

# EMBODIED ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

Investigating Performative Spaces as Sites of  
Resistance to Capitalist Societal Norms

*Degree of Master of Science (Two Years) in Human Ecology:  
Culture, Power & Sustainability  
30 ECTS*



*Authors: Naja Karoline Heuch & Maya Louise Johansen  
CPS: International Master's Programme in Human Ecology  
Human Ecology Division  
Department of Human Geography  
Faculty of Social Sciences, Lund University  
Supervisor: Vasna Ramasar  
SpringTerm 2024*

Department:	Department of Human Geography
Address:	Geocentrum 1, Sölvegatan 10, Lund
Telephone:	+46 46 222 17 59

Supervisor:	Vasna Ramasar
-------------	---------------

Title and Subtitle:	Embodied Engagements with the Ecological Crisis: Investigating Performative Spaces as Sites of Resistance to Capitalist Societal Norms
Authors:	Naja Karoline Heuch & Maya Louise Johansen
Examination:	Master's thesis (two year)

Term:	Spring Term 2024
-------	------------------

Abstract:

Although the accounts confirming that we are in the midst of an ecological crisis are undeniable, the transformative action necessary to address climate change remains elusive. Capitalist norms of economic growth, self-interest and denialism obstructs paths towards sustainability. This research illustrates how embodied engagements with the ecological crisis through artistic practices can foster more in-depth ways of dealing with the crisis. More specifically, the research delves into a performance that was created by the authors, together with three peers from the CPS programme, in the winter of 2022. The performance was recreated and facilitated three times in the spring of 2024 to more deeply analyse its potential. The empirical data that was subtracted from these performances include reflections from the participants on site followed up by interviews. The research arises in the intersection between artistic research and ecological theory, contributing to broadening the methods in the field of Human Ecology. Our findings suggest that the performative space, detached from everyday time and space, provides an opportunity to reflect on taken-for-granted capitalist structures that allows for different imaginations to unfold. In our performance, we deprived participants of their vision with blindfolds, while leading them into a soundscape. This offered the participants an opportunity to cultivate other senses and lean into a bodily and emotional engagement with the ecological crisis. Hence, the performative space offered a site for resistance to the capitalist pursuit of productivity, rationality and individualism by allowing participants to connect bodily with their emotions rising in the ecological crisis. Further, it encouraged a caring and hopeful connection through a feeling of community building and interconnectedness.

Keywords: *embodiment, performative spaces, capitalist resistance, artistic research methods, interconnectedness.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thesis could not have been written without a whole ecosystem of clever, helpful, and caring people, who have dedicated themselves and their energy to help us carry out this project. First of all, we give our warmest dedication to Keira Dignan, Anne Jessen and Johanne Tagmose. Without your bright minds, sensuous bodies, and great collaboration on making the performance at the HEKM21 course, there would not have been any artistic practices to write a thesis about. Thanks to Michelle Appelros, who believed in the project and invited us to perform at the Copenhagen Degrowth Festival 2023, inspiring us to carry on this project. To Vasna Ramasar, we are grateful for your encouragement and guidance in writing this thesis.

A heart warm thanks to every participant through each manifestation of the performance. Thank you for your honesty and devotion. And especially thanks to Josephine, who dared to put us on the curriculum for her course on Climate Change and Policy and to let us test our performance in class. And to the participants that agreed to take time to share their experience with us through interviews. Especially thanks to the people who helped us through the performance, Johanne Tagmose, Therese Thim, Nanna Gram Bentsen, Etta Laura Vitus Andersen, Cajsa Jasmin Sørensen, Katrine Stæhr, Emilie Farbæk Johansen and Alexander Pilgaard Christophersen. In your hands, every participant was taken through a warm, calm, and caring journey. Moreover, a great thanks to Jonathan Hvalsøe Schou for coming to aid, where our skills were lacking. And to Ny Lille Klub and We Do Democracy for trusting in us to use your venues. Finally, a great thanks to Kaspar Meiltil, Emilie Farbæk Johansen, Johannes Kroustrup, Claudia Steenhard, Jakob Heuch and Kirsten Heuch Hansen who has contributed with their sharp minds and eyes.

## NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

We use the gender pronouns they/them/theirs for our participants or the preferred gender pronoun when known.

"..." denotes direct quotes from informants. Longer quotes are indented, while shorter ones are simply italicised. When referring to academic texts these are not italicised but referred to with citation marks.

(...) signifies when sentences are taken out from the informant's statements, and [...] to clarify a concept.

'...' indicates analytical concepts the first time they appear in a chapter.

Photos, taken by us, will occur throughout the thesis. These photos are recreations of the performances' atmosphere and provide additional context and immersion into the experience. Moreover, our written text is being supplemented by pictures of material generated on-site by our participants as reflections on our performance. These will be referred to as 'in situ' in the thesis.

