

# How to stay together

Looking for sustainable practices in the  
frame of working groups in performing arts

RIIKKA LAURILEHTO



MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMME IN DANCE PERFORMANCE

**THEATRE  
ACADEMY**

**✕ UNIARTS HELSINKI**

**2019**

---

THESIS

# How to stay together

Looking for sustainable practices in the  
frame of working groups in performing arts

RIIKKA LAURILEHTO



ABSTRACT

Date: 15 October 2019

AUTHOR Riikka Laurilehto		MASTER'S OR OTHER DEGREE PROGRAMME Master's degree programme in dance performance	
TITLE OF THE WRITTEN SECTION/THESIS How to stay together: Looking for sustainable practices in the frame of working groups in performing arts		NUMBER OF PAGES + APPENDICES IN THE WRITTEN SECTION 92 pages	
TITLE OF THE ARTISTIC/ ARTISTIC AND PEDAGOGICAL SECTION <i>Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs</i> , choreography Lea Moro, premiere 18 January 2019 Theatre Academy The artistic section is produced by the Theatre Academy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The artistic section is not produced by the Theatre Academy (copyright issues have been resolved). <input type="checkbox"/>			
The final project can be published online. This permission is granted for an unlimited duration.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	The abstract of the final project can be published online. This permission is granted for an unlimited duration.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>In the written part of my thesis, I am looking into how sustainability thinking should be reformulated in feminist, post-humanist ontological terms, and how this renewed sustainability thinking could inform the working structures of artistic working groups in the field of performing arts. The focus is on “why” and “how” we as humans should start practicing a non-anthropocentric worldview to formulate ecologically-minded and sustainable life and work practices. These practices should be equality-driven, keen on enjoyment and regenerative energy, and globally aware but locally invested. I have a special emphasis on the importance of formulating new language and representational narratives – both in the arts and other everyday contexts – to acknowledge the ecological and symbiotic nature of human and nonhuman subjects and their shared habitat planet Earth. In the performing arts context, my interest is centred on how working groups should structure their work socially, materially and artistically to respect and accurately depict this symbiotic real. My personal experiences in professional education and productions runs as an exemplary thread throughout the thesis.</p> <p>In the first chapters I will describe the terms ecology and sustainability as they are used in the frame of this work and will provide a short historical summary of the Western sustainability movement. In the third chapter I will articulate what I see as the main issues in conventional sustainability thinking, namely anthropocentrism, the admiration for austerity and the inability to change business-as-usual. Through this articulation, I reformulate sustainable equality and subjectivity through post-human philosophy and feminist theory. In the fourth chapter I give a deeper insight to ecologically complex storytelling and what kind of forms it might take in performance.</p> <p>The fifth chapter consists of questions and thematic areas of focus for artistic working groups in the field of performing arts to consider when formulating sustainability guidelines for their work. I detail six areas of focus: equality and transparent communication, energy use, enjoyment, temporality and time, locality and delegating responsibility. This chapter is greatly influenced by my own experiences in production processes and is complemented with a few exemplary practices from the European contemporary performance field.</p> <p>In the sixth and final chapter, I present and analyse three different productions I have participated in as a working group member and performer during 2018 and 2019. I look at each performance with a sustainability focus approach. The three productions are: <i>Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs</i>, a big stage dance production, and the artistic part of my thesis; <i>Of being in the Dark</i>, a site-sensitive outdoors piece and <i>olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä</i>, a first exploration phase towards a movement and sound piece.</p>			
KEYWORDS Sustainability, ecology, feminism, post-humanism, anthropocentrism, storytelling, working groups, performing arts, contemporary dance			

TIIVISTELMÄ

Päiväys: 15.10.2019

TEKIJÄ Riikka Laurilehto		KOULUTUS- TAI MAISTERIOHJELMA Tanssijantaiteen maisteriohjelma	
KIRJALLISEN OSION / TUTKIELMAN NIMI How to stay together: Looking for sustainable practices in the frame of working groups in performing arts		KIRJALLISEN TYÖN SIVUMÄÄRÄ (SIS. LIITTEET) 92 s.	
TAITEELLISEN / TAITEELLIS-PEDAGOGISEN TYÖN NIMI <i>Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs</i> , koreografia Lea Moro, ensi-ilta 18.1.2019 Teatterikorkeakoulu.  Taiteellinen osio on Teatterikorkeakoulun tuotantoa <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Taiteellinen osio ei ole Teatterikorkeakoulun tuotantoa (tekijänoikeuksista on sovittu) <input type="checkbox"/>			
Kirjallisen osion/tutkielman saa julkaista avoimessa tietoverkossa. Lupa on ajallisesti rajoittamaton.	Kyllä <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ei <input type="checkbox"/>	Opinnäytteen tiivistelmän saa julkaista avoimessa tietoverkossa. Lupa on ajallisesti rajoittamaton.	Kyllä <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ei <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Opinnäytteeni kirjallisessa osassa hahmotelen kestävyysajattelua uudelleen feministisen, post-humanistisen ja ontologisen teorian pohjalta, sekä etsin tapoja soveltaa tätä ajattelua esittävän taiteen kentällä toimivien taiteellisten työryhmien työrakenteissa. Työni ytimessä on ajatus ihmiskeskeisyydestä luopumisesta, joka on välttämätöntä ekologisesti tiedostavien ja kestävien työ- ja elämäntapojen muodostamisessa. Väitän, että kestävä elämäntavat rakentuvat ensisijaisesti tasa-arvolle ja kiinnittyvät voimakkaasti paikalliseen yhteisöön, samalla tiedostaen kestävyysaasteiden globaalin ulottuvuuden. Kestävien toimintatapojen laatimisessa korostetaan kaikkien olevaisten iloa, nautintoa ja viihtymistä, varmistetaan niille riittävän levon määrä ja annetaan aikaa uusiutumiseen. Omassa kestävyysajattelussani uudenlaisen kielen ja narratiivien muodostaminen on erityisen tärkeässä roolissa, koska inhimillisen ja ei-inhimillisen elämän sekä jaetun elinympäristömme Maan ekologisen ja symbioottisen luonteen tunnustaminen vaatii ihmiskeskeisyydestä pois päin nojaavaa tarinankerrontaa – niin taiteen eri aloilla kuin muissakin arkisissa konteksteissa. Esittävien taiteiden sisällä kiinnostukseni keskittyy työryhmien kestävään toimintaan ja siihen, miten työryhmät voisivat rakentaa työnsä sosiaalisesti, materiaalisesti ja taiteellisesti kaiken elämän symbioottista olemusta osuvasti kuvaten ja kunnioittaen. Tässä työssä käytän omia kokemuksiani ammattiopinnoissa ja esittävän taiteen produktioissa esimerkkeinä erilaisista kestävästä ja kestävämmästä toimintatavoista.</p> <p>Opinnäytteen ensimmäisissä kappaleissa määrittelen ekologian ja kestävyuden käsitteet tämän työn kontekstissa ja luon lyhyen katsauksen länsimaisen kestävyysliikkeen historiaan. Kolmannessa kappaleessa esittelen kolme ajatusmallia, jotka näen perinteisen kestävyysajattelun suurimpina ongelmina: ihmiskeskeisyyden, karuuden ja nuukuuden ihannoinnin sekä totutuissa käytännöissä pitäytymisen. Tämän rajauksen pohjalta muotoilen post-humanistista filosofiaa ja feminististä teoriaa apunani käyttäen ei-ihmiskeskeistä kestävästä tasa-arvoajattelua ja subjektikäsitystä. Neljännessä kappaleessa syvennyn ekologisesti tiedostavaan tarinankerrontaan ja sen mahdollisiin ilmenemismuotoihin esittämissä taiteissa.</p> <p>Työni viides kappale koostuu kysymyksistä ja aihealueista, jotka esittävän taiteen työryhmien tulisi mielestäni ottaa huomioon hahmotellessaan kestävää työrakennetta. Kappaleessa rajaan kuusi keskeistä teemaa: tasa-arvo ja läpinäkyvä viestintä, energiankäyttö, viihtyvyys, ajallisuus ja ajankäyttö, paikallisuus sekä vastuunjako. Oma kokemukseni taiteellisissa työryhmissä ohjaa voimakkaasti argumentointiani tässä kappaleessa ja sitä värittävät valikoidut esimerkilliset käytännöt ja teokset eurooppalaisen nykyesityksen kentältä.</p> <p>Kuudennessa ja viimeisessä kappaleessa esittelen ja analysoin kolme produktiota, joihin olen osallistunut työryhmän jäsenenä vuosien 2018 ja 2019 aikana. Tarkastelen kestävien työtapojen näkökulmasta seuraavia kolmea esitystä: suuren näyttämön tanssituotantoa <i>Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs</i>, joka on opinnäytteeni taiteellinen osa, paikkasensitiivistä retkiesitystä <i>Pimeässä olemisesta</i> sekä ääni- ja liiketeos <i>olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä</i> ensimmäistä työvaihetta, jossa keskityimme liikepraktiikan kehittämiseen ja tuotannon suunnitteluun.</p>			
ASIASANAT Kestävyys, kestävyysajattelu, kestävä työtapo, ekologia, feminismi, post-humanismi, ihmiskeskeisyys, tarinankerronta, esittävät taiteet, työryhmät, nykytanssi			

---



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	12
INTRODUCTION	13
<i>Stating the not-so-obvious obvious</i>	16

---

ECOLOGY - THE CARE FOR RELATIONS	18
SUSTAINABILITY – A TEXTBOOK DEFINITION	20
<i>A short history of sustainability</i>	22

---

THE MAJOR BUGS IN SUSTAINABILITY: ANTHROPOCENTRISM, ADMIRING AUSTERITY & CONTINUING BUSINESS-AS-USUAL	27
<i>Intersectional, post-human feminism for the exhausted 99%</i>	28
<i>Post-human as post-Anthropos</i>	30
<i>Inviting the nonhuman in</i>	32
<i>Sustainable excess and pleasure</i>	35
<i>The ecological subject &amp; sustainable ethics</i>	38
<i>Humans: take a break, go on strike, slow down, take a weaker stance</i>	40

---

BETTER STORYTELLING FOR EARTHLY SURVIVAL	42
STAYING WITH THE TROUBLE OF STAYING TOGETHER - QUESTIONS & CONCERNS FOR STRUCTURING SUSTAINABLE COLLABORATIONS	46
<i>Equality &amp; clear, transparent communication</i>	48
<i>Redirecting energy</i>	52
<i>Enjoying work: pleasure, fun &amp; joy</i>	56
<i>Time, temporality &amp; duration</i>	58
<i>Locality &amp; focality</i>	61
<i>Letting go of control</i>	63

---

EXERCISING SUSTAINABILITY	66
<i>Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs - Being green, lumpy, bumpy &amp; grumpy</i>	67
<i>Of being in the dark - Practicing survival skills for a changing, damaged planet</i>	73
<i>olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä – Distracting the Human</i>	80

---

CONCLUSION	86
------------	----





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A great thank you to every body, force and thing that brought me to this point in my life. I would not be here without you.

I especially want to thank Jenni-Elina von Bagh for kind and discursive supervision on this written part of my thesis.

I also want to thank my partner and family for their inexhaustible support, love and care throughout my thesis process, alongside with all the colleagues and friends that discussed, worked, performed and danced with me, listened to my ideas and worries, hinted on good reading and pushed me forward in difficult times. I love you.

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is a buzz word associated with ecological values and preserving a liveable planet for future generations, but it equally echoes tones of false corporate marketing and insufficient international policy. The sustainability movement – consisting of theory, policy and action to fight the environmental and societal problems caused by fossil-fuelled industrialism – is too often discarded by forward-looking thinkers as anthropocentric, capitalist and corporate-driven greenwashing, even though a sustainable lifestyle must urgently be formulated.

Finding sustainable practices for human living is a pressing challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The devastating effects of industrial pollution, resource depletion, mass extinction of species and cultures and accelerating climate change are becoming more and more apparent in the everyday life of all living creatures. Unsustainability, depletion and collapse are currently met on different arenas and areas of life on all scales: the global human population is growing beyond the carrying capacity of the planet, the peak of oil production has long passed risking depletion in fuel and energy in the near future, vast areas of land have been emptied of life due to monoculture farming, the inequality between the rich and the poor is vaster than ever, plastic waste in the oceans kills sea creatures and baby birds by shredding their intestines and choking them, millions of people around the world are constantly forced to move from their homes due to war and desertification of farmland, more and more urban workers burn out because of excessive workloads, children grow up to be anxious because of an extremely uncertain future, nations are polarised and extreme nationalism, racism and sexism bloom even in the most democratic societies, indigenous lifestyles get run over by industries, et cetera, et cetera. Clearly there is something very wrong in the way contemporary Western life is organised at the moment, and another way of thinking and practicing life must be drafted. Sustainability thinkers and doers for the last couple of centuries have been tapping into these problems and have offered multiple guidelines for reparative, recuperative and regenerative life practices, but many of them stumble upon being too tied to excluding ideologies, like growth-based fossil-fuelled capitalism, or enlightened romanticism, or the patriarchy. Sustainability needs and deserves to be refreshed, because the

fight for ecological, economic and social sustainability is more important than ever, but the means for reaching it are not ambitious or effective enough.

My personal journey towards studying sustainability goes through experiencing a close burn out after six years of professional studies in contemporary dance and working in the field of performing arts: there were always too many things to say yes to, too many interesting projects to attend, and very little time to do them, in addition to not having too many financial or material resources to complete productions, so I went on exceeding my limits thinking that it might get easier one day. But the contemporary dance field for freelance artists, especially for young dance artists, is very precarious, and it is shockingly common that colleagues burn out or change careers after few years of working in the arts after graduation. At the moment it seems terrifying or even impossible for me to enter the professional world and work sustainably with the slowly recuperating personal resources I have – the thinking patterns that lead me to complete exhaustion are deeply rooted both into my own system and the prevailing cultural structures around me, and it will require massive amounts of work to remake them. Thus, I wanted to start drafting ways for rethinking sustainable structures for working, shifting between the scales of the personal, social and environmental.

In this thesis, I am looking into how sustainability thinking should be reformulated in feminist, post-humanist ontological terms, and how this renewed sustainability thinking could inform the working structures of artistic working groups in the field of performing arts. The focus is on “why” and “how” we as humans should start practicing a non-anthropocentric, in other words non-human-centric or post-human, worldview to formulate and rediscover truly ecologically-minded and sustainable life and work practices. The practices should be equality-driven, keen on enjoyment and regenerative energy, and globally aware but locally invested.

There is a strong emphasis on language, naming and representation throughout the work, because I find language and the structures it enforces as starting points for change and as an opening towards sustainable futures. Donna J. Haraway, a main reference of mine, summarises aptly: “it matters what thoughts think thoughts” (Haraway 2016, 35). It matters, because the

models and language we humans use to describe our reality reveal and re-enforce the concepts through which we interpret that reality. The ideas with which we articulate our very existence are especially crucial in the ecological wake we are currently living at, because the human-centred world view has driven us to the state of global environmental and social crisis. Thus, rethinking ontology is political, as Timothy Morton, another important author for my work, states: rewriting ontology and changing linguistic forms to better describe that ontology will inevitably change how the human world is constructed (see: Morton 2017). Consequently, a key practice for sustainable art is finding new, ecologically-aware, sustainable language and representations.

In addition to creating sustainable aesthetics and artistic practice, my interest in the performing arts lies in how working groups should structure their work socially and materially to better sustain equal and meaningful atmospheres and working cultures. I am especially concerned with how the individual ecological subjects of the working groups' members could be sustained, and my personal experiences in productions run as an exemplary thread throughout the thesis.

The thesis starts with theoretical framing and moves gradually towards my own thinking and experience, finishing with practical examples of productions past and in the making. In the first two chapters of this thesis, I will present the terms ecology and sustainability as foundational frames for the rest of the work. Chapter three is a mixture of ecological, feminist and post-human philosophical theory and my own application of them to sustainability thinking as means to articulate ways to move away from anthropocentrism. The focus is on creating new language and models for subjectivity and interaction to start working towards feminist, non-anthropocentric equality. Chapter four concentrates on how narration and storytelling could change in the performing arts to create ecologically aware and sustainable representations. The fifth chapter consists of reflections and general suggestions for sustainable stage art and working group practices under six thematic headlines, that are: equality and communication, energy use, time management, enjoyment, locality and delegating responsibility. In the final and sixth chapter I present and analyse three different productions I have

participated in during 2018 and 2019, looking at each of them with a specific approach to sustainability in focus.

### *Stating the not-so-obvious obvious*

I want to finish this introduction by stating the obvious: I want to underline that none of the thoughts presented in this thesis are mine, because they came from somewhere and got formulated in specific conditions – in addition the concept of “me” as an original or singular subject is quite controversial altogether, which I will go deeper into throughout chapter three. The material in this thesis is very site-specific, and the thoughts have been formulated within the web of the ecological entity I call me, but I do not want to claim ownership over them, even though I will take responsibility for standing behind my words.

Transparency, clear referencing and traceable origin of thought are crucial in academic writing, and correct referencing is an important part in the practice of thesis writing, too. Still, there are many personal histories, opinions and untold stories that do not usually get carefully traced in the theoretical material that still affect the process of writing and collecting information. I am personally a big fan of transparency and being aware of hidden agendas and entanglements; I even tend to be slightly obsessed with being aware of all the things that affect my own and my colleagues thinking. It might be because I am a perfectionist, but also because I am a feminist: being aware of one’s background and one’s intersectional privileges is a central practice in feminism. Thus, in the name of transparency and to honour the rhizomatic, messy, ecological nature of knowledge-making, I would like to shortly map out here what kind of personal features and choices led me to the reference material I use in this thesis, and I will also keep on articulating my professional background and context throughout the work.

