so that a normal concert, for example, takes place in and out of the Hall with less people, divided in more than

Chrysanthie Emmanouilidou Conducting "Petite Messe Solennelle Rossini" |15 February 2015 5p.m. | Emmaus Church Berlin Kreuzberg | Photo Credit: Foto Klaus-Peter Schmitt

one sessions? There are hundreds of solutions and perhaps less expensive than cancelling all performances. Not only the artists but all practitioners associated /connected with them are in danger throughout this time: backstage personnel, agencies, sound engineer and so on. In the global stage music halls or theatres have been seen simply as means of entertainment and less as bearers of our culture. Let's face it! There is much

more to be done and can be done for the sake of the arts so that they can be revitalized and waken up from their current lethargy, but we

have to do more for this to happen. We need to act in synergy not to tumble again before the next virus appears and threatens us to take away even more of the social rights, which characterize us as human beings on this planet. The following music model that I am proposing and which is inspired by the communal spirit of the *Citizen TALES* Commons collective to which I belong, is just one of the myriad ways we can revitalize the arts and their capacity to weave connections among human beings:

Chasing for the Love of Music: A *Citizen TALES* Commons Music Model

Every voice alone is too weak. For the multidisciplinary *Citizen TALES Commons* chorus, for a voice of a hundred people, the possibilities increase immensely: Every year brings about many topics. We could concentrate on one topic and place the music among paintings, dance and literature. Four different kind of art could be presented within a day (a kind of festival) maybe in an abandoned place/ squad. These are the most preferable ones. Throughout the year some members can be responsible to brainstorm and select the best ideas building up a feasible program regarding a presentation and an artistic day program. A small trailer-video should underline the meaning and the subject matter. This idea could be associated with a charity idea. The more people are involved the more possible it is to find local participants who are interested in both: helping and being helped. For support we could engage universities or museums or other artistic organizations.

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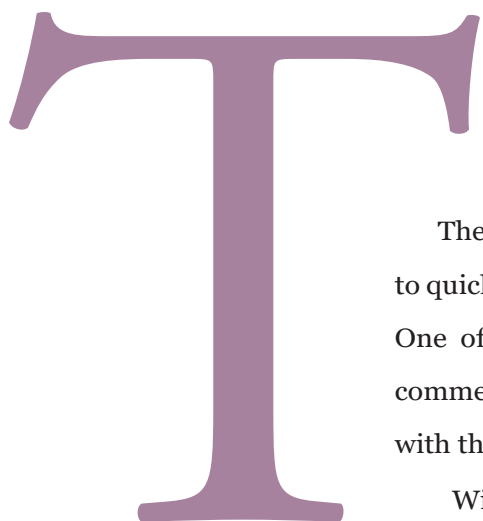
The COVID-19 pandemic, together with the failures of both governments and society, to quickly and appropriately respond to its ravages, have upended most aspects our lives. One of the hardest-hit industries has been the arts and entertainment world, both commercial and non-profit. While the damage done to the cultural sphere cannot equated with the human loss, it is considerable and will cast a long shadow.

Without sounding pollyannaish, I believe that this upheaval is likely to create opportunity and promise, particularly for smaller, more nimble organizations and creators previously disadvantaged vis-à-vis dominant organizations and artists in their respective creative fields. With lower overhead and less to lose, the former can be more flexible, able to act more quickly and more willing to take risks than the latter, making them more adaptable and in some ways easier to sustain in a crisis. Both have been liberated to experiment, because the old methods don't apply now, and the pressure to conform to traditions and mimic peer behavior is much weaker. Since much of the current transformation is connected to the "virtual" world, some of it will reinforce entrenched inequities, and exclude those without sufficient knowledge of or access to critical technologies. Individuals/institutions who/that have underinvested in digital engagement may be handicapped. But in the virtual realm, forceful, decisive and unconventional action can turn things around more swiftly than in a 'bricks and mortar' environment, if the appropriate tools are identified and the groups work to their strengths. New platforms focused on serving, empowering and generating revenue for the less advantaged participants in the cultural marketplace can and will continue to emerge. The rapid increase in demand for certain technologies is also leading to price decreases made possible by economies of scale that makes these technologies even more inexpensive and easier to use. This will eventually reduce barriers to the entry on new organizations or

How Art Survives

Anna Winestein

participation of new creatives. Technology can even, at least partly, address the classic economic problem of Baumol's cost disease—the rise of wages in jobs that have not experienced productivity gains (e.g. it takes as many musicians and as much time to play a Mahler symphony today as a century ago), which makes certain silos of the arts and education increasingly costly relative to others, in turn suppressing demand.

America's markets are known for their fierce competition, much less fettered than in Europe. Large corporations falter and entire industries are upended fairly regularly. But in the cultural sphere, entrenched institutions and high-profile figures have had an enormous advantage in terms of momentum and influence, and much more continuity. This is on the whole beneficial, as it would be disruptive to lose organizations and beloved creators at a comparable rate—although we should not forget that it has happened with regularity throughout the twentieth century, and the arts have survived and even flourished. On the other hand, it can be quite stifling, as large organizations and well-established artists (performing and visual) occupy enormous resources that might otherwise be spread around more widely. For example, in Boston, three leading arts/media non-profits

receive well over half of the available philanthropic support. The competition for the remaining scraps can be quite fierce, and takes away resources (as well as audiences) that could otherwise help foster growth and creative evolution among smaller entities that instead spend a lot of energy on sheer survival. In the for-profit entertainment industry, the benefits also mostly accrue to the top. Blue-chip institutions become formidable intermediaries between creators/performers/content and audiences/donors/consumers and while some share generously and support the greater creative eco-system, others do not. A crisis that sidelines everyone equally makes possible direct and wider engagement by those normally shut out by, or dependent on, the "big boys." It also accelerates processes that were unfolding previously and forces a reckoning with slow-motion declines and unsustainable strategies perpetuated by resistance to change (not uncommon in a sphere where tradition carries great weight). This potentially enables transformational decisions that can position those willing to make them for huge opportunity, and it also creates space for new entrants. Consumer behavior and expectations, also normally resistant to change in tradition-bound art forms, can similarly shift rapidly in ways

that can be beneficial to some art makers/institutions. The losers will likely be those most dependent on the perpetuation of the status quo and those who remain unwilling or unable to adapt fast enough to the new conditions. Established hierarchies of power and status can thus fall and, though it can be painful for some and disorienting for many, it need not be negative overall.

Meanwhile, it is individuals low on the totem pole within organizations, or excluded from them entirely, that are suffering the most. The former are quickly sacrificed for institutional preservation. Both are likely to be undersupplied with resources and resilience to weather the eye of the storm. Government support programs provide incomplete relief and people are left on their own, forcing some to give up on a creative life. This lesson in self-reliance is very painful, but it could liberate those who are truly dedicated to creativity from passive dependence on external forces and push them to seize greater agency and creative as well as economic control over their output and supporters/fanbase. It may also reset expectations for those seeking education and careers in the arts in the future to more realistic levels. Prior to the pandemic, the rate at which post-secondary educational institutions were unleashing would-be performers, visual artists,

filmmakers, etc. into the world was not sustainable and arguably unconscionable, given the fees charged and lack of preparation for the practicalities of making their way and enduring in their chosen industry. Looking back at history shows that a remarkable number of the creatives who made a lasting impact in their field(s) had inconsistent access to formal training, and developed their skills in a mostly self-directed way with input from peers rather than professors.

I am not, nor have I ever been of the 'burn it all down' school of thought. While I have, for over a decade, seen a precipice slowly approaching that I believed might bring down many creative institutions (museums and galleries, performing arts organizations and theaters, music venues and cinemas etc.), I never imagined that it might be unleashed with such speed and force. It is disheartening to see a recently vibrant cultural scene at an almost standstill. Nevertheless, this period has shown me that creatives/creators continue to have a burning desire to create and share that creativity, and audiences to engage with and support them. More importantly, both appear (now) more willing to be flexible to meet each other in new ways. As I write this, in December 2020, we are entering what I hope is the most intense phase of

The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company Museum, in Boston's historic Faneuil Hall, closed to the public since March. Photographed November 2020. Photo courtesy of Ballets Russes Arts Initiative (BRAI)

Musicians record a virtual concert for Ballets Russes Arts Initiative (BRAI) at the Harvard Musical Association in Beacon Hill. Photographed September 2020. Photo courtesy of BRAI

the crisis, with a return to a world with minimal obstacles to traditional cultural activity two or perhaps more years away. I am confident that when we can safely emerge from isolation, people will have a stronger desire to interact with others in a variety of ways as well as to share aesthetic and transcendent experiences. The arts will be needed, sought after, and valued.

However, after an initial explosion of activity, I am not sure to what extent audiences will want to return, long-term, to formerly traditional, hieratic ways of experiencing the arts. Having had concerts come to them in their living rooms, and performers speaking (seemingly) directly to them, they may expect a more immersive and more personal experience in the concert hall—not just the opportunity to hear, with a group of strangers, a live interpretation of music that they could listen to with better sound quality, fewer hassles and more creature comforts on a well-calibrated sound system at home. Having watched performances filmed in 4K at different angles, perhaps even with AR/VR components, allowing

experiences that are not physically possible from a single (possibly rather distant) theater seat, and fly-on-the-wall peeks 'backstage,' they may want to get something new or different from the atmosphere and perhaps from their fellow audience members during the in-theater experience rather than the simple fact of bearing witness to a particular performance and having a drink in the lobby bar during intermission. Having "visited" exhibitions in online viewing rooms and VR walkthroughs, what level of connection or enrichment or personal curation will they demand during an in-real-life exploration of a museum or gallery?

I do believe, that the new creative epoch that emerges after the pandemic gradually recedes will feature a more demotic way of creating and experiencing art. It will be less formalized or academic, less regulated and dictated by the high priests of "Taste." It may not be to everyone's liking. And it is hard to know to what extent it will resemble the pre-pandemic world. But it will be vibrant and diverse in all their senses. Art, like life, will find its way.

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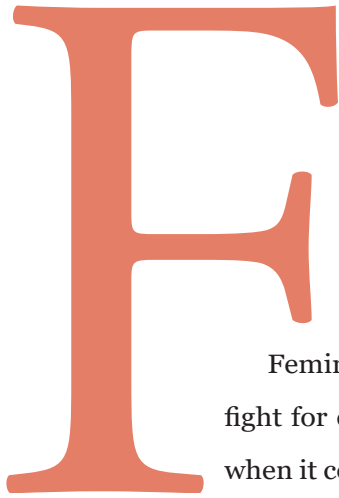
Feminists at the helm of almost every single feminist movement would have you believe that their fight for equality is just that: equal. However, operating under the assumption that 'one size fits all' when it comes to feminism unequivocally ignores the complex realities of how social identities such as race, gender and class and their related issues are in fact interconnected. Feminist movements use the image of a middle-class white woman as an outdated model for which they base their agendas on. Yet this outdated model fails to address the inequalities that act as nesting dolls within already existing issues such as the gender-wage gap, domestic violence, and sexual violence. These issues are disregarded because not every woman deals with those experiences on the same level. But that's the point. Not all women have the same experiences. Without the implementation of intersectional feminism, a concept that would allow for the interconnectedness of social identities to be recognized within feminist agendas, mainstream feminism will not achieve its goal of securing equality for all women.

The whitewashing and discrimination within feminist agendas isn't new. This outmoded concept has been a landmark trait in a variety of "all inclusive" feminist movements dating all the way back to women's suffrage. One of the suffrage movement's main goals was to win the right to vote for all women, however, it was very clear that middle class white women, women of color, and working class women had distinctly different reasons for fighting for the right to vote. Middle class white women fought for the right to vote as a way to become equal with their male counterparts. Women of color fought for the right to vote so that they could empower themselves and their communities. Working class women fought for the right to vote to gain more political power that would help them obtain things like higher pay and better working conditions. The suffrage movement upheld this facade that they were fighting for every woman's reason and right to vote and continued to uphold this notion throughout its duration. Because of this, it became more and more apparent that women of color and the added implication of race attached to their issues weren't being considered. It also became apparent that working class women and their different needs due to their class status weren't being taken into

Feminism is Not "One Size Fits All"

Tyler Pauly

consideration as well. Additionally, suffragette figureheads Suzan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Stanton's discriminatory rhetoric and actions encouraged the production of a whitewashed and biased agenda in the suffrage movement that inaccurately gave the impression that the suffragettes were fighting for all women. However, this wasn't the case. The suffrage movement and its members refused to offer any solid support for working class women who were trying to form labor unions as well as gain better wages and working conditions. According to the model in which the suffragettes based their movement off of, working class women and their needs weren't something that the majority could relate to, and therefore, working class women's rights weren't a priority. Furthermore, the eventual ratification of the 19th amendment which prohibited citizens to be denied the right to vote based on gender was indeed a victory for the suffrage movement and for feminists in general, but what people failed to realize was that this amendment did nothing for women of color. Despite being given the right to vote on the basis of their gender, women of color could still be discriminated against because of their race and forced to participate in poll taxes or literacy tests. The suffrage movement ultimately failed to understand the intersectionality of race, gender and class and execute solutions that would address these differences. This failure and disservice to women of color and working class women illustrates a larger issue still apparent in modern day feminism of how feminist movements often fall short of recognizing the intersectionalities between race, gender and class and therefore advocate for solutions that do not help every woman like they are supposed to. The suffrage movement is the perfect example of how, yes, you can advocate and attempt to create solutions for all women, but without the application of intersectional feminism in feminist agendas, these attempts won't be successful.

The suffrage movement's unwillingness to implement the concept of intersectional feminism within their agenda is something we still see today within modern feminist movements such as the Women's Movement. The Women's Movement's emphasis on inclusivity, on amplifying the voices of women of color and working class women are illusions that hide the fact that the overlapping social identities of race, class and gender are still not being taken into consideration. Time and time again, women of color and working class women are forced to contort themselves to the mold of what a "typical woman" looks like which is just an updated version of the model that the suffragettes used from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. According to data collected by the American Psychological

Association in a study of more than 1,000 participants from the United States, "Black women and other women of color are often less likely to be associated with the concept of a 'typical woman' and are viewed as more similar to men of color than to white women, which may lead to some feminist movements failing to advocate for the rights of women of color." In addition to feminist movements utilizing an updated version of the "typical woman" model, feminists participating in these movements also try to incite this idea of "common oppression" stating that all women are oppressed in the same way which also actively ignores the complexities of intersectional social identities. In her book The Problem That Has No Name, author Betty Friedan states, "The idea of 'common oppression' is a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality" (44). Friedan's statement on this idea of "common oppression" supports the idea that when you enforce this type of commonality that acknowledges one identity but ignores the other, you are failing to support and fight with the women that experience other issues that aren't experienced by the "typical woman" such as racism or classism. Furthermore, researcher Stewart Coles, a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan's Department of Communication and Media reinforced the fact that

women of color aren't adequately acknowledged by feminist movements by saying, "Feminist movements that focus only on issues that predominantly affect white women without addressing racialized sexism ignore the needs of Black women." This further suggests that through the implication of a generalized model of what type of woman needs to be advocated for within these feminist movements, you, in turn, ignore the issues of women of color and fall short of coming up with effective solutions for these women.

In addition to actively ignoring the intersectionality of race and gender, modern feminist movements also fail to understand the intersectionality of class and gender due to the fact that their feminism often leaves working class women behind. To further elaborate on this point, most feminist agendas put an emphasis on the middle class white women which encompasses the action of empowering those women to "fight for spots in the board room" or to become powerful business women. However, this notion encourages an agenda that actively ignores working class women and the environments in which they work and live in. Furthermore, feminist movements have shown that issues such as alleviating women's poverty and the historical slashing of government programs that disproportionately effect poor and working class women are not their concern. These issues are of

no concern to them because these types of things don't affect the middle class white woman in which they base their agenda off of so why should they care right? But they should care because gender and class are intersectional just as gender and race are intersectional. Feminism is meant to be intersectional. It is also important to keep in mind that with the growth of modern feminism, the intersectionality of other social identities such as sexuality have risen to the surface. However, this sexuality is an additional identity that mainstream feminism chooses to ignore because it doesn't fit the agenda that surrounds their "typical woman" model. Likewise, issues such as women's poverty, mainstream feminism doesn't think of LGBTQIA+ issues as their issues to fix or address.

A common misconception amongst those who support and participate in feminist movements is that the agenda isn't whitewashed so much as it is generalized to fit the needs of all women involved. However, who is this generalized agenda meant to fit best and what does it do because of this? This type of agenda is meant to fit the majority, not the minority, and in this case the majority is considered to be the middle class white woman or the "typical woman." Women of color, working class women, and LGBTQIA+ women are considered to not fit this notion of the "typical woman" whatsoever

further proving the fact that feminist movements don't just generalize their agenda to fit all women, but they whitewash and constrict it to fit the majority which is the middle class white woman.

The outdated "typical woman" model utilized by historical and modern feminism needs to be replaced with a more intersectional approach to feminism because without this approach, the subsequent goal of achieving equality for all women will not happen. According to dictionary.com, the very definition of intersectional feminism, "[…] recognizes that barriers to gender equality vary according to other aspects of a woman's identity, including age, race, ethnicity, class, and religion, and strives to address a diverse spectrum of women's issues." With the implementation of intersectional feminism, mainstream feminism can begin to create solutions that do in fact benefit all women and not just those that fit the "typical woman" model. Gender, race, class and sexuality are all social identities that are interconnected and therefore impact one another. Utilizing a more intersectional approach when it comes to feminism can and will bring us one step closer to a society filled with opportunity and equality for all no matter what social identities one woman encompasses. As intersectional feminist Falvia Dzodan said, "My feminism will be intersectional or it will be bullshit."

Lavender

Wyld Tha Bard (Phillip Scruggs)

I am free in my mind

Free from the times

Where they hate what is not in a straight and hetero line

I live somewhere on the spectrum, between the pink and the blue

This is nothing new, yet my respect is over due

Where it seems that this world wants me to lose

The system seems to abuse

The people who wish not to conform

To any systematic norms

So much hate I have absorbed because my existence has been ignored

Yet and still I chose to soar

As I take command and love myself

For who will take care of me when nobody else seems to really care?

So a vibrant life I dare

To lead in an act of resistance

My whole life, my whole existence has been against this puritanical vision.

So I made the radical decision

To accept me for me

And this sacred life I got

Where my body is a temple

The vessel in which I thrive

With hopes that by being alive, other bodies who perhaps identify like I

Would know that their limits surpass the sky

As we march with watery eyes as we make those soldiers cry

We embody love expressed in so many colors

Oh how I pray for a world where we don't fear one another

And where our options as a lover isn't tied to politics
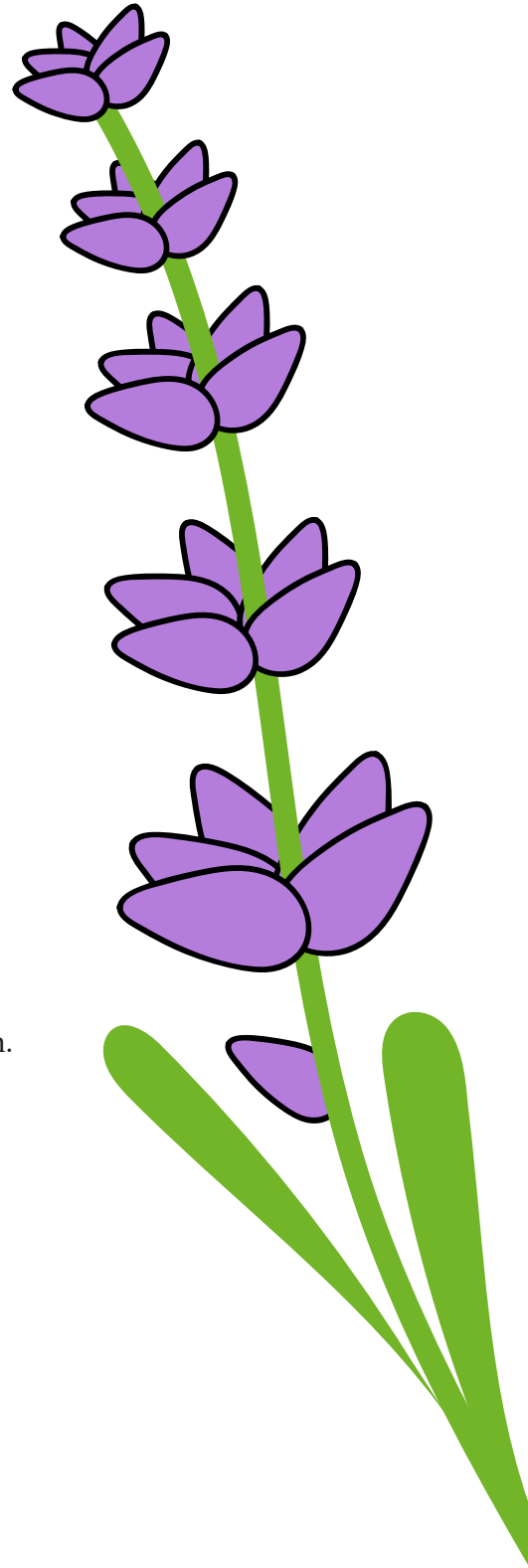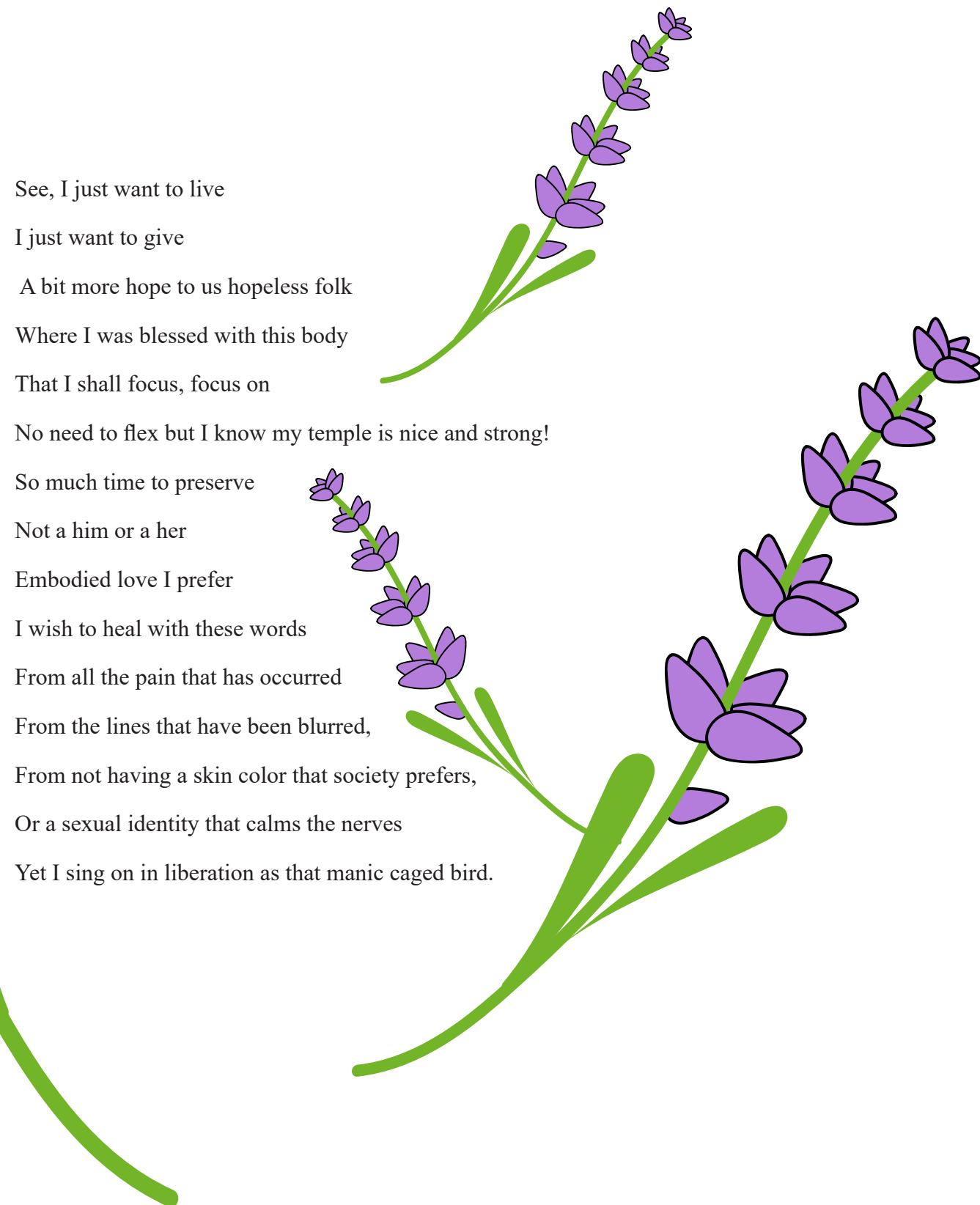
See, I just want to live

I just want to give

 A bit more hope to us hopeless folk

Where I was blessed with this body

That I shall focus, focus on

No need to flex but I know my temple is nice and strong!

So much time to preserve

Not a him or a her

Embodied love I prefer

I wish to heal with these words

From all the pain that has occurred

From the lines that have been blurred,

From not having a skin color that society prefers,

Or a sexual identity that calms the nerves

Yet I sing on in liberation as that manic caged bird.

Lengua Lamentation

Lengua Lamentation

Isaiah Frisbie

Spanish is not my mother tongue—my mother's tongue

is not Spanish either. Es la lengua de mi abuela.

My grandmother's tongue. My grandmother tongue.

My grandmother. Abuela, I owe you an apology. Lo siento

that my español greets the crowd with a smile grown

from guilt, that it stumbles on every speed bump on my

tongue and slips from lips like it's caught on a short string.

Te amo abuelita y gracias for your language.

Maybe one day we'll get to meet and say hi.

Reunion

Peter Bottéas

Union again? Union anew?

Can there be a re without a then?

Images of family members gathering

Was there ever union?

Well, connection of some sort

Willy-nilly ties of blood and obligation and

Even some honour and care

Ties of time and place

and circumstances of genes and sperm

Ties illuminated or obscured

by gaslight and denial,

A retelling of stories that never were,

mythologies spawned by need

And interment — vaulting — of the way things were.

Were. But never allowed

light or breath

or sound or succour.
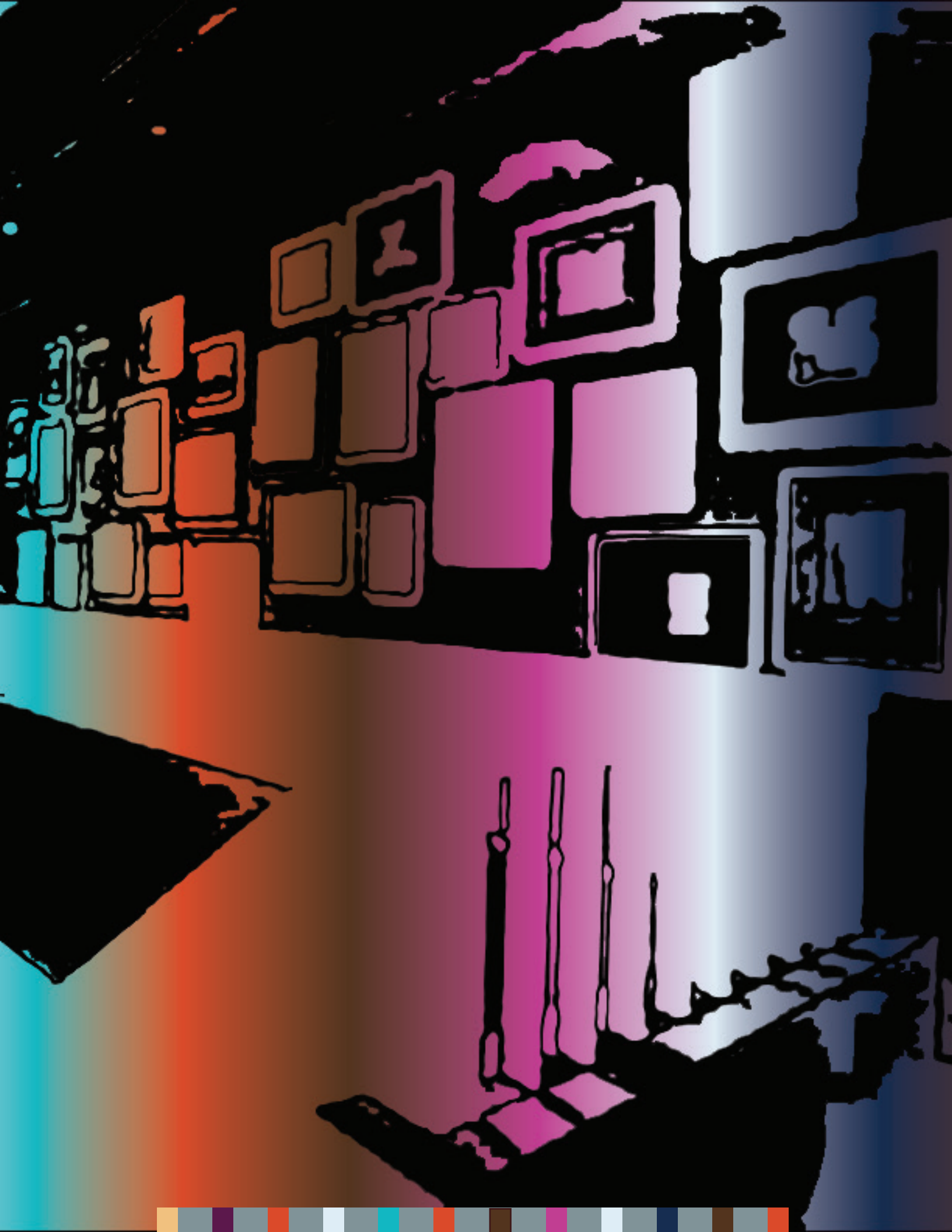
I am compelled to implement a spirit of activism in my work, in response to the current political climate at the Texas-Mexico border. I created a performance project with Merge Dance Company at Texas State University in San Marcos, TX that has helped me and my students process this situation, in a civic and imaginative way. The project is my way of bearing witness to an unimaginable trauma and suffering experienced by families, just a few hours from where I am. This piece of choreography bears witness to the inhumane treatment, and the anguish experienced, specifically, by the women and children at the Texas-Mexico border.

The images and video footage of children being taken from their mothers deeply disturbs me. The horrific trauma of the situation pulls at my soul. As an artist (dancer, choreographer, instructor) I process the pain through movement. Before I know it, the movement becomes phrases, and the phrases become a narrative, and a story of survival. I worked through my body to find the right movements to bear witness for the events at the border. As I worked, I asked myself questions:

How can dance bring voice and healing to people at the border?

How can this effort influence others to bear witness in their own way?

How can this project inform and possibly persuade others to think critically about the crisis at the Texas-Mexico border?

Posture of the Heart:
Reimagining A Borderless Future Through Dance

Christa Oliver

I shared the videos and images with the dancers before we started the rehearsal process because I needed the dancers to see the victims' faces, hear their stories, and see their pain before we attempted to give a voice to the voiceless through movement. I expressed my need to create a piece that would cry out for families experiencing this horror, and one that would impact the audience. It had to make people think, and encourage others to get up, and stand up for change. In full disclosure, my daughter was born in Texas and has Mexican ancestry, so I have a personal investment in the larger narrative. Furthermore, most of my students at Texas State University also have Mexican roots, and many of them were born and raised by the border.