The drawing on the front page is made by Cajsa Jasmin Sørensen.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	8
1.2 STRUCTURE OF THESIS.....	9
<b>2. INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>14</b>
3.1 CAPITALIST SOCIAL NORMS.....	15
3.2 REPAIRING HUMAN-NATURE RELATIONS.....	16
3.3 RETURNING TO THE SENSES.....	19
3.4 CLIMATE EMOTIONS.....	20
3.5 PERFORMANCE THEORY.....	22
3.6 ARTISTIC RESEARCH ON ECOLOGICAL ISSUES .....	25
<b>4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>29</b>
4.1 ONTOLOGY: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE.....	29
4.2 EPISTEMOLOGY: THE FIELD OF PHENOMENOLOGY.....	31
4.3 ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS METHOD .....	33
4.4 SITUATEDNESS .....	35
4.5 DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE.....	37
4.5 LOCATION .....	40
4.6 PARTICIPANT GROUPS.....	42
4.8 DATA COLLECTION METHODS .....	45
4.8.1 <i>IN SITU REFLECTIONS</i> .....	46
4.8.2 <i>SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS</i> .....	48
4.8.2 <i>PRE- AND POST-PERFORMANCE REFLECTIONS</i> .....	49
4.9 ETHICS.....	49
4.10 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY.....	51
<b>5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>53</b>
5.1 THE SEPARATION PHASE.....	54
5.1.1 <i>TIME AND SPACE</i> .....	54
5.1.2 <i>THE CRITICAL GAZE AND THE DEVOTED BODY</i> .....	58
5.1.3 <i>IMAGINATION AND SENSATION</i> .....	60
5.1.4 <i>A CARE-FULL ROOM</i> .....	63
5.2 THE LIMINAL PHASE .....	67
5.2.1 <i>IF WE CAN'T FEEL IT, WE CAN'T FACE IT</i> .....	67
5.2.2 <i>A LIGHT THAT SHINES HOPE</i> .....	70
5.2.3 <i>BECOMING ONE WITH NATURE</i> .....	72
5.3 THE REINCORPORATION PHASE.....	76
5.3.1 <i>A SHEEP OF ITS TIME</i> .....	76
5.3.2 <i>SILENT RESISTANCE</i> .....	79
5.3.3 <i>AN ECOLOGY OF MIND</i> .....	82
<b>6. CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>85</b>
<b>7. BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>91</b>
<b>8. APPENDIX</b> .....	<b>96</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The accounts confirming that we are in the midst of an ecological crisis are undeniable (e.g. Carlson et al. 2022; IPCC 2023). As we write, we are confronted by the extinction of species and breakdown of ecosystems across the globe at an unprecedented pace (IPCC 2023). 2023 stands as a sobering milestone of the hottest year in recorded history with levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide still increasing (Watts 2024). Global temperatures rise and multiple tipping points might already have passed, pushing the Earth systems to the brink of climate collapse (Kemp et al. 2022). Even though the science is alarmingly clear, the transformative action necessary to address climate change remains elusive. Instead, capitalist norms of economic growth and self-interest are blocking the road towards sustainability (Fraser 2014; Hornborg 2011; Malm 2016).

For those who are already aware and affected by the ecological crisis, being confronted with a political reality that does not mirror the actions needed to address the crisis, means living through difficult emotions (Haraway 2016). The sociologist Kari Marie Norgaard (2011) suggests that the inability to act on the ecological crisis is rooted in socially organised denial. In a neoliberal and post-industrial context, avoidance from dealing with the ecological crisis does not come from lacking knowledge about the crisis (Norgaard 2011, 2). Rather, scholars exploring the emotional and psychological aspects of the crisis suggest that it comes from collective denial reinforced by an economic system that values private capital before care (Norgaard 2011; Weintrobe 2021). Capitalism as an economic and social system, has in the field of critical theory been criticised for being the root cause of the ecological crisis (Fraser 2014; Kovel 2008; Malm 2016). As the predominant economic framework of western contemporary societies, it has shaped institutions, advocating individualism, productivity, and rationality throughout all layers of society (Fraser 2014; Foucault [1978] 2008; Harcourt 2018). Constructed on ideas of ever-expanding economic growth, the system of capitalism fails to provide ways of thinking about, engaging with, and solving the ecological crisis and the root of the

problem: that we are outgrowing the resources of the planet we inhabit and making it unliveable (Fraser 2014; Haraway 2016).

In order to counter the inertia installed by capitalist ways of thinking about our environments, it becomes imperative to imagine new and different ways of relating to the testimony of collapsing ecosystems, extreme weather across the globe and the continuation of losses it will inevitably cause (Escobar 2020; Rice, et al. 2015). In the spirit of Donna Haraway (2016) we live in troubling and turbid times and ought to become truly present with these troubles to learn from them (ibid., 1). In this case “staying with the trouble” (ibid.) requires not fleeing from the ecological crisis by projecting it elsewhere or onto the future but staying with the losses and devastating effects that have already happened (Butler 2023; Randall 2009) and are continuously happening as we write. In this thesis we explore how a performative space holds the potential for mediating emotions and staying with the trouble in the ecological crisis.

Arts has historically been recognized as functional in giving voice to subjective experiences and mediating unexpressed emotions and feelings (Butler 2023). As emphasised by political philosopher Jacques Rancière (2004), art can figure in political contests on how we understand the world as it challenges ideas that are taken for granted (ibid. 13). In this research we dive into the potential of an interactive performance that the authors created together with three peers, as part of an artistic presentation of ecological issues in an earlier CPS course. The initial motivation for making the performance stemmed from a need to connect emotionally with the load of information we encountered through our academic studies. We had an experience of participating in highly intellectual debates about the ecological crisis, while struggling to find room for our emotions. Thus, we created the performance as a way to find refuge in the storm of climate debate - a dedicated space to pause and digest the insights from Human Ecology. From the feedback we got when doing the performance with our peers, and later at the Copenhagen Degrowth Festival 2023, we experienced that it had a strong emotional effect on people and generated hope in the midst of troubling times. Based on the feedback, we decided to recreate the performance

in a research-based environment to more deeply analyse its potential value in dealing with the ecological crisis. The research-based performances<sup>1</sup> took place in Copenhagen three times in spring 2024, and facilitated different groups of people aged 20-30, based on a choice of giving voice to a generation facing the urgent challenge of addressing the ecological crisis during their lifetime.