The choices I make filter through the archival matter of my thinking body, which is Northern, Western, middle-class, urban, white, young, normatively able-bodied and queerly female. The reference material for this thesis was gathered quite intuitively, and it is clear to me that I could have chosen almost any contemporary writers to back up my thoughts, since the issues of ecology

and sustainability are so urgent and complex that almost every author touch upon them somehow. The majority of my reference material has been actualized in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: I chose to focus on recent literature because I think contemporary problems need contemporary solutions. In addition, much of the theory is philosophy, probably mostly because, as an artist, the mixture of analytical and poetic language in theory speaks to me best. What saddens me slightly in the material I chose is not being able to fulfil a dream of only referencing female writers to fight the masculinity of academia. This dream got ruined already in the beginning of my writing journey when I was deeply moved by Timothy Morton's work, and currently only approximately half of the authors in my reference list are presumably female, and very few of them are people of colour. Getting out of the bubble of the Western English-speaking world is also a challenge for the next round of academic writing for me.

Finally, I want to underline that the phenomena and challenges I address in this thesis are not shared with all humankind, and even less with every thing, even though the global scales of climate change and mass extinction are mentioned. I come from a Western, industrial petrol-fuelled culture, and this thesis is directed to the issues inside that culture, and even to a very specific area of focus inside that culture. I find it very important to emphasise this, since in the ecological world there is no one bottom line or a common shared story, but myriads and myriads of specific localities and local entanglements, which I, as the author of this work, am one example of.

## ECOLOGY - THE CARE FOR RELATIONS

In its most basic form, ecology is a model and study of relations. Ecology as a world view means to look at things constantly in relation to each other, entangled in various symbiotic relationships. Ecology and ecological can mean a multitude of different things in everyday language, everything from a study branch of biology to an “environmentally friendly” consumer product. Ecology, theory on ecosystems and ecological phenomena is most commonly associated to things in the realm of “nature” or “the environment”, as in outside of human culture, but my thinking on ecology is strongly based on the idea that everything is included in the rhizome of connections called life. I am leaning away from an anthropocentric point of view of ecology happening on the “outside” of humans towards what Timothy Morton calls looking at the world as “the symbiotic real” (Morton 2017, 1). The symbiotic real is a name for the ecosystems that makes up Planet Earth and the galactic movement around it, where it is hard to tell “which is the top symbiont” (Morton 2017, 1), as the interactions between beings don’t follow traceable one-way hierarchies, and the difference between host and guest or friend and foe are often hard to distinguish.

An especially important model for my ecological thinking is Félix Guattari’s division of ecology in three different scales from his essay *The Three Ecologies* (1989). These ecologies are mental, social, and environmental ecology. Guattari, a psychoanalyst, philosopher and activist, describes these three categories of life to be porous and mutually affective, meaning that a disruption or imbalance in one will inevitably affect the other. Thus, the pursuit to lead a meaningful, healthy, or happy life requires the wellbeing of both the agents themselves and the linkage between them on all the three relational scales. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the harmony between the scales would mean reaching a balance or a status quo, but it materialises rather in a constant, possibly uneasy and abrupt process of negotiating locality and subjectivity, something Guattari calls *heterogenesis* (Guattari 2008, 34). In fact, Guattari states that the solution for the oppression and homogenisation of culture by global capitalism, which he sees as the root cause of ecological crisis, is keeping the mental subject, the social organisation

of societies and their interaction with their environment in state of constant transformation, mutation and reinvention (Guattari 2008, 45).

When ecology is phrased in this manner, it is easy to tweak the three scales to illustrate a specific type of relationality. As an example, I tend to rephrase the three ecologies in a more spatial manner to first the instant proximity of the entity one could call oneself, the close proximity of the other entities that you are in direct or close contact with, and finally to the wider surrounding that is reachable with one's imagination, a virtual document or a travel that transcends one's everyday realm of mobility. On the scale of a low-hierarchical performance art working group, this model could be used to check up on the overall well-being of the production by mapping out how the needs of an individual member of the group, the social structure of the group dynamic or the wider context of the performance venue or producing institution are met. These categories or fields of happening are intertwined and -connected, which means that all these scales have to be taken into account when solving a problem or making a change in a web of symbiotic participants. Thus, the idea of three ecologies translates to a framing model through which to view the different aspects of a sustainable working culture in the performing arts, and to assess possible practices for a sustainable lifestyle in general.

## SUSTAINABILITY – A TEXTBOOK DEFINITION

In this chapter I will outline basic terminology and a short history of the sustainability movement to give a background and starting point for my own reformulations and considerations of sustainable practices. I am using the book *Sustainability: A History* by Jeremy L. Caradonna (2014) as the main reference throughout this chapter. This volume was chosen as my basic reference because Caradonna maps out the recent history of the sustainability movement, and the recalibration of a movement or ideology can only start from acknowledging its histories. Most importantly, Caradonna is very transparent about the fact that the histories he concentrates on are very Euro-centric and North American, which is important to note since it is exactly the Western, colonising and industrial histories that created the need for the formulation of the sustainability movement in the first place.

Generally, sustainability is a term used to describe a lifestyle or practice that considers the fact that the planet we live on has a limited amount of consumable resources and that we must use and care for them wisely in a way that secures a fulfilling life to the people living now while also allowing the possible flourishing of future generations (I will come back to the definition of “we” and the problematics of the word “resources” later). Caradonna defines the sustainability movement “first and foremost” as “a corrective, counterbalance, and directly tied to climate change”, and sustainability as a corrective concept is indeed strictly tied to capitalism and the idea of an ever-growing economy.

The words “sustainable” and “sustainability” can be traced to the Latin word *sustinēre*, that combines the words *sub* (up from below) and *tenēre* (to hold). *Sustinēre* means to “maintain”, “sustain”, “support”, “endure”, or “to restrain”. The word passed from French (*sostenir*, *soutenir*) to English as the verb “to sustain”, which can already be found in 17<sup>th</sup> century forestry documents. Similarly, the German words *nachhaltig* (sustainable) and *Nachhaltigkeit* (sustainability) entered common use in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through sustained yield forestry documents by Hanz Carl von Carlowitz. Sustainability as a concept and the adjective “sustainable” and the noun

“sustainability” have become mainstream in the 1960s and 1970s along with the contradictory phrase “sustainable growth”. (Caradonna 2014, 7)

The theories and practices that go under the umbrella term “sustainability” are highly diverse and often contradictory or in some degree conflicting with each other. Caradonna aptly quotes John Dryzek, who summarizes “sustainability as a broad debate rather than a specific model, system, or idea” (Caradonna 2014, 12). Nevertheless, Caradonna outlines four shared features that form the intellectual base of the movement: firstly, sustainability thinking entails an ecological worldview interconnecting “human society, the economy and the natural environment” (Caradonna 2014, 12), which is based on the idea of relations and dependencies of species and phenomena rather than seeing “nature” as an endless reserve of consumable resources for human societies. Secondly, societies must “respect their ecological limits or face collapse” (Caradonna 2014, 13), meaning that if a community reaches and crosses the limit of the habitat’s carrying capacity, by e. g. impoverishing their farmland with monoculture farming and toxic pesticides, there will not be enough food and other resources to sustain the members of the community and the community will be endangered or go extinct. Thirdly, human communities must plan wisely and far-sightedly to have the possibility of continuous life and to secure the equal right of future generations to flourish when making decisions in the present. And finally, the sustainability movement needs to “localize and decentralize” its organisation and logistics (Caradonna 2014, 16), which means that local problems need local solutions, and a dangerously homogenising and universalising top-to-bottom organisation should be replaced with strong delegation of power and responsibility together with reorganising the logistics of globalised capitalism.

In addition, the most used categories to highlight the interconnectedness of different areas of society inside sustainability are the “three E’s”: environment, economy and equity/social equality. The E’s stand for the fact that all these areas of life must be in check in order to build a sustainable lifestyle, in other words, only a society that is socially equally organized and builds its economic structures in harmony and correspondence with its environment and its limits can thrive and lead a sustainable life. (Caradonna 2014, 8-9)

## *A short history of sustainability*

Historically the beginning of the sustainability movement is usually situated somewhere in the 1980s, when United Nations started to pick up on the term in its official documents and Green parties and environmental activist organisations had been formed. However, Caradonna interestingly tracks the discourses story back to early modernity and various events and thinkers that led into the term entering everyday language in the late 1900s. Of course, the question of sustainability is old as time and especially relevant from the beginning of agriculture, but Caradonna starts his historical review from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

During early modernity many elite thinkers and policymakers had started to notice, that with the population growing and the need for new fleets rising, there wouldn't be enough timber to build ships and to warm houses, if the forests in Europe were not better sustained – at that time many places in Europe were already severely deforested. Caradonna highlights the national policymaking on conserving forests and practicing sustainable yield forestry as one of the most important pushes towards sustainability thinking in 18<sup>th</sup> century, along with enlightenment thinkers and Romantics, who embraced ideals of equality, education and freedom, and admired nature and its powers. Obviously, the European's colonisation of Africa, America and India had been a handy alternative to resource scarcity and depletion already before, but Caradonna argues that early modernity is when the concept of sustainability as an ideology combining the environment, economics and social equality starts to emerge. (Caradonna 2014, 21-54)

Along with the Industrial Revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century came the idea of a free, unregulated economy, the use of highly pollutive fossil-fuels in the form of coal and oil and the obsession for growth. Caradonna notes at the beginning of his chapter on the Industrial Revolution that “indeed, economic progress is cast as *moral progress*” during this time (Caradonna 2014, 55, emphasis in original), and this modern ideal still sits deep in the present-day Westerners mind. Nonetheless, there were many critiques of an ever-growing economy since the beginning of the era of “*laissez-faire*” economics. Among these was e.g., John Stuart Mill, who advocated for a stationary and steady state

economy, meaning that when sufficient richness and abundance is reached, economic growth of a society should cease, and the state should make sure to maintain the society's well-being and equal distribution of wealth. With its urbanisation and reorganisation of work and the workforce, the 19<sup>th</sup> century was also marked by the rise of trade unions, rights activists, and social parties, that were widely concerned with growing societal inequality, poor working conditions, pollution and health hazards produced by industrial production. These movements are the base of social equality movements today. Another important figure of the 1800s was Charles Darwin, who gave the seeds for the concept and study of ecology with his ground-breaking book *On the Origin of Species* (1859), since ecological, relational thinking is the base of sustainable thinking. (Caradonna 2014, 55-88)

The Industrial Revolution has been a major turn in history forming human and non-human lives and it still dictates our every-day thinking and reality dramatically. Caradonna aptly summarises the situation as follows: “We are now 250 years into what sustainists<sup>1</sup> would characterize as an experiment in unsustainable living called industrialism. In a sense, the Industrial Revolution has never drawn to a close: it has merely changed the shape since the nineteenth century. [...] We still inhabit a stratified, urbanized society that veers on mechanization and fossil fuels and values economic growth above all else.” (Caradonna 2014, 87)

The ecological connotation of the word “environment” dates to the 1950s and began to be widely used in the 1960s. This meant that the ancient dichotomy between human culture and “nature” started to break and the consciousness of the human's place inside an interconnected environment began to spread in Western and industrialised economies. Critiques of the growth economy, blind faith in technological development, pollution and social inequality started to have sharp scientific data to back up their arguments, and many important books on ecology, population growth and risks of pollution gained wide public attention pushing the environmental movement forward. One bestseller from the 1960's was Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), where

---

<sup>1</sup> Caradonna names everyone who has taken on the challenges of sustainability as “sustainists”. The members of this group of people vary “from scientists and engineers to economists, educators, policymakers, and social activists” (Caradonna 2014, 5).

Carson equates the use of toxic pesticides and fertilizers to a nuclear catastrophe and envisions a quiet future when all birds have gone extinct because of the poisonous environment. Through the environmental movement ecological thinking and issues of sustainability strongly entered the political sphere: The United Nations started its own Environmental Program (UNEP) in 1972, and brought together institutions from all over the world ever since; the Green Party had national branches in many European countries already in the 1970s and; the now world-wide activist organisation Greenpeace was formed as an anti-nuclear movement between 1969 and 1972. In addition, growing anti-war, anti-racist and feminist movements set the example of later debates on the third E of sustainability, equality. (Caradonna 2014, 89-111)

Parallely to the environmental movement formed a group of “ecological economists”, who are to thank for the inclusion of the economic system to sustainability thinking. The ecological economists “brought together the dual nature of the Greek word “oikos” (literally: household), which is the etymological root for both “economics” and “ecology”” (Caradonna 2014, 112-113). These economists were concerned with growth-economy and a fossil-fuelled polluting industry, favouring a regulated economy that would take into consideration its dependency and interconnectivity to a healthy, renewable and resilient environment – they wanted to build a sustainable human “household” inside the shared natural environment. (Caradonna 2014, 112-135)

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sustainability had developed from merely a concept to a full-blown movement embraced by universities, state governments, international and national institutions, activists and even commercial businesses worldwide – and the word “sustainable” gained a myriad of different formulations in various contexts. New academic and educational programs in sustainability were started, metrics and models were created to measure human impact on the environment, research and product development on renewable energy increased quickly, (especially encouraged by catastrophes like the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986), principles for organic and ecologically-minded permaculture farming developed and gained wide-spread popularity, and many new international organisations, (like the

UNEP and UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or, IPCC), held conferences, published numerous documents on sustainability principles and struggled to create global agreements to fight pollution and climate change.

One problematic turn of the late 1900s was the coining of the word pair "sustainable development", or "sustainable growth". As they are used in everyday speech, sustainable development and growth seem interchangeable with sustainability, but these terms were condemned from the beginning by sustainists and de-growth economists as an oxymoron and a camouflage term to keep on with growth-based, neo-liberal capitalist business-as-usual without sincerely embracing sustainability principles. Pairing sustainability with perpetual economic growth or development is usually seen as not-big-enough mind-shift to thoroughly balance economical structures with their natural environment. (Caradonna 2014, 136-175)

Despite all the developments of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, one has to note that the Western and industrial societies have not all of a sudden turned sustainable, quite the contrary. But at least the popularisation of the terms "sustainability", "sustainable" and "sustainable development" shows that there is a strong urge to practice otherwise. The sustainability movement is not a unanimous, singular movement, but rather a philosophy and world-view shared by a great variety of agents. Today, the issues of sustainability range from energy, urbanisation, green building, technology development, sustainable agriculture and business, all the way to fighting war, poverty, structural discrimination and abuse. Having a sustainability plan or statement has become more a standard requirement than an exception in action policies of businesses and institutions. The wish for a sustainable, ecologically-minded life has become the main challenge for Western and climate-anxiety-ridden citizens. Still, sustainability statements are often discarded as optimistic, simplifying, discriminating or plainly "green-washing" (referring to false ecological or sustainability promises given by firms and public institutions). The climate is changing more rapidly than ever expected, global inequality and population is growing acceleratingly, we are running out of oil and all the seas are filled with plastic waste – working on the currently popular sustainability models simply does not seem to be doing enough to meet the

terrifying challenges of today's societies. So, what seems to be the problem with sustainability, how should it be reformulated?

## THE MAJOR BUGS IN SUSTAINABILITY: ANTHROPOCENTRISM, ADMIRING AUSTERITY & CONTINUING BUSINESS-AS-USUAL

The third E of sustainability, standing for social equality, is the most important E for me: if social equality is in check, other things will follow. Of course, the first E, standing for ecology, reminds us of the crucial baseline that we live in an irreducibly interconnected and horrifyingly symbiotic world, but this should be obvious to everyone by now (even though with saying this I know that is not at all obvious to almost anyone, which is also why I am writing this thesis). Moreover, if the capitalist, industrial human societies would truly and deeply acknowledge their ecological mode of existence, our social equality would already be in check, since we would already consider every thing's wellbeing. That said, fair economics follow social equality, because economics is a system for lifeforms to "organize their enjoyment" (Morton 2017, 5). This is why the third sustainability E of Equality needs proper refiguring and expansion, and also deserves to be the first one in the list.

To reach social equality is to make social space radically inclusive – not inclusive as assuming sameness, harmony or ease, but to fully dive into the messy, risky, non-innocent collective we call Earth. Ontologist and philosopher Timothy Morton attempts to rewrite communist ideology in his book *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People* (2017) claiming, that the main "bug" in Marxist thought is human-centrism and the exclusion of nonhuman agents from economic models. Following Morton's phrasing, I argue that the major bug in sustainability thinking, or the Western, capitalist, industrial human world view in general, is human-centrism. When Jeremy L. Caradonna drafts the future of sustainability in the final chapter of his book stating that "the first and most important challenge of the sustainability movement is to get people on the same page" (Caradonna 2014, 235), it is exactly the page of questioning Anthropos human-centrism that we all need to get to. In order to move past anthropocentrism, the concept of "human" and what kind of entities it includes needs to be thoroughly questioned and recalibrated.

In this chapter I will give insights to how sustainability could be reformulated or updated through feminist and post-human theory, with special focus on creating sustainable language and equality-driven concepts. The chapter is divided into six parts: the two first ones focus on feminist wording and sustainability, the third on how the human thinking and language could be expanded to include the nonhuman agent, the fourth one concentrates on why pleasure and joy should be in the centre of sustainable practice and the fifth on reformulating the ecological subject. The sixth and concluding part is a more personal plea for stopping business-as-usual and breaking the current thinking patterns to formulate sustainable life anew.

### *Intersectional, post-human feminism for the exhausted 99%*

If the goal of the sustainability movement is to guarantee flourishing both for the ones living now and for the future generations, principles must be created so that all kinds of flowers may bloom. Today, most living things on our planet are exhausted by just existing because of oppressing sexism, racism and speciesism, or in the worst-case scenario, already extinct – this leaves us all in a risky state of impoverishment, precarity and vulnerability. The expectation and favouring of sameness, which signifies equally e.g., patriarchy, nationalism, and monoculture farming, seems absurd in any ecological thought: the study on evolution, ecosystems, symbiosis and interaction between and inside entities shows that life thrives in multi-species collaborations of curious forms and variations and in extreme reliance of the others' existence. However, the global, neo-liberal, growth-obsessed, fossil-fuelled capitalism is based on colonialism and slavery of both human and nonhuman subjects, which must end for an equal organisation of enjoyment for all to arise.