The principal dancer in this piece is from Laredo, TX. She also happens to have a personal connection to the character she's portraying. I asked her how the choreography, and the story of the piece impacted her. She stated,

"I have seen and felt the pain that my friends back at home have gone through because of what's happening at the border.

When I'm dancing in this piece, I offer my movements up as a prayer for them and their families. There is a section in the piece where I dance inside a crowded holding cell with other women who have also been caught trying to cross the border. In that moment, I am caught. I feel very vulnerable, and it's not a feeling I'm used to. The piece makes me think of the women who are going through this. It makes me think about what they might feel in those scary moments. They don't have a person to stick up for them. They don't have a person to speak for them. I love performing in this piece because I feel like it brings awareness to what's happening right now. We're not sugar coating anything. The audience witnesses my newborn baby being literally ripped from my arms in the beginning of the piece. There are a lot of choreographers who would sugar coat the truth. We're not afraid to go there. We're not afraid to tell the story. For me, this piece is important because I feel like this is my way of helping my friends and their families. This is my way of giving a voice to those who don't have a voice."

The piece opens with a woman running-trying to cross the border. She sprints, stops, crawls and jumps frantically across the stage, trying to evade the wildly moving search lights. Another female emerges next-one young mother trying to cross the border with her newborn baby. She stumbles into a male border patrol agent who immediately calls for backup from other agents. The agents wrestle the woman to the ground and rip the child from her arms, and then drag her off. Both women are caught and are put in a small holding cell with other women who were caught trying to cross the border. The women are handcuffed, dirty, and their spirits are crushed. They have no voice. They feel hopeless. All of them have given up, except the one young mother who decides to fight for her child, and who rallies the other women to get up with her, to fight for their families, and to be treated as human.

The images of the mothers and their children at the Texas-Mexico border, still live in my consciousness, in my own sense of being a mother. I can sense the pain in my own body at the memory of those women, their children, and wherever they might be now. As an artist, my body is my instrument, my tool for teaching and expressing my craft. Creating this piece is my way of processing the trauma occurring at the border, and through choreography I am able to bear witness, and to include activism in my work.

I could not imagine the horror of not knowing where my child was, who she was with, and the trauma she would have to endure from having been taken from the only family she has ever known. The reality for the mothers at the Texas-Mexican border is not done justice by my tears, nor by my work, but I will continue to bear witness the best ways I know how, as an artist, and as a mother.

I can imagine engaging families at the border or in similar spaces where there is trauma, and using dance and choreography to build community, and to heal. The choreographed piece that I am looking to build upon, Posture of the Heart, celebrates the power of being a woman, and the unbreakable bond between mother and child. The space of the border, and the politics found there provide a rich context for exploring ideas of community and healing, through dance and choreography.
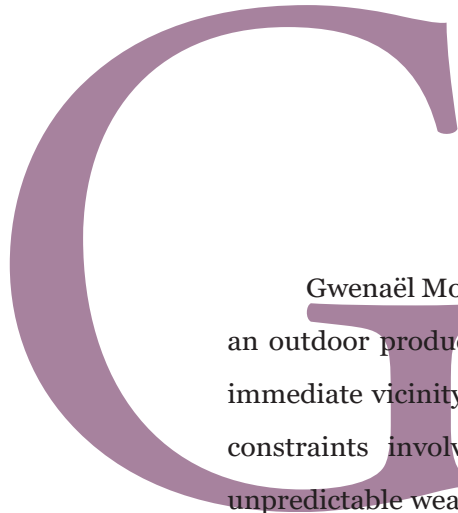
G Gwenaël Morin's (re)production of *Paradise Now* was originally billed as an outdoor production, taking advantage of the expansive green space in the immediate vicinity of the Théâtre des Amandiers. Unfortunately, the practical constraints involved with such an undertaking—including the somewhat unpredictable weather patterns that characterize Paris in the late springtime— meant that, in the end, the show was moved indoors, though not into either one of the two main theatre spaces. Instead, an area in the back half of the design workshop was cleared out to make room for a sort of rudimentary stage space: white temporary flooring, a few chairs and stools scattered about for seating, and, as a sort of "divider" between the work space and the playing space, a black curtain hanging a few meters down from the ceiling. Aside from this 'entry marker' to designate a sort of boundary or (rudimentary) limit to the space, the design as a whole leaned more heavily towards openness and porosity than to a recreation of the otherwise often highly structured inside/outside, visible/ hidden dichotomies that categorize a large number of theatre spaces. There was, for instance, no real backstage. What would have been considered as such—i.e. the space that, when seated facing the stage, was located 'behind' the curtain— was denied such a status based on first, the fact that in order to access the

Theatre and the (Im)possibility of Utopia: *Re-paradise.* Directed by Gwenaël Morin, from the Living Theatre's Paradise Now (1968). Nanterre-Amandiers, Spring 2018

Ifigenia Gonis

performance space, the audience had to walk through the area "behind the curtain," and second the fact that the actors, by and large, started on stage, interspersed amongst the audience, and stayed there. As to the seating arrangements, given that there were only a few chairs set up, many audience members sat, or lounged, on the floor around the stage. For those seated, separation between themselves and the stage was delimited by the point at which the white stage floor ended, and the cement flooring underneath reappeared again, though this boundary could be easily—and openly—crossed from even before the official start time of the show, merely through the gesture of stretching one's limbs. Eventually, some of these audience members would end up, through their own volition, or through persuasion/invitation from one of the actors, sitting not just on the stage but more closely to the center of it, intermingling amongst the cast.

When the Living Theatre—then still under the artistic direction of founders Julian Beck and Judith Malina—originally produced *Paradise Now* at the 1968 edition of the Theatre Festival at Avignon, the production created something of a scandal. Nudity was a partial cause, the pointedly aggressive and confrontational violence directly aimed at the spectators by the actors—heightened, or rather, rendered more complex by the fact that, on several occasions, the spectators were invited to come on stage and either speak out or commune with the actors—another. Moreover, this production was staged only a couple of months after the demonstrations of May 1968, themselves spurred on, to a certain degree, by a combination of frustration and anger at the established order of things, as well as a desire to create something new. The eventual culture clash between the theatre troupe and the residents (and municipal authorities) of Avignon was, under these circumstances, almost inevitable, with the call for spectators to join the actors in taking the ritual/celebration/performance out of the theatre and into the streets following the first performance leading not only to the show's cancellation, but also to its ascension to an almost mythical status. The choice to program its revival, then, is one that must contend not only with the fluid yet precise structure of the piece itself, but also with the weighted history attached to it.

During the course of several interviews given before and immediately following the play's premier, Morin stressed that when deciding to take on this production, his aim was not to mount a reinterpretation or a readaptation—in other words, a production whose staging was filtered through and largely informed by his personal aesthetic and

interpretations as a director—but to follow as close as possible Beck's and Malina's original script and production notes[1]. Rather than a museumification of the piece through its presentation as a relic or artifact of fifty years ago, the choice to stick to the letter, so to speak, was meant to function rather as an avenue through which the contemporary audience could approach the memories of both *Paradise Now* and the events of 1968, a way to see what still resonated fifty years later and what, conversely had lost its former draw.

Indeed, said critical engagement with the legacy of *Paradise Now* began almost immediately after everyone had entered the performance space. What followed at this point was a series of what could best be described as "rites" that, for the most part, used speech and/or gesture to explore the possibility for a restructuring—if not full upending—of the current state of things in order to move towards a more "utopian" communion. That the result of leaving the original text untouched was the maintenance of this idea of utopian potential as one of the central theses of the piece was almost evidence enough of an argument for its continued relevance fifty years after the play's creation. At the same time, however, on a practical level, there were a few moments throughout the course of the performance that, if not necessarily undermining the central thesis, inadvertently questioned its efficacy within the present context. Coincidentally—or perhaps not surprisingly—, these moments all involved, whether directly or indirectly, some form of audience interaction.

The first of these occurred following a direct actor/spectator confrontation that ended with the former communally disrobing and standing nearly, if not fully, naked on the performance space. Facing front, the company remained silent for a moment before one of the female actors spoke out, for the first time, a phrase that would be repeated several times over the course of the evening:

"Théâtre libre ! Faites ce que vous voulez !"

On a semantic level, one can say that this phrase functions a sort of call to action, where the act of speaking functions as a means through which to bestow a level of autonomy back to the audience. In other words, it gives permission—or at least makes known the possibility—to transgress established codes of behavior one is expected to follow while at the theatre, in favor of a return to following more basic impulses or desires. It is, on the surface, a call to act without question, to return to the instinctual or unpredictable. One could, to a certain degree, even consider it as an extension of the

1   See, for instance, Augustin Guillot (2018), "Le Living Théâtre, toujours envie?" Libération [online], 12 May 2018.

transgressive behavior that began earlier with the act of undressing, with this time the members of the public being more directly implicated in the action.

At the same time, however, when this phrase is spoken, what results is a cognizance of the existence of a codified system that structures the present theatre space rather than a manifested response to the call. "Faites ce que vous voulez!" ("Do whatever you want!") results, rather, in a moment of silent, frontal confrontation between the performers and the audience, before the former continue onwards with the next 'ritualistic' act. More precisely, it results in a form of auto-surveillance. Would anyone, at the moment of the opening of the possibility of 'freedom' of action, take the opportunity to "act," in this case, allow an instinctual and random impulse to inform their actions, thus entering a process of 'unlearning' the conditions of expected behavior specific to the theatre space? Was there a limit to what would be accepted as a manifested 'act'? And perhaps most critically: was this call meant to be interpreted literally in the first place?

This final question poses a few problems, the first of which concerns the implications it raises about the relationship between the performers and the audience. To refer back to the beginning of the piece, said relationship is rendered unstable from the outset following the

sequence of "complicity/confrontation" that preceded the enunciation of the "'all to act." At first welcomed in as an accomplice of sorts in the act of transgression—the actors opened the show by first approaching various spectators one-on-one, whispering their secrets to them, as one would a close confidant, before adopting a harsher, more accusatory tone—the increased aggression in communication later reorients the position of the spectator if not as the source of the constraint that the actor is fighting against, then at least as somewhat responsible for or complicit with it. In other words, those to whom the possibility to integrate into the rites being performed is open are now placed firmly in opposition to said rites. Given this repositioning, the call to "[faire] ce que vous voulez" becomes less of a welcoming back into the fold and more of a challenge. Would, in other words, an acting out of an individual desire be welcomed in a space where, moments before, those putting forth the call to act placed those meant to act in a position decidedly opposed to the former's interests to the extent that it could threaten their own potential to freely perform certain gestures?

What results from this, then, is a sort of implied imposition of inaction, that is, the creation of an environment where to not act becomes the only viable option. The freedom granted, to a certain degree, is merely illusory.

This is not to say that the possibility for action is entirely ruled out; theoretically, someone could have still heeded the call and done something. Given, however, the moment at which the call is first put out during the piece, one could safely argue that it was never meant, or expected, to be taken literally in the first place. So that the rituals that followed these initial opening moments could be carried out, a sense of order had to be maintained, with the potentiality for disorder relegated firmly in the margins. The repetition of the call to act, the constant reaffirmation of the definition of the space as a "free." that is, "boundless," one, consequently also stresses not only this aforementioned marginalization, but also, as the piece continues on, the gradual move of disorder from the margins to something resembling a momentary actualization of it.

The final moment of significant audience/actor interaction involved a song and dance number staged at the conclusion of the play. What started as the actors rhythmically clapping and dancing about ended with them waving everyone seated up on their feet, first to dance around a bit in the space, and then to grab our things and follow the actors outside, a reference to the infamous walk about Avignon that closed out the original *Paradise Now* in 1968. Once the design workshop had been cleared, the dancing continued for a few moments in the small parking lot that separates the workshop from the main theatre building, with the actors—still mostly, if not fully, nude—skipping around amongst the crowd, encouraging the dancing, clapping, and eventually singing to continue with greater verve to the point where, eventually, the two otherwise disparate groups had found a musical harmony with one another. Yet this progression towards communion ended not with the creation of a singular "unit," but rather through a reestablishment of an order of difference, or more precisely, disunion. After a few minutes of 'unified' singing and dancing, the actors began to dance their way back towards the open doors of the workshop entrance, this time making no motion for the audience to follow them. Once all the performers had crossed back into the warehouse/performance space, the doors were abruptly shut, leaving the spectators outside. The ceremony had ended. Applause followed, but there were no bows, no moment in which the actors would return to greet the spectators in the mutual act of recognition that both groups were, at least at this moment, occupying the same temporal space. Instead, the two groups ended exactly as they had started: distinct, separated, only momentarily approaching something akin to unity before being firmly relegated back to their disparate categories. The actor/spectator status quo, in other words, was never truly upended or destabilized.

In fact, it is arguably this lack of destabilization, made only more evident by the gesture of shutting the door of the workshop, that pushes the rest of the production more into the category of museumified relic than perhaps what was originally intended. This, however, may have had more to do with the decision to stage the show in Nanterre than with the content of the production itself, as the relatively isolated location of the theatre meant that the performance, even when taken "into the streets," was relatively contained within the entire group of individuals—actors, spectators, and a few technicians—directly present in the workshop space at that time. As the theatre is bordered from the back by a large park, and from all other sides by various businesses—all of which, save one hotel across the street, were closed for the evening—, the chances of crossing paths with a non-theatre-goer upon exiting the performance space are relatively minimal. Consequently, given the minimal risk of the performance "bleeding out" to have a discernible effect on its surroundings, the move outside the confines of the workshop was less an act of "breaking down" of the walls of a performance space and more of an extension of these same boundaries.

On the other hand, it is also very possible to see this 'preservation'—as opposed to "reinterpretation"—of *Paradise Now* within the cyclical confines of *Re-Paradise* as a comment in itself on the limitations of a theatre that speaks to a revolutionary imagination. Other than the shutting of the doors at the conclusion of the communal dancing—signaling not only the end of the show, but more precisely, that all the required "beats" had been hit in order to merit marking the end of the performance of *Paradise—,* there was no instruction given that those of us left outside had to stop dancing, stop the performance of the ritual. Several of us had, in fact, only moments before communed with strangers, yet when the doors shut and the applause died down, everyone more or less went their separate ways. The "revolutionary" gesture was not taken up by those in whose hands said act could have led to an evolution away from the cyclical structure otherwise left intact. This does put a certain level of responsibility on the spectator as the origin or bringer of change, but said responsibility will remain unmanifested so long as said spectators themselves contribute to the "becoming-relic" of a production via an implicit—or explicit— acquiescence to the notion that certain gestures or spatial dynamics should remain within the confines of the performance space or otherwise discouraged from "spilling out" from it.
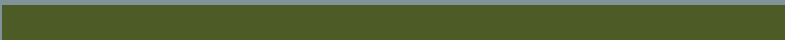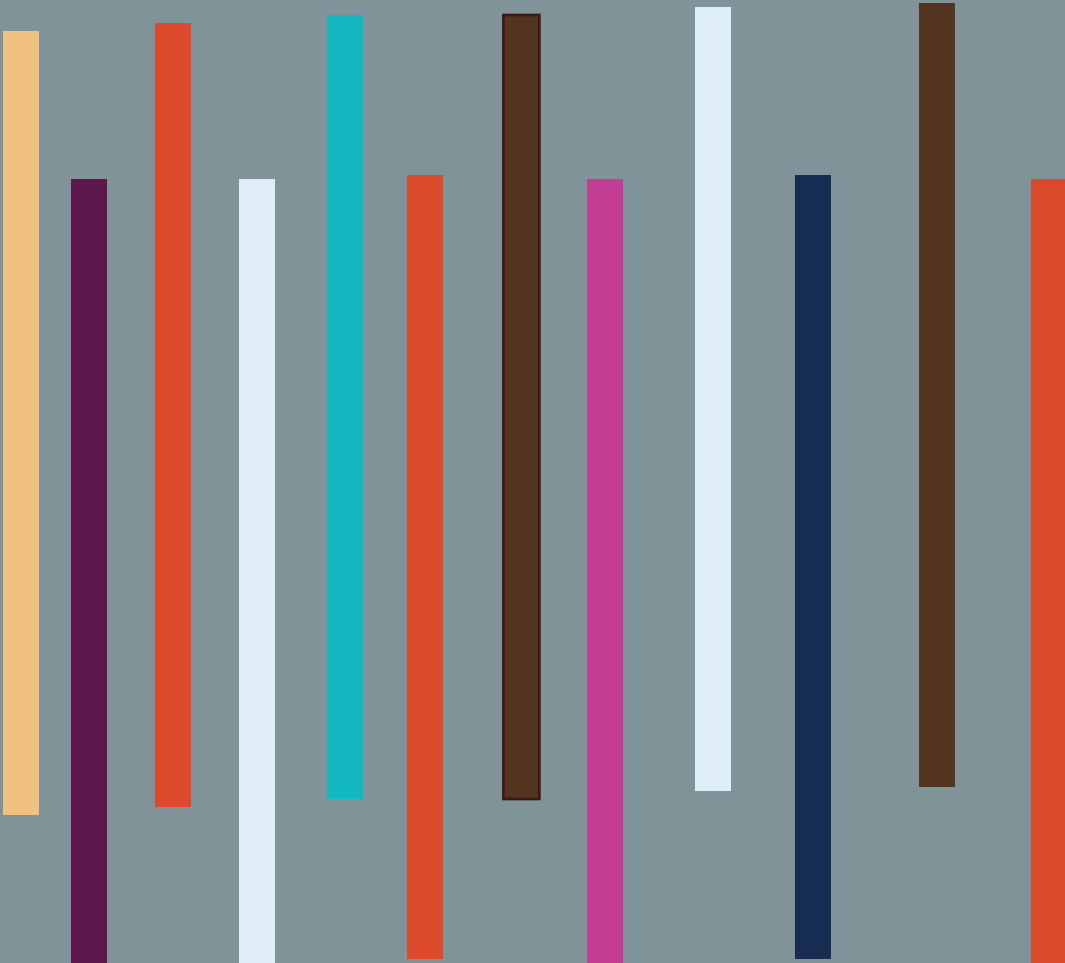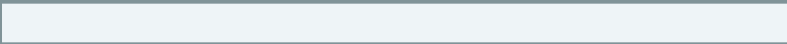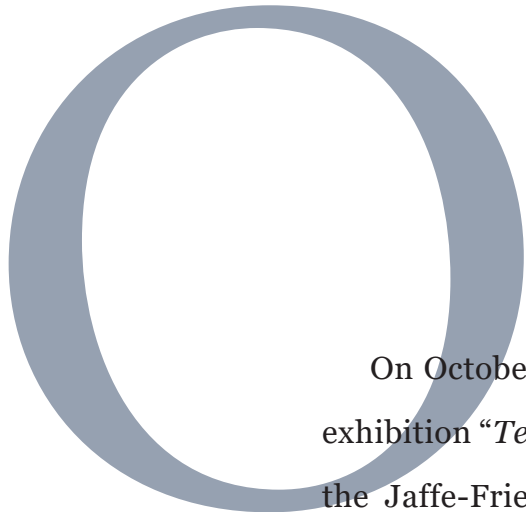
On October 19th, 2019, I was invited to visit Dr. Zenovia Toloudi's solo exhibition "*Technoutopias*," run from September 24 - November 17, 2019 in the Jaffe-Friede Gallery and Strauss Galleries at Dartmouth College. It consisted of two-parts: on the one side, the Strauss Gallery hosted Dr. Toloudi's "Optotopia I: Polyphemus' Eye," an architectural apparatus that interplays with light, vision, perception and space though camera obscura techniques; on the other side, the following four pieces were displayed in the gallery Jaffe-Fried: "Photodotes V: Cyborg Garden," (in collaboration with Spyros Ampanavos), "Silo(e)scapes," "Colors of Exchange," and "Free-See-Saw." The site-specific installation "Optotopia I: Polyphemus' Eye," part of Dr. Toloudi's "Optotopia" solo exhibition at the New England College of Optometry (NECO) in Boston in 2015, took on a new form in its playful interaction with the other four artworks, especially the "Free-See-Saw," which functioned as a call to the visitor for a playful immersive experience bouncing in between the two galleries and in between the microcosmic and macroscopic utopias offered by the entire exhibition.

Zenovia Toloudi's Solo Exhibition "Technoutopias:" A Journey to a Wonderland of Donors of Light

Vassiliki Rapti
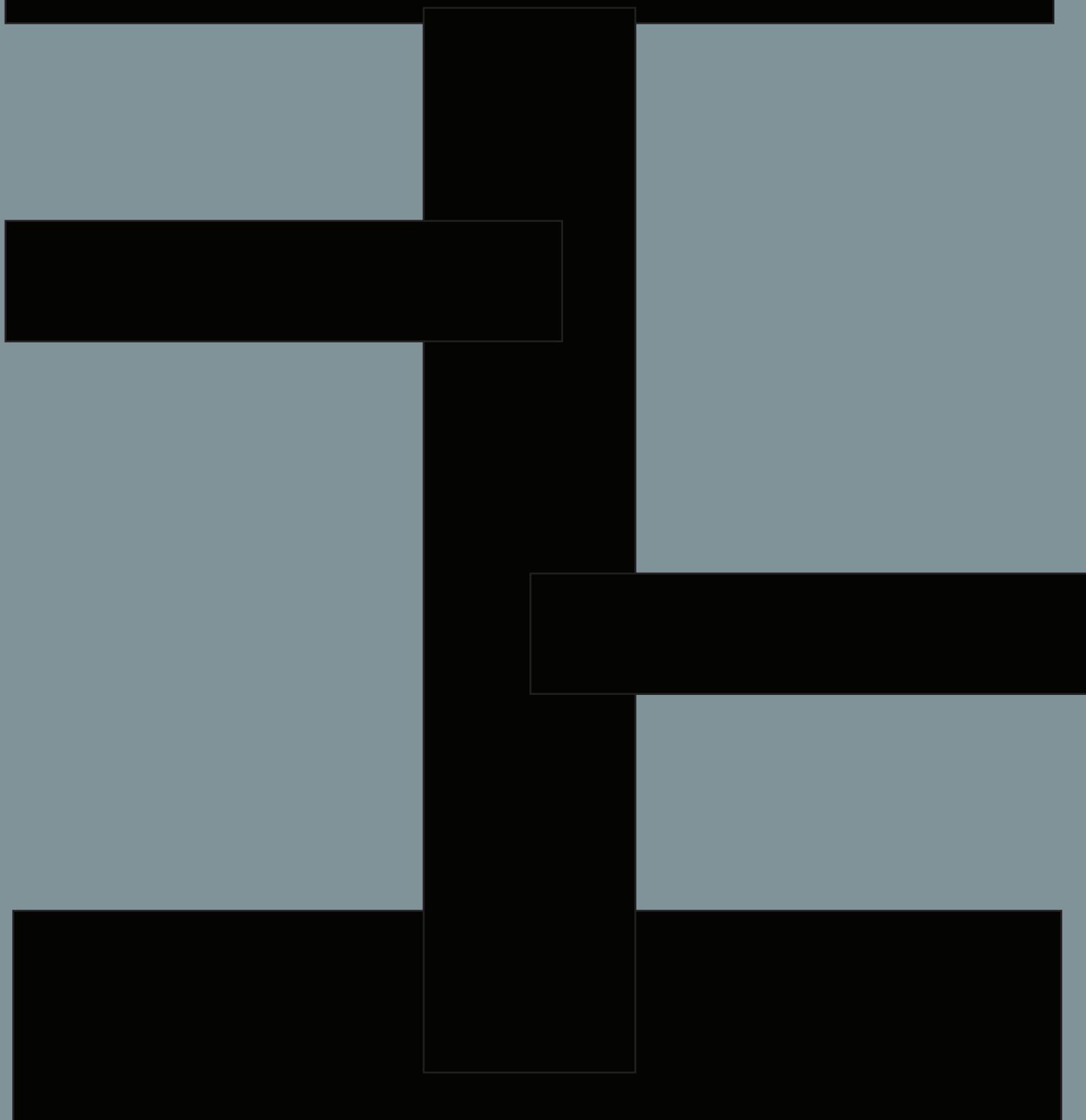
Free-See-Saw

Photodotes V: Cyborg Garden

Free-See-Saw

This feeling of liberating play was immediately present to me, as I was accompanied by my 13-year-old daughter, and I realized once again how child's play has a special place in Dr. Toloudi's architectural and artistic world, a constant in her work. Far from any bleak dystopian future, her play-centered *technoutopias*, consisting of both old and new architectural installations, are optimistic and altruistic, aiming at enhancing the experiences of the visitors whose wildest imagination is constantly fed yet never quenched. Toloudi's protean architectural design and artwork, deeply rooted in interdisciplinary discourses fueled by both ancient and contemporary thinkers in the fields of architecture, urban planning, ancient and contemporary philosophy and culture, such as Plutarch, Cornelios Castoriadis, Peter Sloterdijk, and Jacques Rancière, is resourceful, ingenious and optimistic. Always fighting against short-sighted neo-liberal and profit-oriented approaches to public spaces, Toloudi, always vigilant, strives to make visible in her pioneering work the need for sustainable, relational, equitable futures.

Optotopia I: Polyphemus' Eye close view

Optotopia I: Polyphemus' Eye installation view

Polyphemus's Eye

In Polyphemus's Eye, exhibited at the Strauss Gallery, the Greek Cyclop's myth took on a new meaning thanks to technology, magnifying the need to amplify the marvelous in our daily urban environment. A stunning gigantic orange and gold-shaded installation depicting the Homeric one-eyed giant who was tricked by Odysseus, (full of angles to perfectly match with the angles of the many corners of the small Strauss exhibition hall), kept tricking the visitors by reflecting back onto them, their ever-changing facial gestures and moods (along with reflections of other people outside the hall depending on the daylight), as they were constantly captured through the camera obscura hidden in the installation. This single eye mirrored the need for the intrusion of the marvelous in our daily sensory experiences. But more than that, it encouraged the visitors to see that this very marvelous is not externally imposed on our quotidian urban life. Rather, it is an intrinsic process of self-discovery by means of the intimate relationship with the space one inhabits and an integral part of one's identity re-formation, intrigued by a new concept of architecture that values play as a generator of small "a-ha!" moments. Such emphasis on the element of the quotidian marvelous is

Zenovia Toloudi's Solo Exhibition "Technoutopias
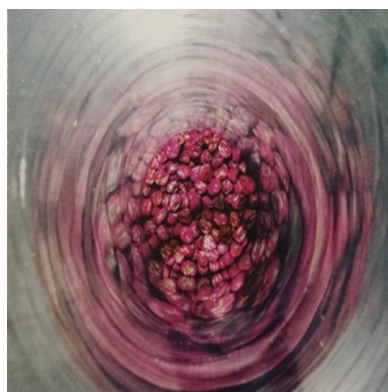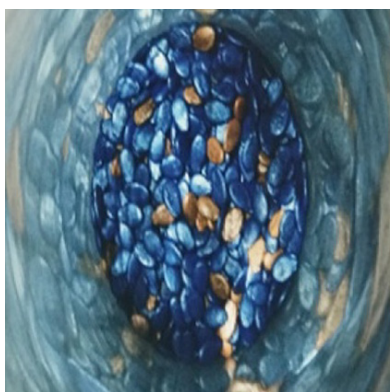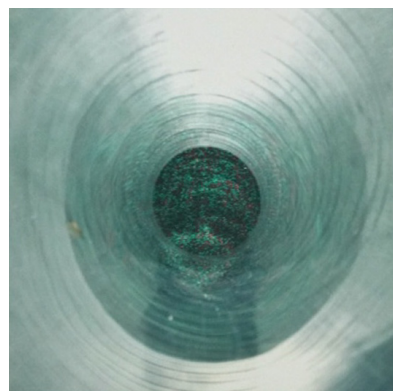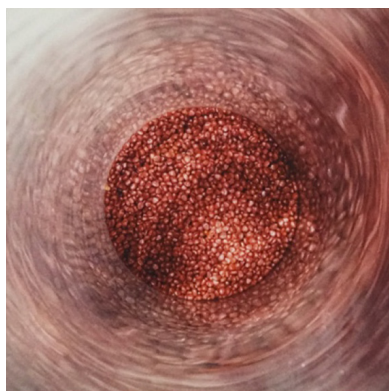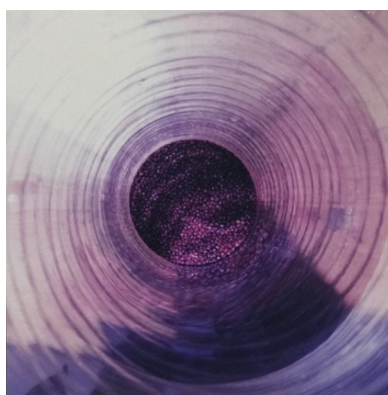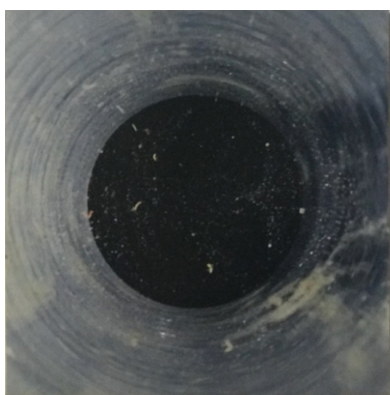
reminiscent of Toloudi's past exhibitions that drew on the movement of Surrealism, especially on the poetry of the leader of Greek Surrealism, Andreas Embeiricos *(Amour Amour: Oktana, the Utopian City*, in the Technopolis – Gazi, Athens, Greece, and Artrages: Surrealestate Exhibition in East Boston, MA.).

Unlike the kaleidoscopic aleatory adventure of the visitors in the Strauss Gallery, the four-partite display of Toloudi's installations at the Jaffe-Fried hall, was carefully planned in a manner that allowed for a progressive immersion of the visitor to her transparent "*Technoutopias*," while having freedom to start anywhere, something that was also evoked by the transparent "Free-See-Saw" hybrid of urban furniture and play that was placed in between the "Photodotes V: Cyborg Garden," and the "Colors of Exchange." It thus perfectly matched its conception as a dialectical and performative space that constantly needed cooperation, negotiation and awareness of the citizens' interdependence, in order for them to find equilibrium. As far as the "Photodotes V: Cyborg Garden," it was a new iteration of Dr. Toloudi's earlier exhibition, "Photodotes I: Light Donors," an installation exploring light and its effects in three stages: collecting, transferring, and diffusing (MassArt, 2012), as well as of her previous large site-specific interactive light installations under the same Greek name, meaning "light-donors," both literally and metaphorically, that was first placed in Lansdowne street garage at Fenway, as part of Illuminus Boston and HUBweek in 2015.

"Photodotes V: Cyborg Garden," consisted of a huge hanging garden alongside the uniquely-shaped Jaffe-Fried exhibition hall, which included plants, plastic containers, waters, and fiberoptic cables, allowing plants and artificial lights to coexist and coevolve, based on people's movements, giving light literally and metaphorically to the visitors.