By using our own performance as an explorative field for doing research, this thesis contributes to the field of ‘artistic research’, which has its foundation in the intersection between academia and art as a concept of study where the practice of art is generated into knowledge (Lebech 2019, 23). In recent years, transdisciplinarity between art and academia has been fused with great interest but the area of research is still very limited (Heras et al. 2021). In the intersection between research-based performances and academia, our research contributes to the field of Human Ecology by complementing traditional research methods within academia. With a feminist and phenomenological approach, our research contributes to the development of pluralist methods in ecological research. It does so by offering a research-based performance in which participants can look for orientation and understanding when dealing with a daunting future. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the field of Human Ecology through widening the range of methodological practices by exploring how artistic practices can assist towards societal transformation, offering a tool to a more embodied way of dealing with the crisis.

## 1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How and why does the performance create other ways of knowing, feeling, and connecting that challenges capitalist societal norms?
- 2) How can artistic practices enable embodied and caring engagements with the world?
- 3) Why are such practices important in dealing with the ecological crisis?

---

<sup>1</sup> In her PhD dissertation, Sofie Lebech (2019) defines research-based aesthetics as artists’ adoption of strategies of knowledge production. Although we write in an academic context, we find this definition applicable for our performance (ibid, 9).



## 1.2 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

Before continuing with the conventional flow of the thesis, the next section will present a description of the performance that was used to gather empirical data in this thesis. As we are not able to invite our readers to experience our performance, we have tried to capture the essence of it in words. While our performance consists of multiple sensory layers that defy simple descriptions, we use storytelling techniques to evoke emotions, awaken the sensory system and create pictures, in which it will come to life.

In section three and four, we present our theoretical and methodological frameworks. In our theoretical framework we clarify what we mean by ‘capitalist social norms’ and ‘embodied and caring ways of being in the world’ by drawing on critical theory. Further, this section includes a run-through of performance theory which has guided both the creation of our performance and our analytical perspectives. Our theoretical framework also includes a literature review on artistic research that deals with ecological issues, which clarifies what we mean by ‘artistic practices’ and ‘artistic research’. In our methodological framework we go through the different layers of methods and methodological reflections, which has defined our research.

In section five we share our findings and analysis, which is structured in three main parts, following the three-folded structure of a rite of passage with a separation phase, liminal phase, and reincorporation phase. Rites of passage reflect a transition from one state to another, which has inspired both our performance and our analysis due to its transformative potential (Turner 1966). The findings and analysis lead up to the final section, section six, which reflect our conclusions of the study’s findings and methodology and its contribution to the field of Human Ecology.

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE

Our performance is an experimental space to approach the abstract nature of emotions arising when living through an ecological crisis. It takes place in a room where senses are enhanced through smell, sound, and touch, while being blindfolded, so that sight – the most used sense – is withheld. It is accompanied with a soundscape and goes through different states of emotional appeal, from feeling isolated in the stream of news about ecological breakdown, to feeling solidarity by standing together. Each phase of the performance has its own pace, sensory atmosphere, and message, which is made apparent in the *journey through our performance*. The following description was created after the facilitation of the performances. The use of words has been inspired by both the atmosphere we wanted to create with the performance, and the words that the participants' used to describe the performance.



## *JOURNEY THROUGH OUR PERFORMANCE*

### *- INTRODUCTION -*

How does it feel to live through an ecological collapse, and do we have to go through it alone? In our interactive performance we encourage you to let go and experience the overwhelming emotions triggered by the ecological crisis we ever so often are compelled to suppress. We welcome you into a sensuous world that you might have forgotten to pay attention to. In the rush of our super-efficient, highly optimised life, there is seldom time to stop and listen to our breath. Feel the fabric of air, and let the scents tickle our nostrils.

### *- ANTICIPATION -*

We ask you to be silent when entering our performative space. Let go of everyday conversation and enter into a wordless dimension. We greet you in a darkened room, with candlelight dancing in front of you, shedding warm hues of amber. As you step into the room, your nose will instantly pick up a different scent. You hear birds chirping, communicating in another language than yours. This indicates that you are entering a new world.

### *- SURRENDER -*

Leave your shoes behind, feel the ground beneath you. With a white piece of fabric, you become blindfolded, and your other senses enhance. You become aware of your sensing body. You start to notice your own breath. A breath that connects you to the soil, animals, and plants of the earth, sharing the same air as you. As you reconnect with your breath, your attention intensifies. The perceived world begins to change, as you start to listen from your sensuous body. A moment of surrender. Let yourself be guided, feel the soft touches calm you. Notice the wooden scent in the room, deep, calming, and heavy in your system. A hand takes yours, gentle, warm, leading you into the unknown.

### *- RUNNING WATER -*

Suddenly you stop. Your hands are passed on to another's, and calmly get lowered into warm, enveloping water. You feel a soothing warmth spreading through your fingers and palms. The water is perfectly tempered, causing your muscles to relax, and tensions begin to dissolve. A gentle touch that begins at the root of your hand and massages every inch of it. Stress and worries melt away as the water slowly envelops your hands like a welcoming embrace. A gentle scent of wood fills the air, further soothing your senses. Peace and calm spreads through your body, and you begin to realise how much your hands needed this care. As the water gets replaced by a towel, the soft touches on your

hands remain. A new pair of hands leads you into the floating sounds of a clearing in the forest on an early spring day.