Feminist theorist Sara Ahmed describes the exhaustion caused by being oppressed and fighting for equality in her book *Living a feminist life* (2017). Writing on privilege, she points out that merely standing up and existing within the prevailing structures of oppression, e.g., sexism and racism,

requires all the energy of some human beings, not leaving resources for any activity other than mere survival (Ahmed 2017, 175). Simultaneously, these structures stay hidden for the more privileged ones, allowing them to focus on other actions than fighting for their right to exist, and thus the privileged thrive on the expense of the others' exhaustion, accumulating more and more power to themselves. Women, people of colour, transgenders, homosexuals, disabled people, working-class people, refugees, indigenous people, among others, use significant amounts of their energy resources for mere survival in patriarchal, capitalist, racist, ableist<sup>2</sup>, nationalist and puritan societal structures, which does not enhance equal opportunity for flourishing nor leading a sustainable lifestyle.

Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser illustrate the issue of exhaustion on the scale of global capitalism in their manifesto *Feminism for the 99%* (2019). They argue that contemporary feminism must be anti-capitalist, because capitalism as a system hides, by devaluing, the labour of creating and tending to new human beings, while focusing on the well-being of profit- and product-making labour. With this devaluing the system dismisses the necessity of reproducing new human workers for the continuity of capitalist economy, while relentlessly abusing this labour. In other words, “- oppression in capitalist societies is rooted in the subordination of social reproduction to production for profit” (Arruzza, Bhattacharya & Fraser 2019, 20). Social reproduction and care work in patriarchal societies falls on the shoulders of women and other “others”, even more to members of the financially poorest classes of society, even more on people of colour, and so on, not giving credit to work done by the already exhausted 99%.

The manifestos name *Feminism for the 99%* aims to highlight that social equality is far from being established, even though the most privileged 1% of class-society would have the illusion of having reached gender equality or tackled racism in elite, academic, head-of-business and -state cabinets. Similarly, the reproduction work of nonhuman subjects, e.g., calves, apples and mineral crystals, is completely hidden and bypassed in the anthropocentric capitalist system, rendering everything outside the human

---

<sup>2</sup> Ableism is prejudice and discrimination towards disabled people (or towards those seen as disabled in the eyes of normatively able-bodied people).

realm as mere “natural resources” and energy slaves to be governed and consumed. In this contemporary capitalist system, every body and every thing is ultimately oppressed by the oppression of both human and nonhuman “others”, since co-dependence is the very fundament and key element enabling life in the symbiotic real of our shared world. This means that if one hopes to live in a sustainable community of diverse beings, one must take care that no-one is exhausted by mere survival or hidden, enslaving labour simply in the favour of others. To summarize, the sustainability movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be intersectionally feminist and post-human in the most non-anthropocentric sense.

### *Post-human as post-Anthropos*

Post-humanism is not a unitary field of theory, and the following paragraphs are dedicated to defining what kind of post-humanism my work is connected to. Feminist post-human theorist Rosi Braidotti states in her book *Nomadic Theory: The Portable* (2011), that “the question of what exactly counts as the ‘human’ and what constitutes the basic unit of reference for the human in the globalized world is more urgent than ever” (Braidotti 2011, 279). She refers to the relativity of who can enjoy human rights in the era of growing global injustice, taking forms of e.g., neo-fascist nationalism and increasing amounts of war and climate refugees. So, what exactly is it in the human and the humanity that aims to be faded out with the post-prefix? Too often the post-human associates to a transhuman ideal, meaning that the expected figure emerging after the defeat of the current human-species is another type of indestructible human race enhanced with technology – and it maybe goes without saying that this superhuman is generally not female, queer, disabled, a person of colour or part of an indigenous community. It is exactly the delusion of human as the crown of all creation, in control of the balance of ecosystems, that must be trashed to bring the sustainability movement to this day. Thus, post-humanism in this work equals post-anthropocentrism, referring to an era where the human Anthropos is no longer the main character or the top symbiont, but rather one of the many entities in the ecological chains and rhizomes of the symbiotic real.

With that said, also the Anthropos in anthropocentrism needs to be specified through a feminist lens. The prefix “anthropo-” comes from the Greek root *anēr*, which means “man”, not as in species or humanity, but “as opposed to woman, a god, or a boy” (*OED*, 20 September 2019). In other words, male dominance, male point of view and man as the default agent is currently inscribed in the language used to refer to all humans – who are everything else but simply male – thereby dismissing the diversity of humanity. Post-humanism as post-anthropocentrism must consequently inherently include post-patriarchy thinking and wording for formulating the language for a sustainable, shared ecological future.

Following this thought, feminist biologist, philosopher and writer Donna J. Haraway criticizes the word “Anthropocene” in her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene* (2016) arguing that even though the term was coined to point out the devastating impact of human action on the era we on Planet Earth are currently living in, it only manages to reaffirm the universalist, white cis-male elite as the centre of attention, rendering them the power to reign over and demolish all other life. By naming our era the Anthropocene, we narrow the ecological narrative of the symbiotic real to the singular ruler story of Man, a typically Western Hero, the story of weapons and victories, the uniqueness and superiority of Man’s actions upon other beings. This kind of a protagonist-emphasizing plot structure of the Anthropocene-story overlooks the relational, rhizomatic nature of our reality, and steals agency from everything else than the glorious Anthropos. There are other ways to highlight the subtractive and oppressing nature of anthropo-violence on Earth, and Haraway presents the borrowed terms Capitalocene<sup>3</sup> and Plantationocene<sup>4</sup> as alternative names for the Anthropocene. Capitalocene would point to the fact that the ever-expanding global capitalism has had the most prominent impact to the geological era today (Haraway 2016, 47-51), and Plantationocene would stand “for the devastating transformation of diverse kinds of human-tended farms, pastures, and forests into extractive and enclosed plantations, relying on slave labour or other

---

<sup>3</sup> Originally coined by Andreas Malm in *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (2016).

<sup>4</sup> Originally coined in 2014 during a taped conversation at the University of Aarhus. See: Haraway et al. 2017 for the published transcript between the six scholars that led to this wordsmithing.

forms of exploited, alienated, and usually transported labour” (Haraway 2016, 206).

Exercising precision in describing the sustainability challenges of the capitalist, industrial human civilisation is crucial for finding adequate solutions for sustaining abundant and equally enjoyable living for all. The challenges are not universal as in the same, even though they might be globally shared, and the agents solving those challenges are locally specific and contextually situated. In the beginning of her lecture on post-human feminism at Columbia University (2017) Rosi Braidotti states that the greatest contribution feminist theory has done to critical thinking is acknowledging thinking as “embodied and embedded, situated and accountable” (*Rosi Braidotti: Posthuman Feminism* 21.6.2019, 8:38), refusing the tendency for universalism in male-dominant academia and patriarchal thinking. So rather than flattening the definition of humanity to the privileged Anthropos, or giving Man the single authority to decide histories of the symbiotic real, sustainable feminist wording and concepting must respect locality and context, and illustrate the complexity of humanity – in Braidotti’s words, “speak from somewhere specific, don’t do the God’s trick” (*Rosi Braidotti: Posthuman Feminism* 21.6.2019, 8:52).

### *Inviting the nonhuman in*

The work towards a post-anthropocentric sustainability starts with inviting the nonhuman into the human world. Many writers and thinkers of ecology, post-humanism and sustainability see that there has been an era of breakage or division in human history, where some humans had the idea of distancing themselves from their utterly symbiotic being in the world and started calling their surroundings, and even parts of their own bodies, as “nature”: the outside, the externality. In his book *Humankind: Solidarity with nonhuman people* (2017), philosopher Timothy Morton dramatically calls this distancing the Severing, and places it to the beginnings of Mesopotamian agriculture and “agricultural-age religion” (Morton 2017, 20) where the resourcing and claiming ownership of soil, seeds and other-than-human-animals began. Morton writes: “The Severing is a foundational, traumatic fissure between [...]

*reality* (the human-correlated world) and *the real* (ecological symbiosis of human and nonhuman part of the biosphere)” (Morton 2017, 13, emphasis in original). He sees this division as a trauma and absurdity, that enabled the enslavement, oppression and abuse of the nonhuman other, the nonhuman including equally the victims of speciesism, racism and sexism, and this division has grown to ever vaster scales and taken myriads of forms throughout the centuries of the human industrial civilization.

Personally, the realisation of this gap’s existence, and its many forms, have proven the Severing to be a basic cause of exhaustion and anxiety on an everyday basis: the ambiguity of the wish to find a way back to a communication that I feel is lost, but that I already inevitably always take part in. No wonder I feel uneasy: “since nonhumans compose our very bodies, it’s likely that the Severing has produced physical as well as psychic effects, scars of the rip between reality and the real” (Morton 2017, 13). The fracture is so deep, it is not enough to simply realize, that we need to stop using fossil-based pesticides to avoid poisoning ourselves and other “useful” species, like flower-polluting bees; that is what Morton would call “infrastructural maintenance”, that is usually aimed towards sustaining merely “a reasonably human-friendly environment” (Morton 2017, 37). We need to include all the other-, non-, or more-than-humans into our “we”. The basics of existence need to be re-established in order to lead a sustainable life.

Morton suggests solidarity as a basic possibility condition for life and existence in the cosmic heap of relations he calls the symbiotic real. In his view, solidarity is a dependency acknowledgment far deeper and more equality-driven than sympathy or empathy, which both inherently include some level of dominance over the other, and favour recognition and familiarity over ambiguity. Solidarity is not a harmonious, easy, or simple mode, but rather an uncanny, paranoid mode rocking between feelings of fascination, lust, love, disgust, discomfort and horror – similarly, Donna J. Haraway often describes symbiotic relationships to be non-innocent rather than proper or pure. Morton describes solidarity as “human psychic, social and philosophical being resisting the Severing”, that is, opposing the “cozy, seemingly self-contained and [...] walled off” human world “from the disturbing/wonderful paranoid play of the symbiotic real” (Morton 2017, 23).

To add to the toolbox of situated knowledge, Morton has created some simple but possibly effective thinking tools as ways to start chipping away the human-nonhuman divide. One tool I especially appreciate is something Morton calls *subscendence*, which is a playful way to approach tricky, enormously huge and complex concepts like capitalism and climate change, or the human. Subscendence means that rather than using an over-arching, detail-eating way of describing huge challenges or entities by stating that “a whole is greater than the sum of its parts”, one can turn the course of the categorizing game by stating that “a whole is *less* than the sum of its parts” (Morton 2017, 101, emphasis in original). In other words, “some things could be physically huge, yet ontologically tiny” (Morton 2017, 104). This means, to put it simply, that one is always many. It is to say that all of the “parts” that consist a “whole” are numerous, if not uncountable, and equally important and valid in the symbiotic relationship of the real as the “whole” itself, and thus have a life of their own aside from being an agent in the human, or global capitalism, or climate change. The vastness of the effects of a warming climate, or the impact of ever-spreading neoliberal capitalism, are huge things, but they exist as any other thing in the big messy heap of the symbiotic real. Thinking this way, things might get a bit easier to grasp, it becomes possible to start inquiring a problem without being overwhelmed by the monstrous scale of it, and every one’s local deeds and needs become slightly more meaningful – the discourse becomes situated and embodied.

Another helpful notion from Morton is making things cheap, as in making concepts or names so applicable and vague, so common that they become everybody’s property. As an example, solidarity in his writing is very, very cheap, it is so profound that no effort is needed to find it – solidarity is already everywhere, because it is the constituting force of the symbiotic real. So, what if the concept of human was so cheap, it could apply to any thing? If the problem of Anthropos is the exclusion of the messy abundance of otherness and uncanniness, could a way to saturate anthropocentrism be to call every thing human? At least the cheapening of human could be used to play with some popular human-centred definitions of sustainability: in the IUCN *World Conservation Strategy* (1980), the “development” in sustainable development is defined as “the modification of the biosphere and the application of the

human, financial, living and non-living resources to satisfy human needs and improve the quality of human life” (IUCN 1980, Introduction). What if the word “human” was replaced by “seal”, or “bacteria”, or “cacti”, or erased altogether, making life itself the protagonist of the definition? I personally like to narrow the gap between entities by calling every body a “person” or “*tyyppi*”<sup>5</sup> as an everyday post-human feminist wording practice to create small cracks in the imperialism of Anthropos in the way I structure my reality. Donna J. Haraway would rather replace the human altogether by referring to things as “critters” or “holoents” (Haraway 2016, 60). Whichever way it is done, it is vital to reformulate language to create and support sustainable futures.

### *Sustainable excess and pleasure*

Anthropocentrism includes a certain admiration for universality, sameness, wholeness, and consequently of purity, balance, controllability, and perfection. This translates to sustainability thinking as the admiration of efficiency and austerity as the ultimate ecological virtue, that crystallises in the concept of simple living, a lifestyle that opposes the excessive capitalist consumer culture. Doing less as a human and refusing property are unquestionably important to moving towards a non-anthropocentric sustainability, but what if the excessive capitalist tendency to consume, which is often associated with wasteful pleasure and enjoyment, could also reveal something basic about the human connection to the complex and vibrant symbiotic real?

Timothy Morton suggests that there is a “trapdoor” through the excess of consumerism, the underlining superstructure of capitalism, into ecological thinking. He states that “this ecological awareness would not depend on the ‘right’ or ‘proper’ ecological being, and thus would not depend on ‘a metaphysical pseudo-fact’” (Morton 2017, 66), the pseudo-fact here referring to the monotheist higher power that Donna J. Haraway would call “sky god”, another example of the one-to-rule-them-all anthro-po-logic. To oppose the

---

<sup>5</sup> The word “*tyyppi*”, which I often use for calling things in my mother tongue, best translates from Finnish to English in this context as “fellow”, suggests Pietari Kärki.

puritan logic, philosopher Allan Stoekl attempts to reformulate sustainability thinking with excess and ecstasy at its core in his book *Bataille's Peak: Energy, religion and postsustainability* (2007), where he drafts the idea of postsustainability for the era after the depletion of fossil fuels with the help of work by anthropologist and philosopher Georges Bataille. Stoekl's biggest concerns are the nature of energy and how the use of energy is tied to the formulation of the subject. Like Morton, Stoekl suggests that a possible pathway to a more ecological life is the underlying force of its biggest antagonist, consumerism: "Maybe there is something profound, something archaic and fundamental in spending" (Stoekl 2007, 121).

Stoekl, following Bataille, sees expenditure, generosity and the ecstasy of spending as the driving force of the universe and its lifeforms. An important notion in Bataille's work is the idea of a "general economy". Stoekl summarizes the basic principle of the general economy as follows: "living organisms always, eventually, produce more than they need for simple survival and reproduction" (Stoekl 2007, 36). This, in turn, is based on the idea of the sun as planet Earth's main energy resource, which always produces energy in excess by burning, and that excess solar energy powers our ecosystems – in other words, all life on this planet is based on excessive spending of the energy stored in different kinds of bodies. Consequently, what is problematic in the sustainability movement is that it is tied to the acknowledgement of the finitude of fossil fuels (and other unrenowable resources) and thus the idea of a "closed" economy, or what Timothy Morton would call the cozy, walled-off human world. A closed economy is based on the stock-piling and calculated use of energy as merely the power to do work, something Stoekl would call "homogenous energy". A controlled, utilitarian and efficiency-driven view on energy also produces an ideal of a controlled and proper subject, which in its austerity neglects the excessive nature of energy expenditure of the subject's body as a part in the solar, general economy. The general economy is of "heterogenous energy", that is "energy of the body, of useless body motion in deleterious time", which is "inseparable from the putting into question of the coherency of the body, of the self, and of God, that supreme self" (Stoekl 2007, 135). Here, just as Morton, and Rosi Braidotti as presented under the headline below, Stoekl calls for the acknowledgement of the body as an ecological entity, and the insufficiency of

the human scale as the primary scale: heterogenous energy “is the energy of celestial bodies, matter beyond or below appropriation by the human” (Stoekl 2007, 135).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Stoekl’s expenditure is not equivalent to the reckless spending of fossil fuels and the acceleration of anxiety, pollution and species extinction caused by it. Stoekl’s postsustainable expenditure happens on the intimate scale of the body, and he sees the use of muscle and body power as the main energy modes of the post-fossil era – the wasteful use of energy following the aesthetics of the above mentioned sustainable simple living. He describes the industrial, oil-based anthropocentrism as a block in the way of tapping into the generosity of the unplanned, heterogenous general economy. Stoekl writes: “In speaking of the finitude of energy supplies, we are only speaking of the limits to the human, the fundamentally limited availability of ordered energy capable of doing ‘work’ for Man” (Stoekl 2007, 223); again, the human-nature divide does not hold under ecological pressure. Thus, Stoekl’s future sustainability, or postsustainability, is no longer based on the stock-piling closed economy logic of production-consumption, but rather making sure that the glorious expenditure of life may continue through orgiastic recycling and reuse of energy: “the world is sustained as a fundamentally unplanned aftereffect of the tendency to expend” (Stoekl 2007, 144).