I spent a long time playing around the reactions of the fiberoptic cables that obeyed to my own movements and my daughter's experiments with her gestures affecting light. We were both prepared to deepen our playful interaction with light and colors in the next installation, "Colors of Exchange," which consisted of the following series of nine seeds-photographs:

No. 1. Blitum / "Horta"

No. 2. Peas

No. 3. Watermelon, Oval

No. 4. Watermelon, With Color

No. 5. Melon

No. 6. Turnip, Two-Color

No. 7. Radish

No. 8. Unknown

Zenovia Toloudi's Solo Exhibition "Technoutopias
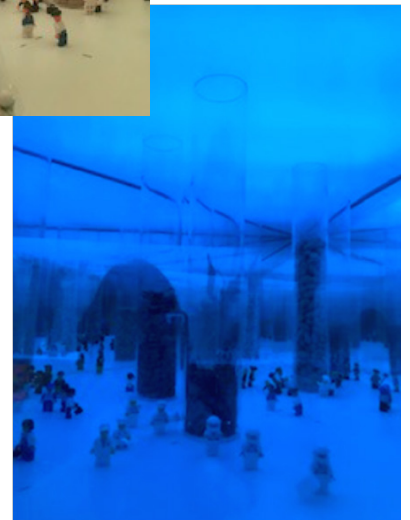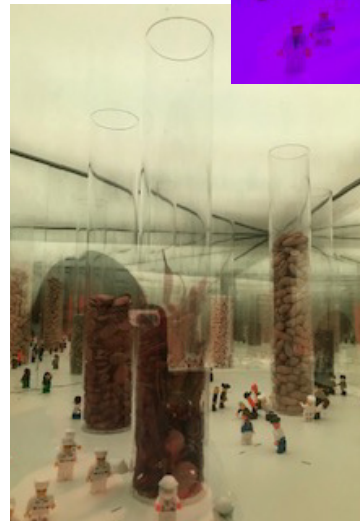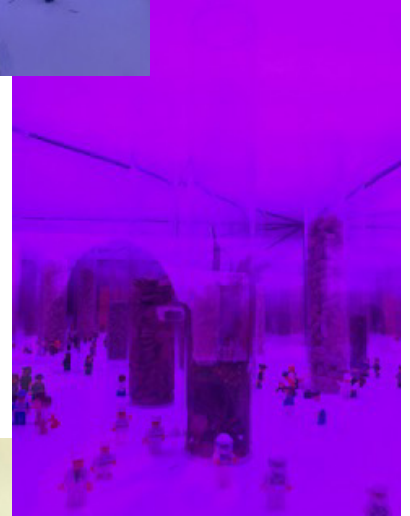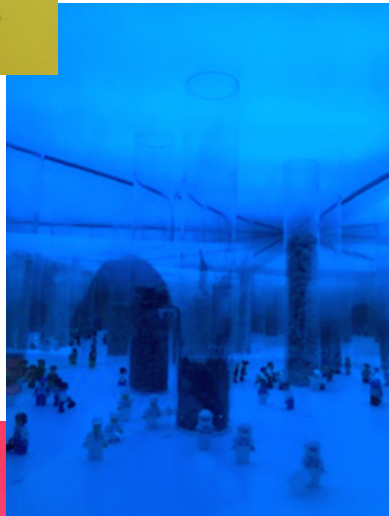
Colors of exchange

This pandaisia of a colorful seed-fed utopia, formed by the nine paintings of micro-utopias displayed like three triptychs next to each other, invited the visitor to marvel at their original colors that evoked matrixes of swirls of sheer beauty in which one would gladly abandon herself. Upon a close-up, the rare Mediterranean seeds were magnified, deified, while displaying their primeval forces to sow a new world, preparing thus the visitor for the immersion that was waiting for her in the next micro-technoutopia of the "Silo(e)escapes" installation of the exhibition, the fulcrum of the entire solo exhibition. This last component of the exhibition that was brilliantly hidden and isolated like a silo (you could risk not to see it, as it also required physical effort on behalf of the visitor to enter that new world).

Silo(e)escapes

In that last world I experienced a true dream in a fairyland. It was a silo in itself, a capsule in which I found myself being enchanted by my own and my daughter's reflections and the multiplied rare seeds that were mirroring back our womb-like encapsulation in that world. But instead of kleistophobia, I felt like the optical illusion was amplifying my world and I had in front of me an imagined world with Playmobil-like figurines representing all aspects of daily life in motion and lively situations. I started a conversation full of wonders with my daughter who kept discovering snapshots and forming stories by asking me, "what do you think these tiny figures are now discussing?" Storytelling and interpersonal connections started blossoming and I was convinced about Dr. Toloudi's brilliance as an architect and designer of authentic personal and intimate utopian moments that are tangible thanks to technology. Simply put, the visitor's preparation to experience "Silo(e)scapes," a hybrid of a seed bank, a sharing economy and a Museum of Mediterranean plant endangered species, the seeds of which were stored in transparent silos/ museum displays that also formed the columns of a communal architecture, was carefully planned thanks to a less than two-minute sound by the famous folk singer Chronis Aidonidis from Tokoudi's native land, Thrace, Greece, atuned to the sharpness of the angled walls of the exhibition hall. The high-pitched tik-tak sound, mixed with the nostalgia of a return to one's roots, stirred heightened emotions to the visitor, evoking both feelings of lament for a life that is about to extinguish and hope for preservation and sustainability of these archetypal seeds, thanks to the technology that promises a hopeful future. Aidonidis' sounds

prepared the visitor with the metallic sound of the silo-like experience that was transferred to many levels and which is indicative of the need for the other. In "Silo(e)escapes" citizens can achieve self-sufficiency, freedom and security, as mirrors, light, human-centered design, interactivity and technology commingle towards this end.

Overall, Toloudi's architectural installations that incubate mirrors and dreams, create small utopias embedded in one another, endlessly multiplied and diffused through optimal optical effects that instead of making the visitors dizzy, they take them to a journey towards an imaginary yet so tangible wonderland, full of light and optimism. There, an ever-changing palette of colors transforms the visitor to a *flâneur* who passes through the looking glass into the other side of wonders. This miraculous macro-technoutopia is achieved thanks to Toloudi's mastery in manipulating light in space, something that she is aware of and pays particular attention to her collaborators-technicians who spend endless hours of labor of love to ensure the desired effects of light. For this reason, she considers them as an integral part of her exhibition, as she also does in regards to her visitors. In an interview I had with Toloudi after I visited *Technoutopias*, she generously acknowledged the help she received by Gerald Auten, Director of The Studio Art Exhibition Program at the Department of Studio Art at Dartmouth College, as well as to Theodore Levin, Arthur R. Virgin Professor of Music at Dartmouth who encouraged her to use sounds from her native city of Alexandroupolis, Greece. In that same interview, Toloudi stressed how important she considered this exhibition in the frame of the current flourishing of dystopian fiction and catastrophic scenarios for the future of humanity, against which she offers an optimistic vision of a utopia that is hopeful, tangible and possible. In that Technoutopia,

people would interact with each other, would talk to each other, would dream together, would deliberate together and play together, incorporating all elements of play and would become better ethical entities that would ensure a better world. She also stressed how, inspired by Cornelios Castoriadis's idea of collective memory of the past, she aspires to create public spaces that can be responsibly shared and where seeds along with books can be also shared. Sitting comfortably with the idea of the collective memory of the past, she tries to create connectors in the social fabric that can guide us to a possible enjoyable and sustainable future. This is why she wanted '*Technoutopias*' to be interactive. Because she wanted her visitors to become witnesses of her vision that incorporates everyone's dreams, as they leave her exhibition with a new vision and an action plan. As an experienced architect-director, Toloudi staged a user's experience by minimally arranging the most disparate materials in a harmonious unity: her Technoutopia that embeds many mini-*technoutopias*. The plural in the word '*Technoutopias*' was well-chosen, as each installation constituted a small utopia and together, a world a galaxy of utopias organically interconnected. In the same way, Toloudi creates endless inspirational moments to anyone around her, especially to her students as the educational component is very important for her. There is no doubt that her *mise-en-scène* left indelible marks on her visitors' memory, offering them ample "seeds" for thought, and making them aware of the ways they themselves can become donors of light as potential actors/agents of social change. Every component of Toloudi's installation aimed to be perceived as a photodotes/donor of light, both as an autonomous piece and as a part of the entire exhibition. And she remarkably succeeded!

W

We are still amidst the COVID-19 pandemic whose disastrous effects keep piling up across the globe and it seems that it will leave serious wounds in our societies for many years ahead.

This is why it may be good to revisit the meaning of the compound word "pandemic," consisting of the words Pan (=all, everything) and "demos" (people, community of citizens, part of city-city government). In ancient Greece "Pandemos" (all people) was the community of all citizens who gathered in order to deliberate with the city-state officials on issues and concerns affecting all of them. In the modern times the use of the word "pandemic" has been limited to denoting a dangerous large-scale emergency of medical concern. The virus may be a microbiological organism but so far it has managed to greatly disorganize all societies while its existence either exacerbates problems or has become a source of extreme issues, thus deepening the health crisis into a political, social and moral crisis.

Conversations upon conversations on COVID-19 mark a new era. The lockdown has led to a reorganization of the ways human beings socialize while at the same time has brought about great economic changes in favor of those who control the media and technology. This automatically entails financial loss and financial collapse of other structures and institutions of society before the spread of the corona virus. We have only seen the first waves of the shift in the economic landscape without being able to fathom all its implications. The only sure thing is that all these new phenomena will occupy us very intensely in the future.

From the Coronavirus Pandemic to the Pandemic of the Cities-Peoples:
An Interview and Exchange of Thoughts with Professor Georges Contogeorgis

Dr. Hiva Panahi

In the murky and seismic landscape of our days, in a mysterious way, memories come to life from the archetypal motifs of the power of the strong over the weak and are introduced in front of us. Sudden social inequalities have resulted in socio-political unrest as we have experienced a dose of this unrest in the US while it is ongoing in other parts of the world. Social imagination, utopia and rational harmony are considered essential components of the social critique that is required to be at stake for the common good. Under these conditions, the return to the great philosophers and their pupils through the study of their works becomes the hope for the future. That is why I turned to the leading Greek Professor and former Rector of the Panteion University in Athens, Greece, Professor Georges Countogeorgis, in order to find some answers to our current concerns and put them in perspective.

THE INTERVIEW

H.P.: My first question is: "How do you see the so-called pandemic we live in? In your opinion, what can happen and how did the Greek people grow by observing the rules?

G.C.: First of all, let us recall that we had forgotten that we are human beings and small units of nature. Nature has its own laws and rules, that is, most components of nature remain competitive, mysterious, largely incomprehensible. Their rules are governed and regulated differently. But man, with his arrogance and greed, felt that he became the invincible master of nature. Because technology has made his life easier - for example, to go from one place to another by plane - a man's life is short and not enough for all the greed he has. At both the social level and the possible political developments of the pandemic, man does not control anything. He is beyond his power. The power of words on another level, is at the hands of the mighty. The social development of man is still reminiscent of infancy and has remained there. And even further, social evolution is an illusion of power, like a customer who goes to the supermarket and buys something but the whole economy behind this market is not owned or controlled. The nations are under the pandemic and only the nations can change the end of the pandemic for their own good. In our time, pandemics are not treated like those of the Middle Ages but in more

humane terms. The virus has taken us back on every level, but this is human history: sometimes it stops. We must look at everything with a critical eye, look at the mistakes and omissions of the past, look at tomorrow with an optimistic look and fight to create. Dealing with the pandemic in Greece was remarkable and the people responded to the state mechanism, as a pleasant surprise and I attribute this to the anecdotal wisdom of our society that has historical roots and, of course, to scientists who, also had and have made a huge contribution to it.

H.P.: Would do you say that after the pandemic, the world's managers, politicians, economists and governments may realize the peoples' struggle for a better quality of life and will take action towards that goal?

G.C.: The truth is that I am worried about the economic situation in the post-pandemic era because the economy will not be the same as before and those who had the wealth will be lost. Thus we come to prove Aristotle right when he said that in such a situation the people who will revolt are not the poor but those who *had* and no longer *have*. So, there will be somehow an instability, as always has been in similar situations.

H.P.: Let me linger a little bit more on this issue. Is there a chance that the difficult and painful days of the coronavirus pandemic will force big governments and major stakeholders to reconsider their attitudes towards societies?

G.C.: I do not think so. In any case, these people live in their own world, governed by power. For several months the world economy has ceased to function, but lately we see that the only thing that concerns the Western media is to serve a new order of things and to impose it on the citizens in the fear and shadow of disasters, that is, how to control them even more and how to increase their profits and power. That is why they create phobias and keep spreading them out. For example, Great Britain suddenly decided to leave the EU and some other parties were replaced by ruling fascists. In other words, instead of politicians deciding for the good of society and the people, they are exacerbating the situation so that there is no improvement. Here the people must control where these changes come from, to whom they are due and why? The economy of the West, and consequently in many parts of the world, is the result of the industrial

revolution and the end of Feudalism. In other words, we have an economy and a system of mentalities and political activities that still belong to the 18th century. Every new thing that is created is a continuation of the previous one, like the birth of the second child from the mother's womb. That is why even now during the pandemic the rich of the world became richer. Who should be held responsible here? This is due to a bad copy of Greek thought during the Renaissance. At that time in the Feudal system people were slaves and those thinkers who studied and discovered Greek thought failed to feel the high meanings and value that the Greek world gave to man. From such greatness they adopted only what would serve them for the nation-state system they created. That is, practicality, functionality and utilitarianism, calling all this "Democracy," which is a wrong perception of the Greek notion of democracy and its anthropocentric character.

H.P.: So, do you think that we do not have a Democracy?

G.C.: No, by no means do we have a true Democracy. The parliamentary delegation and the Republic are two different systems. They have simply created a representative system of governance and whenever they want, they invite us to confirm their positions and power. This is a continuation of the Respublica of Rome and the assemblies of the oligarchs. Democracy is the body of the citizens of the municipality who discussed everything and everything was a matter of deliberation for the common good of the entire community. Recently, due to my current duties, I was in the Council of Europe. All they cared about was how to control the world through the developments of the Internet and all the good in the field of economy to go to responsible bodies of the powerful and their politicians. In fact, I suggested to them to let the citizens participate, that is, to have the participation of the citizens in the economy and everything related to it. Disagreements and unfounded excuses such as, "what if power passes into the hands of criminals and control is lost?" As if they do not have criminals and corrupt people now! They have no respect for anyone but

themselves, this thing cannot be called Democracy and it is not.

H.P.: How do you evaluate the period of Turkish-occupied Hellas and the work of the Enlightenment?

G.C.: The thinkers of the Enlightenment studied a lot and this gave them courage, an impetus and rigor. They felt as if they had become stronger than the human-centered Greek world. That is why they began to organize as states and see us from below as slaves of the Ottomans. Yet, we Hellenes never were slaves, as we resisted and managed through difficult times to rescue our timeless values through the mediation of communities and the way we managed our finances and taxes to the Turks. The Greeks imagined a system of self-governance that sustained them throughout the centuries. That was the prototype of civic imagination.

H.P.: What do you mean by the concept of "civic imagination" in the Greek world-system of governance? Do you believe in it? If so, why? How can technology contribute to the good of humanity? In the era of digital governance, can we hope for an improvement in today's Democracy?

G.C.: Democracy is not a finding / invention of the human imagination but the end of an evolution that has to do with the human-centered world system, that is, it aims at the experience of universal freedom, cumulatively of individual, social and political freedom. Democracy is the institution of universal freedom. In our time, living in large-scale states (nation-states and not city-states) Democracy will be established not in a physical space, in Pnyx, but at the level of communication technology. There, the societies will be formed into a municipality, an institution of the state to govern itself. I say, when the time comes, because today the conditions of Democracy are not met.

The political system today is an electable monarchy. Society does not form a municipality or own the political system. It is a private society that simply chooses its monarch for a certain period. The current system is not even representative for the same reason. The principal and trustee is the holder of the political system of

the state against whom society has the right to protest the head of state but has no obligation to listen to it. The sooner we realize this, the sooner societies will realize that in order for politics to return to society, they will have to demand a transition to a representative state and, in the end, a claim to Democracy.

H.P.: As I am listening to you, I can't help but think of Nikos Poulantzas. How do you see his thought?

G.C.: Nikos Poulantzas' thought has been honored and recognized in many countries and that is why his works have been translated into many languages. The Panteion University pioneered this recognition and invited him in 1976 to teach its students. His though is systematic, clearly positioned, drawing on the Marxist methodology and theorytakin git to another level with his own reading that adds an extra value to Marxism. In this light, one could say that the core of Poulantzas's thought is civic engagement. An engagement that he tries to rationalize, based on empirical markings, but because of his commitments, it is not always obvious whether he uses them to confirm his starting point or to put it to a critical test. It is precisely Poulantzas's attempt to reflect on some of the stereotypical assumptions of Marxism that kept it in the 19th-century world and prevented it from taking into account that the product of developments is its originality. Marxism focuses mainly on the question of the "relative autonomy" of the state and, ultimately, on the fact that it laid the political question at the starting point of Marxism. In fact, the political issue of the question of the autonomy of the state was alluded by Marx, but in the end, he gave it a negative mark. Understandably, he failed to highlight this in the restrictive climate of the theocratic

conception of statehood that prevailed in the environment of European totalitarianism. Poulantzas updated Marx's thought with a view to the reorganization of the "state" of totalitarianism into an elected monarchy during the 20th century, the universal spread of statehood (which includes the right to vote) and its effects on the social substratum of political forces. On the other hand, however, Poulantzas's consistent commitment to Marxism, understood in the circumstances of the time, prevented him from testing significant dimensions of the Marxist "science" and from further advancing the development of his thought. This presupposed an epistemology that would lead him to a perspective of world history, which would also include our time in its classification. In this way he was deprived of the possibility of elaborating a solid system of knowledge, capable of answering the questions raised by the human condition and on which he would rely in order to then establish his ideological project. It must be said that the absence of this epistemology is not inherent in Poulantzas. It is also not just about Marxism but about modernity as a whole. Indeed, Marxism does not differ in this respect from the bourgeois/liberal ideology of the European Enlightenment, except in its ideological decree. We would even say that Marxism is valued as the authentic child of the Enlightenment, from which it received its ideological and cognitive tools, and circulated them as fundamental components of "science." I can reiterate with confidence Poulatzas's contribution to Greece, whose work, together with the work of Nikos Svoronos, was a reference project for the study of the neo-Hellenic state and Neo-Hellenic society.

HP.: Professor Contogeorgis, a big thank you and my best wishes!

Abstract

What does "Citizenship" mean? "Citizenship" is not as simple as people think. It means different things for different people in different countries and different contexts. There are ways to understand citizenship beyond a government's approach to it. Citizen TALES Commons precisely envisions a different and broader approach to citizenship. For us, it is a pretext to explore the many ways people come together and find their places in society. In an interview with Professor Peter Levine, Tisch College Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Tufts University, on May 1st, 2019, we sought answers to the complex issue of citizenship.

What does Citizen Mean?

Vassiliki Rapti

V. R.: Professor Levine, thank you so much, for this interview. Tell us more about your role here. You've been here for several years, you have created an amazing niche for civic studies, and I'd like to know more about your role here.

P.L.: I've been here for 11 years, and I came into this thing that already existed definitely called the Tisch College of Civic Life where you're sitting. And the Tisch College is focused a lot on-- well it has two main functions. One is, educating all Tufts students for civic life --and all students means all the programs, including the graduate and professional programs--. So, we, for example, support every medical student doing service learning. So that's one thing. And the other aspect of Tisch College is doing research that affects civic life, nationally and internationally. And so at first it was mostly applied social science on certain topics, especially American young people civic engagement, because we were concerned about what might be problems there. The civic education is not good enough in schools, not enough young people vote. So, we build up a pretty big research enterprise that looks just at those questions. So we have about a dozen full time researchers here that study young American civic engagement, and they have external audiences. They're not studying at Tufts and they're not writing for Tufts. They're

kind of a think tank. And then civic study is kind of the most recent development because that's a more interdisciplinary look at civic life. It's not just not the empirical questions for social science, but also philosophical questions and historical questions, and it's global, not just America. And that has

partly now takes the form of a major for Tufts students which is, well it's the first major that's called, civic studies anywhere, and so we're inventing that but it's connected to other things that happened in another places. And so I'm now actually doing less research and doing more teaching and directing of civic studies.

V.R. : And you said it's not something that is studied or taught at the universities, or at the high school civic life. Where do you attribute this problem?

P.L. Right. Well so civic education, civics is still somewhat taught. I could say it was not taught, but I would say it's not taught enough-- and with enough attention. In some ways, civic studies at Tufts is like civic education for advanced college students. So whereas eight grade civics might be about how the government works. College civics is like how the people make change in society broadly, globally and so on. So I think the-- but to answer your question, why is there not enough civics, partly, it's just been kind of left out. The American education

has gone through these waves of reform in the last 40 years. And the reforms have been different kinds of things from school choice to testing, all kinds of things, but none of them has ever focused on civics. They've always focused on Reading, Math, Science, Economic outcomes. And so Civics has been kind of a back quarter. It hasn't disappeared but it has been kind of underemphasized. Very little money for it, not many people get hired to teach it, not many people studying it to be civics teachers in college. For example, they have a lot of Civics teachers in high schools but they typically didn't study government, or civics, or history. They studied something else and they-- so it's been underinvested in.

V.R.: Do you also think that this is one of the reasons that democracy is also contested today?

-- And I know you have created this amazing Frontiers of Democracy conference--. Is this also related to that?

P.L.: I think so. I don't want to overstate it because I think that there are a lot of reasons that democracy is contested globally, and -- if you were making a list of reasons--, you'd have to think of many, including technology, and economic change, and --I think --also the success of authoritarian governments. So, if you compare it to 1989, at that time you couldn't look around and say, "Well, China is such tremendously successful authoritarian state." All the authoritarian states were old and rickety. But now, some of them seems to be doing quite well. So there are a lot of reasons that democracy is in trouble. Not just that civic education isn't good enough but I think that civic education is part of the solution --long term solution-- and has a role to play. And the fact that it's been done in a very minor, modest way, is a sign of how we have not been concerned enough about preserving democracy.

V.R.: What other solutions do you see in bringing democracy back to its true essence?

P.L.: Well, that's a hard question. I'm very interested right now in social movements, because, I think, everybody is paying attention to social movements, because they're very much happening and seems to be one of the only countervailing forces. And I'm not just talking about the US. I mean, within the last month, we had Sudan and Algeria governments toppled by social movements. But then social movements themselves vary in how good they are for the people in them, and how effective they are, and how good their values are. So I think there's a lot of work to be done to basically improve social movements in the 21st century.

V.R.: Such an interesting thing! I refer to the rise of social movements in a new light

today. It's like a repetition of the social movements of the '60s and '70s. And now with the technology, how are these different from those movements?

P.L.: I mean, there's more similarities, I think, than you might expect because even though a movement now looks like it's online-- well it is online but in many of the patterns, ways people actually engage or not is so different. I mean, for example, you use a hashtag now to know the movement but movements have always found slogans or symbols to indicate that people are, well, part of the movement. Because what I think a movement has to do is demonstrate unity in numbers. They have to demonstrate that they have a lot of people on it, that people are unified. So in some ways, you can think of a hashtag as just the equivalent of a colored armband from 1959 or 1965. I do think that technology matters too, but I think that in some ways there are some ongoing patterns.

V.R.: And, along with technology, do you think that the civic engagement in the communities --from the grassroots—is also important?

P.L.: I do. So that is where I'm worried about technology, because I think that in the US, the classic model was that people were drawn into big organizations that were strong and durable,

not because the people were interested in civics, but because the organizations offered them something else. So you ended up in a union, you ended up in a church, you ended up in a grassroots political party not because you were interested in politics, but because it was a source of jobs. Or, you ended up reading the newspaper, not because you cared about politics, but because you wanted to read the sports news. So, I'm mentioning --on purpose, I'm mentioning unions, political parties, churches, and newspapers, because they were all big institutions with the ability to draw in most Americans.-- So 80% of Americans paid for a daily newspaper weekly. And so those things have all collapsed, and so what we have now is a wonderful choice. So you can find anything online and you can find any group, but the problem is that you have to have the motivation to want to do the civic thing. You have to think, "I want to do community service" instead of, "I go to church because that's what my family does and they have a community service wing." So I fear that in a situation of stream choice, what you get is, first of all vocalization into different groups, but also lots of people not doing any of it, because there's not a reason that you have to. So, for instance, if you went back in the days when 80% of people were getting the newspaper, everybody had to

notice there was a presidential election, because you would go to your front doorstep and you open the door and there's the newspaper and it says the presidential election. We in our recent poll found that about half of young Americans follow political news from Facebook. Okay, but half of young Americans don't follow political news from Facebook, so it's possible to go through a presidential election being a Facebook user and because your friends are not interested in politics, you could actually miss the entire election. And so it wasn't so much surprising to me that 50% did. It was surprising to me that 50% didn't follow political news on Facebook. So, I think that technology has --I mean the short version is-- I think technology has massively disaggregated choice, and this disaggregation of choice has left a lot of people not participating.

V.R.: This reminds me of this term, "the civic deserts" in America. Is there anything that we can do to make these civic deserts disappear?

P.L.: Yeah. I mean I-- so just to tell people, the definition of a civic desert is a place where the people don't think that there's anywhere they can go to be part of something civic, working on community problems, or meeting other people-- it's subjective, really. So it's coming from surveys about whether you think that there are those availabilities, but people in

certain parts of our country don't see those opportunities and-- especially rural. Especially, where the civic deserts' especially common in rural areas I think partially just because low population density means there's less. But I think also there, the decline of churches has really-- or because it used to be-- at least there was the church. So, could you do something about it? Yeah, I mean I think-- I actually think it's kind of like dried ground that rain would-- if rain fell on dry ground, it could cause things to flourish quickly, that is I think there's a lot of desire-- of latent desire-- to be engaged in our civic deserts, and a little bit of investment in terms of-- for example, what community organizers do is they go to a place and they try to get people together. And if we had community organizers I think we would make progress quickly. And there are some institutions that would support community organizing in civic deserts. I mean one example, just to give it one is, every single county in the United States has an extension officer who works in a way that's supported by the state university and the United States Department of Agriculture to provide services to community. And some of them are also community organizers, and if you imagine that every single one of them was a community organizer you could --I think-- make significant progress.

V.R.: Great. And I also see that you have many programs here, including the one in public humanities, which is so appealing. Would you like to tell me more about this program?

P.L.: Sure. So it's directed by my colleague Diane O' Donahue, and it's been doing specific things. For example, she's just got a grant to study the question of how museums and others should display human remains. And this includes genocide memorial museums and museums that have remains of Native peoples, Indigenous peoples. So it's a bunch of ethical and political questions that confront cultural institutions, the institutions that have bodies. It sets an example to me of a public humanities or civic humanities program. But, more broadly, I think civic humanities addresses two problems: one is that public debate and discussion doesn't have enough humanities in it, but the other is that humanities is not in the public enough. And that humanities disciplines have gotten pretty marginal as shown by things like the declining number of students who take humanities majors, and so on. And this is a real crisis for someone who cares about the humanities. So I think finding ways for the humanities to be part of public life again is critical. And I think humanists need to be less defensive and a little less entitled. It's not just their right to get paid to be humanists. The question is, what role do they play in the society? It could be a critical role, that's fine, but it has to be a role. So the public humanities is an effort to find a role. I'm going back and forth between civic and public humanities, because, nationally, there's the public humanities movement which we're proud to be part of. I think we've thought of it about making it specifically civic humanities, which connects it to civic studies.

V.R.: I like the term civic humanities, it's --I think-- broader than the public humanities and it embraces this whole philosophy of civic life. Interdisciplinarity is so crucial for making the humanities relevant again.

P.L.: Yeah. Some of the experiments we've been doing intentionally mix the social science and the humanities in the same study. So we're doing a study of a new arts center in Chinatown called the Pao Arts Center. And it's actually a research study where there are humanists looking at the arts and behavioral scientists looking at the effects of the arts, and we're trying to have them in the same conversation, because usually those would be two different conversations.

V.R..: That's wonderful. I am such a believer in the power of the arts for civic engagement. Now, I am going to go back to my initial question

about citizenship which has so many definitions. What is your preferred definition of citizenship?

P.L.: I'll answer probably answer in the negative. So it's not the question of legal membership, right? And it's getting hard to continue to use the word citizen as our central word, because the debate is about citizenship as a question of whether you have a right to be in the country. And that's so dominant that I think we're having a hard time holding on to that other meaning. As far as the other meaning, my definition is that "a citizen is someone who seriously asks the question, "What should we do?" And the "we" is some group and that person is a citizen of the group. So anything can be a "we" and the question of whether you are a citizen is a question of whether you really ask the question, "what should we do?" But in some of the settings in which you can be a citizen or not nation-states at all. So it's FaceBook, it's the Catholic Church because -- which I mentioned because it's a global church--, or it's science. For example, biology. You can be a citizen in biology. These things are not nation-states. Or, you can be a citizen in your community even though you don't have a legal standing there, even if you're illegally there. So that's the definition. Not just mine. That's the definition applied in civic studies or implied in my title, which is Professor of Citizenship.

That's what it means. But I mean, there is this other discourse where it's about which passport you have and which country you're allowed to be a resident in. And the problem with that, of course, is that it doesn't... -- it's both too restrictive and not restrictive enough.--. I mean, too restrictive because it says that if you're not -- don't have a passport--, you can't be a citizen here, which is bad. But it's also not restrictive enough, because it says, if you do have the passport, you're fine. And of course, the real goal would be to call on people to be better than just holders of passports. That's actually what makes the world better.

V.R. I like so much the way you phrase the question "What we should do?" So, the role of the Civic Studies Professor is to raise awareness about this question. "What should we do?" It's an ethical question.

P.L.: It is. It's an ethical question but it's also -- it is and that's already the point--, but it's also a collective ethical question because a lot of ethics-- I mean, my own PhDs in philosophy and a lot of ethics is individual. So should I tell a lie? This is what should we do? So it raises a different set of questions about how you make a decision collectively. And it's also a pragmatic-- it's not just an ethical question, it's also a pragmatic question because "What should we do?" means you have to pay

attention to whether it would work. So philosophy belongs there --and I am happy to be a philosopher in this--, but philosophy is not sufficient, because in civic studies is asking questions about what works and what doesn't.

V.R.: So that's why you have also the fieldwork. The fieldwork that you're doing here on so many fronts addresses the pragmatic question.

P.L.: That's right. A lot of experiential education. In some ways, you could actually say that Tisch College began like a lot of American higher ed civic education programs. It began as entirely experiential. So all of it is about internships and service. And what we've tried to have had here is actually the academic side as well. Because you can learn how to be a good citizen in these terms by acting and experiencing but you can also learn by reading and if you try to learn from scratch, everything from action, you're missing the fact that other people have already explored this. So if you decide you want to be a non-violent actor, you might want to read Gandhi. He already went through this 75 years ago, right? So we're adding a strong curricular element to this.

V.R.: That's great.

P.L.: But we never would drop the experiential side because that would be a mistake.

V.R.: Absolutely.

P.L.: Yeah.

V.R: The human design component is there.

P.L.: Yeah.

V.R.: And what about the use of the word voice? It's so important when we talk about civic life. So how does voice play here in Center for civic life? As a philosopher and as a pragmatist?