- *ATTENTION* -

Left to yourself. Is there anyone around you or are you all alone? Long brackets of time [ ] until something slides down your shoulders, a pair of hands. They embrace you and calm your system. Warmth streams through the hands, as you melt together with the breath of the other. [ ] Standing there, still. Breathing in and breathing out. [ ] Your feet against the cold floor, grounded like the roots of a tree. Fleeting hands that touch you and let go, gently, as you stand there swaying like a canopy in the wind. [ ] A tickling sensation from your neck down your spine as new hands hold lightly but comforting onto your shoulders. They stay there for a while, then let go. The anticipation of when another touch will occur. [ ] Still you hear the voices of birds chirping, but in the background you notice a pulsating sound. Is it roaring steam engines? Machines cutting through trees? The metallic beats from a city? The sounds become more frequent. [ ] Slowly intensifying, new sounds blend in, like a silent cry in an alienating city.

- *CHAOS* -

Hectic, metallic noises take over. The birds have disappeared. Chaos that breaks you free of your illusions and throws you headfirst into the beat. High speed. What was before gentle touches, has changed into pushes. Being pushed around and bumped into by unfamiliar bodies. You are in the way. A reminder of the hectic metropolitan life. Suddenly a voice tells you that “*climate change has caused substantial damages and increasingly irreversible losses, in terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and open ocean marine ecosystems.*” A sense of urgency. Change of direction. Not able to focus. Attention is undirected. A new voice: “*This collapse will lead to sea level rises of 10 metres over the next few centuries, bringing the ground on which we stand today under water.*” Fast pace, news streams overflow you. One tragedy takes another. Happening so far away that it feels easier for you to shut it out and dance intoxicated to the techno beat. “*Carcinogenic, diabetic, asthmatic, epileptic. Post-traumatic, bipolar, and disaffected. Atomised. Thinking we're engaged when we're pacified. Staring at the screen. So, we don't have to see the planet die.*” Torn between the movement and the voices. Feeling scattered. Incomprehensible emptiness. Worry and unpredictability.

- *SOLIDARITY* -

The music changes again, with a deep sigh from a piano that travels all the way through your body and ends its journey in the centre of your heart. Your breath gradually returns to a calm rhythm. A melody sways back and forth between

calm and melancholic rhythms and guides you to a place of inner peace and reflection. Each note is like a gentle embrace. You hear a voice: *“What are we going to do to wake up? We sleep so deep it doesn’t matter how they shake us.”* Still blindfolded and without sight, overwhelmed by a daunting future. Afraid to leave behind a world in decay. You sense someone is approaching you. Untying the bind that blinds you. The curtains fall and eyes meet you. Captivated by another being. *“The true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking love.”* You come to notice that you are in a circle with other people and not scattered around as you thought all along. As a small light burns in the middle, a hope reappears in the dark. Standing together, united by a crisis we have not chosen to be in. Representing a generation that must mop up the past from the floor and learn to listen from a place of mutual hope: *“If we can’t feel it, we can’t face it. So take my hand and find warmth.”* We hold hands and feel a sense of belonging.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to answer our research questions, we have composed a substantial theoretical framework that deals with key issues in the ecological crisis and the importance of artistic practices within this domain. Our aim with this section is thus to clarify what is meant by ‘capitalist societal norms’, ‘artistic practices’, ‘performative spaces’ and ‘emotions’ which are important concepts in answering the research question. The section will start by turning to a definition of ‘capitalist social norms’, an inevitable backdrop when dealing with the issues of the ecological crisis. Next, we present a framework of ecofeminist theory, which lays the foundation for examining how our performance can challenge dominant capitalist structures and create alternative modes of knowing, feeling, and connecting. To answer our second research question of how artistic practices can enable embodied and caring ways of being in the world, we draw on phenomenological theory and performance theory that explains the transformative potential of rituals and the importance of emotional engagement in the crisis. Finally, we present a literature review on the intersection of artistic practices and ecology which is essential for answering why artistic practices are important in dealing with the ecological crisis.



### 3.1 CAPITALIST SOCIETAL NORMS

Capitalism is the overarching economic system that structures the social organisation of most societies today. Therefore, defining capitalism seems like a big mouthful. Karl Marx ([1867] 1976) defined it as an economic system where a) the means of production are privately owned, b) the primary purpose of production is profit, c) the commodities produced, are sold on a market, d) work is organised through wage-labour (ibid.). As an economic system, capitalism demands a reinforcement of labour and capital to prevail. Inspired by Marx, Andreas Malm (2016) has explained this by forming the equation  $M - C - M' - C' - M'' - C'' - M''' \dots$  where M stands for money (or wage) and C for commodity (ibid., 385-86). The prime indicates that a sold commodity on the market commands a higher exchange-value than before it was put into the loop (ibid.). According to Malm, the capitalist will continuously pursue increased profits, by seeking out cheaper labour and resources, which are then reinvested to further expand their profits (ibid.). This reveals an ever-expanding accumulation of capital, driving the forces of capitalism (ibid., 387). As a consequence, capitalism accommodates a culture of consumption, where individuals are encouraged to expand their fortunes and consume more products (Takedomi Karlsson & Ramasar 2020). Thus, some would argue, capitalism is the main driver for the ecological crisis as it promotes capital expansion at the expense of sustaining our natural environments (Hornborg 2011; Malm 2016). The result of this has shown to be overconsumption, waste, and resource extraction without compensation (Fraser 2014).

Feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser (2014) argues that capitalism cannot be reduced to an economic system. Rather it rests on three major non-economic conditions; 1) the division of productive and reproductive labour, 2) the view of nature as a finite resource, and 3) public powers who uphold the idea of economics as separated from politics (Fraser 2014, 56). Each of these background conditions shapes how capitalist society works and the normative ideals it entails (ibid., 69). Further, ecofeminist Trish Glazebrook (2017) argues that capitalist society, promoting neo-liberal principles of market, competition,

individualism and profit rests on ‘a logic of capital’ that values reason before emotional intelligence. Argued by the psychoanalyst Sally Weintrobe (2021), this logic of capital also becomes part of our psyche and social interactions, and thus values such as individualism, efficacy and rationality are adopted through our upbringing. As the famous quote by Fredric Jameson suggests “it is easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to capitalism” (Jameson 1991). It has thus become almost impossible to think beyond capitalism when picturing alternative ways of living (Fisher 2009).

Following this body of literature, we define capitalism as a social and economic system that promotes individualism, productivity, rationality and devalues social reproduction, care, and embodiment. The devaluation of social reproduction, care, and embodiment will be elaborated in the following section. Returning to these values offer a pathway to repairing the underlying logic of capitalism which has caused the environmental issues that we currently face.

### 3.2 REPAIRING HUMAN-NATURE RELATIONS

Various ecological philosophies have attempted explaining the roots of the ecological crisis<sup>2</sup>. Regardless of the vastness of ontologies and underlying causes on which these theories are based, they all underscore the same problem: the environmental issues that we currently face arise from an alienation from our natural environments (Hailwood 2015, 11). The ecofeminist movement has made important contributions by highlighting how underlying damaging and suppressive structures of capitalism have caused the devaluation of caring values in regard to preservation of non-human nature (Salleh 1997). As feminist Carolyn Merchant (1989) has famously argued, the domination of non-human nature rests on capitalism's reinforcement of patriarchal structures that values economic rational thought over embodied knowledge. She illustrates how the Scientific Revolution was a main driver of humanity's alienation from non-human nature (ibid. 2). Evolving from The Renaissance's revolutionary engagement in understanding humans' place in the world, the new ideology of

---

<sup>2</sup> Some predominant tropes are Marxism, Ecofeminism and Deep Ecology.



scientific progress spread optimism for progression, economic growth and paved the grounds for the invention of machines that provided tools for expansion (Merchant 1989). But with the introduction of machines in the 1600, the non-human nature conversely became a restriction to humanity's development and subjugated to (hu)man (ibid.). This development rested on ideas of human exception that justified the control, extraction and exploitation of natural resources and human labour in the pursuit of technological and industrial development (ibid., 3). Feminist scholars point out, primarily men in the Global North benefited from this development, evolving the concept of white male supremacy that spread its roots in society, and gained this progress at the expense of other human beings and the realm of non-human nature (Merchant 1989, 2; Salleh 1997, 88). These ideas are still prevailing, as capitalist expansion rests on this ideology, promoting economic growth with great consequences for nature and people (Hornborg 2011).

Ecofeminism's concern for nature draws parallels to the historic domination of women and female values in society, making care for nature a feminist political issue. According to ecofeminist Ariel Salleh (1997), the conjunction of domination over non-human nature and women in Western cultures has many stories of origin that collide and intersect. But the conception of women being "closer to nature" than men is one of the most profound and has served to rationalise the exclusion of women from economic production (ibid., 85). While men's productive work was perceived as the work of surplus value, and therefore counted as "labour", female work of birth and childcare was perceived as purely "animal" (ibid. 86). Thus, understood as a resource to developing the capitalist economic system (ibid.) Salleh furthermore notes that capitalist development has fused this relation and structured a society, where female traits like care and reciprocity are devalued (ibid., 87).

To sum up, ecofeminist literature thus suggests that to live in more flourishing and immediate relations with the cycles of nature requires reimagining humans' place in the world. To repair this destructive relationship with Earth, ecofeminist voices call for reciprocal, responsible and respectful care,

traditionally considered feminine values, in every aspect of society (cf. Salleh 1997). This work entails recognising and actively working against the oppressive structures of capitalism.

We suggest that caring is a way of working against the domination over non-human nature and women. Care is practised in our daily lives as a way to build social ties (Gómez Becerra & Muneri-Wangari 2021, 4). By “caring” we can find ways of repairing what has been broken and reinforcing social bonds of responsibility (ibid., 3). However, care does not always arrive from a moral standpoint of changing the world for the better, as care is also entangled in power relations, reinforced by the patriarchal structures of capitalist society (ibid., 2). To avoid reproducing power relations, political ecologists Marlene Gómez Becerra and Eunice Muneri-Wangari (2021) suggest an analytical division of care into care as ‘exchange’, ‘distribution’ and ‘reciprocity’. While care as distribution and exchange both reinforces a unidirectional individualistic form of care, through blood lines or ethnicity for instance, reciprocal care is multidirectional (ibid., 5). It entails “giving, receiving, and returning what has been given” (ibid., 4). Thus, in communities based on reciprocal care, care is practised collectively and assumed to benefit the maintenance and repair of the whole, allowing for a long-term commitment (ibid.).

Reciprocal care does not need to be confined to the human species only. Donna Haraway (2016) transcends socio-nature boundaries, by calling for a realisation of the interconnectedness of human-environment relations beyond conventions. As she says, we ought to accept “the fact that all earthlings are kin in the deepest sense, and it is past time to practise better care of kinds-as-assemblages” (Haraway 2016, 161). In this way, she challenges the idea of care as something limited to same-species parental care. Instead, the hierarchies of capitalist structures should be turned over and the entangled relations existing between human and non-human reimagined.