Timothy Morton also calls for replacing survival and need at the core of organising society with an emphasis on enjoyment: “an ecological society that doesn’t put pleasure enhancement and diversification at its centre is ecological in name only” (Morton 2017, 120). He formulates economics as the ways in which we organize enjoyment, and to include nonhumans in economic structures means that every one’s enjoyment must be considered. Similarly to how Stoekl wants to proliferate excess and pleasure from efficient, planned goals, Morton wants to liberate desire from the notion of need: he states that need is a desire that is already fulfilled or taken out of context (Morton 2017, 141), thus narrowing down desire as the basic fascination and curiosity beings have towards each other into mere efficiency logistics of survival tasks. Letting go of anthropocentrism would require that the basic view on life is not based on survival in evolutionary competition or deterministic control of resources,

but the abundant, random vitality of fascination, and excessive use and bodily regeneration of energy. Pleasure is not simply a human condition but shared by humans and nonhumans alike, filling the possibly “simple” post-fossil living with rich interaction rather than scarcity of resources. A sustainable future is thus formed in complex, passionate ecologies in the interplay of porous and intertwined subjects.

### *The ecological subject & sustainable ethics*

Bringing sustainability thinking to the scale of the singular body, Rosi Braidotti sees reformulating the subject as an ecologically bound entity as the fundament for sustainable politics and ethics. For Braidotti, sustainability is “not the abstract economic ideal that development and social planning specialists often reduce it to”, but a matter-of-fact, complex, material and bodily, joyful and painful “concrete social and ethical practice” (Braidotti 2011, 309-310).

In the last part of her book *Nomadic Theory: The Portable* (2011) Braidotti lays out the basic principles of affirmative ethics as based on a nomadic subject, that is “an assemblage of forces or flows, intensities, and passions that solidify in space and consolidate in time within the singular configuration commonly known as an ‘individual’ self” (Braidotti 2011, 302-303). She goes on by specifying that “this intensive and dynamic entity is rather a portion of forces that is stable enough to sustain and undergo constant though non-destructive fluxes of transformation” (Braidotti 2011, 303). A key concept in the sustainability of a nomadic subject are its “sustainability thresholds”, the limits of what a body can endure without breaking or transforming into an unidentifiable form in the transforming process of death. These limits are utterly local and specific to an ecological entity, which means that different rules apply in different situations with different lifeforms and symbiotic dependencies, and these differences must be respected as positive and life-forming. Consequently, “ethics is a matter of experimentation” (Braidotti 2011, 348), not a mode of social control over the other or policy to safeguard one’s own power position. In addition, to truly respect every one’s sustainability thresholds is to acknowledge the cry-out “I can’t take it

anymore” as an ethical statement, “not the assertion of defeat” (Braidotti 2011, 318).

Braidotti sees the limits and recognition of the entangled, bound and mutually dependent nature of ecological, nomadic subjects as a frame for the subject’s freedom, and the ever-on-going process of becoming of a partial and fluid nomadic subject as joyful. Instead of looking at positivity and negativity in the traditional sense as good and bad, Braidotti reformulates positivity as the possibility of the interactive, joyful flow of vital, vibrant, constantly forming and transforming matter (that Braidotti calls “zoe”), and negativity as a blockage, stop and interference in the possibility to be in contact with symbiotic others. Pleasure, and the ability to turn negative passions into positive passion, are at the core of sustainable ethics, which happens by “reintroducing time, movement, and transformation into a stifling enclosure saturated with unprocessed pain” (Braidotti 2011, 314). This does not exclude the inevitability of experiencing some pain: in fact, Braidotti reminds us that pain is an implicit part of any change, and that pain needs to be taken care of, so it will not formulate yet another blockage of negativity.

Braidotti suggests that “by adopting a different vision of subject and with it a new notion of the nature-culture interaction, legal theory may be able to move beyond a modernist and rather reductive conception of environmental justice and environmental crime as based only on harm and reparation” (Braidotti 2011, 354). The pay-back logic of rightful and limited compensation must be abandoned as useless, since no thing is tied to merely one other thing, and the idea of rights and mutual reciprocity vanishes in the mesh of uneasily symbiotic human-nonhuman relations. Braidotti underlines the acknowledgement of the legal subject as an ecological, post-anthropocentric collective unit with a post-human temporality as the core of sustainable justice (Braidotti 2011, 354-355). Applying this view of the subject to the capitalist, industrial systems of justice might just turn sustainability back to the right track, even though it would probably mean the erasure of the whole prevailing legal system altogether. Radical non-anthropocentric reformulation of the subject and consequently that subjects’ equal rights to life, pleasure and action is needed to create sustainable practices, and these practices might look, smell, sound and feel very different from the current human practices for

justice, work, leisure, reproduction, love and life. As Braidotti concludes: “the sustainability of the future rests on our ability to mobilize, actualize, and deploy cognitive, affective, and ethical forces that had not been activated thus far” (Braidotti 2011, 286-287).

*Humans: take a break, go on strike, slow down, take a weaker stance*

At the face of the vastness of our Severing, the tremendous amounts and layers of oppression of all kinds of humans (including the nonhuman humans) I meet every day, and while realizing that I am not, or never have been, what I used to think “I am”, my system quickly overheats, short-circuits and almost burns out. I want to cry out loud: “stop, hold up, I can’t keep up!”. I need a break. I am overwhelmed, terrified, I am anxious, I am exhausted, and I need a break. And that is exactly what everybody should do: take a holiday from the business-as-usual that will inevitably destroy us all.

Rosi Braidotti argues for reassessing the legal subject and the “human” in post-humanism. Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg begins a school strike for climate justice, my therapist advises me to go on sick-leave to sustain myself: a break, a crack is needed to rethink existence in ecological terms, to rebuild a sustainable society, to recuperate oneself. It seems so obvious, nevertheless so utterly absurd and out of question to stop business-as-usual and rethink. Whenever a move towards a more equal, sustainable world is made, we get cold feet right at the minute we realize that it was only a little peek into the keyhole of the door opening towards the entirety of the symbiotic real: the sustainability movement is a plaster on capitalism when the wheels of fossil-fuelled industrialism get stuck, feminism based merely on gender-equality is only one step down on the never-ending staircase of histories of inequality and oppression. From a personal point of view, after realizing that I am close to a burn-out, the more troubling realization was that I radically needed to change my routines and thinking to adapt to this new reality opening in front of me – phew, it will require so much work to stop working!

Sara Ahmed describes the following of norms in society as traffic, and the rules of that traffic are extremely hard to go against (Ahmed 2017, 45). The norms, e.g., capitalism, the patriarchy, anthropocentrism, Western cultures, are so powerful, the stream of the traffic so strong, that it takes all of one's effort to derive from the well-trodden path. No wonder we don't dare to stop and ask who is the human in post-humanism, or what sustainability could be without capitalism, or "what if I just took a sick-leave and didn't go to work?". It seems like we have to go on, we have to produce, to eat, to move, to travel, to "live to the fullest", to forget all the slaves that are actually doing all the work for us just to exist and survive; because that's how it has always been, that's what's right, that's what's good, that's what's simple. We must keep going as we used to just to keep things up and running, keep doing business-as-usual in order not to crumble, to collapse, dismantle, break, pause – to change, to transform. The unknown future is so terrifying, so full of uncertainty, so intense and filled with uncanny, unfamiliar life that the risk feels simply too big to take.

Nevertheless, we need to take the time to listen to the oppressed, fight for their rights, to mourn colonial violence and losses of mass extinction, to rest exhausted bodies, and most importantly, to leave anthropocentrism behind: in Sara Ahmed's words, we need to learn how to "ruin what ruins" (Ahmed 2017, 40). The change will be painful, and Rosi Braidotti reminds us to be enormously careful with making sure that the negativity of a past event is transformed into positive, empowering actions in the present for future sustainability. Us human-animal humans need to rethink what we are, who we are here with, and build new sustainable ethics and guidelines for here and now, to also be able to exist and organize enjoyment equally in the future. Only then can we pick up the trillion pieces of the shattered puzzle of the nature-culture-divide, patriarchy, or capitalism, and reorganize the bits in billions of peculiar, obscured, porous, queer, and beautiful ways and start reformulating a sustainable life anew. To give this chapter an apt conclusion, I want to quote Braidotti one more time:

"Why should one pursue this project? For no reason at all. Reason has nothing to do with this. Let's just do it for the hell of it – to be worthy of our times while resisting the times and for the love of the world." (Braidotti 2011, 298)

## BETTER STORYTELLING FOR EARTHLY SURVIVAL

If we industrial western-world humans are to lead a sustainable life both now and in the future, we must change our way of thinking, speaking and acting – namely, we need to tell better, more diverse stories of life. As Haraway writes, “it matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with, - - it matters what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions” (Haraway 2016, 12). Here is where art comes into the picture: as all the arts have a tradition of introducing new and diverse ways of experiencing, sensing and seeing the world throughout history, artists also play a crucial role in changing the story of the heroic Anthropos towards a more complex, ecological-minded storytelling today. A sustainable art piece cannot only run on wind-power and consist of recycled materials, it also must dive into the messy matter of the symbiotic real in its content and language and acknowledge the nonhuman forces that already inhabit artistic work.

Timothy Morton and Donna J. Haraway are my dearest co-thinkers on language, storytelling and nonhuman subjects – I borrow the name of this chapter from the film *Story Telling for Earthly Survival* (2016) about Haraway’s work by Fabrizio Terranova. Both Morton and Haraway, together with their reference network, provide concrete theories and tools for reformulating the narrative of artistic work towards a less anthropocentric, more sustainable mode. In the previous chapter, I introduced Morton’s playful work on the “cheapening” and subsistence of concepts. In this chapter I will focus on Donna J. Haraway’s views and tools on multi-species storytelling “attuned to still possible finite flourishing, still possible recuperation” (Haraway 2016, 10), a.k.a. storytelling towards a more sustainable life, together with describing how those tools might translate into different narrative forms in performance.

Haraway puts a strong emphasis on creating and collecting new words to describe our symbiotic reality to avoid anthropocentrism. In the centre of her work is the move of replacing the name of our era from Anthropocene to a

more ecologically-minded, symbiosis-acknowledging Chthulucene. The Chthulucene is inhabited by the chtonic<sup>6</sup> ones, that “are not safe; [...] they belong to no one; they writhe and luxuriate in manifold forms and manifold names in all the airs, waters and places on earth” (Haraway 2016, 2). Haraway also describes the Chthulucene as follows: “the unfinished Chthulucene must collect up the trash of the Anthropocene, the determinism of Capitalocene, and chipping and shredding and layering like a mad gardener make a much hotter compost pile for still possible pasts, presents and futures” (Haraway 2016, 57). Apart from a beautiful description of a possible near future, I read this passage as a call to ruin what ruins, to start building new complex, multi-layered, non-linear stories from the uneasy and hurtful histories of oppression the Western industrial civilisation is based on. A sustainable artistic practice must have a strong emphasis on reformulating both artistic and organisational language to articulate new, porous, inherently relational and more equal worlds.

In the performing arts, storytelling does not only happen through text or writing, even though scripting plots and communicating through program texts and written materials in installations or site-specific pieces are central practices in constructing performance events. The idea of formulating new language in performance expands to performative body practices, the composition and dramaturgy of pieces and the representations the performance material creates when composed in a specific order. Thus, ecologically complex and sustainable storytelling in performance could mean anything from e.g., decomposing the conventional climax-oriented dramaturgy into more steadily ongoing, fragmented or pulsating events during the performance, to e.g., refocusing nonhuman agents as the protagonists of a piece through spatial placement and lighting or to creating movement and voice practices focusing on human-nonhuman relationality and interaction. The manifold of practices included under the umbrella term “performing arts” makes this field an especially fertile platform for exploring and inventing symbiotically sustainable narratives.

---

<sup>6</sup> See Haraway 2016, 169 note 2, for a specification of how the spelling of Chthulucene was decided upon and how “chtionic” does not refer to Lovecraft’s Cthulhu or any other “monster or deity”.

In addition to finding rich forms, concepts and wording to describe our ecological reality, acknowledging creative processes as a collective, ecological, symbiotic processes is at the core of a sustainable art practice. In the third chapter of *Staying with the Trouble* Haraway evokes the term *sympoiesis* with the help of M. Beth Dempster (Haraway 2016, 33) to highlight the nature of storytelling as a collective act. Sympoiesis simply means “making-with”, which means that nothing in the world is self-organizing or autopoietic (Haraway 2016, 58). Haraway writes: “*Sympoiesis* is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding with, in company” (Haraway 2016, 58, emphasis in original). A crucial mode of sympoiesis is writing history in remembrance of the symbiotic nature of both the past and the present, meaning the acknowledgement of past human and nonhuman cultures and their extinction alongside with seeking for more apt representations for presenting forms of abundant, diverse forms of living. Today, it is still very hard to keep alive any other stories than the devastating victory march of the colonising, oppressing, growth-based capitalist Anthropos. Thus, the practice of telling better, more complex, more ecological stories is not only post-human, but also deeply feminist, anti-colonial, and anti-racist. I would argue that recognizing storytelling as always in sympoiesis is a way towards sustainable storytelling in favour of the ongoingness of all kinds of humans and critters.

Sympoiesis is to some extent inherent in the performing arts, since theatre and dance pieces are most often collaborations between professionals from different fields of performance and stage design, but the organisation of work and crediting of pieces still tends to focus around single authors as writers, directors or choreographers. Moreover, including the nonhuman agents of performances into authorship and marketing communication is even rarer than crediting wholes and collectives, and communicating the collaborative mode of creating performances more accurately could be one concrete mode of making sympoiesis visible. But realising work in sympoiesis can also take many other forms than proper crediting or acknowledgement of what life forces were at play during the creation of a piece: it could mean building work outdoors to minimise human control and maximise the environments element of surprise, working in transdisciplinary art-science-hybrids, basing collaborations on multi-species entanglements, or creating a platform of

feminist alliance in giving a privileged space to artists representing oppressed minorities or forgotten non-Anthropo-centric histories. Sympoiesis might also show in practical organisation of the everyday life structures of working groups and more equal delegation of responsibility amongst the group members, which I will exemplify in more detail in the next chapter.

## STAYING WITH THE TROUBLE OF STAYING TOGETHER - QUESTIONS & CONCERNS FOR STRUCTURING SUSTAINABLE COLLABORATIONS

As an already-exhausted, anxious MA level academic dance artist, that has never practiced work completely outside of an educational institution, I am terrified to enter the symbiotic real of the working life of a freelance artist: the material and financial resources are getting scarcer, the production cycle of performing arts pieces keep shortening and accelerating and more and more colleagues are equally restless and burnt out as I am. The urgency for formulating sustainable working cultures and structures in the performing arts is greater than ever. Therefore, I want to pose questions and draft guidelines for working groups that wish to structure their work sustainably in a deeply ecological, post-Anthropos sense. In addition to literature and inspirational examples of organisation from the European performing arts field, the thoughts I present in this chapter are strongly affected by my experience of being a young contemporary dance artist. To contextualise my thoughts on working groups and artistic work, I will next share a few characterizing aspects of my professional background.

I have been educated in dance and choreography in theatre academies in Denmark and Finland, with an emphasis on the professionalism of a dancer as a maker and self-producing artist rather than strictly an interpreter and employee of another author. Most of my own artistic work has happened in small, low-hierarchical group structures or responsibility-sharing collectives. The roles of performer, maker, choreographer/director and producer have always been combined or existed side-by-side in my work. Thus, I tend to be interested in poking my nose into all the work phases, folds and nooks of the rhizomatic ecology of a performing arts production.

In addition, or maybe as a result of this haunting curiosity, or the shape-shifter working mode, I see the structuring of a production and the piece's artistic content as utterly inter-connected and entangled. In other words, I

would argue that there is no material that is not limited and thus shaped by and inside the funding, scheduling, social and material frames of a piece: just like the walled-off Anthropos idea of humanity is absurd in the ecological wake, a genius, authentic artistic idea, that would stay untouched by the binding relational production structures surrounding it, seems unthinkable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Consequently, creating sustainable production structures entails that the same rules and values apply for actions both on stage and off stage. This means that the ethics of working towards an art piece must correlate with the ethics described in the artistic work itself – a piece can hardly be feminist or post-human if its creation was not organised in a feminist, post-human mode. In my point of view, sustainability can only be reached, if there is a coherence in ethics between different areas of life – or different areas of work, in this case the building of a piece and the public performance of a piece. Thus, sustainability measures must reach all the areas of a performing arts production, and that will most certainly mean changes in the form, aesthetics and priorities of art pieces, just as a feminist, non-anthropocentric sustainability movement would most likely have a new, non-unitary, uncanny look to it.

In this chapter, I will suggest thematic areas to be considered when building more sustainable working constellations in the frame of professional working groups in the field of performing arts. I have gathered the areas to consider under six categories, that are: equality and communication, energy use, enjoyment, temporality, locality, and delegating responsibility. I use the idea of posing similar questions to both the structuring of working culture and to the structuring of the artistic material of a piece as a dialogical thread throughout this chapter. The categories presented below are entangled and often overlap each other, just like Guattari's three ecologies, and thus must be taken into consideration with equal care.

Nonetheless, I must note that it would be utterly hypocrite to state that one could always have one's eyes on everything, that one could solve all sustainability issues during one production – or during one lifetime, or even a century. The illusion of such control over one's actions would be yet another way of elevating oneself to a pedestal above others and discarding one's limits. It is very easy to slip to the familiar, cosy, safe, anthropocentric assumption

that things could be well-planned, balanced and kept in a status quo for infinite flourishing while reading any kind of guidelines for sustainable practices. Thus, it is crucial to remember that sustainability is a constant, locally specific, embodied, ever-changing process of negotiation, just like striving for social equality, or finding ways to recover energy sufficiently, or nourishing a collaborative relationship: one must start somewhere, and surely in every artistic production some areas of sustainability will be more urgent or central than others. Bearing this in mind, I want to challenge my artist colleagues to stick with the challenge of building sustainable working cultures by staying with the trouble of staying together in our shared, complex, ecological times.