P.L.: Yes. One way to answer that question is if you start with a question, "What should we do?", --and a question that's going to come up next for you is, "How should we talk about what we should do?" --. Especially, "how should we reason together verbally about?" because you don't just reason in your head with other people. You have to reason verbally about what we should do. especially if we disagree? And so that takes you to questions of voice, right? And both, I think of the ethics of voice. So "what is good speech?" and also, the questions of equity of voice. So why are some people not speaking? Those two questions. And the question of what good speech is, is really interesting. They're more complicated than they look. Some people will use the word civility. We should have more civil discourse but when you look hard at that, probably, that's not exactly what you want. The word "civil" tends to mean "polite." Sometimes, good speeches are not polite speeches. On the

other hand, you can say horrible things in a polite way. So "civil" probably isn't right. So that leads you into a whole bunch of questions about "what kind of speech is good speech?" It should be empathetic. Maybe, not. Sometimes, empathy is not appropriate. So that's all a long answer to your question about voice. I will say one other thing which is that, if somebody equates citizenship with voice, I actually resist a little, because I also think that the work and the body matter. So if you think of Davis Square near here, which is a lively, urban space., it's created partly by a voice in the sense that people have advocated for it to be laid out in a certain way. They 've argued there should be a stop light. But it's also created by the people who actually put down the sidewalk and built the buildings and also by the bodies of the people who are in the space. It's a critique of an idea that really goes back all the way to Aristotle, which is that citizenship is all about the talking and the listening and the working. The tradesmen can't be properly citizens because they're too consumed with work, and that was always a mistake. It was a class bias but it was also a mostly analytical mistake because ancient Athens wasn't just made by the deliberating citizens in the assembly. It was also made by the artisans who built it and who made choices every day about how to build it. So Aristotle was misunderstanding the city, because he wasn't seeing that it was also made by even the slaves. So, I don't think it's all voice.

V.R.: So, it's space of these voices, and the voices are also created and developed through the space in the body and the interaction with whoever is in that space.

P.L.: Sometimes, nonverbal interaction. I mean, often verbal, but sometimes, not. I mean, I think the other thing to remember is the contributions of people who are very quiet. For example, often, human labor is very quiet. So we can tolerate voice, but we also need to remember the value of not speaking or the eloquence of not speaking.

V.R.: Is the voice only referring to speech or it could be also through the written word?

P.L.: Yeah, I through the written word too. I just realized as I said it, I know I was talking about oral here, but I mean, also text. In fact, in a funny way, everybody talks about how we are now in a visual culture, but I think we are in a culture of typing, aren't we? I mean, we really type a lot, all day. It's what we do.

V.R.: This is true. And this brings me back to my field of literature, and I know that you also wrote about literature.

P.L.: A little bit. Sometimes. Yeah.

V.R.: Again, what is there in literature that is very relevant to civics studies?

P.L.: I mean, we start off in the summer a course which is for adults by reading Seamus Heaney's poem, In the Republic of Conscience. So I mean, it's a very good poem and, it's kind of complicated. One thing that takes a little while for students to realize is that it has a plot --it's not just a metaphor--. It actually has a fairly specific plot line. I think that's one of the distinctive things about poetry that the plot line is not so obvious. You have to figure it out as opposed to prose fiction where, usually, the plot is pretty straightforward -- So, it's also very efficient. I mean, it's a poem of only 40 lines, and it has a lot to say. So it's more efficient than an essay, and it is raising questions about citizenship. So, that's one way to answer your question. Those kinds of texts are part of civics studies.

V.R.: So that brings me back to kind of the beginning of my kind of project, which is the one that mentioned, which started with the Citizen Read initiative by Claudia Rankine between the A.R.T. and Emerson. And it was this amazing text that raises awareness about citizenship as not only a matter of legality. It's more than that, going back to your wonderful analysis. The last question I have is about civic imagination foe our upcoming issue of *The Journal of Civic Media*: When you hear the term "civic imagination," what comes to mind

and how do you envision alternative futures?

P.L.: Yeah. You asked a great question. I guess, one thing is that the futures-- our job is not just to envision alternative futures, but to make sure that they're better. The slogan, I think, of the world social forum, is "another world is possible" and I always thought that wasn't the greatest slogan because, yes, another world is possible. We could blow it up with nuclear weapons and have a different world. The question is, can we have-- is "a better world possible?" And yes, but then you have your own explanation why it's better. And you also have to have a path to getting there. Because I think that a pure ideal can often be unhelpful, because the immediate going through immediate direction of the ideal, you might fall off a cliff. So you need to have some strategy --a good idea is one that comes with a strategy for its accomplishment-- So that means it just makes it harder. But I think we people do have that kind of idea. And that's what we should cultivate. You know one? Then --maybe it's a stray thought-- but I think Americans are relatively bad at having imagination about fundamental political structures, because we've got the oldest written constitution the world, and it's very hard to change. And maybe not so smart to change because it would open up all kinds of problems, but the result of that is our

civic imaginations tend to get very constrained by this document called the Constitution. And I really think that has that cultural fact that's broader than the Constitution. We have this sort of piety about the Constitution, also secular religion, that the place where James Madison was writing his notes before he went, he dropped some ink. And they have a Plexiglas over it like it was a saint's relic, which I understand I wouldn't take it off. if I were in charge of the space, I would also put plexiglass over the work-- but we do sacralize the Constitution in a way and we definitely teach children to do so in a way that, I think, prevents creativity. I mean, it has an appropriate conservative functioning that we have and we didn't get at 20th-century dictatorship either, because it was harder to change but it really-- Americans are not very good at –saying-- we could have a different institutional arrangement. And I think now it's just being, feeling kind of a little jealous of the Spanish over the last three or four years because they've had all the --I mean, they've also had terrible problems like in Catalonia, but they've had-- there's a sense that you could envision something and then you could turn it and suddenly you have a new party, and they have a bunch of seats, but it's also an original view of how the world should be and comes out of nowhere. And there's a sort of flexibility there that we don't have. We have had the same two parties since 1860. And the same political institutions since 1789. And it's where I don't think we're very good at constitutional imagination.

V.R. In terms of other countries, do you have a model? You mentioned Spain, is France a model?

P.L.: It's interesting, because --it's a good question-- because I was thinking, 10 years ago, a lot of particularly large number of democratic innovations were coming out of Brazil. So you would look at, for example, participatory budgeting is probably the most common widespread new form of democracy in the world and it started in Brazil, didn't it? Yeah. It started in Puerto Rico, Brazil. And it's a Brazilian invention and they had a lot of these inventions. But I realized as I say that, that this is also now where they have quasi-fascist authoritarian figure and their former president's in prison. So I suppose imagination has the limit to imagination, or it may even be some dangers to it, but yeah!

V.R.: And you're going to tackle all of this again in the upcoming Frontiers of Democracy annual conference.

P.L.: I hope so. Some of it, yeah.

V.R.: Well, thank you so much, professor Levine, for such an illuminating discussion!

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Meral Ekincioglu: Dear Vassiliki, what was your (and/or your research group's) essential motivation to begin "*Citizen TALES Commons*,"[1] a civic engagement-experiment and project (with a series of workshops and speakers) by inviting scholars, translators, artists, storytellers, civic practitioners; and why, in particular, Claudia Rankine's acclaimed work, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014)? In addition, could you share how Professors Paul Mihailidis and Eric Gordon[2] supported this project, and their importance within this context?

Vassiliki Rapti: Thank you, This is a great question that requires a long answer. Basically, it started from my initial participation in the Claudia Rankine Citizen Read initiative. It was a collaboration between Emerson College and the American Repertory Theater during the academic year 2017-2018. There was an initial call on behalf of Emerson College to every faculty member, every student, every staff member to participate on a volunteering basis. I was one of the professors who were really committed to this project. We were given this book for free, and then, when I was introduced to this book, I was fascinated by it. It was incredible as a text and as an

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1   See for more details on Citizen TALES Commons project, its story, mission, team, partners, methodology, etc., https://citizentales.squarespace.com/, last accessed on 6.19.2020.

2   See for a recent publication edited by Eric Gordon and Paul Mihailidis on a scholarly examination of civic engagement, political and social life through the lens of digital culture, Gordon, E., Mihailidis, P. (ed.), Civic Media, Technology, Design and Practice, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016).

A Conversation with Vassiliki Rapti

A Conversation with Vassiliki Rapti: On "Citizen TALES Commons" and Challenges of Citizenship in Today's World

Meral Ekincioglu
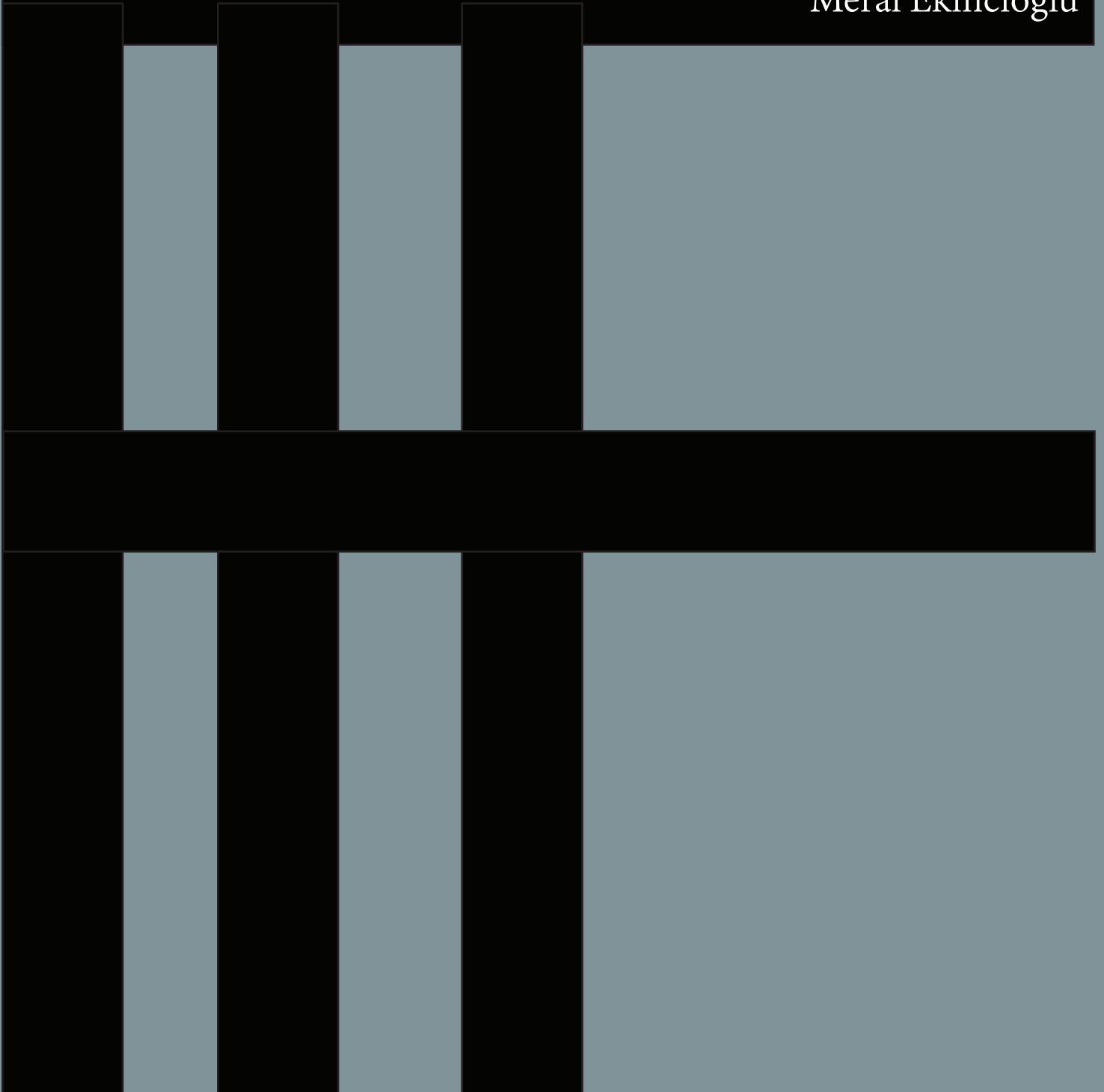
innovative way of thinking on race. How Rankine works with the juxtaposition of text, and images caught my attention right from the start. I immediately committed to this project, and we were guided throughout the process with facilitating guides and a series of lectures and events. We spent a lot of time thinking together with the organizers of the project, and we invited our students to participate. I also brought another group of which I was in charge, the Advanced Training in Greek Poetry Translation And Performance Workshop. I was really excited because I could bring my group that was left a little bit without compass when I left Harvard in 2016, where it was formed in January 2014. And although I did my best to invigorate it by organizing workshops on play and translation in collaboration with the Ludics Seminar of the Harvard Mahindra Humanities Center which I co-founded, the options were limited. When the Citizen Read initiative came about, I thought to myself, "Look at this. We can also have another collaboration between two different groups and see how the interplay of blackness and whiteness can be further explored and I think this was one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had as both a participant in a larger group, in a larger endeavor of the kind of an interinstitutional collaboration as the ones I mentioned earlier, between different kinds of groups including my Emerson College students --I had at least 25 students from two different classes that volunteered to participate--. At that moment as the new group was emerging from a translation group, I had in mind that what we could probably offer to the Citizen Read initiative would be to translate excerpts from Claudia Rankine's influential book in as many languages as our members were fluent in. Also concurrently with that, there was the premiere of Claudia Rankine's play *The White Card* under Diane Paulus' direction, which complements *Citizen: An American Lyric* in a more philosophical way of thinking of race. Everything for Rankine started from this simple question: "Can we sit in a room and have a quiet dialogue between a black and a white person?" What does this mean? Are we still at the level that we can have a comfortable dialogue? Apparently it is not easy when it comes to the state of our racial imagination. It is perhaps one of the most challenging ways to talk about race in our time….and all of a sudden that became a prominent discourse and little by little, other issues were raised after we had these yearly meetings. This discourse was enhanced by weekly meetings within our group, and by talks by

Claudia Rankine herself who came to our campus. She gave an open lecture in the panel with several facilitators. Also, Professor P. Carl who was a key creative collaborator (dramaturg and producer) of the play played an instrumental role in the entire project and we also had to participate in other meetings with both the organizers and other parallel groups that kept updating one another on their activities. The result was for our group to conclude with this amazing contribution to the project on April 30, 2018, at the Ludics Seminar at Harvard which hosted a panel of about 30 participants who shared their translations of excerpts from *Citizen* in their native tongues –about ten of them-- and talked about their experiences throughout the process while encountering Rankine's powerful work. So, we translated, for instance, in Chinese, Greek, Spanish, French, German, or Serbian. Wendy Walters, a Professor at Emerson College who specializes in African-American literature in the larger context of diaspora studies, who was the coordinator of the event, gave a wonderful introduction of her own interpretation of Rankine's book as accumulation of trauma layers that found their way into that book. We also had other professors-participants in the *Citizen Read* project who joined us and read their students'

responses to *Citizen: An American Lyric* in their creative writing classes. Anna Ross, professor of creative writing and poetry was one of them and she graciously shared samples of her students' adaptations of the book. It was an incredible experience to feel how this book was received and informed these students' identities. Another participant talked about her experience as a professional translator and the challenges she had when tackling this text. Then other issues came from the broader audience such as whether it is appropriate to have a text culturally specific to the American culture translated into another context and culture, and if so how to do justice to it. I had already addressed this challenging question to Claudia herself on another occasion --when she came and gave an amazing talk at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies and she told me: "That's what everyone really aspires to have a wider reception, so her book was not an exception." She wanted this book to touch as many souls and readers as possible. That is the beginning of our *Citizen TALES* Commons collective and platform. I can talk so much about this because you can see the excitement that is behind this … because we really wanted to further explore this wonderful book and to find a form that would allow us to continue the open dialogue

on race. That was also part of my decision to come to the Masters' program that is called Civic Media: Art and Practice at Emerson College (CMAP) now called Media Design. What I was really looking for was to find a way to empower myself to connect the dots amidst all my ideas and community-based academic projects. So this was the beginning of *Citizen* TALES! At the same time, as a collective we realized that as a collective we could perhaps have a greater impact on society, because as an educator I am deeply concerned with the turn of the humanities today. So I'm coming back to the "citizenship" question. So citizenship was the whole concept for so many other issues that are at the core to our identities. So, that's how it all started. And because it was difficult to talk about race, when I approached people to talk about race, it was not easy. People refrained from talking about that. So, we opened "race" to the question of "citizenship." And then all the issues were coming up automatically in the discussion with every individual I conducted interviews. So up to this moment, I have conducted 50 interviews; 31 in an online form which are anonymous from all places. The other thing that I found particularly empowering was the in person interviews --19 in total-- with all kinds of ages from different backgrounds. I was

just fascinated by the complexity of the term "citizenship." Then we found a way to continue with this core research question "what is citizenship" for a scholar and also for a civic practitioner. At that first stage, I didn't know if this would be a viable topic for my thesis. Then, I said "why don't I start *Citizen* TALES Commons as an experiment-directed study in the fall of 2018?" Then, I ran the idea to Professor Mihailidis, the director of the Graduate Studies Program at CMAP and he found the idea very appealing and graciously accepted to be my advisor. We had bi-weekly meetings, I organized workshops and I started documenting them by filming them and by writing responses. In the end, I had to come up with a process book where I would summarize my moments of reflection. It was a fascinating idea that started taking shape little by little, as I was attending the monthly seminars with my group that was ever evolving. It had some people who had started it and new people who joined in the process, like you, Meral, for instance, who joined us after Ivaana Muse's panel in October 2018. The first semester was still fluid but it was very empowering for its few members. Then with Peter Bottéas, my colleague and translator sat together and asked ourselves how we could frame this project in a more

meaningful way. So that's when we came up with a title honoring Claudia Rankine's work that ignited this project. I also wanted to have the concept of storytelling present, and then the acronym TALES appeared! I still wanted to emphasize the interdisciplinarity of the project, and then based on who was part at the moment and whom I ideally had in mind that would be a good fit for the collaboration, we came up with the initial acronym Translators, Artists, Ludics Learners, Explorers Storytellers. The Ludics Learners was due to the conjunction with the Ludics Seminar because we wanted to make the most out of this seminar. Then we had this wonderful discussion with the members who are committed to this project. Finally, open invitations had to be finalized. It seems to me that what we all brought aligns with each one of the threads of the acronym TALES. Then the conceptualization of the workshops would have somehow to align with that. So we had translators leading workshops and we are going to have another one. We had artists like Elisa Hamilton from my CMAP cohort who graciously accepted to come voluntarily to support us. It was an incredible workshop, and then we had Ludics Learners seminars like the one led by Miguel Sicart who came and talked about the play and

how play can empower or disempower citizens. Also we had game nights. We're going to have one next week with I-Civics Educators Network to which I belong in collaboration with another two wonderful fellows of my CMAP Cohort, Giles Bullen and Herman Servatius and later another workshop on identity and social justice with my colleagues Emily Baeza and Isaiah Frisbie. So this kind of collaboration speaks volumes of the mentality of our collective spirit and solidarity among us. We really support each other. As far as the last branch of TALES, storytellers, we chose it because in the end we aspire to create our collective narrative of people who have faced some kind of exclusion at some point in our lives or we experienced it in our surroundings. At the same time, we wanted to capture each member's individual stories. Whether this will be in the form of the song or in the form of the play we started coming up with some threads that align and bring the mission of each one's voice. So the idea is to have this collective voice that brings also the diversity of our voices. And for me, the idea of the concept of the Greek chorus is at the heart of my research and of my pedagogical component, a very important component indeed throughout my 20+ years of career. I am really exploring possibilities for my students and the

Citizen TALES Commons participants to have access to creativity, innovation and collaboration, cross-pollination, and interdisciplinarity. I really feel like we need this dialogue between the sciences and the arts in our time. Technology empowers us only if it is a tool for us or a way to better communicate our ideas and concepts, not to become slaves of it. So that's why then the podcast medium came as the natural medium to choose from, because I realized that the voice is such an important component of the entire project. After all, we all wanted it, because we felt marginalized somehow. We wanted to bring those voices and amplify them if possible. The podcasting medium seemed to me and to all the members of the group the most adequate medium to amplify our collective voice and to spread it everywhere and it's the most democratic means. It is the cheapest medium and just the idea to being people together through storytelling which is related to my passion for poetry and performance --the roots of poetry have this kind of connective ritual, a quality that brings people together to tell their stories through their own voices--is appealing.Storytelling is the one thing that brings them together as this amazing core *Citizen* TALES Commons is a collective body of citizens who have this identity as part of the group, but also with alternating rounds each one of the members becomes the leader of the chorus. In that way the "individual voice" is also embraced and created. So I spoke too much..... That's how it all started! That's how we formed this amorphous group in the beginning! Openness and fluidity characterize it, and I like this fluidity of the group because I don't want to impose things. I want things to flow naturally, to take their time to take shape. I'm a big proponent of this protean idea. Of something emerging and going with the flow and something else will come out of it in another form, one into another. So I know this is something that is related to my fascination with the surrealist idea of the one-into-another that I have explored in my book Ludics in Surrealist Theatre and Beyond (2013). In other words, one --even the most disparate things-- can find commonalities and emerge out of something else. So I think there is a lot of potential here and this is the joy of collaboration. The joy of the process of bringing people together and curating their experiences and marveling at the endless possibilities of *aesthesis* for each one of them.

ME: As you wrote in the blog of this civic engagement project (your first conclusions), citizenship refers to intersectionality of gender,

race, ethnicity, power dynamics, democracy, economic division, etc. In particular, with the current critical political atmosphere, travel ban, the influence of global migration and forced displacement on many peoples' lives, and critical debates on how to improve more diverse, inclusive and equal understanding in society under these circumstances, citizenship is a well-timed research and discussion topic (not only in the. but in the global world). [3] Within such a complicated picture, one of the significant dimensions of your project is to be interdisciplinary and to include various participants from different backgrounds, scholarly disciplines, different home countries, etc. According to discussions by your participants during *Citizen TALES* Commons, what would you like to say about how they understand the word "citizenship," when they feel "the most and least empowered as citizens," and what are the most critical topics on "citizenship" for them?

VR: Thank you for this complex question, Meral! Indeed, I think it is a well-timed topic and part of the desires of the *Citizen* TALES Commons members to participate was this urge to address these issues that are packed within the term "citizenship." I had no idea, before even tackling this issue, that there would be so much diversity in the responses that I received. What I found is that citizenship can be conceived in both abstract and concrete terms. I had people who said "when I think of citizenship, I think of legality, I think of something that has to do with government, I think of something that is imposed on us, something not only related to tax or voting rights or jury duties." And then I had other interviewees who focused on the practicality of citizenship as a set of everyday practices. This is where I find the most intriguing part of citizenship today that is related to your question about the topicality of citizenship, and in light of what happens today, in light of the reshaping of the map of the world,

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3 See for a discussion on rethinking citizenship in volatile times, a workshop with Seyla Benhabib, the Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Yale University and former Director of the Program in Ethics, Politics and Economics, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PEfHXqdWTQ, last accessed on 6.19.2020, and her discussion on interactive universalism and the rights of others, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prS1In2Z8WU, last accessed on 6.19.2020. In addition, see for a recent critical examination on citizenship, how its role in the world has been changing and how it is used as a legal tool that justifies exclusion, humiliation, etc, even though it promises to apply the attractive ideas of dignity, equality and human worth, Kochenov, D., Citizenship, MIT Press Essential Knowledge series, (Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press, 2019).

in terms of who is allowed to do what, etc. "Citizenship" as a set of daily practices is, in fact, something that came up in a discussion I had with play theorist Miguel Sicart, the author of *Play Matters*. When I asked him, "what do you think about citizenship," he said, "the first thing I think of is my passport and I feel like I am a European citizen that allows me to go to all of these countries without really being concerned whether I will have any trouble to enter or exit etc. But on the other hand, it is a whole set of practices that inform our daily routine." This was an epiphanic moment for me which came up in the interviews I subsequently conducted and it was incredible how these people pushed the boundaries of their own thinking by saying, "you know, for me, 'citizenship' is 'community;' for me, 'citizenship' is 'to care;' 'citizenship' is a 'responsibility.'" They would give me examples of how they were mostly empowered as citizens when they were asked for their opinions. Some of them said "citizenship matters in grassroots meetings, in their communities whether they should give a permit for a license for a liquor or in a person who holds a hotel in which Osama Bin Laden used to go, for instance, or issues like that." They were asked to think as responsible citizens. One of them said, "you know, for me,

when you talk about 'citizenship,' I can't help but to think of my classmate Kathy Boudin, co-director and co-founder of the Center for Justice at Columbia who was once involved with the Weather Underground and spent 20 years in prison--her father, a Harvard Law Professor changed the law so that she could come out of the prison--. She and her partner were in prison at the moment because they participated in a bomb attack in New York and then they were raising their kid in the prison and then, what do you do after you've come out of this prison? So the notion of the returning citizen was also related to the practicalities of citizenship and it is part of who is granted US citizenship. When people are in the prison, for instance, they are not allowed to vote. They are not allowed to say anything, they are deprived of the basic civil rights and then when they're coming out of the prison, they are having those rights." In another conversation I had with a 12-year old boy whose parents have dual citizenship, he said that he was informed by his school teacher everything about the Ellis Island history. He said, "when I think of citizenship, I think of those people who like my grandparents and great grandparents who, came from Greece, they had to be scrutinized in the Ellis Island, and if they had money they could go

forward, but if they hadn't, they had to be sent back to their countries at that time. For instance, the illnesses were at their peak." He noticed the social injustice and he pointed it out to me by saying, "when I think of citizenship, I think that this is a privilege, that this is something that is not a given as we tend to think." Another person said, "when I think of citizenship, I think of it really as a descriptor of social injustice because some people have it, and some people, even if they tried hard, they could not have it." She was thinking especially of her brother in-law who was from El Salvador. He came here as a hard-working person, and he married an American citizen. Eventually, he became an American citizen, but all his life what he was doing was sending money back to his home to help his family to come here, and give them the basics that they did not have in El Salvador. Other people talked to me about citizenship in relation to the current ban. Recently I went to an M.I.T. conference and I met with various people, some of whom later became members of *Citizen* TALES Commons. One of them was a cultural anthropologist from Iran. She said, "I'm really working with two groups of religious studies of women. One is a group of Muslims, another group is composed of non-Muslims. In light of the ban that was placed last

year, they eliminated their differences, their religious differences, and they feel like they need to come together and to cope with this everyday reality. And then there are people who cannot even go back to their countries because they are afraid that they're not going to be able to come back." Those are the issues of the everyday practicalities that are related to "citizenship." That is something that I think deserves in itself to be addressed in as many possible contexts and see if there is a way for us to find ways to help navigate these problems. There are some problems that are at the heart of democracy today. Here is where the big picture comes. My interest in this initial model of democracy that is centered in everyone's voice is less meaningful today, because, for me, with the invasion of the media, the visual aspect has turned into a spectacle and a spectacle sometimes is just a spectacle without the deeper meaning, without the dialogue that we need to address and find commonalities, to find solutions to the problem. Here is where my desire as a civic practitioner comes to play a role, and this is something that is fostered in the program that I am currently enrolled in at Emerson College, which brings me back to your first question, how professors at the Engagement Lab offered me space for the *Citizen*

TALES Commons. It's because that is at the core mission of Emerson College in general, that is, to address civic engagement, ways of democratizing societies across the globe. So here's where global citizenship comes to play and that was something that was also illuminating for me--to see how complex an issue ethnicity is.--Some people deny the notion of "global citizenship" because they tie it typically to a specific city, a city-specific context where one resides and has responsibilities and rights. On the other hand, the larger picture of global citizenship still persists according to which one belongs to this "global village" with all the media that connects us from one point to the other and some people would say, "of course, I am a global citizen because I am concerned with global issues such as global warming, democracy debilitation and things like that." It's interesting to see everyone's perspective. I think that's where we have a say as educators, civic practitioners, artists, human beings: to unpack these questions that are embedded in the notion of "citizenship;" and "citizenship" is sometimes used as a weapon by people to attack others. Sometimes it is used as a privilege. I want this to be dismantled, to see how citizenship is at the core of our identity. I

can be a citizen of the United States, I can be a citizen of Greece with a dual citizenship and something else. By the way, I forgot to mention the fact that I became an American citizen after 18 years of living and working in the United States! The entire process of naturalization was a tough process but this fact was instrumental for me to start the *Citizen* TALES Commons collective/platform, because I felt like I had a responsibility now more than I had before, because I was not an alien resident anymore. Before as a permanent resident, I did not have full rights and as a result, I did not have access to so many advantages and I am going back to the practicalities. I was not able to apply for jobs, for instance, that required citizenship. A whole new pool of possibilities opened for me by just becoming an American citizen. Then my daughter was born here, but I really felt the need to give her dual citizenship. I wanted her to feel that she is also a Greek citizen even though she does not reside there but she is Greek in her identity and she speaks the language. Also, the entire process to learn the history behind citizenship and to delve deeper into the history of the United States, and how it is related to the

Founders' vision of America seemed like a kind of ritual during which you enter another space where you redefine your role as a "citizen," you redefine your own identity as a "citizen." Identity then is part of this intersectionality that we were talking about earlier. Whatever lies at the heart of their own identity is brought up when they talk about citizenship. I mean, coming back to your initial question, I could not imagine that most of the people mentioned that they felt most empowered when they participated in the Women's March, for instance, and not when they first voted, when they found solidarity among women to raise their voices and denounce some discriminations that have been committed against them. The Me Too movement was also brought up in my interview in relation to the hope that a woman had in the voice of her 18-year old daughter who told her once, "I have no idea what are you talking about Mommy, when talking about 'discrimination against women'," and she said, "yes, most of our of our generation –I am 53 now- had somehow a case of sexual harassment!" And she continued: "And we were not able *to talk about it*." Her daughter said, she confessed, "I cannot believe this is the case" or

she could not believe that there was this racial discrimination at the moment of the civil rights movement. That's why she said: "I hope the voice of our children will undo whatever has been done up to this moment. Then you have discrimination against LGBTQIA people, queer people, lesbian, gay communities who still are treated differently, or they're not allowed to have the space they should have as real citizens, as normal citizens as everyone." Or, recently I met a girl who wants to become part of the group and she said, "I have reading disabilities and I cannot really help but to promote what is the heart of my desire to help this society to improve. She needs help, she wants to raise her voice because of her disabilities. Of course, much has been done towards the direction of this, yet much more needs to be done. That's also something that was raised in one of my interviews and one said "Look, we have to look at every citizenship differently. We have to see the differences and to honor those differences." I recall one interview which took place at the jury duty waiting room and I had this wonderful opportunity to speak with the woman sitting next to me. She pointed out to the moment when women were not allowed to vote and she

also noted the discrepancy in the numbers of women in politics versus men. Also several professors whom I interviewed told me in their online interviews "I felt less empowered when I had to apply for a job in academia and I was turned down for no reason, or things like that." There's so much to discover and analyze at the heart of each person's identity when you talk about citizenship.

ME: The findings of *Citizen* TALES Commons will be translated into a digital platform, open to the public. Indeed, first of all, the digital sphere is one of the most effective realms to promote effective communication and productive discussions on citizen-powered democracy with its potential to facilitate more social inclusion and to strengthen participation across the globe for civic engagement. Secondly, innovation in this field offers expanded opportunities for sharing information in order to raise awareness and to encourage much more active discussion and participation, etc. In this respect, with the findings of your project, what is the strategy and goal(s) of "digital platform of *Citizen* Tales Commons" to stimulate its readers to think about their roles in citizen-powered democracy and to take steps for positive changes

on current situation (in the US, and more generally, around the world)?