Together, these ecofeminist ideas lay the foundation to our understanding of why it is important to consider ways of repairing the broken relation between

human and non-human nature. They suggest that economic growth should not be gained over the suppression of other beings, arguing that reciprocal relations of care can lead the way of countering these structures. In the next section we show how, indeed, returning to our senses can recreate the sense of interconnectivity which is needed to fully address the ecological crisis.

### 3.3 RETURNING TO THE SENSES

“Underneath the anatomized and mechanical body that we have learned to conceive, prior indeed to all our conceptions, dwells the body as it actually experiences things, this poised and animate power that initiates all our projects and suffers all our passions.” (Abram 1996, 37).

As the ecologist and philosopher David Abram (1996) accounts for in the above quote, the body has become a “mechanical body”, a body detached from the sensing system for the benefit of capitalist efficiency. According to Abram, the senses are our primary means of perceiving and interacting with the environment. This stems from the phenomenological assumption that senses connect us intimately with the natural environment, allowing us to perceive, interpret, and navigate the world around us (Pink 2009, 26). It ties to the concept of ‘intentionality’, introduced by Edmund Husserl, which covers the relation between consciousness and that which consciousness is directed towards (Husserl in Sjørnslev 2015, 150). Our consciousness can be directed towards an object, ourselves or other people, as well as our surroundings (ibid., 156). The intentionality of our consciousness shapes how we experience and understand the world, as it directs awareness towards different parts of our experience. Abram argues that capitalism distracts our attention with human-made technology from our own embodied experiences of the natural world (1996, 22-23). Consequently, people become engrossed in consumer culture and digital technologies, spending less time engaged with the sensory richness of the natural world (ibid., 25). To illustrate this, Abram presents an example from his childhood, where the power went off in his hometown due to a hurricane, resulting in days without electricity. As a consequence, people had to walk to work, crickets and birdsong became clearly audible, and at night the sky, usually brightened by streetlamps and house lights, were full of stars (Abram 1996, 46).

Abram describes this memory as an experience of returning to the senses. Senses that the technological and industrial way of life had oriented him and the other townspeople away from (1996, 46).

Inspired by Abram's call for a reawakening of sensory awareness, our performance is an act of resistance against capitalist values of mass consumption, economic rationalism, and nature extraction. By reconnecting with the senses in the performative space, we can cultivate a deeper attunement with the natural world, fosters a new embodied sense of being in the world. This heightened awareness, in turn, nurtures a sense of ecological responsibility and empathy towards other beings.

### 3.4 CLIMATE EMOTIONS

As this research thesis claims that emotions are important in dealing with the ecological crisis it becomes crucial to define what is meant by "emotion". Theories about emotions can roughly be divided into those who think emotions are tied primarily to bodily sensations and those who perceive emotions as tied to cognition (Ahmed 2014, 5). The feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed (2014) suggests a mixture of the two in order to fully grasp emotions. According to her, emotions are relational and arise in our contact with the world around us (ibid., 5). By interacting with the world emotions arise according to whether we perceive something as bad or good for us, hence how we get affected by something (ibid., 6). In this sense, emotions are always directed towards an object (ibid., 7). By "objects", Ahmed does not mean that they always take a material form, they can also be imagined or memorised (ibid.). Emotions, thus, can be evoked not only by immediate sensory experiences but also by mental representations, implying that emotions are both a result of cognitive processes and bodily sensations (ibid.) Further, this implies that our emotional responses are not predetermined but reflect a continual process of shaping and being shaped by our environment.

Ahmed's notion of emotions is beneficial in order to understand emotions as social and not primarily psychological forces. Understanding emotions as social