### *Equality & clear, transparent communication*

As I have stated in the previous chapters, I see equality between humans, critters, things and all kinds of agents as the foundation of sustainable structures. In the heart of this ecological and feminist equality is acknowledgement of difference, diversity and specificity in contrast to equality as the expectation of sameness. Following this thought, working towards equality in an artistic working group does not mean having similar responsibilities or roles or doing the same tasks. Rather, it means to create environments where the specific personal characteristics and professional expertise of the group members are cherished and good conditions for all the different work assignments between the members are accommodated. This will allow the members to feel ownership of the piece and its production together with feeling respected, safe and welcomed in the group.

Equality and inequality are a question of power relations, and in a working group the power relations are most apparent in social structures and the hierarchies of decision making. The core principle for sustainable working cultures is transparency of power structures, paired up with having enough time and opportunity for dialogue and negotiations on those structures. In my experience the most energy-consuming and distressing issues during artistic productions have been directly tied to hidden group dynamics, untraceable lines of decision making and miscommunication, and therefore I suggest that

a considerable amount of time is put aside for evaluating and formulating roles and group dynamics inside an artistic working groups' working hours.

Striving for equality in a performing art working group is cultivating mutual respect between the members of the working group. For me, having a feeling of being heard is the key to feeling welcomed and respected, and consequently feeling like a meaningful member of the working group. For achieving the feeling of being heard, an atmosphere, where every group member's specific characteristics, abilities and needs are respected and where their wishes for the production structures are listened to equally, must be built. This is an ongoing construction work that is certainly deemed to fail at a reoccurring basis, since the power structures at play in a working situations are not only those between an employer and an employee, or a choreographer and a performer, but the members of a working group also bring the privileges and minority positions from other areas of their life to the working situation. The different amounts of this energy and exhaustion brought to the production from the "outside" will directly affect the amounts of responsibility and pressure each member can take without breaking. It goes without saying that such amounts of intersectional relations of oppression and privilege are impossible to constantly keep track of, but the sensitivity for them and the possibility to express and process uneasiness and exhaustion should be built into the social structuring and scheduling of an artistic working group to enhance the groups sustainability.

One concrete way towards sustainable dialogue is simply having enough time for dialogue in general. In addition, it should be made sure that the different access modes to conversation of every group member are accommodated in the conversation structures used for that dialogue. This means that members are not expected to behave similarly, as in taking equal time to talk, expressing their feelings in a similar intensity or having the same tempo of processing information, and that the production has structures for accommodating the particularities of its members' diverse ways of expression. It is impossible to name any bullet-proof methods for this, since every production is different, but a good place to start is to find out what kind of conversation situations are comfortable for everyone: is it best to make all the decision democratically with the whole group, or does it get very

uncomfortable for someone to express themselves in front of everybody constantly? Is it easier if everybody has one reliable go-to-person when a challenging situation arises? Should every discussion start with collecting one's thoughts on paper silently before opening any mouths? These are some examples of questions that could be asked when forming the communication structures of an artistic working group. Another tool I have found very helpful for preventing major social crisis is to regularly reserve time for talking about how the group is doing, e.g., by having a "talk-time" allocated for addressing social issues concerning the working group outside of strictly productional or artistic matters.

It is worth noting that sometimes it is very hard to know what is best for a group, or what would be most comfortable for oneself in a specific group setting, especially if the members of the group are not very well acquainted with one another before the project starts. Again, striving for equality and good communication is not about total control or completely avoiding friction, but more a matter of staying with the trouble of trying out, failing, listening and learning. Moreover, just as equality does not equal sameness, it does not need to have the aesthetics of harmony, balance, ease or happiness. Conflicts and misunderstanding are an important part of group processes, but the group can only be sustained if those conflicts are infused with positivity; positivity here referring to the propelling force towards sustainability formulated by Rosi Braidotti. The feminist discourse on safer and braver spaces, where no violent assumptions are made of any subject's identity, desires, or abilities, can work as an inspiration for formulating codes of social conduct in artistic working groups. A safer and braver space is meant to ease the exhaustion of oppression of those in minority positions, but also to prompt sustainable discussion on equality issues. A great example of very clear and concrete safer space guidelines is the *Safer Space Policy* (2019) for a queer, sex-positive work and event space held by Querq ry in Helsinki.

Even though the continuous mapping of group dynamics is time consuming, and thus easier to accomplish in group constellations with fewer members, I don't think spending time on forming equal decision making and feedback structures should be the luxury of small collectives – quite the opposite! It is even more crucial for more hierarchical working constellations, like huge

spectacles for the main stage of the state theatre, to care for clear internal communication and nourish a constant dialogue on the group member's responsibilities – I will analyse an experience I had on challenging, unsustainable communication in a big stage production in the next part of this work.

I see equality work as the attempt to recognise the specificities of subjects to be able to organise every one's enjoyment in a satisfying and sustainable manner. At the core of equality work is the acknowledgement of the limits and bondages of an ecological subject as the basic condition for the subjects' existence and action, and that those limits must constantly be affirmed and reformulated for the subject to be sustained. Funnily enough, I have personally had the experience that respecting the limits of my own very limited energy reserve and evolving professional skills have in fact boosted my ability to take on responsibilities in a project and increased my agency in and ownership of the project, rather than having the limitations been felt as a restriction. Of course, this is only in the case that the space to express those limitations and an atmosphere of accepting and respecting every group member's personal limits have been established – exhaustion and burn out lurk right around the corner if a subject's bodily limits are repeatedly transgressed by not having the time to even notice them.

Moving from a working group's social dynamics to the realm of the artistic content of a piece, equality issues should be in the heart of artistic material of any sustainability-seeking, ecological-minded project. I am not suggesting that every piece should be directly about multi-species symbiosis or equal human rights, but I would like to put into question what kind of stories are constantly being reproduced and restaged. As an example, most of the western tradition's classics of literature, film and theatre have been written in misogynist, racist, ableist Anthropos-hero-mode, and I wonder if the classics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century could be authored in sympoiesis, acknowledging the ecological nature of subjects and narratives. I am also wondering if the era of "eye-opening", one-to-one reproductions of acts of violence in the forms of e.g., rape, abuse and genocide, a still very popular way of pin-pointing societal problems in dance and theatre today, could finally be over. I would much rather experience performances that focus on acts of repair or the

acknowledgement of the subject as an ecological identity, and I also believe that is the pathway towards a more sustainable, messy, abundant narrative mode. Again, this is not to say that a sustainable performance would have a certain aesthetic, duration, media or form, or that the performing arts discourse couldn't use a provocation every now and then – I am only inviting my reader to think towards a more diverse and equal organisation of enjoyment among all kinds of humans, critters and forms of zoe-life.

### *Redirecting energy*

Energy is the force that vibrates and locomotes everything from atomic changes to cosmic movements, and the ontological models we use to describe this force are crucial to how we view the world and organise ourselves as ecological subjects, as Allan Stoekl points out. The human harnessing of fossil fuels, especially oil, to fuel the industrial humankind's needs has had a huge impact on the industrial human subject's experience and view on how the world works, and this experience directly affects the way cultures of working and production are formulated, also in the performing arts.

Antti Salminen and Tere Vadén formulate this experience of oil very accurately in their book *Energy and Experience: An Essay in Nafthology* (2015). Oil, as a fuel, has a very high EROEI (abbreviation for “energy return on energy investment”), which means that the energy that can be produced by using oil as a fuel is way higher than the amounts of energy needed to extract and refine it, which makes oil an outstandingly efficient fuel in comparison to any other fuel (Salminen & Vadén 2015, 31-32) – of course, this model is a simplification, since it is very hard to calculate the exact amounts of labour that go into extracting and refining oil to fuel. What this extremely energy-rich fuel has enabled in the past 200 years of fossil fuelled industrialism is the acceleration of movement and rate of change, the global spreading of industrialism and generalisation of cultures, and most importantly, the complete disconnect to the amounts of energy we use every day because of the hidden fossil energy slaves; a hidden labour similar to the people-making labour the authors of *Feminism for the 99%* claim capitalism hides when merely valuing profit-making labour. Salminen and Vadén use the term con-

distancing to describe how, simply put, oil simultaneously binds the industrial people together by fuelling the global capitalist economy, that is based on extracting materials in one place and using them somewhere else, and thus disconnects subjects from their locality by distracting and hiding the actual amount of energy used by the nonhuman energy slaves in everyday actions of e.g., powering machines, heating houses and transporting people and goods (Salminen & Vadén 2015, 38; 41; 82; 119).

Looking at the experience of energy that the contemporary working people have from Salminen & Vadén's point of view, it is obvious why so many workers and colleagues get exhausted and completely burn out. If one is already completely disconnected from the production of energy one uses every day to power machines and vehicles, how could one be connected to one's own body's energy reserve? If nonhuman production machines can run on oil and coal, (or the electricity produced with them), round-the-clock seven days a week, why couldn't the human body machine do the same? In a fossil economy that idolizes growth, (which we still live in today), production is running at high speed non-stop, just because it is possible, and because growth and speed are seen as economical and moral progress. The problem of a closed economy and stockpiling energy (as suggested by Stoekl) appear again: if an economy is based on carefully managing the finite amounts of fossil energy, efficiency – the idea of making more with less – becomes the main virtue of that economy. Efficient use of both human and nonhuman resources is managed logistically, mechanically, not with the organisation on equal enjoyment in mind. The pleasures, excess and ecstasy of the general, solar economy are lost, and generosity is replaced with scarcity and puritan conservatism and conservationism. In a closed, fossil economy, prolonged survival of the walled-off, manageable and familiar become far more important than the sustaining of ecologically meaningful, lush and abundant living. The urgency of letting go of a fossil-based general economy and finding another, regenerative and sustainable way of describing and generating energy is ever more urgent today, since the production of oil has already reached its peak and fossil fuels are running out.

I would like to bring to question the notion of efficiency, the idea of doing more with less in the general oil economy, which is also the underlining

condition of most freelance contemporary performance art productions today. What if we just did less with less? What if performance production just were smaller if there were less funds, less time, less materials, less people to do work? The basic guideline for dreaming about projects in their planning phase (that I adopted through my studies) is to “dream big”, which in my experience leads in always having too ambitious plans, too little time and a lot of stress and distress when the deadline of the premiere approaches. What if having big plans could mean making small gestures? Of course, I do not want to prompt an idea of sustainability as balance without conflicts or energy-intense emotions or making less as energy-saving: valuing small, simple and less with less can risk sounding like idolising scarcity and austerity as the true virtues of sustainability in the stock-piling logic. But what if making less would mean refocusing, recycling, and recognising what is already there to work with, to indulge in the magnificent performance of the symbiotic real already happening? Making less would thus mean making work less-anthropocentric, less over-arching, and more about the locality and the body.

As an example, artist and professor Tuija Kokkonen has worked with creating performances in collaboration with non-human actors in her doctoral artistic research project *The potential nature of performance: The relationship to the non-human in the performance event from the perspective of duration and potentiality* (2006-2017), and proposes weak human action as a concrete performative tool to move the focus from the human agent towards the nonhuman agent. Central to this weak action is the practice of “active passivity” as a human actor (Kokkonen 2017, 168), and it is paired up with other artistic material that asks the spectator to focus on nonhuman processes and temporality in Kokkonen’s work. Her tools for performativity and creating material have been very inspirational during the production of *Of being in the dark* (2019), a site-sensitive outdoors performance I will present in the next chapter.

On a more productional level, inventing practices of generating renewable energy is one of the most common and debated subjects throughout the history of the growth and fossil fuel-loathing industrial sustainability movement, and likewise a major question in the performing arts is how energy and electricity is produced for the logistics of powering stage technology or

tour transportation when energy resources grow scarcer. In addition, recycling of raw materials and re-using products, also an important sustainability measure in the consumerist capitalist society, is an important issue to consider when building theatres, scenography, props and costumes, and there is actually a great tradition of recycling materials in performing arts simply because the funding and material resources have always been scarce for theatre, dance and performance art. But apart from these sustainability measures that fall into the category of Guattari's environmental ecology, the most concrete and everyday energy and resource depletion happens at the scale of the social and the individual subject.

A working culture cannot be sustainable if there is not enough time for rest, which is too often the case in performing arts productions: again, too much is too often trying to be accomplished with too little. The most basic thing is to have a comprehensive schedule with enough breaks from the beginning of a production. What I have appreciated in projects I participated in lately is the decision to work shorter days (around five or six hours in one go) to keep the working days lighter and free more room for reflection and recuperation or make possible to work on multiple projects simultaneously. Still, it has proven to be very challenging to match the amount of work to be done to the wish to work less, which means that extra hours will have to be added to the schedule towards the end of the production to fulfil the "big dreams" made in the beginning of the project. Thus, I encourage a working group to carefully and continually assess whether the artistic goals of the project match the confining frame of the production's material and energetic resources.

In addition to the wish to have shorter working days, I have been happy to witness a general wish amongst my colleagues to create group structures that would be sensitive to the diverse and individual needs of their members – nonetheless, it is common to feel uneasiness in a collective where equality does not equal similar workload, similar working hours or similar personal resources. There is a lot of work to be done in formulating structures for working where group members can enter with diverse abilities and situations in this time of repeated burn out, overflow of informational stimuli in the medialised culture and well-hidden, over-arching, intersectional oppressive power structures. Sustainable energy use is again tied back to equality work,

where relieving the pressure of oppression on subjects would free great amounts of energy to other uses than simply existing and surviving. So again, to create equality-driven, communicative and transparent working structures is a great place to start for striving to regenerate energy for sustainable artistic work.

### *Enjoying work: pleasure, fun & joy*

It is rather odd, that a certain admiration for a completely committed, workaholic and slightly suffering artist lingers above the contemporary arts, when it is often stated that art is always created in excess: that art is a curious play that starts when other more basic needs, like having food, care and shelter, are met. Consequently, it does not seem reasonable to base sustainable artistic practices on simply working harder now to reach possible future professional successes at any cost or to rest and recuperate later to get results faster. As stated in the previous chapters, the limits and desires of an ecological subject must be considered now to positively sustain the subject to a future time, and I would argue that reaching that positivity includes a certain amount of joy.

In my opinion, having fun at work is the only way to work sustainably in the arts. I personally have a hard time when the aesthetics of working must be “serious” for an artwork to be taken seriously, meaning that presumably I cannot be working seriously if I am not constantly producing something during the hours I am working, with a slight frown on my forehead, at all times. To enjoy oneself doesn’t mean to simply be comfortable, or at ease, but to find pleasure in work: even though a challenge can be energy-consuming, anxiety-provoking and haunting, working with a meaningful challenge can bring great satisfaction. Artmaking for me is serious fun, and having a playful angle to a subject and being ready to be silly are key to making good art.

I would add having fun together straight into the basic sustainability toolkit of an artistic working group. In my experience, in groups where idle time together, generously long breaks or common leisure time has been scheduled inside the working hours, the group members have had the chance to better

get to know each other and form more resilient bonds for future challenges. Having spent time in excess in a non-productive mode, or even getting bored together, is usually the possibility condition for injecting fresh ideas to the artistic work. In addition, having had a good time with a certain group might mean that the work of the same working group could possibly continue with another project, creating sustainable continuity of work possibilities in the future.

Moreover, having a pleasurable working environment, including clear communication and equal treatment between members, is a good base towards preparing for crisis. Having a work place one wants to spend time in gives a buffer for facing problems when they arise, whereas if one or more of the group's members are already suffering due to exhaustion or ill communication, the group's integrity snaps instantly when a challenging situation occurs. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that keeping up an enjoyable atmosphere is no easy task, and that it is, once again, a constant, transforming practice to be taken seriously. As an example, all the working group's members don't necessarily share the same pleasures: spending time on leisure activities or having breaks all together can feel forced or pressuring to a member that needs great amounts of time alone for regenerating energy for working and socializing. Thus, it is more relevant to emphasise the sustainability effect of having a playful approach to working, rather than striving to find team-building activities that apply to all working groups, since no such things exist.

Moving from backstage pleasures to the pleasures on the stage, I find it deeply political to represent diverse kinds of pleasure modes in art pieces, this being the politics of moving towards sustainable, ecological, post-anthropocentric ethics. The stage is a greatly affective place for dreaming of, and experimenting on, sustainable futures based on the diversification of pleasure enhancement and abundant, joyful multispecies entanglements. I am pleased to witness a growing trend of interacting with other-than human materials and subjects in the form of e.g., plants, logs, pieces of fabric or plastic, construction tools and other everyday objects in a curiously indulgent and even erotic modum within European contemporary dance pieces, great examples of this being the work of Sonja Jokiniemi or the piece *Biofiction*

(2019) by Simone Aughterlony and Hahn Rowe. To turn the traumas of e.g. sexism, racism and the Severing into positive affirmative practices and passions in the frame of sustainable stage art, this type of acquiring of new performance playmates together with other illustrations and representations of both human and nonhuman pleasure and fun must continue.

### *Time, temporality & duration*

The main goal of sustainability thinking, were it anthropocentric or not, is to preserve and sustain decent conditions for living for the future generations as well as guarantee healthy and meaningful life for the people living now. Planning so far ahead requires thinking that surpasses a human lifetime's limits and is thus a stretch of imagination that must be practiced. The western mind is trained to admire fast thinking and efficient work, efficiency also usually associating with fast speed, or optionally doing more work with less resources. The praise for fast results and instant profit is everywhere in our culture, from workout programs to marketing and politics, and it seems very hard to give oneself the time to stop and think over what a sustainable practice would look like. I myself am very impatient, a product of my time, and tend to move to the next thing if the previous one isn't satisfying fast enough. But if sustainability requires the ability to flex our time-thinking muscles, sustainable practices must include taking time to tune into other-than human timescales and to reflect, reassess, plan well and rest.