VR: This is another iteration of this project, my aspiration to continue this project after its defense in August. My aspiration for the continuation of this project is to give it a life of its own, to help it evolve into a collective and a complete online platform that can be used as a repository, as a source open to the public all over the worlds, that will offer ways to engage them while accumulating the generated knowledge that will ultimately become part of the common knowledge. We have various ways to accomplish this, and one of the innovative platforms that we're going to use is modeled after the online platform implemented by our amazing professor Magda Romanska, the inventor and founder of the theatertimes.com, the largest digital platform for theater across the globe, which currently has more than 123 countries represented with local ambassadors in each one of these countries, based on scholarship that is accessible to everyone. Our similar platform will host the voices and projects of our current 50 *Citizen* Tales Commons in the form of a Greek chorus, that is, both as a collective and as individual leaders of the collective.

One of the methods we use to amplify our voices is the medium of podcasting which would be expanded to have each member's voice heard. Hopefully somebody will fund *Citizen* TALES Commons in the near future, because it really has a great potential, but the format of the documented Workshop, partially or in its entirety, constitutes the core of *Citizen* TALES Commons, which, I like to think of as an incubator of collective ok, where everybody will find or raise their voices, and the way, in which they are empowered. What really interests me is to see how this prototype can empower independent scholars and artists to cultivate and raise their own voices within a community of likeminded people. Such an adaptable model of production and dissemination of knowledge and artwork can be used in various situations and can be applicable to various settings. You can see how my educational background and aspirations come into play. I think of this collective/platform as a tool available to everyone that can be accessed from all corners of the world. As long as there is Internet connection, *Citizen* TALES Commons addresses a call to everyone to co-create and think together apropos of citizenship and thus to unpack this heavy-loaded term in

their own ways. Maybe this will be a way to connect those different voices through thinking together, co-creating, collaborating and pushing the boundaries of common knowledge. One of the other ways is that hopefully my students, as long as I teach global literature, will also be empowered to use this and expand the knowledge. Hopefully through their Wikipedia Education Center, a workshop of which I attended at M.I.T. and I saw a great potential of collaboration for co-production, co-creation and availability of common knowledge, democracy will not be an abstract term but really something that brings together voices which find solutions to some issues which pushes narrowminded people to open their minds. Therefore, this is where this incubator can become a conduit for social change through collective storytelling, through our voices, through our research. So you can see how *Citizen* TALES Commons incorporates all the methods or at least some of the most powerful methods that civic design/media design gives us. I prefer to call it civic design. Everyone in this collective thinks that it is not one's only decision to make a change. It's the power of all that comes in unity, and as our motto "united in our diversity, this diverse in our unity"

suggests this it is really something very powerful, and is at the core of democracy. By the way, one of the influential blogs that made me think of podcasting as a primary medium for our collective/platform is "Democracy Now," which is a powerful political podcasting series. It is where all this comes together and you see the vision that I have which is embraced by every member and I feel that there's a lot of potential to take on different challenges. At the end of the day, I want this to be applicable and to be useful to everyone. I want this to be expanded and modified to function as a chrysalis that opens its wings. I want to give breath to this project and I think it's going to that direction. So that's why I like to call it civic empowerment.

ME: You organized several workshops and you invited some speakers during this civic engagement project.[4] Could you briefly share who they are and how they have contributed to a laboratory of critical thinking on your project subject?

VR: Yes. I thought this was such an important component of our model, that is, to have experts in their respective fields talk about citizenship. Our group needed this kind of seed for thought, as I call the Workshop, the core component of *Citizen* TALES Commons that pushes the boundaries of our thinking, and as you will see, we've benefited from our collaboration with the Harvard Ludics Seminar which became one of our partners. We also found partners in The

4   In addition to those workshops and talks by invited speakers, some of Citizen TALES Commons members participated in several international conferences and annual meetings, such as Vassiliki Rapti, Meral Ekincioglu, and Diana Ramirez-Jasso who made their joint presentation ("Citizen TALES Commons: A Collaborative Multi-Disciplinary Model of Ethical, Reliable and Inclusive Production and Dissemination of Knowledge around Issues of Citizenship Today") at "WikiConference North America" organized at Massachusetts Institute of Technology between 8-11 of November in 2019; and Elena Mancini, Meral Ekincioglu, and Kenny Yim were speakers at the 51st NeMLA, Northeast Modern Language Association, Annual Convention (Convention title: "Shaping and Sharing Identities: Spaces, Places, Languages and Cultures"; Citizen TALES Commons seminar title: Citizen Tales Commons: Imperceptibly off Walls) where Vassiliki Rapti conducted this Citizen TALES Commons seminar as a (co)-chair, and Hannah Trivilino conducted a participatory workshop at Boston University on 8 March 2020. In October-November 2019, several Citizen TALES Commons members also participated in "Sapphic Tales: Re-Making Sappho through Comparative Media", a micro seminar offered by Vasiliki Rapti at the MIT-WGS Program, and brought into focus fruitful scholarly discussions on gender, equity, inclusion and citizenship, etc. through "Sappho," the great female lyric poet of Antiquity and her fragmented tales.

Missing Link Studios and the Culture House and we hope many more organizations in the near future will njoin us. As for our guest speakers, when I look back I can see that the common theme "why citizenship matters?" brought them together. Our first speaker, Professor Louis Arthur Ruprecht, Jr, director of the Hellenic Studies Program at Georgia State University in Atlanta, was the first speaker at the Ludics Seminar and publicly conversed with Cornel West, author of the books *Democracy Matters* and also *Race Matters*. Ruprecht was kindly interviewed about his book *Policing the State*: Democratic Reflections on Police Power Gone Awry, in Memory of Kathryn Johnston (1913-2016), that captured his experience as the jurist on the case of a 90-year African-American lady who was shot by accident by a policeman in Atlanta, Georgia. He brought ethical questions about police brutality and racial injustice. Our second speaker was Miguel Angel Sicart who wrote the influential monograph *Play Matters*. We wanted to address at least once each one of the strands that form our acronym TALES (Translators/Artists/Ludics Learners/Explorers/Storytellers). We wanted not to leave anybody outside without being helped. I found it

particularly interesting to see how our group could be empowered within and from within. This is why we also invited the members of our cohort of the Masters Program in Civic Media at Emerson College to come and offer workshops to empower our group in a small circle. Elisa Hamilton came as a socially-engaged artist, while Emily Baeza and Isaiah Frisbie gave a joint workshop on identity to empower the members to think of themselves regarding the role they have in our collective and also to find the best way for self-expression in terms of their own voice. My other friend Leah Nielsen gave a technical workshop on podcasting. Then we had an innovator, Dr. Zenovia Toloudi, an architect, artist and urban designer. She came with an amazing scholar on gender studies, Dr. Nisha Kommattam. In their joint talk on May 8, 2019, we saw how space and citizenship are interrelated. The translation workshop with poet-translator Becky Denisson Sakellariou took place on April 22nd. So I think every field embedded in our acronym (TALES) is addressed and the workshops have been designed in such a way that they establish structures and conditions for critical thinking and dialogue. I also really like the fact that some of the members themselves,

including you, have volunteered to present their work and have generated a wonderful constructive dialogue amongst themselves. So I like this variety that offers options to our members to express themselves as they wish and in the medium they consider most fruitful for them.

ME: With some recent critical arguments in (American) politics and protests, I think that the importance of civic engagement in (Higher) Education became clearer in order to teach and encourage students (such as the young generation) to become agents of good citizenship and positive socio-political changes through their civic behaviors. What would you like to say about the role of academia in supporting and promoting civic and democratic engagement in today's teaching practice in the US? In addition, as the co-founder and co-chair of the Ludics Seminar, Harvard Mahindra Humanities Center (2013-present), what would you like to say about the "current" role, critical issues and future potential of "humanities" in this endeavor?

VR: I'm so glad you brought up this question. I think we are at the point where we understand the importance of pushing towards civic humanities. There are just a few people who use this term, that is, "civic humanities." It's not used

widely. You might have heard the term "public humanities," which is much more widely used and still the need for public--and civic humanities, I would add-- is crucial, if we want to have hope in this world, because, especially in academia, we see a decline and devaluation of the humanities. We see how the departments push for productivity and high enrollments, especially in the American system in which the private sector has a say. I believe that civic humanities should be kept in mind when they fund the university departments, but I also think that in order for this to happen there is need for more generosity and more giving and thinking about creating the possibility for nurturing minds that would act as good citizens and well-rounded personalities, which means to be aware of both their responsibilities and their duties towards "the other," to just take them out of their egos, take them out of their little siloes and allow them to think of themselves as individuals within a larger community. So, where the humanities today fell short is exactly this, succumbing to the demands of productivity necessitated by a profit-oriented capitalistic system. Also, the collaborative model that works well in the sciences or social sciences should

become a norm for the humanities as well. Scientists achieve all these amazing discoveries thanks to their teams that work together, all the while acknowledging each one's single contribution within the group. Likewise, in the social studies this model of collaboration works well and this was part of my decision to go back to school after my PhD to do something that is related to social studies. I feel like the humanities need to embrace some models of social studies and the sciences. I feel like we need to open up, to think not only of ourselves, but of the future generations. We need to create the conditions for a better society by opening up to civic humanities. I really stress the term "civic" more than the term "public" because it's only then when the individual will think of himself/herself/themselves as a member of the whole. That's when they will have a better sense of their own identity. I would rather say "identities" because there are multiple identities within an individual, but they will go out of this monolithic individualistic self-reliance model that has been foregrounded, especially by the American universities. So, like you, I feel that I am in a liberal arts college like Emerson College that has embraced this model in its core -- its liberal arts

education which aspires to create leaders in communication and arts, writing, theater. and cinema.-- I mean we have at our disposal a vast technology that helps us to make a better use of this collaborative model that can take us out of our little egos and the more generous and open we are, the more sustainable an environment and peaceful world we can have where joy can become reality.

I know I speak from an idealistic point of view but we do need such people. I was quoting earlier Cornel West; I think he said something about education that we have to envision the world of education with graciousness. So I think we need to think of ourselves ahead of time. I think -- maybe because I'm a mother—that I want to create something for the future generations so that they can be hopeful, not to be just selfish and individualistic but to give some values to the future generations so that they can have something to believe in and not to believe in the devices, not in the fake images that they create for themselves based on Facebook, Tik-Tok, or similar social media image-making. We need to give them immaterial values, not only material values. We need to empower them to think critically. That's why one of the many constant

concerns I have in my teaching is to bring different perspectives to challenge students to think outside the box and see how the epic of Gilgamesh, for instance, matters today, as a warning against bad governance. By the way, this is the first literature piece that was written three thousand five hundred years ago and it still matters. So, anyway, what can you do to educate your students to be "good citizens"? If you educate them to be "good citizens" they immediately will realize how their everyday behavior will change from the time they are in the classroom to the time they spend with their friends or alone outside the classroom door. To give them hope, I don't want them to just be given assignments to be just there and take grades. I want their teaching to be transformative for them. I want teaching to empower them. I want them to find value in those old texts or contemporary texts. I want them to be engaged with them. I want them to critically think and to make decisions the same way. The literary criticism that is applied to those texts, is to be also applied to their everyday decisions. I want to raise "ethical human beings," and if you teach them how to be good citizens they will be good citizens. So in other words, civic humanities is very important for me and I hope more minds,

more people who are decision makers in Education, will be tuned to the civic humanities and will reevaluate education, redirecting it to what needs to be taught and how it needs to be taught; not in isolation, not according to a model of individualism and productivity but in a model of collaboration, sustainability and civic responsibility. I really want to see more collaborations among students and professors. I want more experimentation, more creativity, more laboratories of critical thinking with the use of technology and experiential learning that takes place outside the school settings such as museums, nonprofits, communities, streets, public spaces etc. In that way, students will embrace other modes of learning such as observation, interviews, even the ludicrous as Professor Sigehisa Kuriyama suggested in his Ludics talk yesterday that can lead everyone to small daily discoveries, something that can enlighten our lives and our world. So when I recall that moment when from a plain piece of paper, Kueiyama came up with two beautiful intertwined hearts, I was really pleasantly surprised. I said to him, "that was the surrealist marvelous I was searching for!" Oh yes; so can we have more such moments. That's what I envision. That's what I hope for. That's what I

hope people who have the money will fund in the future. We want collaborative, interdisciplinary experimental models and incubators like the *Citizen* TALES Commons collective of researchers, artists, and creative thinkers.

ME: In recent years, some leading universities began to uncover their own history related to slavery,3 racism and women.4 What do you think about this effort by universities a. to reveal some critical facts, challenges, struggles in the history of citizenship in the US; b. its potential contribution in teaching to educate more informed (young) citizens; and c. in research practice to explore new findings and create new discussion topics on the history of democracy,

citizenship and their future?

VR: I definitely think that this is our duty to open up the spaces that have been closed for several reasons and we really should make this our task if we believe in true democracy. We should push for all these archives to be open for research. We should be clear and ethical in dealing with this material. We should use appropriate methods in dealing with this material to care for it as a source of direct link to the past, to the history of these oppressed people, and it's our task to make this available to the new generations, to students, to everyone, and make this public. I mean it's so important not to hide the history. We don't want to give a false impression of history. We want to give

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5   Please see for more information on "Universities Studying Slavery, USS", http://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery-uss-the-birth-of-a-movement, last accessed on 6.20.2020. In addition, please see for a community dialogue on the Legacy of Slavery at MIT (in 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ioyg9qX8kn0, last accessed on 6.20.2020.

6   In this respect, it is important to note that there is still a big gap in the scope and content of documentation on the history of some pioneering academic programs in the US in order to uncover how diverse, inclusive and equal they have been in terms of their education and academic communities. For instance, more specifically, there has still been a huge gap in historical documentation practice and methods at pioneering schools of architecture in the US, such as at MIT, Princeton, Yale, Harvard, etc. in order to reveal how diverse, inclusive and equal their education history is with respect to diversity in women, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. (as of 2019). In addition, there has also been an unclear strategy for digitization of their visual and textual archival materials (as of 2019). See for a recent research project and discussion on this issue, Ekincioglu, M. (interviewee), 2020, "Archival Innovators: Dr. Meral Ekincioglu", ArchivesAware!, Awareness and Outreach Resources for Archivists, an interview by Rachel Seale, Society of American Archivists, Committee on Public Awareness (COPA) member, https://archivesaware.archivists.org/tag/archival-innovators/, March 17, last accessed on 6.20.2020.

access to real history. We want our students to be aware of the injustices that have happened in the past. It's not possible to remedy this but it is possible to honor those who fought against exclusion, and give the people who own this their own value that their ownership. In my world literature class today we were discussing The Tempest by Shakespeare and we had a great conversation and a great presentation with four students who presented as a group and their topic was devoted to the topic "decolonizing Shakespeare." They explained why The Tempest is not a good play but it's a great play for literary criticism, as it brings up powerfully this colonization issue. Indeed, it's time to bring all this hidden or concealed archives, and bring those marginalized voices up, and maybe we'll become better citizens if we become aware of what has happened in the past. At least our responsibility as scholars is not to conceal, not to commit the crime that has been committed thus far. We have the responsibility to honor these archives and to treat them as they should be treated, as immediate resources for knowledge, for empowerment. We have to learn from the past, and also to learn how the present is shaped by that past, and what the implications will be for the future if we do not make this available for new generations. It's so interesting. Yesterday in our class Civic Media Design 2, we had

a guest speaker who is an artist, whose name is Stephen Hamilton and he is a very talented African-American artist who worked with Nigerian women professionals in the textile sector and he created amazing artworks by using techniques he learned from these women. He brought this traditional technique to the United States and he now designs for the curriculum of high schools with students helping him to spread this art that would otherwise be extinguished. At the same time, he empowers the students by helping them rethink their past and their history by finding links in the textile patterns and techniques they use. It was so interesting! He has created, for example, the work entitled, "The Founders's Work," which is very interesting and is related to our citizenship topic. You know, I looked for the missing link of my older generation. Everyone needs to find where they come from. Hence the appeal of ancestry.com and other DNA services. One of my students today said she used these services and she traced up to one group of African people who came as slaves to America. Then he said, "I was so frustrated that they could not reach out to more" and he said "you know, we have to stop thinking just of it as if we are coming just from one group. We come from many groups from Africa and it's so important to honor that." The artist Stephen Hamilton really brings up the

accumulated racial injustices of the past, slavery and all of these traumatic memories. And he used this art that was tapping into collective memory and, for me, this was really such a powerful moment. All this collaborative collective came together as if in a ritual, stitching memories in an artwork. At the same time, this artistic process works towards removing and healing something from the wounds of the past. So for me, these archives may have a wound in themselves but these wounds will remain wounds if they still remain there, but if you open them up, the air will heal them. That is the metaphor that I want to use to think of those historic archives. It's our task to heal them in the sense that they will be there to be used for more wisdom in the future. That's why I admire you, because you would do such an incredible work with archives, by bringing the voices that had been marginalized in the history of architecture, and these women who contributed so much they are unknown here. They have to be brought out. It's just a matter of honoring them. It's a method of doing justice to them and to their efforts. So, all these injustices have to be seen. I mean, they have to be revealed and if this is not scholarship what is it good scholarship then? You have to face everything.

ME: One of your successful fields is digital media technology (in particular, in your teaching practice): Pushing digital media instruction, in your classes, you have motivated your students' individual and collective experience to reveal the potential of their self-expression and creativity.[5] You are also an associate editor of *The Journal of Civic Media*, a publication to support the democratization process around the world by digital platforms and community-based media activities. With all of those experiences, a. As a professor, what would you like to say about the current importance of digital media technology in teaching practice, and pedagogical approach and techniques (in teaching practice) to develop civic knowledge, skills, and participation by the younger generation? b. As an associate editor of *The Journal of Civic Media*, what could you say about recent significant digital innovations to empower more diverse, equal, inclusive understanding in society for "all citizens"?

VR: We are at the moment where technology thrives and that's where the opportunity arises and the danger lies at the same time. So as educators and civic practitioners we have to make the best use of what we have in our hands, and we have to be critical in the way we will

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5   Please see, "Focus: Vassiliki Rapti," http://darthcrimson.org/focus-vassiliki-rapti, last accessed on 6.20.2020.

present these media; because every single decision you make in the use of civic media matters. In terms of its reception, in terms of the impact it will have. You have to have, first of all, the big picture in mind, rather than just to impress instinctively and instantly. I would say, avoid the emphasis on the spectacle and focus on the more core issues. It's great to have wonderful design but the goal has to have an educational goal behind it. I mean, I like the use of technology to the point that it empowers the students to collaborate, for self-expression in terms of art, to find their own voice, their own style, and their own role in its context. But if the medium is taking away that personal voice, I wouldn't want to push that far. I don't want to impress because of the medium. I want to use the medium for a better self-expression. You see the core of the humanistic values are still there. Let me rather say civic values, for clarification purposes. We have immense opportunities to harness our goals as civic educators, as scholars, as teaching artists or whatever you call yourself. Everything is a matter of civic design. When you use this endless range of tools, every day something new comes up. I think that it's important to also align with the larger mission of the institution to which you belong. Be truthful, be faithful to that mission

and also as an independent artist make sure that you really do not betray your core values in the use of the media, and always be on top of that. I mean, follow whatever is innovative. I have been introduced to that in the process of this program in an incredible way that requires us to implement media in our art practice. Like, for instance, we saw an artist –unfortunately, I don't recall the name of this artist-- who created a synchronous global choir with hundreds of voices. It was an incredible tapestry there. Incredible! All you have is a virtual reality or augmented reality. You are empowered as a person, as an individual, as a citizen but using those innovative media in a way that is aligned with the core mission of your scholarship. Make your goals as inclusive as possible and as impactful as possible, and then you can become innovative. It's not because you're using something that is a novelty but the way you implement this new medium that is offered to you. I've seen these big companies like Google or Wikipedia who give room to creativity, give room to individuals to push forward their ideas but again make sure that whatever you use, it is clearly thought out beforehand and is clearly in line with your mission as a scholar.

ME: (Trained as an architect), I think that a university's climate has a very important impact on

the behaviors of its students and their civic education. I would like to know your comments and suggestions (as a professor) on how universities should plan (and design) their campuses to provide more welcoming and inclusive spaces (with a sense of belonging and a sense of community) for all students, faculty members and staffs from various race, ethnicity, religion, etc.?6

VR: This is so important. I think there is a need for more inclusiveness in the majority of the universities. Every school has its mission clearly stated and that shows a lot about the way the spaces are created around the mission of each entity. My aspiration and my hope is that more universities will have missions like Emerson College which states clearly, "our mission is to be diverse and inclusive and to focus on excellent leadership in communication." I think there should be a component in every university revolving around civic engagement, but a component that is genuinely integrated in all layers and also that listens to its grassroots. We were given an interesting experiment last semester as part of a collaborative assignment about sustainability on campus. Students from all classes collected statistics about how Emerson is doing in terms of sustainability and we realized that it was behind other campuses -- Boston University does a tremendous job in terms of recycling and sustainability, for instance---. We are not bad, we are okay, but more effort is needed to be done on that front, and we realized that the students were asking for a policy coming from the bottom up. It's important to listen to these voices, to come back to *Citizen TALES* Commons. But it's important to be open to praxis, not to only say that it's important to implement decisions. I would say host events that focus on inclusion and diversity and align with the core mission of every university. Here at Emerson College for instance, you have professors who need to attend some workshops on diversity and inclusion which are great, but again this is not enough. You really have to change your mind. You have to think in those terms so that this is reflected in every curriculum, in every attitude within the campus, on campus and off campus. You have to show this in the way you are designing a syllabus, for instance. It's not enough to only include those clauses about

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6   Please see for a talk and conversation on inclusion, university campus planning and design by Renzo Piano, one of the significant design architects in Columbia's Manhattanville Campus project, and Lee C. Bollinger, the President of Columbia University, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9e6xnhy_h1s, last accessed on 6.20.2020.

inclusion and diversity that is required by the university. But more than that, you have to make this a practice in your own teaching and your own behavior on campus and off campus. I am trying to listen to the students and each time I teach the same class I redesign it again and again to improve it, taking into consideration the new student dynamic and their feedback. I am asking myself for instance, "did I include enough texts in my class that reflect both the Western and Eastern canons?" or "are there women's voices enough?' etc. so that the students can compare and contrast, or "did I offer opportunities to the students to express themselves in different ways or give multiple assignments and not just a single type of assignment?" or "does this allow everybody in the classroom, for instance, to say something?" I am not happy if I don't hear everyone's voice in my class. I am asking myself: "do I create opportunities for everyone to express themselves? Do I create the space in a way that allows for collaboration such as a circle where everybody can face each other instead of having a range of rows of students?" So, already the thinking of the display and organization of your space constitutes the first step towards inclusion and diversity that you make as a teacher. Also, you offer your students assignments both

individually and as a collective. This takes me back to your previous question about implementation of technology in teaching. There was an interesting article yesterday I was reading, entitled, "Get rid of PowerPoint because that makes learning dull for all your students," and yes I agree with that statement, because PowerPoint presentation tends to be predominant in our teaching style but it is not the only way. It's fine as a starter to trigger class discussion but you want to have deeper conversations with your students than just a PowerPoint presentation. So that is where we need the collaborative model of *Citizen TALES* Commons, which does take time to expose the students to different varieties of stimuli and then have the time to digest and converse, to analyze and evaluate the findings to then come up with some conclusions. I think again not on the surface level. I am a big believer in digging deeper. I always have roundtable discussions, once we are done with a major section. I have a prepared roundtable which continues online with the discussion section where I encourage them to comment on each other's comments deepening the conversation while always showing respect for one another. It's also important to always test your own assumptions before you talk about diversity.

Because sometimes we take for granted some things. Do we give voice to everyone? How do I embrace diversity? So, it's not something that comes because you get a certificate. OK. I fulfilled this requirement. I attended the diversity and inclusion workshop. But that's not all. It's rather what do you do after that! How you implement this in your everyday practice. So. Yeah. This. What was the other part of the question?

It also depends on the space that is available at your institution I mean, let's take Emerson College, for example. It is an urban space. Other universities are on large campuses. So I think everything has to aim towards the common good. I think every university should have public, interactive artworks that allow for everybody to engage in conversation to have a space where you can leave feedback, a comment. Data can be collected. Again we go to another zone. There have to be opportunities for real communication. Not just again, let's have pizza and then goodbye. Because I think a lot of those events are superficial. So how can we go beyond the superficiality of the designing of a campus? To make something that requires human intervention and response? I like interactive spaces. I want to have an element of playfulness and interaction in every campus, opportunities for discussion, and intellectual stimulation through great works. Sometimes they have these talkbacks after a show. And again this can be double-edged. Some of them are like rehearsed and they're not of big value due to the theater goers. They have discussions, panels, etc. and those that said sometimes they have a good idea but it's not well implemented. So space should be adaptable. The space should have some element which empowers and encourages human interaction and is human-centered. Space design, more than anything else, and if technology can push for this, is the best. But just technology for the sake of technology, to say that we have innovation or we'll have this big space with cameras, video games or whatever usually exists in the student centers, is not enough. I keep going back to the idea of the need for a design of spaces that welcomes human interaction and human thought and co-creation and all that. What we try to empower in our cities and towns, our people.

ME: Thank you for this interview, your comments and sharing your experiences and thoughts.

VR: Thank you so much for offering me this opportunity to think together on some major issues that are at the heart of our scholarship.

April, 2019

Notes and References:

Boston

*Visiting scholar, MIT

Research scholar, Columbia University

Special Turkish fellow, Harvard University

Citizen TALES Commons, member

1. This interview was made before the unprecedented, ongoing global pandemic crisis, and edited in June 2020. All questions were asked regarding citizenship issues before COVID-19 world. If it had made a few months ago, interview questions would have been different and focused on "current problems and challenges" with COVID, citizenship and civic engagement, etc.

2. See for more details on Citizen TALES Commons project, its story, mission, team, partners, methodology, etc., https://citizentales. squarespace.com/, last accessed on 6.19.2020.

3. See for a recent publication edited by Eric Gordon and Paul Mihailidis on a scholarly examination of civic engagement, political and social life through the lens of digital culture, Gordon, E., Mihailidis, P. (ed.), 2016, Civic Media, Technology, Design and Practice, the MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

4. See for a discussion on rethinking citizenship in volatile times, a workshop with Seyla Benhabib, the Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Yale University and former Director of the Program in Ethics, Politics and Economics, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PEfHXqdWTQ, last accessed on 6.19.2020, and her discussion on interactive universalism and the rights of others, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prS1In2Z8WU, last accessed on 6.19.2020. In addition, see for a recent critical examination on citizenship, how its role in the world has been changing and how it is used as a legal tool that justifies exclusion, humiliation, etc. even though it promises to apply the attractive ideas of dignity, equality and human worth, Kochenov, D., 2019, Citizenship, MIT Press Essential Knowledge series, the MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

5. In addition to those workshops and talks by invited speakers, some of Citizen TALES Commons members participated in several international conferences and annual meetings, such as Vassiliki Rapti, Meral Ekincioglu, Diana Ramirez-Jasso made their joint presentation ("Citizen TALES Commons: A Collaborative Multi-Disciplinary Model of Ethical, Reliable and Inclusive Production and Dissemination of Knowledge around Issues of Citizenship Today") at "WikiConference North America" organized at Massachusetts

Institute of Technology between 8-11 November in 2019; and Elena Mancini, Meral Ekincioglu, Kenny Yim were speakers at the 51st NeMLA, Northeast Modern Language Association, Annual Convention (Convetion title: "Shaping and Sharing Identities: Spaces, Places, Languages and Cultures"; Citizen TALES Commons seminar title: Citizen Tales Commons: Imperceptibly off Walls.) where Vassiliki Rapti conducted this Citizen TALES Commons seminar as a (co)-chair, and Hannah Trivilino conducted a participatory workshop at Boston University on 8 March 2020. In October-November 2019, several Citizen TALES Commons members also participated in "Sapphic Tales: Re-Making Sappho through Comparative Media", a microseminar offered by Vasiliki Rapti at the MIT-WGS Program, and brought into focus fruitful scholarly discussions on gender, equity, inclusion and citizenship, etc. through "Sappho", the great female lyric poet of Antiquity and her fragmented tales.

6. Please see for more information on "Universities Studying Slavery, USS", http://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery-uss-the-birth-of-a-movement, last accessed on 6.20.2020. In addition, please see for a community dialogue on the Legacy of Slavery at MIT (in 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ioyg9qX8kn0, last accessed on 6.20.2020.

7. In this respect, it is important to note that there is still a big gap in the scope and content of documentation on the history of some pioneering academic programs in the US in order to uncover how diverse, inclusive and equal they have been in terms of their education and academic communities. For instance, more specifically, there has been still a huge gap in historical documentation practice and methods at pioneering schools of architecture in the US, such as at MIT, Princeton, Yale, Harvard, etc. in order to reveal how diverse, inclusive and equal their education history with respect to diversity in women, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. (as of 2019). In addition, there has been also an unclear strategy for digitization of their visual and textual archival materials (as of 2019). See for a recent research project and discussion on this issue, Ekincioglu, M. (interviewee), 2020, "Archival Innovators: Dr. Meral Ekincioglu", ArchivesAware!, Awareness and Outreach Resources for Archivists, an interview by Rachel Seale, Society of American Archivists, Committee on Public Awareness (COPA) member, https://archivesaware.archivists.org/tag/archival-innovators/, March 17, last accessed on 6.20.2020.

8. Please see, "Focus: Vassiliki Rapti," http://darthcrimson.org/focus-vassiliki-rapti, last accessed on 6.20.2020.

9. Please see for a talk and conversation on inclusion, university campus planning and design by Renzo Piano, one of the significant design architects in Columbia's Manhattanville Campus project and Lee C. Bollinger, the President of Columbia University, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9e6xnhy_h1s, last accessed on 6.20.2020.

I

In the following interview, friends Hannah Trivilino and Richard Santos Raya discuss manifestations of civic imagination in Santos Raya's recent Oakland City Council campaign. The two also theorize civic imagination, identity, and praxis through the lenses of myth, counter-narrative, animation, the collective unconscious, friendship, Bruce Lee, Yu-Gi-Oh!, police abolition, sunsets, Spy Kids, frogs, and more.

Hannah Trivilino: Hi, Richard! Thank you for speaking with us today. You are a friend of mine and somebody who recently ran for public office, which we will discuss at length. But first to give you some backstory on the context of this interview, I'm part of a civic art and media collective called *Citizen* TALES Commons. *Citizen* TALES was created when a group of people met while translating Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* into their native languages as part of Emerson College and The American Repertory Theater's *Citizen* Read initiative in 2018. After the initiative ended, some of the participants felt that it was important to keep gathering with each other given how powerful the experience was; they became the initial *Citizen* TALES members, and the rest of us joined later. So that's where the *'Citizen'* part of our name comes from. TALES is an acronym— translators, artists, ludics learners (which has to do with the pedagogy of play), explorers, storytellers. The Commons component is our pledge to open, public scholarship.