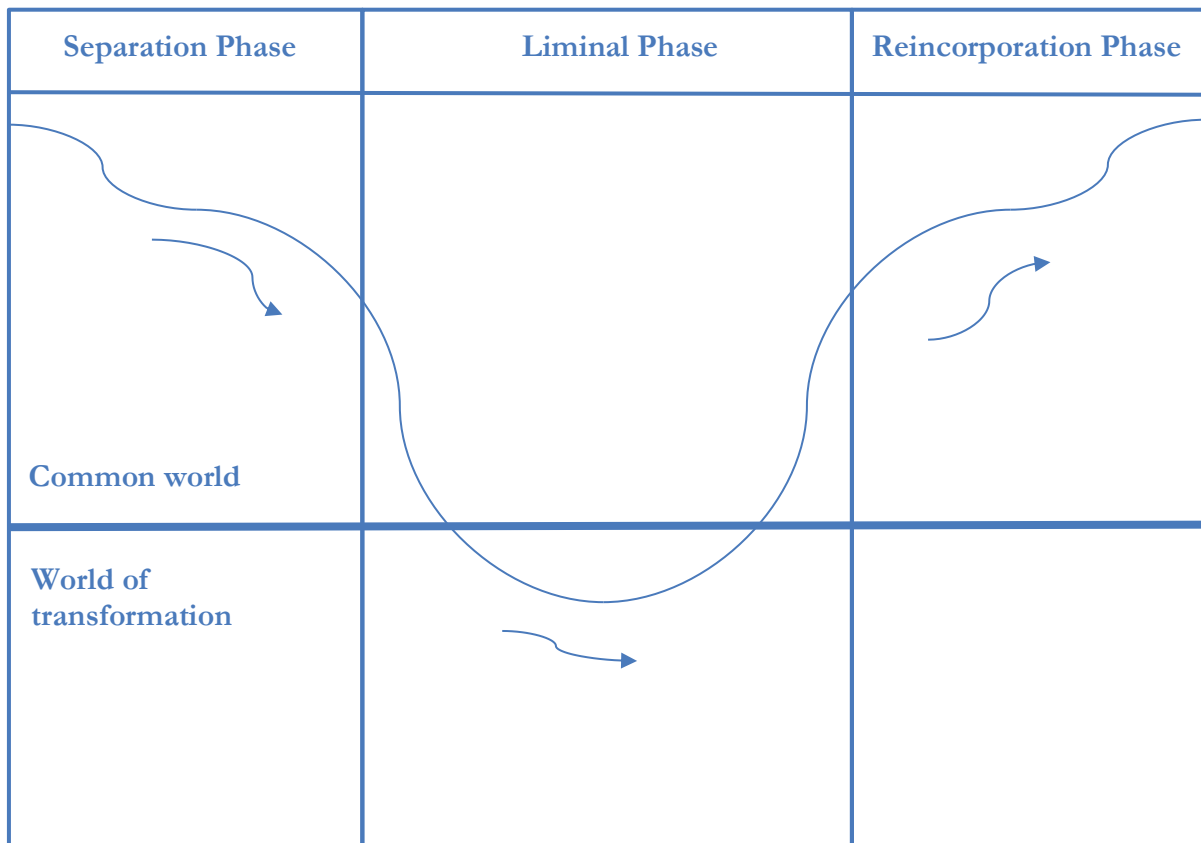
unlocks avenues for exploring their transformative potential within social and cultural dynamics, also when it comes to understanding emotions in the context of the ecological crisis. Norgaard's research further underscores the significance of emotions in understanding the lack of action on environmental issues, revealing how denial is entrenched within social norms (2011, 9). In the context of the ecological crisis, emotions like guilt and powerlessness emerge, particularly among those in affluent nations responsible for the crisis (ibid., 82). Norgaard's work illustrates how societal norms influence what is deemed relevant or distant, impacting individuals' responses to environmental challenges as they navigate their everyday lives (ibid., 7). Her work on emotions has inspired our understanding of how emotions are deeply intertwined with societal structures and practices, shaping our collective responses to environmental challenges. As she writes “emotions form the texture of how we embody society” (ibid., 210). This highlights the importance of creating social structures that enable emotional response to the ecological crisis, as this can facilitate meaningful action and collective engagement in addressing environmental challenges. Rather than “living in denial”, shielded from the reality of the ecological crisis, we ought to face the difficult emotions that the ecological crisis gives rise to. According to psychoanalytic theory, the suppression of emotions does not mean that they disappear. Rather, the feelings might return in a more destructive form (Dodds 2021).

The psychoanalyst Rosemary Randall (2009) argues that mourning is an important emotion on the way to accept the ecological crisis and move forward. This is backed up by scholars such as Judith Butler (2023) and Mikkel Frantzen (2021) who argue that mourning is not a passive state of mind that equals inaction and hopelessness (Frantzen 2021, 224). Rather it facilitates hope and empathy towards the planet and its inhabitants (ibid.) According to Butler, the ecological crisis challenges the common perception of grief and sorrow, as in the ecological crisis it is not *a* life that is mourned, but the condition of life itself (Butler 2023). Butler describes two different modes of grieving: melancholia and mourning. On the one hand, melancholia is a flight from the reality of losing,

while on the other, mourning is the acknowledgement of loss (ibid.). Fleeing from the reality of losing, is the acceptance of the market demands, industrial pollution, extractivism and the current way and mode of capitalist production causing the losses (ibid.). Acknowledging sorrow, is to rise up against these destructive structures (ibid.; Frantzen 2021, 224). Following this, we need spaces for mourning over the losses that have already taken place on Earth.

### 3.5 PERFORMANCE THEORY

When making our performance, we were drawn to rituals as scenes of transformation. Worldwide, rituals function as important foundations of passing on knowledge and building collective structures. The French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1960) was the first to formulate the ritual structure of rites of passages [*rites de passage*], which is used in most cultures to mark a transition from one state to another (e.g. baptism, weddings, funerals). This model has been elaborated by anthropologist Victor Turner (Turner 1966; 1986) and later used in performance theory. The profound effect of the ritual process, according to Turner, was that it “*separated* specific members of a group from everyday life, *placed them in a limbo* that was not any place they were in before and not yet any place they would be in, then returned them, changed in some way, to mundane life” (1966, 25, original italics). Equal for almost all rites of passage is that they follow a three-folded structure marked by: a separation phase, a liminal phase, and a reincorporation phase.



**Model 1:** *Rites of passage* visualised, inspired by Jens Peter Schjødt (1992).

In the separation phase an individual or group is detached from the normal social structure in society, often marked by a change of scene (Turner 1966, 94). The second phase marks a liminal state of being, where the rules, institutions, power relations, and hierarchies of society do not apply (ibid., 94). This is a state of ambiguity which can foster transformation and learning, (ibid., 95). The third phase marks the reincorporation into society, having completed the rite of passage, with a new status, role, identity, or inspiration (ibid.). Turner elaborated that the phase of liminality has the potential of creating “communitas”, a form of community feeling, emerging through the shared experience of being a part of a ritual (1966, 96). The state of being, where the individuals are all equal, without place or position, and must submit to unknown instructions, creates a space for comradeship and egalitarianism (ibid.). The transformative potential lies in the liminal phase, as model 1 points to, where the participants of a ritual undergo another state of being often with the result of reintegrating to society with another status or identity (Turner 1966, 94). However, as PhD and performer Gry Worre Hallberg (2021) points out “the transformative potential

is more evident in temporary events that do not necessarily change the participants' status in society, but rather, serves as important transformative momentary experiences, which might strongly affect the participants' life and navigation in life afterwards" (Hallberg 2021, 82).