Tuija Kokkonen evokes the term *chronopolitics* in her doctoral dissertation to point to how ideas and models of duration and temporality directly affect politics and decision making. She borrows the concept from anthropologist Johannes Fabian, who used it to describe the common distancing move of portraying the subjects of research, indigenous people, as if they were living in another time than the one of the anthropologist's, thus denying the indigenous others from contemporaneity. Kokkonen expands Fabian's notion of chronopolitics to characterise the politics of time in general, including both the distancing anthropocentric human culture constantly makes to nonhuman entities and the work required to overcome that distance in order to live together in the future. She believes that our chronopolitical understanding is

tied to the human abilities to notice different temporalities and durations, and that the ability to recognise other-than human temporalities and nonhuman subjects as our contemporaries should be trained to make less anthropocentric chronopolitics in the future. (Kokkonen 2017, 201)

In the pieces presented in her dissertation, Kokkonen has worked with durational pieces with installation-like layered, simultaneous narratives and materials, both in physical living bodies and other multiple medias. The audience members have had a lot of freedom in how and when they experience the different happenings of the piece. Some of the pieces also happened outdoors, where many of the artist-produced materials at the site invited the audience to spend time with nonhuman things and watch their non-produced outdoor surroundings as a part of the performance – basically anything that was already there could be seen as a performative act. These are examples of how a piece could be structured towards a more diverse idea of being in time, and I think reconsidering a performance's temporality and duration are in the heart of working towards a more sustainable stage. Giving nonhuman temporalities (and thus narratives), the spotlight is crucial, because to practice sustainability is to practice both human and nonhuman tempos and durations. If our relationship to time moulds our models of how the symbiotic real functions, it is the responsibility of a sustainability-seeking art piece to present possible ways to make post-anthropocentric, more inclusive chronopolitics.

On a more individual scale, a performance can serve as an excuse to be out of efficient production time, the possibility to spend an hour or two to get in tune with an unfamiliar body, maybe a dancer, or a houseplant, or a rock. In addition to being an arena of intense emotions, revelations and politics, a theatre can be a place to rest and recuperate oneself, which is often lacking especially in hectic, urban contemporary lives. I personally enjoy the opportunity for complete idleness when I am a spectator, “forced” to sit in a soft chair in a dark room for an hour with nothing else to do then experience what's there. Together with the shift away from anthropocentrism, a sustainable piece could offer an oasis out of everyday efficient and productive time, a temporary bubble with time for alternative tempos of human and nonhuman multi-species becoming. One great example of such a bubble is the

plastic bubble tent in the piece *Acts of care* (2018) by the Helsinki-based performance group Theatre Circus Maximus. The piece is a durational installation that “invites the audience and the people passing by to enter and receive care”, care here meaning “trying to study and rehearse what happens when you try to make post-fossil art” (Circus Maximus, 2019). The first steps towards sustainability can be taking a break and collecting powers for the next challenge. I will describe another approach to performance as recuperation and healing in the next chapter under the headline *olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä*).

Taking time, both for working and resting, is also one of the central sustainability concerns inside an artistic working group’s everyday life. The shared experience of time in in small-scale freelance productions is surely that there is no time, or at least not enough time to properly finish a project according to the original plan. The scarcity of resources often results in the expectation of being very efficient (a.k.a. faster), meaning having to finish a project in less time with fewer resources than planned or thought possible. In other words, even though there are constantly less funds given out to finance projects, and thus less working time with decent salary for fewer people entering the field, the ambition for what is to be achieved with the scarcer resources does not seem to lessen accordingly. It seems that it is extremely hard to plan for doing less in little time, especially because we’re taught to “dream big” and always write big ambitious plans for funding applications in the hopes of getting more money; and then when less funding is received, meaning that the budget will not sustain the whole intended project, it is still common to try to accomplish the original plan in its totality anyway, instead of choosing a narrower area of focus in the work that would match the scarcer resources at hand. This results in working over one’s limits over and over again, finally causing a crack in the unsustainable freelance artist subject.

Another common solution on the everyday scheduling level for managing with having fewer working hours is the attempt to become faster, as in more efficient workers, by sticking to the artistic subject and skipping everything “ineffective” and possibly unimportant, like negotiating equal decision making structures, taking enough breaks or occasionally making sure that the members of the group are okay. Usually, the effect of such efficiency measures

results in the complete opposite situation, by causing e.g., the burn out of some of the group members just in time for the premiere of the project or an explosion of an unsolved argument that breaks the group up.

I would argue that a sustainable working schedule has enough air and buffer for surprises in it. Taking time to map a group's wishes, needs, and the member's personal resources, expectations and goals for the project, regularly taking time to check the group's well-being and having enough time for rest and reflection, which is always needed in greater amounts than one would expect, are good ways to prevent major crisis and exhaustion during a process. This simply means having enough time to build resilient structures, because taking time to agree on functioning practice for all will save time in the future of the project by preventing possible collapse. As an example, if there is a reoccurring, regular time slot in the working schedule for addressing any social issues in the group, there is a good chance that a problem is being addressed already before it grows into the deal-breaking crisis, even though it would seem that the time put aside from "actual" artistic work slows the production down. Formulating sustainable practice needs time and taking that time will usually only pay off in the long run. Thus, sustainable artistic practices must be based on exercising nonhuman timescales, long-term continuity of communities and artists transcending the fragmented project-based production structures and carefully planning for resource use in the given productional frames to avoid exhaustion and collapse.

### *Locality & focality*

Antti Salminen and Tere Vadén depict in *Energy and Experience: An Essay in Nafthology* (2015) how the use of oil as a fuel, together with colonialism and global capitalism, has disconnected us from our locality and focal practices. Salminen and Vadén appreciate indigenous cultures for their multi-generational ecological knowledge and self-sufficient lifestyles and state that there is a lot to learn from them, while acknowledging that the focal practices in the post-fossil era will be different and surprising, yet utterly necessary, when the energy-intense global economy cannot be sustained any more (Salminen & Vadén 2015, 123-124). Similarly, a common feminist and

environmentalist guideline is to “think global, act local”, which emphasises the ultimate local specificity of situations and corrective actions while the problems and challenges at hand, like racism or climate change, can be recognised globally. Engaging with locality, as in community, place and subject, and the specificity of that locality is at the heart of sustainable practice, in both art and life in general.

As a dancer, the focal practice of training a dancing body and taking care of that specific body is very central to my professional practice, and whether that body is sustained or not is directly dependant on the everyday working structures. In most cases, the connection to the body is cut through trying to accomplish too many things in too little time “efficiently”, which means that the body is not sustained very well: it is under constant stress and over-stimulated, which results in frequently falling ill, getting injured or being chronically exhausted. Having repeatedly been forced to work in an exhausted and less-than-ideal body state throughout my professional life, I have started to use a slogan “work with what you’ve got” as an everyday guideline for respecting the specificity of my fluctuating situation.

Focusing on what is already there is a very concrete sustainability tool for engaging with locality in an artistic working group, both productionally and artistically. “Working with what you’ve got” could mean equally e.g., making a site-specific piece outdoors or at the artist’s home, artistically working with a local environmental or social struggle, only using recycled and borrowed materials or creating a working group from local artists, amateur performers or activist. In the frame of the working group’s social dynamic, in addition to supporting the specific wishes and taking care of the limited resource conditions of each group member, drawing artistic material from the personally specific skills and artistic abilities of each member is a great way to root a piece to the local material of the group: in my experience the feeling of meaningfulness has been greatest and my agency as a group member highest in the productions where the artistic material has sprung from the group members individual interests and specialities, rather than there having been a ready-made script or choreography in the beginning of the process. Whatever form it might take, respecting embedded, embodied, situated knowledge is key to building sustainable focal practices.

Nonetheless, sticking to a locality can be challenging in the globalised world, where performing artists are constantly pressured towards international recognition and touring. There is a danger of valuing transnational familiarity over local specificity, especially in the contemporary dance field, where the professional circles are so small and internationally oriented that it is hard to build a successful or financially sustainable career without extensive touring and travelling. Consequently, establishing sustainable working structures might mean diversifying forms of local collaborations including finding unconventional nonhuman and human connections.

Donna Haraway calls this “making oddkin” as forming trans- and multi-species kinships, in other words requiring each other in “unexpected collaboration and combinations” (Haraway 2016, 4). This might mean doing transdisciplinary collaborations e.g., between the arts and science or art and activism or finding hybrid ways of funding and resourcing projects through other than specifically art funding institutional bodies. A straight-forward non-anthropocentric move artistically is to find collaborators in nonhumans for making pieces or even to make performances for nonhumans: one personal favourite group of mine that does performances for plants is the international research group *dance for plants*, that combines an international network of artists dedicated to locally rooted plant audiences (Dance for plants, 2019).

### *Letting go of control*

Letting go of anthropocentrism is ultimately to let go of control, or the illusion of having control. Telling stories in sympoiesis is to let go of the delusion of the single (Anthropos) author and to acknowledge sympoiesis as the basic narrative mode of the symbiotic real is the foundation for sustainable storytelling and art making.

The performing arts, especially contemporary dance, has a great tradition for fragmented, ambiguous, layered, multiple and bodily storylines and of deconstructing and remaking old classics and narratives. I would argue that there is a high tolerance for oddity and uncanniness in the contemporary

dance field, which I think is a fruitful place to start to dive deeper into ecological human-nonhuman stories. To create sustainable art requires moving the spotlight onto the nonhuman agent always-already at work, or at least widening the spotlight to invite the nonhuman into focus, or even to the realm of “human”.

Another inherent feature in the performing arts that makes it a promising platform for symbiotic storytelling is the default collaborative mode of working: pieces in the theatre are almost always a collective effort of professionals with different expertise, like performers, directors and choreographers, and set, light and sound designers. No performance is done alone, and it might not be such a big step to include the nonhuman professionals as authors of the piece, or at least acknowledge the ecological reality of the piece on the program leaflet – a very straight-forward way of cheapening the human and including the nonhuman to the makers of a piece. In the recent years I have been happy to witness great diversification of how authorship and ownership of projects is formulated in performance credits, and the work of expressing authorship adequately is central in making productions more equal and sustainable: as an example, the credits of the above mentioned piece *Acts of Care* (2018) include “different kind of creatures, phenomena and processes” (Circus Maximus, 2019) in the piece’s credits under the names of the human artists.

In connection to making symbiotic co-authoring visible, careful delegation of the project’s workload is key for sustainable working structures in all kind of productions, whether they were collectively and democratically structured or hierarchical productions with clear leaders. Successful delegation is directly tied to clear and transparent communication, but also to the ability to compromise and reformulate goals. A clear artistic vision surely gives direction, but in my experience holding too tight on ideas usually blocks from seeing other, possibly more fitting, solutions. In addition, hoarding responsibility as a way to keep track of everything, was it as a leader or another group member, and trying to hold all the threads in one’s hands is exhausting, and thus impossible to sustain for long periods of time. This kind of need for control can end up in relying on only one or few people having enough information of the project as a whole to complete the production,

which is a very risky mode of communicating: if most responsibility lies on one pair of shoulders, the whole production crumbles when those shoulders cannot carry any more weight.

To summarise, a sustainable artistic working group practices delegation of responsibility and authorship with both its human and nonhuman agents. Moreover, it is important to exercise ways to articulate the diverse ways of authorship and the symbiotic relations for narration at play in an art piece to underline the ecological nature of the symbiotic real in our everyday language.

## EXERCISING SUSTAINABILITY

In this chapter, I will present three different performance productions and analyse their formulations for sustainable practices. The first piece is a big stage production *Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs*, the second is a site-sensitive outdoors walking tour *Of being in the dark* and the third example is the first working period for the piece *olento/olio/otus /eläin/eläjä*, which concentrated on creating a movement practice for a piece to be created later in the fall of 2019. Each project description will start with a short presentation of the productional frames of the piece and then move into analysing the process' artistic content and social structures.

I chose these examples because all of them have different approaches to creating sustainable working structures and tapping into the nonhuman subject, and because they represent different productional frames and methods for artistic work. My goal is not to thoroughly analyse every aspect of each production, but rather to highlight the specific characteristics that make these productions interesting examples of sustainable and unsustainable practices in the frames of this thesis. I would like to underline that these case descriptions are meant as food for thought rather than as examples of do's and don'ts, and that my specific personal needs, desires and histories have directly affected my experience of the productions and my judgement on their sustainability – other participants of these productions don't necessarily share my views on the processes.

*Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs - Being green, lumpy, bumpy & grumpy*



*Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs.* Photo: Katri Naukkarinen.

*Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs* is the result of the course TADaC, which is the abbreviation for Theatre Academy Dance Company. This course is the final production course in the MA program of Dance Performance, and it is usually the artistic part of the students MA thesis; this time eight students had made it as their artistic thesis work at the university, me included. I see the course as a slightly outdated historical structure, that was originally created to mimic a professional performer's work in a dance company, which is a working situation almost no graduate enters from the school anymore, and it is in fact uncertain if this course will exist in the future curriculum of the Dance Performance program. I want to point this out because the underlying tension and contrast of "old school" and "new school" of performance making was present in many areas of the production, often being the root cause for misunderstanding and conflict.

The piece was facilitated and directed by Swiss choreographer Lea Moro, who was invited to choreograph the piece by the performers because of her witty

aesthetics and humour, in addition to the fact that she was a young female choreographer, and not Finnish. The performers were me and my eight classmates: Matilda Aaltonen, Taru Aho, Anni Kaila, Ella Koikkalainen, Janna Loukas, Aino Purhonen, Ilona Salonen and Jussi Suomalainen. The sound designer Joonas Pernilä and dramaturg Per Ehrnström were also students from the university. Light design was made by Jani-Matti Salo and costumes and scenography by Corinna Helenelund, both guest artists from outside the school structure. None of the collaborators, except for us dancers, knew each other from before, and even me and my co-students had not worked on a common piece before, which meant that the process was full of surprises. The piece was realised in the theatre hall of Theatre Academy, the biggest stage at the academy, and was built by the technical services at the school together with the working group. The production had a rehearsal period of seven weeks with some pre-work meetings both with the designers and the performers. In totality, we completed nine performances in Helsinki and a tour of six performances in Tampere, Viljandi, Tallinn and Lausanne.

The process with the performers started with the choreographer visiting us at the university in the spring of 2018, when she presented her first ideas for the piece and we began to get acquainted through awareness and movement exercises around the senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch. We established an information sharing platform in Google Drive and the designers started to upload inspirational information and relevant texts to the platform together with the choreographer during the summer. We briefly discussed our wishes for the project, and everybody in the working group was asked to write our expectations and desires of the production into a description of a dream project before we would meet again in the fall.

When we met in the beginning of the rehearsal period, we spent the first days going through our written dreams and negotiating working structures and schedules. There was a common wish for discursive collaboration and co-choreographing, for creating a safe and fun working atmosphere, challenging one's own skills and sharing responsibility, and in the beginning, it felt that we did a pretty good job in creating a good foundation for communication. Later it turned out that in addition to the discussions on wishes and creating the daily schedule together, we should have discussed the ways in which each

group member works best, what their methods for creating are, how feedback should be given and how decisions are made in the hierarchy of the group. This could have saved us from much misunderstanding and stress during the process, that was caused by different backgrounds and preferences in working cultures and methods.

After setting up some rules for working, we started creating movement and voice material through exercises, texts, props, costumes and scores brought in by the design team and the choreographer: we played around with mimicking animal sounds, created scores based on texts from Ursula K. Le Guin, created small solos from relations to meaningful objects and explored the movement of an old parachute, to name a few things. Surprisingly fast for the performers, much of the material from very first try outs started to become parts and scenes in the final piece, and throughout the process the negotiation of how to proceed with developing material was quite painful: the confusing communication between the performers and the choreographer resulted in the performers not knowing when was a good time to change something, or to express that a material felt uncomfortable or unnecessary, which blocked the flow of creativity for everyone and made improvisation very hard during rehearsal. The closer the premiere got, more and more of the movement material was tightly set and choreographed, and the amount of improvised material was minimized, even though many of the elements in the piece were strongly based on improvisation at first. This was personally especially hard for me, since my interest in performing lies in improvised performance and instant composition. After the premiere, it took a long time for us performers to find ease, pleasure and our own ways through the performance, which was also evident for the audience members that were familiar with the performers.

*Letting go of the human, the soloist, the ego*

What was fascinating in this piece was how it brought many quirkily symbiotic and uncanny pictures of human-nonhuman in-betweenness to a big stage in a somewhat random dramaturgy, which together with the monochromatic green lighting blurred the lines of the human performers and enabled the spectator to go to a wildly ecological associative trip. The performers were transforming from a disorganised flock of different odd creatures to a fungi-

looking lump of parachute, into a group of mummy-like joke-telling statues wrapped in the green fabric, and so on. The program text described ecological entities as porous and leaky containers, and the images on stage were strangely beautiful examples of symbiotic and ever-changing, hybrid life, garnished with splashes of water and bodily liquids.

There were no solos, except for a few seconds of runway glory in the first scene, and all the performers were always on stage doing more or less the same thing at the same time, which meant that none of us really stood out or got to show off individually. This was a great ecologically-minded choreographic choice, but still a quite unusual one in the context of a graduate show of dance students, framed by the dance company-mimicking production structure: it is usual that pieces for post-graduate and graduate companies are structured strongly around highlighting each dancer's individual skills, and used as promotion material for possible employees, that are supposedly interested in virtuosic movement. I find this way of creating pieces quite uninteresting and outdated, as also the history that structured the TADaC-course, and I appreciated the choreographer's choice of bypassing this history by creating a contemporarily relevant piece rather than selling the dancing skillset of our class. Nonetheless, the history of presenting extravagant virtuosity in graduation pieces still weighs heavy on the expectations that the performers meet from the institution, the audience and themselves. It is time to let go of those expectations and change the storytelling of what is skilful performing, but it is no easy or quick task.