Effecting the Collective Imaginary: Oakland City Council Candidate Richard Santos Raya Talks Civic Imagination, Friendship as Campaign Strategy, and Being a Dedicated Daydreamer

Hannah Trivilino and Richard Santos Raya
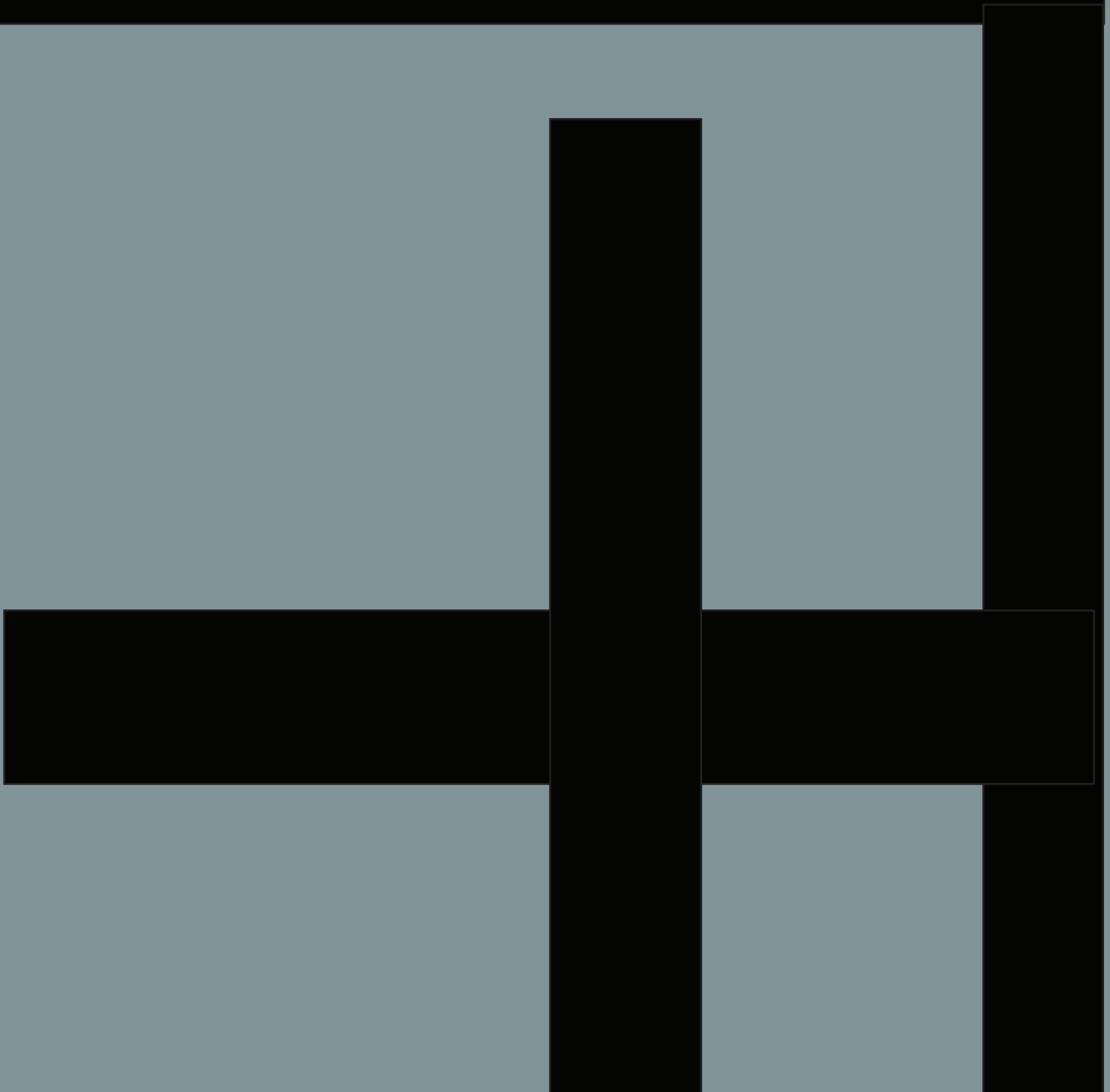
Over the last two years, Vassiliki Rapti (who founded *Citizen* TALES) has been doing really amazing work inviting scholars, artists, civic practitioners, and others who share a similar hope and curiosity to join the collective. It's grown into a beautiful alternative space for co-creation and creative inquiry. The result feels—for me, at least—like the convergence of scholarship without patriarchy and artistic practice without patriarchy. The ways Vassiliki has woven people together in service of this reminds me of how you brought people together with your campaign.

During a recent *Citizen* TALES meeting where Vassiliki, Diana, Meral, Christa, Dionysis, Hiva, Elena, and I were sharing updates with each other, I mentioned the work I had been doing on your Oakland City Council campaign and how your campaign's centering of listening and collaboration mirrored *Citizen* TALES Commons' design. You approaching your campaign from this standpoint—which is very different than how traditional politics operates—reminded us of the ways that *Citizen* TALES offers an alternative to traditional, dominant forms of scholarship that are often hierarchical and wrapped up in power dynamics. The *Citizen* TALES

Commons members were eager to learn more about your campaign and asked if I could write about it. The *Civic Imaginations* journal seemed like a perfect home for such sharing as—as anybody who knows you knows—your imagination is so unbelievably creative. And the way that your creative imagination multiplied against something like a public election led to a particularly unique and inspiring experience, so I am excited for this opportunity for others to learn more about it.

To begin, would you please share a little backstory for your campaign? A summary of who your district is, what the current situation was, and what compelled you to run for office?

Richard Santos Raya: Thank you! I live in the 5th council district in Oakland, California. District 5 is an area that is predominantly referred to as Fruitvale; Fruitvale makes up kind of the majority geographically of my district. Fruitvale has been—since at least the 60's—sort of the Latin American hub of the city. And kind of really one of only two commercial corridors in the city with Fruitvale Avenue—the other one being downtown, Broadway. And sort of the area by Lake Merritt. The fifth district also includes an area called Glenview, which is above the freeway. There has been a lot of writing about the segregation that the 580

freeway provides to Oakland; if you're below the freeway you're in the flats, and that's "poor area,"—sort of—and then if you're above the freeway you're in the hills, and that's "rich area,"—sort of. And obviously gentrification has complicated a lot of that itself. There's studies that have been held about the asthma levels above the freeway, which are lower than below the freeway and all these other environmental disparities, because the citizens above the freeway were able to band together and ban trucks from ever going on the 580. So all the trucks disproportionately go on the 880, and then you have a health disparity.

Our current Council Member is someone named Noel Gallo, who has been in city politics longer than I've been alive. He joined school board in the early, early 90's after working as a recruiter for schools. He has been a really visible part of the school board for a long time, he's been a fixture for a long time, and he joined the City Council in 2012. He is really famous for his weekend "beautification efforts," where he gets in his truck and gets some of his friends or a couple volunteers and goes around Fruitvale picking up trash, because we have a big problem with a lot of illegal dumping in our district. That gives him a lot of visibility, as well as his many, many years of being in a position of power in the community.

The situation that led up to my run was that this summer, the anti-police, Back Lives Matter up-risings exploded across the country, starting so many overdue conversations about alternatives to policing. They exploded similarly in Oakland, and people really began to focus on City Council as a tool or measure by which we could defund the police in this battle for equity and justice in our lands. So I attended a couple of these protests, just as a young person and through my connection with Sunrise and other groups. One of the protests happened outside of our current Council Member's house, the story behind that being that various activists and young people protested outside of each Council Member's house to persuade them to vote for a pretty aggressive defund the police resolution within the city. And Noel Gallo came out and confronted the protesters and said, "all lives matter" and tried to sort of pooh-pooh them. After about an hour of conversation, Noel said that he would vote to defund by $150 million in that week's Council vote....and then two days later turned around and voted against the people he had pledged his vote to and, with several other Council Members, defunded only between 10 and 15 million dollars instead of $150 million from the police department.

He co-formed this new voting block that called themselves "The Equity Caucus." They're four Council Members of Color on the Council—not the only Council Members of Color on the Council—who also represent the most impoverished and impacted districts and who claimed that their perspective was the only one actually serving equity and People of Color's needs. So that understandably enraged a lot of people, that Noel Gallo would go back on his word, would bring some really tired identity politics into things, and hinder the community's clear desire to fund alternatives to policing. And so there was a second protest outside of his house to really hold him accountable for his unfortunate vote, his incorrect vote. I didn't organize one of those protests, but I was selected to help lead the car caravan, so I was sort of visible during that protest. They asked me to get on the mic knowing that I work at Centro Legal de la Raza, which is an immigration services organization where I teach the law to high school students in the Youth Law Academy. It was at that protest that I met a couple of key people who would really become key players in the course of the campaign.

But I was having conversations with people on the street outside of the Council Member's house—we're chanting "vote him out"...it's late June, and I'm realizing, I'm asking around like, *"...is anyone running against this guy yet? Like, do we have anyone who is actually going to run against this guy?"* Because I looked it

up, and he was running unopposed. And no one could tell me anyone who was planning on running. No one could tell me anyone who was planning on challenging Noel. And it immediately crystalized to me the necessity—to continue to be fighting this battle on the streets, but also to put pressure on our electeds in every way we can. That's protesting outside of their house; it's also giving *them* an opponent and giving the people an alternative that will actually raise up and elevate these causes that we were out there marching and yelling and fighting for.

And so after consulting with a couple friends and just really making sure that it felt right, and that it didn't feel like I was overstepping anyone in the community, I stayed up 'til midnight, went to Jack In The Box—which I hadn't done in a long time and really should do soon. I stayed up, got my Jack In The Box, requested my papers from the city clerk, who already knew me from my position on the Cultural Affairs Commission—and I think she was kind of hoping I was going to run, because she sent it to me at, like, 9 pm. She got back to me so fast, like, "here's the papers you need to run." And I just filed them, and I submitted them that Sunday night. I thought it was going to be a very quiet affair, but the next Monday morning the story broke on political Twitter. And the mad rush began.

HT: Thank you. This was amazing. There's many themes from this that we'll come back to as they relate to civic imagination, such as imagining public safety beyond the police. But I quickly want to ask—when you clarified that you wanted to make sure you weren't overstepping any community members, I remember from our phone calls in June that community members were reaching out to you to ask you to run. Is that correct?

RSR: Yeah. To get deeper into the story, this was like, legit, really how it started. There's this amazing organizer out there, her name is Gisela Ramirez. She's amazing. She's a long time organizer who's from LA—South Central LA—and now is really rooted in Oakland. After I gave my speech in front of Noel Gallo's house, I handed the mic off to someone else. And she just sort of came up to me in the corner, and she's like, "hey… if you wanna run against this guy, I'll vote for you. I got your back. We'll co-run this thing together." And I had never even mentioned running on the mic or didn't say like, "we need to run someone against Noel." But I do remember saying, "we don't want to have to push our elected officials into doing the right thing; we want the people that represent us to be pushing the rest of the Council into doing the right thing." You know, "we want a champion, we want someone who's going to fight and push for us." And when I got off, I just remember Gise, like, wiping her

face with her handkerchief, just looking at me and being like, "hey...so, are you gonna run? What's happening?"

And I had already been thinking about it, right? He had that disastrous vote on a Tuesday; this protest that I'm referencing was the following Sunday. Every day in between then I was considering running, I was like, "I should do it, I should do it." I requested the papers on a Friday night, even though the office was closed, and they sent them to me really quickly. But I was still sitting on them. I was wondering if this was the right thing to do. And on each of those days I called a really trusted friend. Or I called really someone who I knew was involved in the community and asked them their opinion. That Saturday I actually even spoke and hung out with Noel; I went to one of his garbage cleanups. I always forget about that part. And I kind of observed him and tried to see if I just had a misread of the guy. And what I felt was—as nice of a guy as he was being to me in that car, I felt that there were some ideological oversights on his part that merited him having a challenger in the election. Sunday was really the moment where I cemented the idea, the necessity of running. I did my due diligence, I asked around...and I remember telling you, us both agreeing that if someone

really from—more deeply rooted in— the community came forward to run, that I would drop out and support their campaign.

HT: Yeah. I really respected that and thought it was indicative of why you were doing this and how it wasn't about your ego; it was really about reflecting the needs of community. You said that you thought some of Noel's ideological oversights merited a challenger. For you, what does the existence of a challenger do to our imagination as people who are in positions to shape civic life?

RSR: If you think of narratives as like a blanket—like *the* narrative, quote-unquote, the central narrative that covers all of us: the people who are in power sort of stick their knees up in the blanket and create a certain shape. And simply just having a challenger in the public sphere saying a different opinion twists the shape of the blanket, you know what I mean? It alters the landscape of what we expect. And so I don't think I was offering anything super novel to people, necessarily. But it was a chance for me and Zoë, the other young person who ended up also running a few weeks after I declared—it was an example of bringing perspectives that had long been outside the system. Or not, like, in the bed, so they're not allowed to change the shape of the blanket. Bringing those arguments in and changing the shape of the blanket.

The big one obviously is housing and

homelessness. Noel Gallo has a really contentious relationship with homeless people, and as I met more and more unhoused members of the community, they told me firsthand narratives of ways in which Noel and his friends had actually really harassed them during the weekly cleanups. And I had seen that firsthand, you know—banging on people's shelters and trailers saying, "I'm gonna take your shit, gonna throw it away" you know, "move, wake up"—kind of that hostility. Being able for me and Zoë to jump in and say, "well, what if instead of harassing them every week we reevaluated our budget, our bloated police budget which grows every year, and shifted even a portion of that million or so—obviously more—but even a portion of that to permanently housing people who are on the streets. To actually, straight up permanently housing people on the streets. Not making them jump through hoops, not treating them like hostile invaders, but treating them like fellow members of our community, housing them."

I think it's rare—even in a progressive place like the Bay—to hear people unapologetically say that while also be running for office. I'm not going to say that we gave people that idea—although there are probably some people who we did inspire, who we did open their horizons just by saying that—but I think broadly the idea

that one of those messages could be coming from a place of held power, right? Like, systemic power, from an elected leader—I think that was new for a lot of people. It was new for me. It was new for me to see.

HT: Which is very telling. I also want to really commend that not only were you talking about shifting the budget to come up with permanent, sustainable solutions that give dignity to unhoused people and address root causes of homelessness, you were also imagining ways to help unhoused leaders you had befriended get jobs in infrastructure influencing roles so that the structures themselves would be directly shaped by the people whose lived experience that was.

Going back to the blanket—which you're using as a metaphor for narratives—what is your relationship between narratives and imagination?

RSR: I think narrative really shapes imagination for better or for worse. That's why and where myths come from. It's to help us understand certain fundamental truths about the world. And all teaching is storytelling, and all storytelling is teaching, and every myth is instructive, and so much of these myths and stories have real truth to offer us. But, also, those truths can be limiting if we fail to acknowledge other truths, right? So for this example, if for thirty years we only hear our elected officials say

"god, we gotta solve the homeless problem, god, we gotta solve the homeless problem"—and then you only see them enact 'solving' it a certain way, then that shapes people. Like I said, Noel's been a public servant longer than I've been alive. People grow up thinking that it only looks a certain way.

So, just being able to offer a counter-narrative is something that expands imagination and helps people. And I think also beyond people just having a different narrative to pick, I think there's also the chain reaction of people understanding that they're allowed to create their own counter-narratives and question or customize what they believe or what they teach their community members and their children. It just helps expand.

HT: I love that. Jane Caputi encourages us to reclaim myth and to take back storytelling power, which you so clearly did.

RSR: Thank you.

HT: And you're somebody who knows a lot about story, about myth, about folklore—your Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship research was on the trickster archetype, for example. Having been your friend for a very long time, I know the deep, deep role that myths, folklore, storytelling plays in your life—whether from your dad, King Arthur stories, etc. Would you like to share which stories or myths have particularly influenced you?

RSR: *Spider-Man* is a central one. But myth is such a broad concept. I remember a debate I had with some of my roommates my first year of law school. They were really sh--ting on people who believe in astrology—and I think astrology is a huge crock of horses--t—but I stop short of my roommates' point that anybody who believes in astrology is stupid and that religion in general is an inhibitor on the mind or on the imagination. There's a lot of reasons why I disagree with that, but one of the most central ones was—they were like, "don't you think the world would be a lot better if astrology was just, like, gone?" And I was like, "no I think it's important from a mythological standpoint." And they thought I meant erasing the myths of Ganymede the goose and the Water Bearer and all these different things—the myths behind the constellations. And I said no, no, no—everyone tells themselves stories. Literally everyone tells themselves some stories all the time. You know? *"If you're good people will like you"*—that is a mythology that some people follow. *"If I'm pretty, xyz will happen," "those who eat vegetables are healthier."* You know what I mean? Some of these are true, some of these are not. Some of these are true with caveats, but they can all fall under the

umbrella of an instructive shape. Shaping story. And I think anybody who acts like they are above that is deluding themselves.

The human brain works in story. That's probably—I mean, I'm just talking out of my ass here— that's probably how and why we evolved to a species that no longer has to evolve physically but evolves culturally, right? Where it's less important now that we build the fastest, strongest kid and more important now—and what has helped humanity flourish as a weak species—to be able to pass on lessons to our children. Our brains are hard wired to synthesize information and find a story anywhere, and we all have mantras, stories, or guidances that we tell ourselves. I'm less interested in debating which myths are true and which myths aren't and which religions are realistic and which ones aren't as opposed to just acknowledging that everyone has several mantras guiding them whether they're aware of it or not. And I don't really care what yours' is because I understand that we all need to have one. Whatever it is that's inspiring people to find self awareness, inspiring them to be a better communicator, inspiring them to do what's right or to nurture relationships—I don't care what book you read that out of. You're at least being yourself. And you're modeling yourself out of a certain mythology. Everyone derives faith in something. Or as they grow, starts to build more faith in something. Whatever those faiths are, they inform how we relate to each other.

HT: Absolutely, thank you. I'm curious about these narratives and counter-narratives—all these things that guide us; I was really moved witnessing you throughout this campaign because I think we've seen the same types of narratives play out in political races a lot, and there's many different tropes that your campaign either intentionally avoided, subverted, did otherwise, completely transformed, or existed outside of. One of the ones that I think about is the notion of demonizing or Othering one's opponents. There were two other candidates in your race, Zoë Lopez-Meraz and Noel Gallo. And the fact that you and Zoë became friends, that technically you were both going up for the same position and you were both able to be like, "hey we have similar platforms and there's ranked choice voting," the fact that you were both able to be like, "let's not be opponents" and that you created a genuine friendship and collaborated throughout the race…that was first of all—I'm not qualified to say 'unparalleled,' because maybe it's happened before. But probably not to the same extent that you would both be supporting each other, checking in with each other, bringing each other food, inviting each other to your events and showing up to each others' events. I

don't know that that happens.

And second of all, the relationship to Noel Gallo, where…I don't know if he likes you or not. I imagine he might not, given how his people would come try to intimidate us and try to pressure businesses into taking your signs down and such. But I love that throughout this—while there of course is anger around the ways that he has failed District 5 and there's pain—it's always, first of all, from a place of love; holding somebody accountable is a form of love, right?

RSR: Right.

HT: And that it never felt like you were trying to erase his humanity. I felt like you—and I saw this present in Zoë as well when I would talk to her—that both of you have well wishes for that man. And you want good things for him. You see so many people who work on campaigns develop this ridiculous…I don't wanna say pathologization—of their opponents—but like this, construction of an 'enemy.' And I don't think you believe in enemies, first of all.

RSR: Yeah—I don't.

HT: So I just want to first of all, share that. And also as a praxis of this I'm going to ask if at this moment could you please share an affirmation of your opponent Noel Gallo? And then maybe a constructive critique of him?

RSR: Yeah! Oh hell ya!

HT: And I don't know if I would say the same for Zoë or not because she wasn't an 'opponent' but was a co-candidate.

RSR: Exactly. Exactly.

HT: I love how she would correct people on debates who called you her opponent. She's so cool.

RSR: *(chuckles)* Yeah. For Noel's affirmation: I mean, I would affirm that that dude has really been present in the community, and he makes a lot of people feel—allegedly at least, I mean looking at the votes, at least 50% of people—feel heard, and that takes something. That takes a certain level of presence. And the fact that he's lived in the heart of Fruitvale for so long really speaks to that. I do also believe in his heart he wishes well for people. He wishes well for people, especially his people, and that's evident in the altruism present in him picking out trash. People talk about how that's a publicity stunt and having gone with him, he legit picks things up and puts them in the trash compactor and does that every weekend—not just when cameras are around.

But my critique is that the goodness of his heart is funneled through a lens that is not very systems oriented and is very individual accountability oriented. On both sides of the problem— that the best way for him as a Councilman to deal with systemic issues is to act on his individual accountability

as a trash picker upper. The best way for homeless people to not be homeless is to act on their individual accountability as, you know, "go stand outside of Home Depot and get a job"—which he suggested to me when we were driving around that homeless people do. Or that the best way to deal with truancy isn't a systems, school kind of thing but instead to tell parents to tell their kids not to be truant and to tell kids to stay in school. And so kind of an old school way of looking at a lot of problems, that I think kind of leaves a little bit to be desired.

HT: Yeah. I hear that. And given that you just shared that, I'm curious to hear how you would define the concept of civic imagination.

RSR: I dunno, I'm thinking about it...I think it's akin to a collective unconscious. Collective subconsciousness, you know? Unconscious or subconscious.

HT: Thank you. And also because I'm curious—and maybe there's not a separation here—how you independently think about the framework of imagination and also the framework of civic as two—I don't want to say 'separate entities' when everything is connected, but if I was to ask you: how do you conceptualize imagination?

RSR: Imagination is just kind of what people know is possible. Let me try to reverse engineer

this with the definitions I usually have for words. I define love as understanding, and I define power as freedom, and I define freedom as options. I think imagination is awareness of options.

HT: That's beautiful.

RSR: Thank you.

HT: And how do you think of the framework of 'civic'?

RSR: Civic to me is not really a word that I use that much. Especially because I'm kind of 'over' the idea of 'citizenry' or whatever, which I think is how it's often used. But I think civic connotes 'communal' or 'societal.' We exist together, in tandem. Strands between us. Stranded together— not stranded like abandoned but stranded together in community. And civic pertains to that.

HT: Yeah. I'm laughing because it's making me remember that I have many ways I think about 'civic' and one of my definitions—this is a joke so take this with a grain of salt—is "what white municipal dudes call it when they pretend they invented what was/is true of many Indigenous and non/pre-patriarchial designs throughout the world." But your framing of the civic as this communal, societal existing in tandem, stranded together...pairing your framing of 'connected strands' with 'awareness of options' —how do those two ideas layer together for you?

RSR: Again, kind of like public stories.

Known stories. I really dig the idea of a collective unconsciousness. Kind of like a dream state that exists both above our heads and in our dreams and kind of just like…the amniotic ideas that we all share and sleep on and trade in and swim in and pass around with each other. That's to me what a civic imagination is. What can we pull from or expect others to pull from. It's a pool.

HT: That's deep. Where were moments in your campaign where you felt those amniotic-like ideas really strongly?

RSR: You know, I have such a bad memory from my concussions and from my lack of sleep so I have a hard time remembering, but I remember the feelings more than the conversations at times and that there were moments where I would talk with someone—usually a Glenview voter—and they would be like, "I don't really understand this housing for all, I don't really understand defunding the police"—and within a couple sentences I'd be like, "just take money from here, do this there instead of doing this like this because the other thing hasn't been working" and people would literally be looking—it looked like a cartoon—they would scratch their head and go, "Huh? You know what? I never thought of that"…and then we would keep talking and then a few sentences later they would be like, "wow, honestly I'm still stuck on, you know, that

defund the police thing or alternatives to police thing or permanent housing thing or—you really could do that! That's really exciting! Wow!" You know? That happened a lot.

I think the times I really got that head scratch or that "oh actually" moment a lot was the cultural corridor idea that I have, which is basically just ripping off Boston's Freedom Trail—except actually not because it's not the same thing at all. Creating an activist oriented contiguous corridor of arts, sculpture, murals, and plaques throughout Oakland celebrating our activist history: Fred Korematsu, the Black Panthers, the Black Lives Matter movement, Oscar Grant…all those things. Whenever I would pitch that to people—young, old, Black, white, whatever—they were like, "wow…that's actually… wow, you know what? That's a great idea. I can't believe we don't have that yet." That was a big moment actually where I saw that expanding of a pool happen a lot, which was exciting.

HT: Is this what's in the "oh actually"—that people already had that capability to imagine that idea within them, but prior to that conversation they couldn't see it projected into that channel or that shape or design or whatever?

RSR: Right. Because people will walk around all day and say "god, I wish there was like a 40 foot tall mural of Bruce Lee right here in Downtown Oakland"—and that's not just me; I mean I do,

'cause I know for a fact that I do. But as I've gone through life I know that other people do too and will wish those things, but people will rarely wish... people will rarely *know* to wish about the steps that that would take, or like "oh let's run for city council and make that happen." That's just not necessarily contained within that desire. The imaginary has room for a desire, but it doesn't have room for how to effect it, often.

HT: "The imaginary holds room for a desire but not for how to effect it."

RSR: Yeah. Often—often.

HT: So—and I have some answers to this—how are you somebody who holds both?

RSR: I feel like I'm not haha. Or maybe...I feel like a dedicated daydreamer and not necessarily like someone who provides scaffolding to plans, but what was exciting about running was just knowing that we would be building the ship as we were trying to fly it. Building it as we were going down the runway and...I mean I remember literally a housing debate pulled straight out of my butt a little bit and it became a big cornerstone of what people would call my housing policy, and they loved it. Which was—in Oakland there's a housing crisis. People are getting bought out. There's gentrifying. There's property firms, holding companies coming in and flipping properties ten times over

and creating really expensive condos and stuff. People being driven to homelessness or driven out to the other cities or back to the south. And then there's —in the midst of all this—people who used to represent a large part of the housing economy: small time landlords who rent out their back unit, or their basement or one room, or whatever, who A) are getting pressured to sell to these big companies sometimes B) even if they would never sell, this is how they earn a substantial part of their income and, point B.1, the subsequent tenant protections which are coming into the Bay because of the rampant gentrification are eating into their ability to feasibly rent to people because they sort of have to prepare for all sorts of, like, legal fees for the—in my opinion—rightly powerful rights to tenant protections.

So, I was talking with some of the Glenview people—a lot of these landlords are in Glenview and again, it's not like it's a separate property, it's just a part of their own house. And they were like, "would you get rid of these tenant protections?" And I was like, "I gotta be honest with you, no, I would not. I love those tenant protections. They would stay. BUT, I mean...if we're still looking for a way to help you guys out, maybe we can use some of Oakland's tax scheme to exempt you from either property tax, small business tax, or both, so that it's still somewhat profitable and in fact

we're actually incentivizing you—we exempt you from these taxes as long as you keep your housing below a certain rate and commit to keeping it in the market so that we actually can fight gentrification while/and let you keep renting *and* it's still profitable, and people still, you know—

HT: —that creates affordable housing, right?

RSR: Yeah. That idea sort of came out of a leap without looking. From knowing that I didn't want to compromise on tenant protections and knowing that I had to be honest with people about that but also knowing that I wanted to find a solution that would make other people feel included as well. Literally that all happened in a drive—like, as I was merging, as I was doing a left turn into oncoming traffic—I was like "uhh, maybe we just do this," because one of my supporters was about to go into a meeting with his blocks of voters and he was like, "listen, Richard, the meeting's in four minutes, I need your answer on affordable housing" and I was like, "uhhh, this, this, maybe" and then it just sorta took off. It was kind of funny.

HT: That's hilarious but I love that because it shows how...you know, I really hate how often people will be too binary about what the options are instead of saying "actually, let's look at what all the needs on the table are and come up with a design that accommodates all of them." So I love how

not only is this the third way, but you were also able to preserve what was important to you with tenant protections—which is stemming from a place of obviously striving for a just policy—you were able to be honest and firm about those values and generate an alternative approach that protected tenants' rights while still meeting the needs of constituents who previously perceived tenants' rights to not be compatible with their interests.

RSR: Thank you.

HT: It's incredible. There's so much creativity, so much imagination involved. You're creating alternative policy approaches, you're creating alternative narratives, it honestly felt like you were creating your own myths. How often do you see an unapologetic 'friendship as a model for politics' narrative? I wish I could remember this one phrase you said—it was one of my first nights in town, I had just met Gise, and we were talking about how friendship was the whole point /spiritual compass for your campaign. You then said the most beautiful phrase that I unfortunately cannot fully remember right now—something about friendship being the... foundations? Or roots maybe?—of the campaign, and also the ceiling.

RSR: One thing that I often said is that the process is the goal, you know? Like I cared less about winning than about running an ethical

campaign that felt true to our values, and I think I must have said something that friendship was sort of like the genesis / substrate / primordial soup of the campaign, and that it did literally start from—the day after the protest, me and Gise went and got tacos, just went and got lunch together, ate, kind of told each other a little bit of our stories—but mainly just ate—and Gise finished, wiped her mouth, and just said, "ay I like you, okay? Let's figure this out." And it was that. It was just that over, and over, and over again. And that's all I wanted it to be.

HT: Which is amazing. It's funny because when I think of the concept of 'imagination' and I think of 'friendship' and combine them—on word association alone—*Spongebob* is the first thing that comes to my mind (because the imagination episode and the friendship song). And I really do think that for so many reasons *Spongebob* and civic imagination pair really well together, especially the *Spongebob* musical. But why I say this is because I'm also thinking about what it meant that the day after the election, Wuendy—who is the brilliant filmmaker who got the shots for your *New Dawn in Fruitvale* video—shows up at your house unexpected and is like, "you had never seen *Steven Universe*, and I told you when we first met that the day after the election (because you were too busy to watch during the campaign), that I would come over

and we would watch it together." And also for me watching one or two animes like *My Hero Academia* with you while we were working on the campaign…I'm thinking about which things really center friendship and possibility and imagination, and animation really does feel like a

vessel—not a vessel—an agent? A facilitator? Conductor maybe?

RSR: It feels like a proper medium for it. Conductor. Conveyer.

HT: Let's go with conductor. Animation feels like a great conductor to explore civic imagination because like you said earlier, people often have desire without imagination about ways to effect that desire; animation expands our imagination beyond what we previously perceived to be possible. And I say this because it makes me think about how at the point where you decided to file to run for office, you were considering applying to graduate school for video game design.

RSR: Exactly.

HT: And so, you hit this juncture where it's like, "do I apply to school for video game design, or do I run for City Council?" And I just thought it was brilliant, that that's what was going on in your life. Because how much more creative would our civic imaginary be if people in politics were also—and I'm not saying there aren't people who do this—but were also deeply desiring to create video games or

things like that. Do you want to share more about what the role of games has been in your life and/ or the campaign and how it relates to how to effect these different imaginations that you have for what infrastructure can look like? Or not just infrastructure, but all pieces of this—because like you said, a really big difference between your approach and Noel Gallo's approach was that his was all individual and yours' had a structural analysis and also has a structural imagination.

RSR: I mean I really think a well-designed game is the perfect teaching medium. And when I think about a well designed game—I remember as a kid, a lot of it was about a fascination with realism. And that's not necessarily in terms of graphics, but take for example physics, right? A really well-designed game that has any sort of movement in it, I hope, has either really realistic or really effective physics. Because one of the things that my brother Robert and I comment on all the time, is how a video game is realistic when I can sit down and play it—like a basketball game, or a sword fighting game—and then a week later when I get the chance to do it in real life, I'm better at it. Obviously it's not the same thing as pushing a button, but there's certain principals that were effectively gamified that I was able to learn in a safe setting where I could retry things or whatever that now translate to the real world. And vice versa too.