As Rosi Braidotti writes, change is painful, and it must be taken care of that that pain will be transformed into positive momentum for sustainable life in the future. The move away from anthropocentrism, the shift from the subject as the centre of attention and separate from its surrounding to the subject as an ecological, symbiotically bound entity is a huge leap, and that process requires time, patience and acceptance for repeated failure. One major friction in the process of *Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs* was that the process of letting go of the expectations of being the human in spotlight and melting into the landscape of the symbiotic real of the piece was not taken care of: it was not addressed in discussion with the whole group, and thus not a clear focus for working from the beginning of the process, the methods of creating

material didn't support the shift and almost no tools for being in this ecological landscape as a performer were practiced during the process. This made the social dynamic of the group unstable and unsustainable, and exhausted the mental body-mind ecologies of the performers.

### *A greenwashed stage*

There were many contradictory artistic and productional practices in the process of the piece that made it very confusing and tiring. They were mostly caused by a tension between the haunting histories and traditions of institutions and the wishes of the working group, mixed together with each member's personal resources, desires and characteristics. Many conflicts might have been easier to solve if the working group's members had been better at articulating their methods and preferences for working and if the stress for creating something splendid had been replaced by a more pedagogical and playful mindset towards artistic creation, but surely more actions would have been required to lighten up the atmosphere – even though we worked very hard to solve the issues in the social dynamic during the process, it was extremely challenging to put one's finger on what exactly was wrong, since the group had so many members and the issues were so layered.

From a performers point of view, the pressure that a big production structure with its hierarchical roles created for both the facilitator and the other members of the group, together with lousy communication and the unfulfilled wish for collective and delegated work during TADaC, created a feeling that reminds me of the concept of con-distancing from Salminen and Vadén: instead of uniting us and enhancing our abilities to work together, the situation at hand kept the members of the group at distance from each other while we were forced to stay with the trouble of making the piece through the university structure. The ghost of wanting to shine as the virtuoso on stage was looming over the performer's creative work, because the ecological narrative of the piece remained unclear for them, and the facilitation of the choreographer was haunted by the image of a leader always in control of everything, even though she was dreaming of a more collective, discursive and delegated process. These unmapped and unresolved tensions between the histories, the working structures carried and the contemporary wishes of the

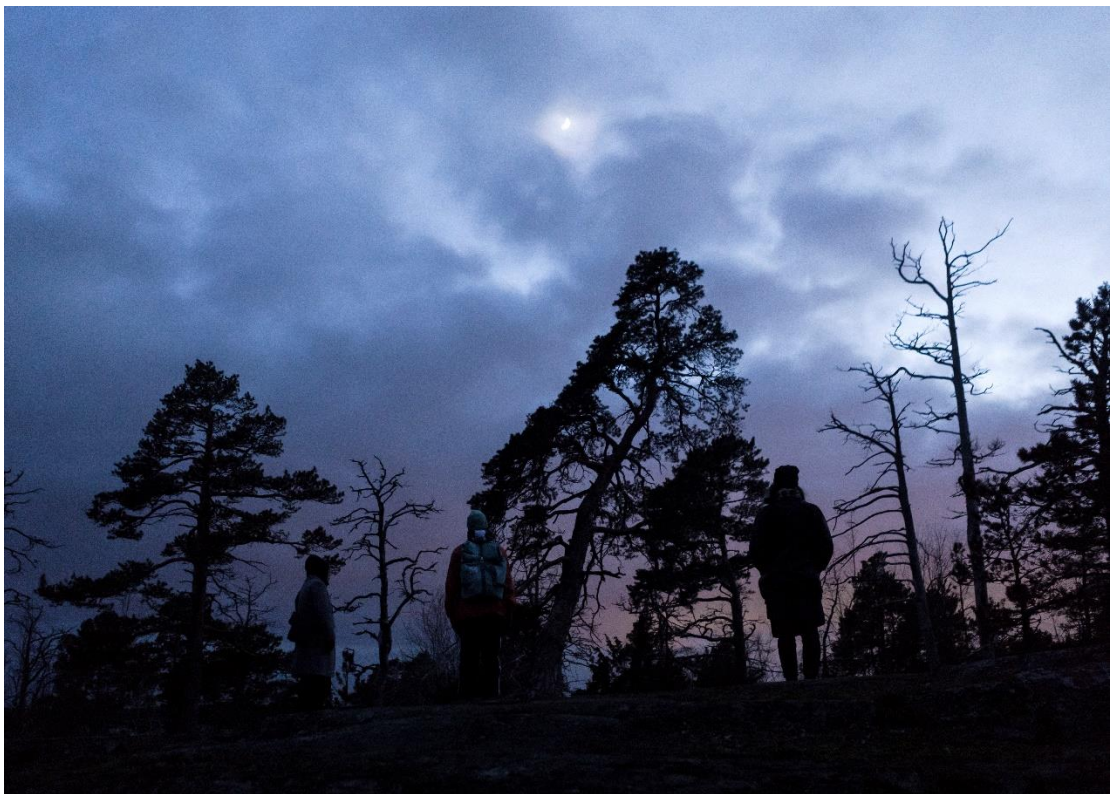
working group members created a situation where the choreographer was overwhelmed with stress without being able to express it to the performers, and the performers lost their feeling of agency and ownership to the piece not knowing how to contribute to the work or lessen the pressure of completion felt by the choreographer.

Moreover, the piece was directed from a very visually driven point of view, meaning that the internal experience of the performer while performing or improvising was often bypassed while focusing on the form and outlook of the material being formulated. This might not be such an unusual way of composing choreography in general, but in the context of our class and the somatic and experiential emphasis of the university's teaching, this approach to creating material was surprising – especially because the process started with workshopping with the five senses. The representation of togetherness and interaction felt fake from inside the piece, because those images did not stem from an exercise or experience of contact, but the shared feeling among the performers during the piece was rather lonely and distant – which is odd since we were all on stage creating the composition together throughout the whole piece.

There are many other examples of disconnect and confusion I could go into in more detail, but all-in-all, the main friction in this production for me was that the representation we were creating for the stage did not correlate with how the work was structured, or how the performers were directed to execute the performance. Because of the communication issues we had inside the group, I was carrying around this uneasy feeling of having been tricked, misled, having missed-out on some central information and being misunderstood. The green outlook of the piece created by lighting, costumes and props made of synthetic materials felt like the false sustainability promises of businesses – merely a greenwashing act that did not properly tap into the issues of organising equal enjoyment and sustainable social structures. The experience I had with *Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs* made me question, whether it would be possible for big stage productions to be sustainably produced, because it seemed so clear that the frames given to this process did not work well for anyone in the working group. Nonetheless, I believe that if the expectations and goals of the university, the choreographer and the student

performers would have been clearer and closer to each other from the start, the process might have been less bumpy socially, and I am sure there are big production houses that can make the machinery work smoother. Still, the place of the nonhuman in the theatre remains unclear for me, and during TADaC I was once more reminded of my preference for making pieces outdoors and in public spaces with only a handful of people in the working group.

*Of being in the dark - Practicing survival skills  
for a changing, damaged planet*



*Of being in the dark.* Photo: Aleks Talve.

*Of being in the dark* (original Finnish name *Pimeässä olemisesta*) is a guided walking tour and site-sensitive performance during and after sunset in the woods. The piece was initiated and facilitated by light design student Mia Jalerva and actor student Pietu Wikström, and the piece was their artistic MA

graduation work at Uniarts Helsinki. The working group consisted of me, Mia, Pietu, Ella Kähärä (a student in dramaturgy), and Jari Koho and Oula Rytönen (both studying sound design). We were also often accompanied and guided by Mia's life partner Unto, a Finnish Lapphund, who also participated in all the performances. The piece was performed in the outdoor area of Uutela in Vuosaari, Helsinki first in April and May 2019, and later again in September 2019.

We started the process with meetings in summer and fall of 2018, where the facilitators ideas were presented, every member's personal interests started to be mapped out and where we started to sketch schedules for a residency excursion in December and the rehearsal period in March 2019. Just before Christmas in 2018 me, Mia, Pietu, Ella and Unto made a trip to Utsjoki to experience the mid-winter polar night, a time where the sun does not rise above the horizon in Lapland during day time. On the six days of the trip, we had the chance to get to know each other outside the usual working situations and hours, which was important for establishing our group's social dynamic for the rest of the process. At Utsjoki, we hiked, did a road-trip to the Norwegian side of the border, discussed the concept of darkness, took turns in facilitating exercises for experiencing the dark and made plans for the coming spring.

The rehearsal period started with updating our roles, expectations and wishes for the production, which we also kept reformulating throughout the process. It was clear that Pietu and Mia would take a bigger responsibility of facilitating and productional tasks and the rest of us would have more focus on content production, even though we delegated the productional responsibilities when it was needed. We spent the first week of rehearsal finding a convenient location for the piece and finally chose Uutela because it was easily accessible by public transport and there were no street lights along the pathways of the area. The rest of the rehearsal period we spent both in the woods getting to know the area, trying out materials and finding the final walking route and indoors at different locations doing productional, dramaturgical and writing work. The participation and guidance of the audience is a central element in the piece, and we organised three open rehearsals, "play tests", before the premiere for our colleagues to test out our

ideas and get feedback from experiencers throughout the rehearsals. We also created a webpage and a small blog as an informational and archival platform for the piece and its process.

### *Draft of a sustainable performance*

The program text for *Of being in the dark* states that it is a “draft of an ecologically sustainable performance” (*Of being in the dark*, 16 September 2019, translation by me). The sustainability guidelines of the production could be summarized as doing less, working with what is already there and treading lightly on Earth, meaning that we strived towards making a minimal impact on the environments we visited. I brought the idea of Guattari’s three ecologies into the process as a scaling model to map out and discuss our sustainability measures, and Tuija Kokkonen’s thoughts on site-sensitivity and weak agency of the human performer were central in conceiving the piece. I think we managed to create as sustainable a structure as we could in the frames allowed by the university and our personal resources and schedules at the time of the production, and there are many practices and ideas that will surely follow me into future projects. Nonetheless, not all challenges were well met or could be planned for; we had some more energy-intensive and troubling periods during the process, the most challenging having been the recompositing of the group when our sound designer changed quite close to the premiere, which meant that much focus went into renegotiating the social dynamic of the group at an already hectic project phase. Luckily, we took enough time to reflect on the process together after the performance period – to go through the struggles and successes of the production: usually proper reflection on a past production is the fundament for the continuation of a working group and for the next project’s sustainability.

The starting point for the piece was a concern on light pollution and the wish to be more comfortable with being in the dark. The constant lighting up of human inhabited areas and streets changes the cycle of the day and year for the creatures that are constantly exposed to the artificial light, disturbing rhythms of rest and recuperation, especially in the north where urban humans spend most of their winter working in non-solar light while their surroundings are hibernating. With the climate warming up, the dark time of the year might

even extend in the North since the amounts of snow will decrease, making it even more crucial to either create more light or to get used to staying in the darkness. In the future, the depletion of fossil fuels might make cutting down the use of electricity necessary, and one place to cut down on could be artificial lighting, if we learned how to feel at home in darkness. Our dream was to create a space where the skill of staying in the dark could be practiced and that by going to the dark woods together, the night time forest might not seem so unfamiliar and frightening anymore. In addition, making a crack in the symbolic dichotomy of darkness and light was an underlying motif in the work: darkness is connected to things unknown, chaotic, filthy, dangerous, underground, dead, and even female, whereas light is the metaphor of clarity, purity, knowledge, life and the Anthropos. Thus, spending time in the dark, letting oneself get acquainted with it, and immersed in it might help humans to get more comfortable with the messy and ambiguous nature of the ecological, symbiotic real.

Our main method for creating material was spending time in the dark and observing the daily and seasonal changes at our performance site – this is what being sensitive to the site and the subject meant to us. It was beautiful to follow the progression of spring in Uutela during the rehearsal period and having a great excuse to spend much time outdoors kept the process intriguing and motivating for us urban dwellers, who are forced to spend most of our time in the paved and constructed city. The fears, sensations and epiphanies we experienced by not letting ourselves use artificial light after sunset created the base for the performance material, that consisted of interactive tasks and small exemplary and illusionary performative acts. In rehearsal, we facilitated different experiences for each other, like moving around with one's eyes closed in the woods or watching a human moving and disappearing to the dark landscape, that all aimed at playing with the night time conditions for vision and navigation in the forest. These experiences translated into material that was directed towards how the human audience could get acquainted with being without flashlights and streetlamps in the woods, mainly focusing on supporting comfort and safety in the possibly uneasy situation, and the actions that us human performers did during the piece were very human social. Nonetheless, this human-oriented approach was used to move the focus to the actual protagonists of the piece, which were

the forest with all its critters, the weather conditions and the slow light change from sunset to night.

Even though the routines for the walking tour were set, they had to be flexible enough to accommodate the changes at the performance site, that had different conditions each night of the performance: on a cloudy night the forest was slightly more lit up by the orange gloom of the nearby harbour reflected down from the clouds, whereas a strong moonlight on a clear night painted the ground with deep shadows and pools of light, making it hard to navigate even on the most familiar pathways. Any performance must be ready to react to the surprises of the live situation, but by going outdoors we hoped to maximise the uncontrollability of the piece and diminish the role of the human performer. What made dealing with the unknowability and risk of darkness possible and sustainable during the process was a safe working atmosphere, and this caretaking of the group translated into the piece as safety measures and kind formulations for instructions and text. The idea of making a minimal impact on the forest took the form of instructing the audience to politely and carefully move in the dark terrain and to stay on already carved pathways rather than creating new ones.

In the productional structures doing less and working with what was there took the form of light and flexible scheduling, using a minimal number of props and bought materials and delegating responsibilities to the group members according to their changing capabilities and wishes. During the excursion in Lapland we spent more time on cooking, resting and going to the sauna than actively working, and during the rehearsal period we worked four days a week, five to six hours at a time. We were very flexible on people having their own schedules and making sure it was possible to do other studies and have other responsibilities around the work, and we agreed that the power to do choices on the piece was mostly on those who were present at the rehearsal, so that not every detail had to be negotiated again if somebody happened to be missing one day. When Unto was present in the rehearsal, we wanted to let the accommodation of their doggy desires to affect the working structures. This flexibility was sometimes a challenge to the integrity of the group, but mostly the appreciation for peoples' commitments to things outside the production and for listening to each member's personal needs was

beneficial for sustaining the group members individually, thus enabling their active commitment to the group.

### *Shape shifting for sustainability*

Personally, one of the most inspiring aspects of this production was the idea that working in a post-fossil, post-human world might require expanding the notion of professionalism and performance. The initiators of the piece wanted to question the traditional roles and working modes of a light designer and actor, which sometimes feel meaningless to follow in the times of rapid climate change, and collected a working group interested in fluid roles and site-sensitive performance. Each one of us entered the project from the point of view of a specific expertise in light, sound, dramaturgy, acting and dance, but there was room to try out new things and collectively share responsibility, blurring the borders between the categories of designer and performer. To some extent, this shapeshifting meant that the differences between the members were flattened out into all members participating in most parts of the production: everyone scripted their own lines themselves, participated in creating materials to the website and organizing productional logistics, and in the final performance events all of us, including Unto the dog, were facilitating the evening in a more or less performative mode. I think the fact that we were sharing the responsibilities quite equally and had similar roles in the actual performance was good for this specific groups' integrity. Still, throughout the process I had the feeling that each member's specific individual wishes for and access modes to the material were respected, which for me is a crucial element of a sustainable working culture.

Tuija Kokkonen sees a human artist's weak agency and the opening of performance events towards the nonhuman agent as a way to decompose the concept of performance as Anthropos- and ego-centric (Kokkonen 2017). With *Of being in the dark* we wanted to follow this thought by calling our interactive walking tour a performance, thus hoping to expand the notion of what a performance might look like, what could be categorized as performing and where performances take place, to make performances more diverse and therefore more accessible. Even though numerous artists have worked on similar lines with site-specific and ecological art already for decades, the move

of insisting on going out from the theatre and “doing less” in a collective mode continues to feel political in the context of an arts university that still strongly carries traditional, hard-working, virtuosity-driven, hierarchical histories in its educational structures. It is an ecological-minded political move away from anthropocentrism towards sustainability to make a graduation piece for light design by simply inviting audience to the woods at sunset and lighting a fire in the dark, or a graduation piece for an actor where the scenes are so dark that it is almost impossible to separate the human actor from the night-time forest landscape. Just as the diversity of species is crucial to the sustainability of any ecosystem, I find that diversifying the notion of what a performance can be and nurturing multiple, resilient performance practices is key to the sustainability and continuity of performing arts.

Even though it is good to question whether having a minimal impact and treading lightly in the world risks having tones of admiring austerity and scarcity, in the case of *Of being in the dark*, doing less as the human agent, simply going to a vibrant and diverse place of nonhuman life and moving the focus to what was already there, created abundant and intense experiences for both the facilitators and the experiencers of the piece. The light attitude towards working together within an allowing atmosphere, where it was possible to do less if the workload started to feel too heavy, actually regenerated energy and enabled me to take more responsibility, because I knew that the others would have my back if I got tired – in other words, we managed to find quite a good balance between the amount of group members and the amount of work there was to be delegated. The mix of meaningful content and a warm, supporting working atmosphere made it easy and pleasurable to come to work, and it is likely that the group will continue working further with the piece. While there is always room for improvement, I find the production of *Of being in the dark* a great example of how the values on and off stage can correlate to create equally a sustainable working environment and an art piece reaching towards a more sustainable life, both in the now and in the future.

*olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä – Distracting  
the Human*



*olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä*. Photo: Taru Aho & Mia Jalerva.

This piece is still in the making, and the group is about to enter the second rehearsal period simultaneously with the final phases of this written work, so this chapter is concentrating on the first part of the production: movement exploration and mapping the theoretical context of the work. *olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä* (the words in the name are all different formulations of “creature”, “animal” or “life form” in Finnish) will be a performance with undertones of healing treatment, the main ingredients being sound and dance. In addition to healing and rest, the thematic focus is on shaking the thin border between human and animal and spending time with ambiguity and transformation. The piece will be a part of the thesis work of dance performance student Matilda Aaltonen and sound design student Markus Tapio. I am invited to the working group as a performer and co-choreographer, together with my classmate Taru Aho, and light design will be done by light design student Mia Jalerva.

Matilda and Markus have been working together already for a longer time, and the rest of the group was gathered during the spring of 2019. Our first common meeting was in the end of May 2019, where we spent half a day discussing the starting point of the piece, each group member's role and responsibilities in the production, everyone's expectations, interest and concerns for the project, and negotiated schedules for the coming summer and fall. It also became clear that there would be a focus on keeping the schedule light by having rather short working days, taking care of having enough breaks and following the group members' wish to not work early mornings. In my experience, this meeting gave a good foundation for a sustainable, trustful and discursive working environment, that will hopefully be nurtured throughout the production. The performers and the sound designer spent the month of June in a studio reading, talking, moving and making sounds, which is the period my reflections stem from. The piece will be built into a small black box at the Theatre Academy and will premiere in mid-November 2019.

### *Shaking the categorical borders*

The starting point for the movement practice in *olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä* is the wish to create a practice where the categories between human and animal could be blurred conceptually, representationally and in the flesh of the human animal body. The theoretical base for the practice is in contemporary animal research, where more and more proof can be found that the difference between the human animal and other animal species is vanishingly small: other animals do have culture, they build homes and nests, they use language, are intelligent, and even play games. They do all the things that once were thought of characteristics exclusive to the human species, which is no surprise for an ecologically tuned and non-anthropocentric mind. One example of a movement practice that is shared among different species, is stress release by vibrating and shaking the body after an intense situation or trauma.

In the human world, this shaking is known as Trauma and Tension Release Exercise (from now on referred to as TRE), a practice coined by American doctor David Berceli (TRE for ALL, Inc., 2019). The goal of the practice is to ease stress and release pent up tension in the body by tapping into the shaking

reflex of the autonomous nervous system. This reflex is coded to the human gene, but it is usually suppressed as uncontrollable and uncanny in the contemporary culture, up until the TRE treatment became popular in the last decade. We started practicing TRE with the working group in spring 2019, and it is used as one basic element for the movement practice.

The sensation TRE practice gives of the body is somewhere between being able to recognise where and how the movement is happening and simultaneously having very little control over where the movement will travel next. It is exhilarating and scary at the same time – the paranoid solidarity between layered systems inside a body – and it is fascinating to think that other non-human bodies share this feeling with the body, an ecological entity, I can call mine. The look of the shaking is often quite rough, since it can be spastic and very sudden, reminding of a seizure, and the form of this treatment does not follow the common calm, soft and pleasant aesthetics of rest and soothing stress-release. TRE is consequently an interesting starting point for creating images of uncanniness and un-human, since ambiguity, sickness and oddness is often ruled out of the idea of healthy and proper *Anthropos*. Since the shaking reflex is shared among many animal species, it has potential for blurring the image of the human performer and suggesting nonhuman, other-than- or more-than-human imagery.

Together with the fact that the shaking can invite a spectator to see animality in the human form, dancing with TRE is also an intriguing sustainability practice, because the regeneration of energy happens by completely exhausting the body temporarily to enhance its performance and functionality later. This indulgence in the full-body shake is closer to Stoekl's idea of sustainability as the wasting and recycling of bodily energy in ecstasy and excess, rather than the stock-piling logic of efficiency and energy-saving. The aesthetics of functionality and efficiency are usually effortlessness, virtuosic speed and smoothness – while clumsiness, excessive effort and uncontrollability are associated with discomfort and wasteful energy use. I've experienced that the aesthetics of efficiency haunt many contemporary dance techniques, like release technique with its clear lines and smooth mastery of the use of gravitational momentum, which means that efficient, functional and thus sustainable movement practice generally risks having a very clean

outlook fit for a carefully regulated closed economy. But what if it was exactly the bumpiest, more wasteful, disgraceful, unexpected and physically exhausting movement practices, ecstatic dances of a general solar economy, that sustained me, the ecological entity, best? With this question in mind, dancing through TRE is an interesting exploration in sustainable performance and movement practice.

Another shake of traditional working structure in *olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä* happens in strongly delegating the directing work of the piece. Both the initiators, sound designer and dancer, want to perform in the piece, and since everybody is in, meaning that no member works on the piece without being a part of executing the piece themselves, the decisions for what material gets worked on (or picked for stage) is collectively decided. Choreographing the material has been delegated so that all the three dancers, including the facilitating dancer, take turns in watching the exercises from the outside and giving input for the compositional direction. In addition, sound, light, costume and set will be agreed upon together, each element of the piece being equally important, rather than the performers being in the focus of the staging of the piece. Personally, this arrangement boosts my ownership of the piece and my agency in the production as a working group member, which are crucial elements for my experience of a supporting and sustainable working culture.

#### *Distracting oneself out of control*

Learning to let go of control over others, and thus oneself as a collection of others, is crucial in letting go of anthropocentrism. In *olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä* the distraction from control is a central element of performance practice, happening both by tapping into reflexive body processes and building sound systems with an inbuilt element of surprise. In addition to delegating responsibility in a working group, I find these ways of delegating artistic control to the autonomous nervous system and the auditive machines as a great way to transform the acknowledgement and the ecological entanglement of humans into artistic practice.

The goal for dancing with TRE, combined with impulse exercises from contact improvisation, is to reach a state where choices are made without planning the result from the compositional and planning mind of a human dancer. While moving, the idea is to keep the awkward TRE tremble awake and going to constantly keep oneself slightly out of control of one's movement, while following spontaneous desires and impulses of interests for actions, both inside one's own system and outside it in the surroundings. All this should be done with a playful mindset seeking out for pleasure and joy: the culture of games and play for sheer amusement that homo sapiens shares with many other-than-human animal species has inspired the process greatly, and a playful attitude towards work is one way of distracting the control-seeking Anthropos in the whole process. Also, the guidelines for the practice in the future might include avoiding repetition and recognisable dance technique forms to enhance the transforming uncanny outlook and the diversely associative representation of the movement.

In sound design, the surprise element is found through creative mis-connection of the sound system: in June, the sound designer was improvising sound with a set of effect pedals and sound machines, that were randomly connected together and back to the mixer rather than to an audio input, thus transforming the mixer itself into a kind of a playing instrument with unexpected electrical sounds. Allowing the system to create layered sound signals constantly disturbing and transforming each other in feedback loops with the mixer, the designer could create a machine-human cyborg system unaware of its own future effects. The system often created noise with ambiguous tones, hinting both towards a familiar sound of e.g., waves or rain simultaneously with being very synthetic and electric.

### *Performance as healing*

The framing question for how the piece will be built is if a performance could have a healing effect, or if a performance can be structured around the idea of healing treatment rather than being a spectacle. The wish to make a healing performance comes from a need to create performance spaces dedicated to rest and recuperation and diverse ways of experiencing sound and dance. The main inspiration for this frame is the facilitators' joint exploration on sound

healing, and the genre of sound used is noise together with more traditional sound healing instruments, like gongs and singing bowls. The double-sided nature of noise makes it an interesting material, since “noisy” sounds typically have a negative connotation to them, but on the other hand listening to e.g., white or brown noise is generally used to calm down or fall asleep.

The idea of healing expands to and connects all scales of the production, which backs up the sustainability of the project both on stage and back stage. On a conceptual level, questioning the human-animal divide is a way to start healing the wounds of the Severing, and using TRE as the base of movement practice is a bridge between the human and animal inside the human body of the performers. During the performance, both the audience members and the performers will be exposed to a soundscape created with a healing effect in mind, even though the experience might not be so simply calming or easy. The goal for the light designer is to find light beneficial for life and rest, which might mean spending long times in very little light or even darkness. In the body practice, the improvisation based on TRE (being extremely energy-consuming and exhausting), can also pamper the performers with intense regenerative stress release. Of course, the same effect is on the people in the workroom during rehearsal when developing the materials, and at times, the artistic exploration has been – and will be – combined with boosting the well-being of the working group by doing shared session of TRE without a specific performative goal and attending sound healing session lead by other professionals. All in all, I find many of the production’s aspects and planned structures as great exemplary sustainable performing arts practices, and I look forward to working further with the project.

## CONCLUSION

“Unless one likes complexity, one cannot feel at home in the twenty-first century.” (Braidotti 2011, 11).

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the era we currently live in, is a time characterized by rapid climate change, increasing social inequality and mass extinction of species and cultures together with the severe anxiety and agony caused by these phenomena. Creating sustainable life practices is more urgent than ever, if the global industrial civilisation is to live on after the depletion of fossil fuels, and recuperate from the devastating effects that global capitalism has had on land, forests, oceans, and billions of human and nonhuman bodies. These practices cannot only be formulated through international environmental policy and logistic state governance – there needs to be a shift in sustainability thinking on an ontological level of the body, the subject and the basic interaction between different lifeforms. This shift requires forming new language and concepts for modelling and narrating the symbiotic reality of the Earth and the cosmos around it, and the performing arts, along with other art forms, can play an important role in creating more sustainable representations and cultures for future sustainability.

In this work, I have presented how contemporary sustainability thinking could be updated to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century through post-human philosophy and feminist theory. My central argument is that sustainability practices must have intersectional, feminist, non-anthropocentric equality thinking at their core to reach long-term sustainability and acknowledge the rich ecological relationality of our habitat, the symbiotic real. A key element in moving towards post-anthropocentric equality is telling better stories of the inevitably and uneasily symbiotic nature of life, both in the arts and other every day contexts.

I have brought this sustainability thinking to the frame of performing arts working groups by outlining six main areas of focus for formulating sustainability guidelines. These areas are equality and transparent communication, energy use, enjoyment, temporality and time, locality and

delegating responsibility. In my view, the basic principle for reaching sustainable working cultures in the performing arts is to follow the same values both on stage and behind the stage, meaning that the sustainable ethics represented in the art piece must equally apply for the process of creating the art piece, and vice versa. To exemplify possible sustainable and unsustainable working group practices, I have presented and analysed three different performance productions I participated in during 2018 and 2019 from the point of view of body-mental, social and environmental sustainability.

Throughout this work I have made quite a huge leap from the ecological ontology of the subject to the everyday life of a performing artist, and many more hands-on practical models for sustainable practices could have been presented to approach the sustainability of working groups in the frame of performance productions. Nonetheless, it has been very important for me to critique the sustainability movement from a deeply philosophical and feminist angle, since the challenges of today's global industrial capitalism take root in oppressive and abusive ideas that go all the way to the core of our very existence and current organisation of life. To begin to solve the ecological injustices of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the unsustainable human life style abusing the carrying capacity of planet Earth we must start with the basic question of who we are and why we are here, which are questions that are frequently asked through art pieces. Using a theoretically more abstract concept as the starting point for thinking towards an art piece is a common method for creation in the contemporary performance world, that I strongly adopted during my professional studies, and it shows in how I quite bluntly associate the global sustainability issues with the everyday exhaustion and anxiety of artist working in the performing arts. Still, this straight-forwards pairing and comparison of issues on different scales and areas of life is crucial to how I view the world and its interconnected relationality, and why it is so important to apply the same rules on all aspects of life, even though the outlook and outcome of those ethics inevitably takes diverse shapes in the specific situations where they are applied.

Consequently, artists must reconsider their artistic practice thoroughly to follow sustainable ethics. It is not enough to make ecologically-minded and sustainability-positive art - the working structures for creating that art must

also respect the ecologies of the working subjects and the sustainability of the production processes for the message to ripple through to everyday practices both inside and outside the arts. There is great potential in translating the cutting-edge philosophical, situated and embodied knowledge performing artists gather from their artistic work into sustainable ethics and concrete politics and practices towards a more sustainable life in general. The focus for my future work with sustainable artistic working groups cultures is thus in the concrete bridging between theory and practice by experimenting with alternative and locally specific structures and insisting on following feminist and post-anthropocentric guidelines.

The bottom line for sustainability thinking and sustainable storytelling is that there is no bottom line, there is just the endless play, negotiation and struggle of staying with the trouble of staying together. As Rosi Braidotti states in the quote in the beginning of this chapter, living, especially sustainable living, today requires relentless conviction and patience in engaging with the complexity of interactions and forms of life in the symbiotic real. There is no fast-forward, quick-fix easy way around climate change, or mass extinction, or inequality, because this is the utterly multifaceted, un-innocent, unintendedly and intendedly violent, paranoid, horrifyingly ecstatic and hauntingly beautiful mess we have gotten ourselves into. All the issues and scales of the non-anthropocentric symbiosis must be addressed simultaneously, or at least side by side or each in their turn, to reach a sustainable lifestyle. I myself intend to keep on trying to stay together as an ecological collective subject, as well as trying to keep my artistic community alive and well in the locality of the urban North, but I am also prepared to repeatedly fail – I cannot keep track of everything, and I am not supposed to. I will keep on fighting for equality, keep on looking for way to invite the nonhuman into the human world, meanwhile doing what I do best: excessively wasting and regenerating energy in the ecstatic act of contemporary dancing.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, Sara. 2017. *Living a feminist life*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Arruzza, Cinzia, Bhattacharya, Tithi & Fraser, Nancy. 2019. *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto*. London: Verso.
- Braidotti, Rosi. 2011. *Nomadic theory: The portable*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.
- Caradonna, Jeremy L. 2014. *Sustainability: A history*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Carson, Rachel. 1962. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Darwin, Charles. 1859. *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. London: John Murray.
- Guattari, Félix. 2008. *Three Ecologies*. Translated by Ian Pindar & Paul Sutton. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New York: Continuum. First published 1989 in France.
- Haraway, Donna J. 2016. *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Experimental futures: Technological lives, scientific arts, anthropological voices, series edited by Michael M. J. Fischer and Joseph Dumit. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Haraway, Donna; Ishikawa, Noboru; Gilbert, Scott F.; Olwig, Kenneth; Tsing, Anna L.; Bubandt, Nils. 2017. "Anthropologists Are Talking: About the Anthropocene". *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 81(3): 535-564.
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). 1980. *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

Kokkonen, Tuija. 2017. *Esityksen mahdollinen luonto: Suhde ei-inhimilliseen esitystapahtumassa keston ja potentiaalisuuden näkökulmasta*. Acta Scenica 48. Helsinki: University of the Arts Helsinki, Theatre Academy.

Malm, Andreas. 2016. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. London: Verso.

Morton, Timothy. 2017. *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*. Brooklyn: Verso.

Salminen, Antti & Vadén, Tere. 2015. *Energy and Experience: An essay in Naftology*. Chicago: MCM' Publishing.

Stoekl, Allan. 2007. *Bataille's peak: Energy, religion, and postsustainability*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

### *Online references*

Circus Maximus. 2019. "Acts of Care performs in Prague in June 2019". *Circus Maximus* home page. Accessed 22 September 2019. <http://circusmaximus.fi/projects/acts-of-care-performs-in-prague-in-june/>

Dance for plants. 2019. *Dance for plants* homepage. Accessed 20 September 2019. <http://www.danceforplants.com/>

QUERQ ry. 2019. *Safer Spaces Policy*. Last updated 17 July 2019. Accessed 19 August 2019. <https://bit.ly/2x64vjz>

*OED: Online Etymology Dictionary*. Search result for "anthropo-". Accessed 20 September 2019. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/anthropo->

*Rosi Braidotti: Posthuman Feminism*. Documented lecture at Columbia University, Institute for research on women, gender and sexuality. YouTube video, 1:00:58, uploaded by user Marce MT 20 September 2017. Accessed 21 June 2019. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drLsM1T\\_Zm0&t=6s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drLsM1T_Zm0&t=6s)

*Story Telling for Earthly Survival*. 2016. Fabrizio Terranova. Film.  
<https://earthlysurvival.org/>

TRE for ALL, Inc. 2019. "What is TRE". *TRE for ALL, Inc.: Tension & Trauma Releasing Exercises* home page. Accessed 17 September 2019.  
<https://traumaprevention.com/what-is-tre/>

*Of being in the dark*. Performance's homepage. Accessed 16 September 2019.  
<https://pimeassaolemisesta.wordpress.com/>

### *Performances*

*Acts of care*. 2018. Working group: Milla Martikainen, Petra Vehviläinen, Kati Raatikainen, Sofia Simola, Eero Erkamo and different kind of creatures, phenomenons and processes. Performance of 9 June 2018, Olohuone 306,4 km<sup>2</sup> festival, Turku. Premiere 26 April 2017.

*Biofiction*. 2019. Concept: Simone Aughterlony. Live music: Hahn Rowe. Performers: Simone Aughterlony, Jen Rosenblit, Hahn Rowe. Costume: Judith Steinmann. Light Design: Florian Bach. Performance of 1 February 2019, Stoa, Helsinki.

*Of being in the dark* (original Finnish name *Pimeässä olemisesta*). Working group: Mia Jalerva, Ella Kähärä, Riikka Laurilehto, Oula Rytönen, Unto, Pietu Wikström. Premiere 12 April 2019, Uutela, Helsinki.

*olento / olio / otus / eläin / eläjä*. Choreography & dance: Matilda Aaltonen, Taru Aho, Riikka Laurilehto. Sound: Markus Tapio. Light: Mia Jalerva. Premiere 6 November 2019, Uniarts Theater Academy, Helsinki.

*Their Limbs Their Lungs Their Legs* Concept & choreography: Lea Moro. Performers: Matilda Aaltonen, Taru Aho, Anni Kaila, Ella Koikkalainen, Riikka Laurilehto, Janna Loukas, Aino Purhonen, Ilona Salonen, Jussi

Suomalainen. Dramaturgy: Per Ehrnström. Sound: Joonas Pernilä. Light design: Jani-Matti Salo. Costumes and scenography: Corinna Helenelund. Premiere 18 January 2019.

*Cover page*

*Documentation from the piece “Of being in the dark”. 2019. Aleks Talve. Photography.*