Me and Robert also talk about a well defined game as a game that can kind of punish you for making a mistake. I think that's the paradox of games, right? People will say, "okay games are a place where you can make infinite mistakes and repeat things over." But also, often at times games—especially the most simple games, like Pac-Man or Mario, will—if you move forward too quickly, you'll miss that piece of fruit, you'll miss that hidden door. So games that will teach speed can also teach patience or observancey, you now? And so, when something is well designed it has lessons for the real world embedded within it. And, in some ways it's impossible to design a really bad game, because maybe the lesson that you learn is just "god, I gotta have better boundaries and learn when to stop playing games because I've been playing a shitty game"—you can still get a lesson out of anything. But I think really good games have both complex mechanics and simple rules or complex rules and simple mechanics. There's room for creativity and self expression within the world of the game. Again, freedom. Options.

And so, I think I didn't necessarily think of the campaign in a gamified way, but I will say—and again, echoing the idea of teaching ourselves our own mythology. I used to kind of really beat myself up for how much time I used to spend in my room watching the same

things over and over. Like you said, animation. My mom, especially, will shit on me and say—ever since I was twelve, for example—she's said, "don't you think it was time that you stop writing stories about fantasy with like magic and swords? And don't you think it's time you stop looking at animation? Grow up, and be an adult." And I used to really think that there was something sort of defective or immature or stunted in me for being really enamored with these worlds and wanting to continue to explore these worlds and create these worlds. And even when I stopped thinking there's something effectively wrong with me, I kept thinking, "that's still a part of me that others won't like. Or that others won't have patience for."

And what this campaign has helped me reframe is that, in the six months leading up to the campaign, I quite intentionally—and thankfully was sort of assisted by the pandemic—told myself that I'm not just going to focus on getting ahead in comedy or studying for the Bar again. I'm just going to stay in my room and nourish myself or love myself and pump myself back full of the narratives and feelings that I know that I love. So I would make myself quesadillas at 11 p.m. and watch *Spider-Man*, *My Hero Academia*, eat my favorite cheeseburgers, do martial arts,

learn how to love myself again and again and

again and again and again and see the lessons that I could gain from it. And I told myself—and I knew in those moments—that I was learning and growing in preparation for something.

And really what it was—I think especially for me as an introvert; being out in the world sort of feels like being a raw, exposed nerve in the wind, and sometimes I need time to remoisturize so I can be back in the world again. And I think that the campaign—especially for an introvert—was deeply taxing for my patience, for my self control, on my sense of peace. There were weeks early in the beginning where I lost the ability to sleep in my own bed, you know, just very stressed. But, I knew I was able to endure all those moments of little sleep or not eating or listening to somebody who bugged me even though I knew I had to go talk to the next person or knock on the next door—I knew that I could withstand all of those things because I had spent so long feeding myself the proper narratives, and because I had spent so long creating the proper narratives again and again and again in repetition in my room. So playing those games and, in fact, now that I'm talking about it, making a game out of those games and stories by repeating them to myself and sort of honing them, perfecting them, practicing them—the same way you do with martial arts, kind of sharpening a blade, so to speak—helped me just be ready for when I got to

use that blade over and over and over and over in the campaign.

HT: This is amazing. It's also reminding me why a thought that was going through my head while I was at a Femi Kuti concert a few years ago was how much he reminded me of you. When I told you this at the time I may have only referenced his affect, but a key factor driving that connection for me then was witnessing his repetition as (what I read as) pedagogy.

RSR: So cool, thank you.

HT: And I also want to really affirm when you said you did not view the campaign in a gamified way. Never at any point did it feel like you were treating it as anything other than deeply real; it never felt like you were treating it as a simulation. The human factor of it was always forefront and center, that these are real lives affected by this. You never saw people as numbers. Again, it was always rooted in friendship. Which is beautiful, I love that.

I also want to affirm—when you were saying that you're introverted so it was draining for you to do the campaign...I just want to affirm how badass it is that you were able to do this while being somebody who is introverted / needs a lot of recharge time...and is somebody who is chronically depressed...and is somebody who was dealing with really long term health effects of Covid— because you had Covid in a really serious way in March...like you freaking survive having Covid, then you almost get shot, then you get f'n tear gassed by the state, then the wildfires happen...and you are STILL showing up and knocking on doors, coming at it all from this place of love and care. Again, not ego. Coming at it with this *Spider-Man* and *Yu-Gi-Oh!* vision for possibility that obviously resonated with people; you and Zoë got like half of the district's votes.

RSR: Yeah. Yeah yeah.

HT: And I think that's so telling about this yearning that people have to be creating in that way.

RSR: Mmmm. Mmmhmm.

HT: I'm thinking about what you said about how a well designed game teaches. One thing that I thought was really unique was the role of playing *Yu-Gi-Oh!* throughout the campaign. When people would ask what your strategy was, and you were like, "playing *Yu-Gi-Oh!*"...it sounds silly, but then as somebody who was there so experienced it, I really understood it. And I didn't know how to play *Yu-Gi-Oh!* prior to working on the campaign so had to learn—you were a very good teacher, thank you—so I'm coming at this not as a previous fan. For people who don't know what *Yu-Gi-Oh!* is, how would you describe it? I describe it as like chess times a million.

RSR: That's literally what I was exactly about to say.

HT: It's like holographic chess.

RSR: No yeah, I would describe it as that. Chess except you kind of get to pick your own pieces, you know what I mean?

HT: And there's, like, six thousand pieces to pick from.

RSR: Yes. Exactly.

HT: Each with twenty different rules.

RSR: Yeah haha. I mean I'm kind of curious to hear your take on how and why it related to the campaign and the epistemologies that we employed.

HT: Oohh! Flipping it back on me. Okay. Well, I think that for you there's always…I don't even wanna say the phrase 'third way' because for you there's always like a sixteenth way. And maybe I'm applying that wrong because I love 'third' as such a simple way to convey moving outside a binary model for things. But it's really non-linear, right? And the fact that the ways that change can happen where—for context for this interview, the results were finally finalized like a month later last Friday with Noel Gallo winning because he went over the majority (what is needed with ranked choice voting) by 0.7%. That's a few hundred votes at most. So the fact that we're still all really excited about what happened with these results even though you didn't "win" or Zoë didn't "win"—that's telling, that no one is viewing this as a failure. That we're all able to see how your run

itself shifted things. I mean, as a Councilor, Noel has to be more accountable now, because he knows that there are people who will challenge him, right? Like he didn't really start enacting Covid response in the district until you and Zoë filed, once there were challengers that didn't assure his future in the role. So your presence alone is affecting change in that regard.

But so how *Yu-Gi-Oh!* plays into all this…I mean the one phrase summary is "lateral thinking." But it's so much deeper than that, so I'm probably going to have a very long response to this haha. First, I want to say you built me my *Yu-Gi-Oh!* card deck. And you built a deck for a lot of other people as well. You're always building people *Yu-Gi-Oh!* decks—even people whom you wouldn't give one to necessarily; you're always striving to understand others. But that deck construction's act of caretaking alone—because you put *a lot* of time and energy into designing a deck for somebody based on how you see their assets and cognitions and values and such—is reflective of why you are so well suited to represent a district's people.

Anyway, what I love about this and you is how—you know how you see those images on social media, like "everyone plays a role in the revolution; what role do you play? Are you the healer? Are you the storyteller?"etc. Those are valuable, and they can definitely

be great at introducing frameworks to somebody who hasn't had a way to conceptualize how they move through and contribute to social change. But I think they're also limiting. Images like that often are—unless they're from the Instagram page of that person who writes those recaps of all my favorite Siobhan Somerville and Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí and Kyla Schuller books, that shit's great. But part of why that's great is because the creator ALOK is like, "here's a recap, go read the book now." I think that works in the context of communicating content from those books because the charge is "learn this history." When the charge is "learn yourself," as it is with the "what role do you play?" question—not that learning history doesn't cue you to learn yourself, because it obviously does, and I'm sure that's also in ALOK's charge—but when the charge is to cue reflection on one's praxis...you kind of need to experience and process that in an applied setting. It's too deeply embodied, becoming, entangled—lived, not to. And that's not the fault of the people who create those images; they usually clarify I think that this is introductory, and they call people to further probe the question, they link to resources, etc. But I do believe that by offering certain frameworks—while I don't

think they are restricting the reader to the ones named—sometimes as humans when we see a finite list of options, we limit ourselves to those options. And it's not usually a conscious process. Or when we see a description of what something like "healer" or "storyteller" means, we can limit our understanding of what that category encompasses.

Yu-Gi-Oh! expands all that. The surreal composition of it forces you to apply the frameworks to yourself in a more imaginary way. Because like—like storyteller is a beautiful thing; I'm not crapping on the framework of "storyteller"—all my deepest love and admiration to the storytellers. Seriously—mad respect. But I think—and this is just speaking to my experience, but I think this does happen for others as well...if I hear a framework like "storyteller," I start identifying with or disidentifying with past times in my life (and/or potential future situations) where I felt like I was or was not a storyteller. And even if I move beyond a literal, direct conceptualization of "storyteller" to imagine all the different forms that "story" and "telling" and "storytelling" can take, I'm still applying this with a certain lens that—if I chose to—can remain completely tethered to a sense of hegemonic reality.

Now let's look at one of my *Yu-Gi-Oh!* cards.

If I'm now operating as a marshmallow who can thwart a powerful dragon just by being a marshmallow, I have to go beyond hegemonic realities to understand my lived experiences, identities, and potential action through that lens, because I am not a marshmallow in 'real life' (or not in a literal sense at least). And once you start doing that, start imagining in that completely boundless way, completely bountiful way.…. ughh just think about what those universes, possibilities, futures, landscapes—what they look, smell, taste, sound, feel like?? Like the names of the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* cards, the 'moves' that you do on your turn— these cards have concepts like 'effector' and 'resonator' in their names. "Creation Resonator," "Clear Effector"—those are just a few from the deck you built me. Names like "Mirror Force," "Soul Release," "Converging Wishes." Orienting myself with these ideas, imagining myself moving through the world, through public space, through the civic—being a civic agent, while also having the lens/framework/identity of "Creation Resonator," for example—teaches me all the creative, nuanced, textured ways we can shift landscapes, policies, structures, relationships.

And the cycle between how those possibilities are both a reflection of my values, practices, orientations, identities— why you put them in my deck—and also

create me, or contribute to me acting more in a certain way. That process is one of identity development, I think. Because when I think of my cards, who are these creatures that look so, stupid, sometimes—but are actually able to make something that has a lot of conventional power crumble, just by being fluffy, by being a shiny pink blob of jello. Or my card that uses light to reveal the knowledge an opponent is keeping private. I get to experience different ways of being and decide if that's how I want to be. I get to decide which of these methods I want to adopt, which I want to inform my practice… and that all shapes identity. During the campaign, I was able to see how this all expanded my civic imagination (which I continue to understand in new and deeper ways as time passes). It wasn't until after the campaign, though, when *Citizen* TALES hosted Sangita Shresthova and Scot Osterweil for a Ludics seminar about the relationship between play and civic identity, that I really started to understand how *Yu-Gi-Oh!* shaped my civic *identity*.

RSR: How so?

HT: Well…so thinking of my *Yu-Gi-Oh!* deck. You remember that I was using some of my

cross-sensory stuff or whatever to describe my deck through music. The cards you built me

and the convergence of those cards, their colors, their vibe, what they do—all really reminded me of the New Amerykah part one and two albums by Erykah Badu (*4th World War* & *Return of the Ankh*). I really don't have words for how/why because that's just an intuitive / synesthesia thing for me, but the color/shapes of the sounds, etc. Anyway, I love those albums, and I think they would pair really well in a curriculum or syllabus with *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy. Those albums and that text all are very salient to my civic orientation. And when I think about them in tandem...actually, I'm currently working on an art installation that's sort of a metaphorical holographic funicular, if you will, and I think that framing might apply here. So constellatizing these holographic funiculars with my lived experiences and with something I did in a dream you had recently—oh my god, all of our dreams played such an interesting role in your campaign... talk about collective un/subconscious. But yes, they all overlay to help me understand the color and motion of my civic identity. Which I guess I can't really translate in a word-based interview.

That being said, even just me recognizing, and owning, that my cross-sensory experiences and difficulty existing in linear time are valuable tools for imagining beyond biopolitical governance, for conceptualizing life-affirming,

public futures...that was all deeply informed by *Yu-Gi-Oh!* And seeing that understood via your seeing of it and then your translation of it back to me via the creation of a deck for me that affirms that. And then me putting that knowing / being into conversation with the other people's knowings via using my deck to play their deck, and as a result having them see, and learn, and understand that as well—and me, them...wow. That epistemic fecundity, that epistemic *celebration*—was everywhere in your campaign. I think we were all further understanding our individual civic identities and group civic identities and how to harmonize them with each other and with larger contexts.

And one final reflection on *Yu-Gi-Oh!*...as somebody involved with experiential education, this was such a brilliant application for processing the roles one takes on in a given experience, the "What? So what? Now what?" of what was happening. I think it created an outlet and avenue for ongoing reflection on and dialogue of what was happening, the roles we take on, and how we show up in, relate to, and affect space, landscape, and imagination. And it's not that we weren't capable of talking directly about our roles in the campaign or campaign dynamics—we would talk about all that, this wasn't to protect us from direct communication. It was to make us further strengthen our self and communal awarenesses,

because we had a parallel setting, or experience, which gave us all these different avenues and lenses to synthesize against each other. Like the sharpening of the blade you described earlier.

That also helped me understand it as a form of professional development for people helping with the campaign. But to clarify—not professional development in a neoliberaly, "how do I further my homœconomicus?" way. I mean professional development in a personal development, and a relational development, and a symphonic development way. Because when you're doing work representing a community and nurturing a district, growing one's personal, relational, and communal capacities *is* the professional development, I would hope. And the model of *Yu-Gi-Oh!* created an avenue that matched the decentralized shape/structure of your campaign approach. Rejecting hierarchization is a huge part of what made your campaign so magical, and the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* play aligned so well with that. I think it's why a lot of people who played *Yu-Gi-Oh!* as a kid happened to find their way to your campaign, or deeply aligned with it; the expansion of hearts and minds that it inspires in people's cognitions and orientations and values made such people find a natural home in your campaign's similar expansiveness. And then

playing it all during the campaign…the blanket you mentioned earlier, the narratives around imagination for how to affect change—that blanket was huge. It had no ending, it was infinite.

And then also seeing what that looked like in an applied context. Like, for example—candidates can technically use city funds given to elections to house campaign staff. I think campaigns usually use funds like that to house outside 'experts' they bring in from other cities to work on their campaigns. But our friend Forrest had the idea to use that rule to house unhoused community members who volunteered on your campaign. That was so creative. Or like how even though Noel Gallo technically won, everybody is still really excited about what your and Zoë's runs shifted. People are really understanding that this doesn't just look like, "you move from here to—straight line—to here, and that makes—straight line—this way happen." The directions of collective paradigm shifts, of how cultural and political transformations happen —they don't look that linear. If you were to like, map a cartography of transformation, right? What that would look like visually is what *Yu-Gi-Oh!* forced our brains to do. It's not linear at all.

RSR: Yeah. A word that we also used a lot this whole time was symphonic.

HT: Mmm, totally! Okay, I've answered—now how did you see *Yu-Gi-Oh!* inform the campaign?

RSR: I mean, we talk about power as freedom and freedom as options, right? And *Yu-Gi-Oh!* as a game, amongst a variety of games—like chess—is a game presenting you with many, many, many options bounded within a certain set of rules and still with a certain goal in mind. You know? And I think when you said, "it's not just 'third way' it's sixteen ways,"—beyond all that there's a level that I really sit in a lot of not of sixteen ways, but of kind of having no way. Or choosing no way. But choosing no way in a special way, or with a special awareness. There's a Bruce Lee quote—this is why he's one of my big idols—which is, "there is a difference between having no form and having no form. The first is ignorance, the second is transcendence." And that's something that I usually don't connect to my *Yu-Gi-Oh!* play or how we were canvassing, but that's totally there.

HT: Oh totally. That describes like the whole campaign.

RSR: Yeah. Exactly. Exactly. Because we were figuring it out as we went along, we were kind of playing things by ear, we were kind of new at it—but no one could call us unthinking. No one could call us imprecise, honestly.

HT: Yeah. Yeah! I mean I'm thinking of all the people who would text you and say "we disagree on___, but you have taken the time to personally reach out and that has gained my vote." Which is sort of different than what you're saying.

RSR: It's adjacent.

HT: It's adjacent. Thinking through 'no form' as transcendence, I feel like your campaign was existing beyond what anything that we've ever thought of as politics looks like. And I think anybody who witnessed it saw that, instantly. Like you had people telling you that they never vote, ever—but you and Zoë inspired them to vote. And you have people who became friends through your campaign. Like, how many people across all these axes of difference now know each other because of this thing? And feel more connected to people in their neighborhood? Who they otherwise might not have met?

RSR: Yeah. No honestly. It was pretty exciting; it was actually very exciting to see some of those connections form, like I met Wuendy, Wuendy is now involved in CURYJ, Forrest and Gise are friends, Forrest and Zoë might team up on Oakland's public bank—

HT: —ooh hell yeah! That's cool! Wow. So many cool people met each other through your campaign. Doris and Alycia—oh, speaking of Alycia...can you please talk about the youth involvement in your campaign and how that affects this transcendence? Affects the blanket, or potential, or choices, options, imagination, games, creativity?

RSR: Yeah. I tried my best to include as many

young people as I can. And you know, you can't just include people who are often boxed out. I mean this is obvious—you have to like, *seek* them out. You have to really work to make it happen. So a lot of my students that I know from Youth Law Academy, I tried to encourage multiple times to either canvass or help out, and a lot of them really just gave me ideas or confidence or told their friends and family about me, which really had a viral effect.

When I was thinking of my team or my people—I mean my cousin Alycia who's also an organizer just turned 20 very recently. Also Aaron is my former student...I can't necessarily say what the implications are for the imaginary, but what I hope people felt— and we had to fight against this; it was hard work, but I think we did a pretty good job of it—was an inversion of existing, established power dynamics. There's big cousin who graduated from law school, there's little cousin who's just starting at community college. There's teacher, and there's student. And then both of those people were invited into a team where they got to act as equals or even expert, where I said, "I want you to be on the team for your expertise—not just for your skillset, but for your insight." And so Aaron really dictated the entire visual vocabulary of the campaign, and Alycia was

really instrumental in helping me identify people to partner with and more. And so, it really carved out some brain space for even just us within the team—let alone anyone who got to observe us—to see the inversion of those traditional age dynamics. Oh my god, I just remembered something too— there were young people that I didn't even know about that were really inspired by just seeing young faces in this campaign. There were several unrelated meme accounts that cropped up about our race. I mean they went on to make other great decolonial memes, but there were several memes that just popped up that I had no part in about me and Zoë and what it meant to see young people advocating for like, "yes, why can't Oakland have it's own version of a Green New Deal?" And what that meant for the conversation.

HT: That's amazing. You referenced Aaron making the visual landscape for the campaign. I would love to hear your thoughts on what those colors were and how that set the tone.

RSR: Yeah. And it was super important because also Aaron is—he's exactly the kind of person that I'm running for. He's 19, young, young Man of Color, part of the queer community. Straight up from, from, from, *from* Fruitvale. Like grew up half a block, like two doors down

from the central park of Fruitvale. I'm so thankful because if I was slightly more controlling or slightly more whatever—I just count Aaron's colors as one of the most beautiful moments of the campaign. Because if you know me, you know my favorite colors are a kind of cobalt and light blue and faded pink, and I would have made those be the colors. And instead, Aaron—being from the community and sort of looking at the landscape of the Bay Area that summer and of some of the shirts that I wore—he chose this really nice faded, almost hazy blue and then this really rich, soft warm orange.

And I remember we just knew we hit gold in our very first design meeting. Everyone was like, "Aaron this orange is amazing. How did you even think of that? I never would have thought to pick orange for a political thing." And Aaron was just like, "I just thought about this community, you know?" And I told him that this looks exactly like the orange that was in my dad's house in North Oakland when he used to live over there—I feel like every Mexican family has a breakfast nook that is this exact orange. I don't know if that's an unspoken rule or something, but I really think so. And Aaron was just like, "yeah...growing up around here and seeing just like the various adobe inspired architecture that has kind of the same orange and then sort of the orange way that the sunset hits when it sets over the flatlands of the Bay"...that orange was just such a part of the landscape. Coupled with the soft blue of the sky, you know? Summer sky. Those colors...talk about myths that sustain you! Those colors, that color scheme became a myth that sustained me when I was out walking, dying from the wildfire haze with my little Covid lungs when the AQI was over like 150 but knowing that I had to canvass anyway.

God, I almost died so many times. Like I would be walking and I would literally be getting dizzy, and my vision would be getting dark, and I would be like, "...oh well." I remember thinking, "wouldn't it be funny if I died out here?"...I guess when you're oxygen deprived those things hit you as funny instead of like, *get out of here now!*" But those colors became a reminder to me of what I wanted to continue to fight for and what the whole point of the campaign was. Not just the landscape that I wanted to preserve, and keep that orange from turning grey from gentrification, but to keep that blue from turning grey from the smog in the sky. The fact that it had come from the heart of someone from that place—and again, cultural corridor was one thing, the fact that I was a young person running and knocking on doors was another thing...but so many people would come to me online or at the door and be like, "I f--king love your colors." They would be like, "I love these, they're like...you never see these, and this is what

we need; this is amazing." And I can't take credit for that, that's all Aaron. But me also. But Aaron. You know what I mean? If we had to generate a hierarchy— which we're against, but if we had to— in the top three miracles of the campaign, it's A) Aaron in general and B) those colors.

HT: Yes. And mad props to Aaron—so in no way discrediting the amazing amount of dopeness that he has to harvest those colors in that way— but I also feel like the whole point of all of this is that it's not just Aaron—or it's not all Aaron. It's like the matrix of everything that intersects with each other that led it to be that those colors could reveal themselves through him. Because I think with those colors—this was the only time I had ever seen a political campaign have colors that I deeply would look at and feel the connectedness between like, the place that it was representing, the people behind the colors, this, that—the connectedness between ecosystems. Not to make this a whole "life beyond the anthropocene" thing—I think that exact phrasing is from the Afro Yaqui Music Collective, which reminds me that I want to send them your paper on Tiger-Style Tae Kwon Do epistemologies and the Black Panthers—but it really felt like those colors Aaron generated were existing in relation to the earth and other living things and non- human beings in harmony. And that's a feeling that I don't think people usually get evoked for them when they look at a campaign's materials, you know? I feel like those colors were really humbling. Because you look at them and know that you are one...I don't want to say node—but that you exist in relation to the whole environment and ecosystems around you; you don't exist in a vacuum. Like, I think of plants and dirt and animals and stuff when I look at those colors.

And like, the ocean. And the sky and the wind. And generations before, and millennia before, and time to come. And who the hell can pull that off in campaign materials? What a magician.

RSR: Aaron-freakin'-Molo can!

HT: Yeah!! This is making me think about the Vandana Shiva talk I attended right before lockdown started. She was explaining how the shift from quantum to mechanistic thought in science, the shift to mechanistic design of seeds with GMOs, and other colonizations of life itself disrupts ecosystems and disturbs cosmic balance. Your campaign had a very quantum, ecological design, and it really felt like it enacted balance in a sphere— politics—that too often violently fractures balance and devastates life. People could feel that restoration of balance, they could feel the breath that conjured. You stewarding that in your district, I really believe that was oxygenating...those colors, the campaign—

they gave people breath. Which in the middle of the wildfires, the pandemic, the tear gassing, was an enormous gift. I'm so glad we talked about the colors. I'm curious what other colors—or sounds, or textures—what other sensory things throughout your campaign really fed you? Or expanded your imagination? Or kept you tethered to imagination?

RSR: For me, it really was less about expanding myself—at least during the campaign; it was and it wasn't—as opposed to holding fast to the strongest version of myself that I knew could exist that I spent a lot of time nurturing. And now I was just fighting my best to share it. And as scary as it was to try to share it—just share, share, share, share, me, me, me, me, more, more, more, more—so I remember those first couple of weeks, I played a couple songs really on repeat, of course genre inspired. And that was "Hero Too" from *My Hero Academia*. The song they play when they finally do the culture festival. Remember that?

HT: Yes!

RSR: (singing) *"what is my calling? / I gave up giving up, I'm ready to go / The future's left unseen, it all depends on me / Put it on the line to follow my dream, yeah!"* And lyrics like, "true heroes stand up for what they believe." It's kind of just a song that's like—oh, oh, oh—there's a part where like,

"what your parents will think of you," or whatever, which also was a huge thing. The lyrics really captured so much of … *(singing) "What do they think of me? Who do they think I'll be? I could not care less, and I don't wanna know! / Am I doing right? Am I satisfied? / I wanna live my life like it's meant to be, oh!"*… and then the breakdown at the end is like, *"I have met so many heroes in my life / gave me the strength and courage to survive / gave me the power to smile everyday / now it's my turn to be the one to make you smile."* Awwwwww, that one really—

HT: —it's so beautiful!—

RSR: —that like…that was the weeks right around when I filed. And the first two or three weeks that was like, willing it into existence, like tracking down the people I wanted to be on my team, tracking down people to hold myself accountable to, to have people accountable to me. Pumping myself up not to drop out—especially when, two days in, my dad came to my house and told me to drop out. You know? So finding the power within myself to again look at the people like Gisela, like Tito, like you, who had the faith in me, the faith in the vision that we could just sort of put that positivity out there. I had to rely on them and rely on myself and rely on a future version of myself that I knew would eventually

come into existence. And now it has.

HT: Yeah. And it totally resonated with so many people.

RSR: You think so?

HT: I know it did. I remember the messages constituents would send you.

RSR: Yeah. Yeah. And then the other song was "His World" from *Sonic the Hedgehog*. That one… I would just like, put that on—like even when I was dead tired at night, I would go get in my car and—this was when it was still hot outside and there still wasn't haze in the sky yet—I would roll down the windows and put out the sunroof and just do, like, 80 on the freeway and blast the song super loud…and just, like, laugh at myself, and laugh at how much coming into my own I was challenging myself to do and be that summer, knowing that going out and protesting with Tito and getting tear gassed—these were the moments that I've been trying to cultivate my moral compass, my patience, my smiles, my honesty, my agility, around. Like those are the mythic things that I've aspired to my whole life, and now I've gotten to show myself how much OF those I've developed in service of something that was so meaningful. And so it was kind of like sticking an intravenous tube into you but just looping it back into you. Like pumping

yourself with yourself, you know what I mean? That's what those songs really did for me.

HT: It's amazing that—you said you spent the six months or so before your run feeding yourself such nourishing narratives, right? But it's not like you knew that you were going to be running?

RSR: No. I knew I wanted to be ready to do something.

HT: This reminds me of *Density*, which is a novel you wrote as a birthday gift for me four or five years ago that starts at the site of our five year college reunion in Minnesota. All of our friends are there, and then this evil force comes in that's a result of unhealed generational trauma and stuff, and then we have to fight it off. You wrote that in 2016. And now it's 2020, real life. Our five year reunion's not happening because Covid. And then—like a mile from where it would be happening, and on the day it's supposed to take place—our friends who still live in Minnesota (who are all in the story you wrote) are, like, battling the national guard in the peak of the uprisings. It felt like you writing that story was you knowing that you wanted us all to be ready to do that should it actually have to happen, which it did. Which is really showing me how every moment is a civic moment in a lot of ways. Or rather, it's not a thing you can just turn on, like, "now I'm in a mindset of how do I nurture public

life?"—everything you're doing all the time is always affecting public life. Because everything you're doing all the time always creates a version of yourself that you will be when you put yourself out there.

RSR: We're always sharing, we're always pouring into our society. And it actually takes a lot less effort than we think. And I know that because the people who have saved my life and given me heroic ideals to aspire to did it without thinking. You know what I mean?

HT: Yeah. And you've done it for other people without thinking also.

RSR: Yeah. And I'm slowly realizing that now. Because we...you know, people often criticize each other as thinking that they're the protagonist of their own story, but there's actually something insidious about that where you never see yourself as the teacher in a story or as, like, the savior in a story—you see yourself as kind of the learner all the time. And—

HT: —maybe you do because you're humble; I think a lot of people who aren't think about themselves as—

RSR: Haha okay. No, but like—you know when Tito, Nick, Diliza helped me up in fourth grade because I was crying about my birth mom's murder? Just all of those things. We always get to be modeling kindness. We always get to be instructive to other people.

Even and especially when we're not trying. And that helps somebody else try harder. But again, what they're trying to do is something that is already within themselves. Tito showed me that; I thought Tito was teaching me kindness, but he was showing me a part of myself. We all have the ability to hug a crying kid, we all have the ability to be present when someone's feeling down. We all have the ability to just nod and smile and listen, and people connect us back to ourselves because people are ourselves. We're all the same, you know? We're all one collective unconscious, we're all one. We're all one.

HT: And I love this because this goes back to *Spy Kids* for me.

RSR: Mmhmm.

HT: Because that was a big paradigm shift in my life. You and I had a conversation about *Spy Kids* in 2013 or 2014 or so about how when I was a kid, I didn't like the end of *Spy Kids*. At the time, I didn't think it was, like, edgy enough, because the "good guys" invite the "bad guy" to become "good" and then he does....8-year-old me thought this was too 'convenient,' or like it was trying to protect kids from the idea of people doing bad things. 8-year-old me was also clearly sort of douchey about my tastes (which did stem from a place of wanting good content for kids because I liked comedy and hated when adults would create

comedy for kids that wasn't funny), and I also hadn't really experienced a lot of traumatic experiences as a kid...or rather, my life experiences at that point made it so this all felt very fictional. You were mortified when you learned I hated the ending as a kid, because that ending is obviously, like, goals, right? That they were able to invite —I don't want to say "the bad guy," because I don't believe in a "bad" person as a thing—but somebody who had been deeply *not* nurturing life—they invited him into their vision for what they thought the world could be like, and he accepted that invitation; that they were able to help him heal and transform. And I think everything you just shared is that, right?

RSR: Yeah. That's why we gotta keep watching *Gurren Lagann*...and like every anime ever haha.

HT: Hahaha. So continuing this theme, what is your vision for what your relationship to Noel Gallo would look like now? What is your wish for him?

RSR: My wish for him is that he learns and grows from this, which you know... people have their own doubts about that. But I would love to see that happen. I called him to congratulate him, and I don't know who's on his staff, because his website is one of the few City Council websites that don't have email addresses on there, but I would go work for him, be a staffer. Be a

community liaison there. I really would. 'Cause I care about the ideas getting airtime, not who gets the freakin' desk with the name on it, you know?

HT: Exactly. Exactly. That mindset is what was behind why you ran in the first place. Thinking about the origins of your filing to run and how this started from calls to defund the police, or to reimagine how we conceive "safety"—well, first of all, I want to quickly say that it's pretty cool that you and Zoë both having that in your platforms means that fifty percent of the people who voted in your district were down with a candidate who was blatantly pledging to defund the police. But throughout this, we've talked a lot about these different shapes, and blankets, and roles of imagination, and collective unconsciousness, and choice, potential—or options—and things like that. I'm curious what having different approaches to what we currently do with policing looks like for you? And what kind of imagination that facilitates or demands?

RSR: I just don't believe in policing. I've never believed in police. I think police are a fracturing of the self, right? If the self is the civic, police institute a boundary within ourselves between haves and have-nots, between sinful and good, and order and

chaos and all those... it creates so many false binaries, and I think that they're the worst kind of band-aid to solutions that can and should be solved by engendering harmony, with more plentiful resources, and more education, and synchronization between people. So I think whether that's housing for all, healthcare for all for a f--king start... whether that's some sort of UBI that disincentivizes crime, that's a start.

Whether that's first responders that carry no weapons and literally just have, like, kneepads and martial arts training and mental health training—which I would love to f--king be a part of that, because I mean I kind of already do that, haha—

HT: —I want to shout you out real quick for doing that. We talk on the phone a lot, and the number of times I've been on the phone with you where the phone call is interrupted because you're intervening—you walk by some sort of dispute that you intervene in, which is awesome—and I'm not recommending everybody do that if it's not something everybody can or should do—but the fact that you can and you're good at it... sometimes you leave the phone running and I hear what you're doing; your ability to de-escalate these situations is remarkable.

RSR: Thank you.

HT: It makes me think about—so remember when I was in town in February for the P-Funk

shows and you let me facilitate with you in a session you were doing with your students on alternatives to policing? Near the end, we reached a point where one of your students started telling a story about a fight in their school...it was the type of thing where the session was 100% getting derailed, but in the best way possible where—because you're a good educator—you're able to take the thing the students are talking about and help them understand how it's deeply connected to the purpose of the curriculum? So we were discussing how them resolving that fight in school on their own—like, that's just the work of being human, and we've outsourced so many different things we should be doing to cops.

I feel like your interventions and de-escalations are a really good example or model of what it looks like to show that we actually have the capability to do—or like, to *become* the people who have the capability to do—the things we've outsourced to the police. And to me, that's the ultimate praxis of public life or civic engagement in a lot of ways. Even though it's not necessarily structural or anything, the fact that it's witnessing something and being like, "I'm connected to this"—or, rather, "we're connected." Or...it's saying, "I see you and I care"..."I see you and I care about you and your future." And I don't—well, we know

that I don't feel that policing does that.

RSR: Yeah, no, it doesn't. And every story we have about a "good cop" is when a cop does *that* and not their actual job.

HT: Right and then like gets fired for doing that.

RSR: Yeah. Or they only do it to like, white kids.

HT: Yeah. Yeah exactly. So what would your vision be for a Fruitvale that looked like you wanted it to look like?

RSR: Well it doesn't have to just be my vision, it's everyones'. My vision for a start is just me being fully stretched out in terms of what I can do, and how I do it, and when I do it. Just fully engaged.

HT: Do you mean that as being present?

RSR: Yeah. Or being utilized.

HT: Oh I see, I see. I mean, what I'm hearing in your response is just listening, basically.

RSR: Mmhmm. Yeah, for me. That's what it looks like on my part. You know?

HT: Yeah. Because how do you get to a place of collective vision without listening?

RSR: Right.

HT: What is your relationship between listening and imagination?

RSR: I mean, now we're getting into philosophy and the nature of god and the concept of emanations, but kind of how we were talking about with civic imaginary, civic imagination—we can't really conceive of things that themselves were forever impossible, you know? So there's no such thing as an unthought of permutation, because all permutations are contained within the nature of the universe. It's just can we notice them in the right way in the right time. So that's to me what listening is. Listening is running your finger over the face of god and the universe, learning things about yourself that were already there, and so when you discover something "new," you're actually just tapping into the eternal. And in a new way. And that comes from many different kinds of listening, many different kinds of perception. And, generally speaking, being present.

HT: This is reminding me of Earthseed.

RSR: Yeah. Oh, Earthseed...I thought you were talking about Earthsea.

HT: That too. That's beautiful though, what you said about noticing and listening. And it's back to the collective unconscious, right?

RSR: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

HT: And this was all in your campaign, right?

RSR: I mean yeah, 'cause it was all in me, you know?

HT: Exactly. And I think that's what made it resonate with so many people, with so many

constituents. Because it was, like, freakish, the way that people who would, like, disagree with you <u>still</u> felt so heard by you.

RSR: Yeah. Yeah, that was really what—that was the whole strategy. I mean, going back—we kind of went way too deep past this, but when we talk about friendship as the model, the whole thing was like, I would literally knock on people's doors. People who were long time canvassers would actually look at me in shock, and they would be like, "oh, so you really don't have a script? It's literally just like, listen." Even Forrest was like, "I've noticed that you use very tactical pauses to like goad someone into talking, next thing you know, they're telling you about their vision for the city, you can just be like 'yes, no, yes no,' 'I agree,' or 'how?'—you get to connect with them, you know?" And I had—you know, I had several people who were hardcore libertarians, or hardcore Fox news, or wanted to slam the door in my face, or were like, "I had planned to never vote again because the Green Party was not viable," and whatever, and—I'm not saying we brought people into the political process, but we had people who felt so disenfranchised come back into to at least our conversation just through sitting on their doorstep and just smiling and listening.

HT: To me that really showed just how much it's not actually about—not just 'what' but 'how'—because that's true—but also kind of how as long as you're actually listening, it doesn't matter what the policy is because it will—and I don't want to be naive by saying this because obviously what the policy is does really matter and have a very really effect—but what I'm getting at is that I don't think the policy can be one that's not life giving if it's coming from a place of listening. And I think that was deeply was able to be identified in peoples' hearts.

RSR: I hope so.

HT: A last question I have is what the notion of change is for you, how it layers into all of this?

RSR: "Change is the only constant"— hahahaha. But it is. Change is the only constant. And change, change is something to aspire to while recognizing—well I mean yes and no, right? Because I just talked to you for two hours about how important it is to stay true to yourself and maintain the honesty that was always inside you and stuff like that. But also change was a really big part of me getting to a place where I can accept myself in whatever form I take over the past year or so. Like that was what all my therapy was about, it's part of why I started getting really back into frogs as a personal totem—that's an animal that, like a butterfly, metamorphoses during its life. Not to the extent that the butterfly does, because a butterfly literally turns into goop, which is incredible. But frogs, they start out as a

creature of one thing, and they become a creature of another thing but still maintain their ties to both. And in Pokémon, I use a ninja. Which is like a frog ninja guy; I found one with a secret ability which means he can turn into whatever element of the attack he uses. And I named him—I always give every Pokémon a nick- name, and usually it's kind of a complicated nickname—but this one, I literally just named him, "Change."

And that was something that over the past year or so, that I just continued to try to aspire to. Just recognizing that change is. It's rarely even something that happens. Change is something that happens to me that...you know—I can fight as hard as I want to be true to myself every day. And that's going to look like a different version every day. It'll look like, diet one day. It'll look like eating Jack In The Box at midnight the other day. It's all sort of in service of this larger purpose of like—I hope I'm answering your question and not just doing psychobabble—

HT: No, no it's perfect. Literally before you even started talking about Pokémon but were talking about the frogs and the metamorphoses, it was making me think about how Pokémon —without knowing much about it—seems like the ultimate civic imagination.

RSR: It is. It is, it is.

HT: This is beautiful, and I love ending on this note of change, and everything you said about it. And that's...I think that was reflected in the campaign colors too. Not to take it back to the colors, but I'm going to because like you said, the keystone of a lot of this really was the colors that Aaron put out into the campaign materials. I feel like when you look at those colors, you see change. And you see it as gentle and powerful and embracing and generative and playful and kind and loving and warm and remembering. There's just so much reverence in those colors.

RSR: Yeah. Exactly. I mean, it's sunset colors, right? And foundational to every myth—and every mythological creature, and every story of hero, and rebirth—is the idea of the sunset. And the sun leaving to go to the underworld, and then shine on a new day. And the journey of transformation that happens in the dormancy in the underworld, you know? And the sunset is something that we have been trying to deal with as a species for millennia. Since before we were human, we've been trying to figure out: how do we deal with sunsets? And I think every myth that really ever is, is trying to guide us toward the truth that you know, we can fear the sunset, we can resent it, we can hate it...or we can welcome it. That doesn't mean that we'll welcome it without tears. It doesn't mean we'll welcome it without fear. But we can welcome it, and we can honor it. And the recognition that that's

a certain kind of harmony that will only, or that *should* only benefit us—or that we get to benefit from, is a better way to put it.

Going back to Earthsea, there's a great, great Ursula K. Le Guin quote where she says, "we live in capitalism. It's power seems inescapable. So too did the divine right of kings."—so kind of foreshadowing that the sun will set on all things, and we get to decide how we feel when it does. You know, the sun's going to explode one day and turn the earth into cosmic dust. And we get to decide how we'll feel about ourselves when that happens. The sun has set on police. It has for a long time. The sun is setting on how we punish each other, how we try to beat each other into conformity with our own visions of the civic, and we get to be a part of that journey. We get to be people with oars on the River Styx.

HT: I wish you could see how big I was smiling!

RSR: I can. I can. Thank you my friend.
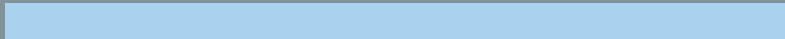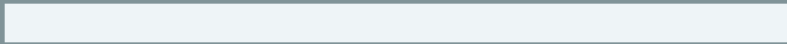
Juan Carlos Carvajal Bermúdez is an independent interaction designer and a PhD researcher at the Austrian Institute of Technology. He is also Board member of the Media Architecture Institute. His doctoral thesis focuses on new methods of citizen participation. He has also interested in decentralized models of creativity and tools for collaborative creation. His master thesis focused on art in public spaces and the participation of communities in the development of their environments. His work has been exhibited at the Ars Electronica festival in Austria, the Media Architecture biennale in Denmark and the Media Architecture summit in Beijing.

After many years in Canada as a translator, revisor, and editor, **Peter Bottéas** came to the U.S. in 2002 to train as a psychotherapist. He is an occasional voice-over artist, an infrequent poet, and an aficionado of Greek poetry set to music, and has recently returned to one of his first loves: literary translation.

George Contogeorgis was born on the island of Lefkada, the island of great statemen, poets and thinkers. With studies in Law and Political Science in Greece and France, he is included in the list of intellectuals who received the French state doctorate, which was then awarded only to philosophers. He was also inspired by Plato, but in the end Aristotle remained present in his life in order to inspire him uninterruptedly, especially from the moment he devoted his doctoral dissertation to the great philosopher and Teacher of the universe. Among his important activities as a higher education administrator, one must note the transformation of the Panteion School into a University, the establishment of the "Erasmus" program for the exchange of students in European countries, as well as the founding of the European Political Science Network. As Rector and Professor, he is always a pioneer in the journey that focuses on the Greek system of thought from the ancient world to the present day. With countless articles in Greek and other European languages, he has written over thirty books focusing on politics and political issues.

Meral Ekincioglu, Trained as an architect, is a scholar with Ph.D. in Architecture, the subjects of her current academic study are intersectional feminism, systemic justice, politics of gender, multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion in postwar (and intertwined) history in architecture. She conducted her advanced

academic research project on immigrant and underrepresented women architects in postwar US architecture at the MIT-History, Theory and Criticism of Architecture Program for two years. Her recent research project brings into focus a critical insight into the politics of historical documentation practice at pioneering schools of architecture in the US. She began her Ph.D. dissertation research at Harvard University, continued it at Columbia University, completed and obtained her degree at Istanbul Technical University. In her expertise fields, she was speaker at MIT, Harvard, CUNY, IWIA Symposium, Society of Architectural Historians Conference, etc. As a *Citizen TALES* Commons member, she also presented her research studies at MIT, Boston University and Emerson College with other group members.

Chrysanthie Emmanouilidou, Conductor pianist, born in Thessaloniki, Greece, lives in Berlin, where she has been the GMD of the Beuth University of Applied Sciences since 2016 and where she also teaches Music History since April 2012. She holds an M.A. in piano studies from the Freiburg Academy of Music and from the Berlin "Hanns Eisler" Music Academy, where she studied with Prof. Georg Sava. In 2018 she also received a graduate diploma in Byzantine Music. Since the summer of 2020, in parallel to her academic and musical activities, she is profoundly engaged with applied music therapy in patients with cerebral impairment. Her focus is on therapy research and development of therapy concepts based on the effects of music and singing, as well as rhythmic and structured auditory impulses in damaged brain structures and their therapeutic utilization.

Shortly after her piano degrees, she began conducting studies in Italy next to the conductor Andrea Pestalozza, to whom she credits much of her knowledge and enthusiasm for contemporary music. She has conducted numerous piano and conducting Master-classes all over Europe, including the one during which she has worked as Michael Boder's assistant conductor in the Royal Theatre Copenhagen. Instrumental for her personal conducting style have been her analytical and intensive studies with the British conductor Lionel Friend (Birmingham) and her work as assistant conductor with the Italian conductor Claudio Abbado (Bolzano, Cremona, Bologna, Luzern).

Chrysanthie has performed in Europe and

Japan (Izumi Hall, Osaka) with the Berlin-Brandenburgisches Sinfonieorchester, the Jenaer Philharmoniker, the Kaposvar Symphony-Orchestra, the Darmstadt Kammersymphonie Orchestra, the Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester, the Loku Philharmony and Kabutoyama Symphony Orchestra, and with the University Orchestras and Choir, which she founded: the Collegium Musicum der Beuth Hochschule and the Beuth Extra Chamber Orchestra.

Isaiah Frisbie (he/him) is a queer, Latinx poet and designer from Southern California. He earned his dual BA in Literary Arts and English Nonfiction Writing from Brown University and his MA in Civic Media from Emerson College. With his experience in community organizing, namely within first-generation college, low-income, and queer spaces, he is particularly invested in the intersections of writing, design justice, educational equity, and artistic activism. His work has appeared in Somos Latinx Literary Magazine and Folktales Literary Journal. He currently lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Ilana Freedman is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard University. She received her Master's in Comparative Literature from King's College London in 2014. Her research interests include contemporary Greek poetry, Interdisciplinary Hellenism, Diaspora and Transnational Studies, and Classical Reception Studies. She is the graduate coordinator of the Ludics Seminar and the Modern Greek Literature and Culture Seminar at the Harvard Mahindra Humanities Center, as well as the Cultural Politics Seminar at the Weatherhead Center for International Studies.

Andrea Gilbert is a native New Yorker residing permanently in Athens, Greece since 1989. She trained and worked as a studio artist before becoming an art essayist and independent curator. Her curatorial projects have been mounted at the Deste Foundation, the Breeder gallery, Vamiali's gallery, and other venues in Greece and abroad. Her many catalogue essays and reviews have been widely published in the Greek and foreign press, and her supporting essays have accompanied solo and group exhibitions in Greece and abroad. She currently writes a regular art column, in Greek, for Antivirus magazine.

Ifigenia Gonis holds a Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures (French) from Harvard University, with a focus on contemporary French theatre. She has also studied at Columbia

University at Reid Hall, Paris, and the University of Paris IV--La Sorbonne. Her primary interest is in theatre—contemporary/experimental theatre in particular. She has been involved in theatrical productions since she was very young—mostly as an actor—although recently she has put performing aside to focus on critical theory and dramaturgy. She first read Ionesco's Rhinoceros in high school. On her bookshelf you'll find not just his plays but also those of Jean Genet (one of her favorite writers), Albert Camus, Alfred Jarry, and a very worn copy of Artaud's Le théâtre et son double.

Peter Klapes is a graduate student in the department of philosophy at Boston College, specializing in contemporary continental philosophy, psychoanalytic theory, and the intersection of philosophy and literature. Peter's work has appeared in various philosophical journals, and he currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of Dianoia, BC's journal of philosophy. Peter also works as research assistant on a bibliographic project in Modern Greek literature, serves on the advisory board of the Guestbook Project, an international forum for narrative hospitality, and is currently at work on a thesis, under the direction of Richard Kearney, on the hermeneutics of desire.

Paulina Lanz is a Doctoral fellow at USC Annenberg, where she explores the intricate relationship of material culture and memory through the lens of archival and cultural studies, by the means of multi-sensorial modalities. Paulina is a member of the Civic Paths group and a founding member and organizer of Critical Mediations, a Communication and Cultural Studies Conference.

Peter Levine is the Academic Dean and Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship & Public Affairs in Tufts University's [Jonathan Tisch College of Civic Life](). He has tenure in Tufts' Political Science Department, and he also has secondary appointments in the Tufts Philosophy Department and the Tufts Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute. He directs the Civic Studies Major at Tufts.

Levine graduated from Yale in 1989 with a degree in philosophy. He studied philosophy at Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship, receiving his doctorate in 1992. From 1991 until 1993, he was a research associate at Common Cause. From 1993-2008, he was a member of the Institute for Philosophy & Public Policy in the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy. During the late 1990s, he was also Deputy Director of the

WLevine is the author of *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: The Promise of Civic Renewal in America* (Oxford University Press, 2013), five other scholarly books on philosophy and politics, and a novel. He has served on the boards or steering committees of AmericaSpeaks, Street Law Inc., the Newspaper Association of America Foundation, the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, Discovering Justice, the Kettering Foundation, the American Bar Association's Committee for Public Education, the Paul J. Aicher Foundation, and the Deliberative Democracy Consortium.

Elena Mancini is a published author and a German-English and Italian-English translator. A New York City native, Elena grew up speaking Italian and English. She holds a Ph.D. in Germanic Languages and Literatures from Rutgers University. Passionate about the intimate portal into the literary dimension that she experiences translating fiction., her published translations span the genres and include three novels as well as numerous articles of social and political commentary. Mancini's English translation of Carmen-Francesca Banciu's Radio Play, "It's Cold and It's Getting So Dark" won Runner Up in the 2016 Words without Borders Radio Play Contest. Elena also practices psychotherapy in New York City and is currently pursuing her LP.

Christa Oliver is an Assistant Professor of Practice in The Department of Theatre and Dance at Texas State University in San Marcos, TX. Her current performance project explores bearing witness through dance, and specifically explores border politics between Texas and Mexico. Her research project involves telling stories of refugees and immigrants through dance. She also has an interest in the intersection of activism and pedagogy, and in her own artistic work. Christa would like for her performance project to be used as a tool for healing in communities of refugees, immigrants, and in places and spaces where trauma occurs. She believes that we all have a story to tell, and she would like to give others an opportunity to tell their stories through dance. She's looking forward to collaborating with like-minded artists and scholars at Citizen TALES.

Hiva Panahi holds a Ph.D. in Political & Social Sciences from the Panteion University in Athens, Greece, with a focus on General Sociology and the comparative study of the political and cultural systems of the neighboring countries of the

Hellenic World. She is also an internationally recognized author-poet and translator and is currently a member of the *Citizen TALES* Commons research team. She lives and works in New York.

Tyler Pauly is a freshman in Psychology at Boston University. She is interested in neuropsychology and in the summer of 2019 she conducted research regarding facial imaging compression technology at Stanford University.

Sean Peacock is a PhD researcher based at Open Lab, Newcastle University, UK. His research interests center on the ways that digital tech can support young people's participation in placemaking and urban futures. Through his research, he has developed expertise in designing methods and tools to amplify youth voices in citymaking processes and the design of digital technologies.

Antonis E. Psarakis (antpsarakis@gmail.com) perceives field work as a management laboratory. Expanding his in-depth knowledge with experience, he acquired the insight to analyze systems and organizations. His background includes Public Administration, Management and Political Science. He holds a diploma from National Kapodistrian University of Athens and is a Graduate of the National School of Public Administration of Greece. He is working at the Hellenic Ministry of Interior and also as a freelancer management consultant. Serving in several posts (employee, units' head, special advisor of political leadership, inspector of public administration), he gained a thorough understanding of governance. Antonis is focused on concept development and innovation; he creates tools and systems by fusing management and IT concepts. By assuming difficult tasks and special missions, he cultivated the capacity to develop custom solutions and get things done.

Tyler Quick is a doctoral candidate at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and political activist based in Los Angeles. His work is primarily concerned with the relationship between media cultures and political practice. He is a member and Research Assistant for Civic Paths.

Vassiliki Rapti, Ph.D., is a scholar of comparative literature and civic media, editor, translator, curator, and currently affiliated faculty at Emerson College, where she teaches studies in digital media and culture and is the editor of of *The Journal of Civic Media*.

During the years 2008–2016 she has served as Preceptor in Modern Greek at Harvard University, where in 2013 she co-founded and

co-chaired the Ludics Seminar at the Mahindra Humanities Center and the Advanced Training in Greek Poetry Translation and Performance Workshop, which she has been running since then along with *Citizen TALES* Commons, a research team of scholars and artists, based in Cambridge, MA.

Her publications and research interests center around civic media, ludic theory, avant-garde theater and performance with an emphasis on Surrealism, literary theory and women's wriitng. She is the co-editor of Ludics: Play as Humanistic Inquiry (Palgrave MacMillan, 2021) and author of Ludics in Surrealist Theatre and Beyond (Ashgate, 2013) and of several edited books and translation volumes including Nanos Valaoritis's "Nightfall Hotel": A Surrealist Romeo and Juliet (Somerset Hall Press, 2017) and of several poetry collections including Transitorium (Somerset Hall Press, 2015). During the years 2002–2004 she cofounded and co-edited the journal Theatron.

Combining scientific and operational experience, ***Dionysis R. Rigopoulos*** enjoys discovering simple answers to lingering problems. His background includes engineering, architecture, computer science and conceptual modeling. He holds a diploma from National Technical University of Athens, Greece and M.Sc. and Ph.D. from Carnegie Mellon University, USA.

During his 2009-2018 term as an inspector-controller of public administration, he identified the need for simple solutions against fundamental faults impeding Greece's recovery.

In democracy, the government and the people have common interest. Yet, unceased civic engagement is a must because governance does not autocorrect. Collaboration, instead of hostility, achieves more toward the common goals. Applied transparency helps measure and face reality. It proves sincerity and establishes trust between all partners.

Dionysis pursues systemic improvement, rather than individual cases. He designs and builds IT tools to facilitate the solution of root problems. He is inspired by his father, Rigas Rigopoulos (1914-2012), a technically minded human loving social scientist and WWII fighter.

Louis A. Ruprecht Jr. is the inaugural holder of the William M. Suttles Chair in Religious Studies as well as Director of the Center for Hellenic Studies. His doctoral concentration was in the area of philosophical and religious ethics, with special emphasis on classical literature and philosophy.

His work covers a wide range of topics but may best be characterized as an historical study of the appropriation of Greek themes in a number of subsequent historical periods, especially the Early Modern period. He interrogates this classical legacy in areas ranging from ethics and politics, to psychology and sexuality, to drama and film. For the past ten years he has been a Research Fellow at the Vatican Library and the Vatican Secret Archives, where he has extended these research interests to the emergence of the Early Modern conception of Art, and the privileging of classical art as embodied in that preeminent institution, the Vatican Museums. His recent books include: *Winckelmann and the Vatican's First Profane Museum* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), *Policing the State: Democratic Reflections on Police Power Gone Awry, in Memory of Kathryn Johnston* (Wipf and Stock, 2013) and *Classics at the Dawn of the Museum Era: The Life and Times of Antoine Chrysostome Quatremere de Quincy* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Richard Santos Raya (he/him) is a writer, educator, and martial artist from Berkeley and Oakland, CA. A stand up comedian and storyteller with a Bachelor's in American Studies from Macalester and a J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law, Richard combines creativity and critical thinking with a strong grounding in historical and political contexts to both think systemically and examine locally. He geeks out on storytelling, myth, and games of all kinds, holding a deep belief in their power and potential as educational and liberatory tools. Most recently, Richard has used his skills to teach law to teenagers at Centro Legal de la Raza's Youth Law Academy, as well as run a campaign for Oakland City Council in District 5 as a part of the larger defund-the-police movement.

Phillip Scruggs, known on stage as Wyld Tha Bard, is a poet and hip hop/roots performing artist and a graduate student studying social justice in the School of Social Transformation in The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Arizona State University. He studies the role the performing arts have on raising social, cultural and political consciousness and is currently working on an album alongside Phoenix-based producer Bobby2083 to be released later this year. "Bring it Back 2 God" is his original spoken word performance that invokes a call to action for all humanity to remember what being alive is all about.

Sangita Shresthova, Ph.D., is the Director of Research of Civic Paths Group at the University of Southern California. Her work focuses on the intersections among popular culture, performance, new media, politics, and globalization. Her previous books include By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism (with Henry Jenkins et. al) and Is It All About Hips?: Around the World With Bollywood Dance (Sage).

Elizabeth (Betsey) Suchanic is a Program Manager at the Urban Libraries Council, a national library association. Her professional background is in community economic development, small business development, and urban planning research for local governments. She holds a Master of Public Administration from University of Delaware's Biden School of Public Policy and Administration and a B.A. in Marketing Communication and Studio Art from Mary Baldwin University. Betsey currently resides in Washington, DC.

Zenovia Toloudi is an Architect, Artist, and Assistant Professor at Studio Art, Dartmouth College. Her work critiques the contemporary alienation of humans from nature and sociability in architecture and public space, and investigates spatial typologies to reestablish cohabita- tion, inclusion, and participation through digital, physical, and organic media. The founder of Studio Z, a creative research practice on art, archi- tecture, and urbanism, Zenovia has exhibited internationally, including at the Biennale in Venice, the Center for Architecture, the Athens Byzan- tine Museum, the Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art and the Onassis Cultural Center. She has won commissions from Illuminus Boston, The Lab at Harvard, and the Leslie Center for Humanities at Dartmouth. Zenovia's work belongs to permanent collections at Aristotle University (AUTh) and the Thracian Pinacotheca. Her essays have been published in Routledge, Technoetic Arts, and MAS Context. Zenovia is the recipient of The Class of 1962 Fellowship. She was a Public Voices Fellow; a Research Fellow at Art, Culture, and Technology Program at MIT; and a Fulbright Fellow. Zenovia received her Doctor of Design degree from Harvard's GSD (2011), a Master of Architecture degree as a Fulbright Fellow at the Illinois Institute of Technology (2006), and in 2003, she graduated from the AUTh in Architectural Engineering. Website: http://zenovia.net/.

Hannah Trivilino (she/hers) is a transdisciplinary artist-scholar, experiential educator, and creative consultant. Hannah is trained in Feminist and Queer Theory, which deeply informs her current and past work institutionalizing community engagement in higher education policy; training secondary education students in dialogue facilitation; co-developing Citizen TALES Commons; co-teaching undergraduate Women's &

Gender Studies classes; and more. Hannah has also worked on political campaigns, performed with world-renowned musicians, and won awards in community building, playwriting, and social engagement. She is currently devising a cross-sensory project exploring intersections between epistemology, dis/ability, de/colonialisms, cognition, memory, and pedagogy.

Eli Turkel is a PhD candidate focusing his dissertation on the diffusion of civic technology. Additionally he is a graduate research fellow for the Institute for Public Administration at the University of Delaware. His background is in state and local politics and political campaigns. He holds a Master of Public Administration from University of Delaware's Biden School of Public Policy and Administration and a B.A. in Government from Skidmore College. Eli currently resides in Newark, Delaware.

Anna Winestein is an arts entrepreneur, non-profit leader, cultural historian, curator, reformed economist and maker. She is co-Founder and Executive Director of Ballets Russes Arts Initiative, and has previously served as Creative Director of the Hermitage Museum Foundation. She has been a Cultural Envoy for the State Department, a Fulbright Scholar, as well as guest curator of exhibitions at the Boston Public Library, Sotheby's France and the Museum of Russian Icons, among others. Her writings have been published by academic and trade presses and journals, she has authored and contributed to exhibition catalogues, and co-edited or translated several volumes. She holds degrees from Boston University and Oxford University in painting, art history, economics and modern history.

Maria Zervos is a visual artist and poet from Athens, Greece currently living and working between the Netherlands and the United States. In 2012, she was the recipient of a Fulbright scholarship to pursue art-related research at Harvard University's Department of Film and Visual Studies. Zervostaught courses at Harvard University in 2014, and has been a faculty member at Emerson College, Boston since 2015. She has presented her work in solo and group exhibition worldwide including the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, Athens; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Nieuw Dakota, Amsterdam, Kunstvlaai, Amsterdam; Onassis Cultural Centre, New York City; and the Hellenic American Union, Athens, Greece among others. In 2017 she was invited for a residency program at the International Studio & Curatorial Program (ISCP) in New York City. Her art is part of several collections including the D.Daskalopoulos Collection and the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens.

Call for Submissions for the Spring 2021 Issue of The Journal of Civic Media
Volume Theme: "Civic Media in Flux"
Submission Due Date: Thursday, July 1, 2021

Editor: Vassiliki Rapti
Guest Editors: Hannah Trivilino and Lea Luka Sicau

About the Journal

The Journal of Civic Media seeks submissions for its third issue. Published by the Engagement Lab and linked to its Media Design master's program at Emerson College, The Journal of Civic Media is a semiannual peer-reviewed electronic publication. It focuses on civic media to facilitate the democratization process around the world, by means of both local and global digital platforms and community-based media initiatives that promote participatory research methods and give voice to diverse communities. The objective of the Journal of Civic Media is to provide an open forum for scholars, practitioners, artists, students and the general public, to harness civic engagement and to rethink the complex and ever-changing landscape of the field in the digital era. While cultivating counter-narratives to entrenched power dynamics, we encourage a multiplicity of forms within humanities scholarship; the Journal of Civic Media therefore welcomes contributions in all media formats and from perspectives/methods that are often excluded from traditional academic scholarship.

Call for Submissions

The Journal of Civic Media is seeking submissions for its "Civic Media in Flux in the Post-COVID-19 Era" issue, covering a wide variety of topics pertaining to the ever-changing media landscape and mirroring the virality of both the current state and media itself. Who are the host bodies of today? Is civic media alive or not alive? Which part breathes life into technology? The civic or the media itself?

Civic Media explores the fluid relationships between people and new media while investigating the rhizomatic network between communities, agency, virality, technology, and power.

We scrutinize civic media as a process. Relating thereto, we strive to find out what civic media can be, now and in future? How can the media reflect on a state of fluidity? What is the role of technology in this process? How has the coronavirus completely changed the digital landscape worldwide? These are some of the issues that the third issue of The Journal of Civic Media seeks to address from a variety of perspectives. Submissions across disciplines, artistic research, comparative media and methodologies, as well as case studies, are highly encouraged.

The Journal of Civic Media seeks submissions on all aspects related to, including but not limited to Civic Media in Flux:

- Theories of Media in Flux
- Sonic Civic Media
- The Role of Civic Media in Human Mobility (both forced and agential)
- Queering, Transition, and Mediation
- Race and Class in Civic Media in Flux
- Civic and Media Futures
- Challenges and Opportunities for Civic Media in Flux in the Post-COVID-19 Era
- Case Studies on analog/digital Approaches to Civic Media in Flux

We invite scholars and practitioners, graduate students and faculty in the civic media and digital humanities fields to submit paper proposals. Papers should not exceed 3,500 words, including references in the Chicago Manual Style, or documentations of artistic processes of 7-12 pages.

Civic media epistemology centers lived experience, artistic incubation, non-linear floods of thoughts and more conventional forms of academic paper writing. We invite submissions in the realm of non-traditional forms of knowledge production, from practitioners of civic media as well as from scholars within the humanities and sciences.

Please review The Journal of Civic Media's full Editorial Policies prior to submission. Inquiries and submissions should be sent to journalofcivicmedia@gmail.com by 5 p.m. on Thursday, July 1, 2021. Selected submissions for the current call will be published in the November 2021 volume of The Journal of Civic Media.