An important part of the ritual is, according to Turner, the symbols that mark small entities in the ritual (Turner 1967, 19). As part of engaging the participants, the use of symbols during the liminal phase are important guidelines to transformation where they function as sets of "evocative devices for rousing, channelling and domesticating powerful emotions" (Turner 1986, 42-43). Thus, through symbolic oppositions and correlations, it is possible to not only evoke sensory memories, but moreover, to embed the experience within participants, enabling them to return to this experience when dealing with these emotions outside the performance. These insights have guided the development of our performance but have also proved fruitful in contextualising our analysis.

Turner later identified that performances follow the same principles as rituals, as they enable to turn social norms and structures of society upside down and picture and play with alternatives (1986, 22). Like rituals, performances consist of a liminal phase, where the time and space of the ordinary order of life is constructed differently (1966, 25). They encompass creative means of changing mental patterns within a temporary composition of people (1986, 22). Turner underpinned the importance of the performative genre because it puts something into motion or process that might otherwise be stagnant (*ibid.*, 7). As he writes, the performance can work as a place where individuals become conscious "through witnessing and often participating in such performances, of the nature, texture, style, and given meanings of their own lives as members of a sociocultural community." (*ibid.*, 22). Thus, performances have the ability to be "agencies of change" where we can picture alternatives to mainstream society (*ibid.*, 24). Likewise, the performance developed for this research plays with other ways of being in the world that are more sensitive and caring.



### 3.6 ARTISTIC RESEARCH ON ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

Facing an ecological crisis, we must adapt to new ways of understanding and relating in the world (Escobar 2020). Although the natural and social sciences have extensively documented and analysed our current era, we need perspectives that can challenge the established norms of capitalism (Rice et al. 2018). As argued by political philosopher Jacques Rancière, art can function as an important site for political contestation (2004, 13). He suggests that art is a way of ‘doing and making’ that intervenes with the general distribution of what is sensible in society (ibid.). It has the possibility to disturb the strict divisions of the sensing system (ibid.). Accordingly, transdisciplinary developments between artistic and academic approaches hold the potential for mediating a distribution of how the world can be perceived and, moreover, contribute to prepare ourselves for a world that is changing. Under the label ‘artistic research’, these approaches intersect between academia and art as a concept of study where the practice of art is generated into knowledge (Lebech 2019, 23).

The transdisciplinarity of scientific and artistic approaches in response to the ecological crisis are not newly paved grounds. In the past 10 years, it has been argued that artistic research on ecological issues can serve as a transformative vehicle for creating sensuous interconnectedness, co-existence, alternative narratives, and embodied knowledge (Kagan 2011; Curtis et al. 2012). Recently, María Heras et al. (2021) called for development in the field of transdisciplinary approaches in sustainability research. In their research they argue that these developments have an interesting potential of finding new ways for societal transformations (Heras et al. 2021, 1876). By awakening senses and stimulating ideas, they demonstrate how aesthetics plays a crucial role in addressing subjective experiences, which often are tacit and non-cognitive, while also encompassing the ability to facilitate a nuancing of the understanding of our relationships with the environment (ibid. 1879-1885). They note that while this type of transdisciplinarity in recent years has been fused with great interest and provided new methodological approaches, the area for joint research is still very limited (Heras et al. 2021, 1879-1885).

For a research project in Human Ecology, artistic research requires posing new epistemological questions: How can we be taken seriously as Human Ecologists making performances? As performers doing research? How can experiences taken from a performance contribute useful findings and analysis to the discourse of ecological crisis in a wider context? How will ways of dealing with emotions and sensuous performances have any effect on the ecological crisis? Moreover, it poses questions to our role as researchers, as these questions constantly reflect back on the methodological reflections about our intentions with the performance, the choices we made through the development of the performance and finally, how we analyse and convey our research. This intersection of artistic practice and academic research can give rise to pluralist methods and new perspectives within academia (Escobar 2020).

The epistemological questions all centre around the validity of artistic research. In relation to this, Hallberg (2021) raises the issue that research is perceived as separate to the researcher, and therefore representing an objective truth (ibid., 37). She emphasises that artistic research challenges the pursuit of universal objectivity as it abolishes the dichotomy between the embodied knowledge of the artist and the research-based knowledge of the researcher (ibid.). Instead, she argues that artistic based research is: “[...] not so concerned with discussing subjectivity and objectivity in relation to research, in that the artistic researcher is always inevitably central to their field of investigation as it is a research study through embodied practice” (ibid.). In other words, it offers a counterposition to the perception of knowledge being exclusively rational but insists that artistic embodied practices are valid academic knowledge. Insisting on the validity of artistic practices in science, artistic researchers have been able to move beyond the conventions of academia in search for research methods in the midst of an ecological crisis. The plural means of communication usually unavailable to academic practices of communication, have entered academic communication of knowledge (Extracting Us Collective 2024; Pinsky 2017; Nadkarni 2003; Friis 2022). Moreover, new methodologies have arisen that can help processes of transformation and imaginative engagement (Hallberg 2021; Climate

Imaginarities at Sea 2023), by which they create new frameworks for ecological attunement and broaden the sense of interconnectedness between the human and non-human world (Hallberg 2021; Galafassi 2023). Collectively, these practices have been capable of challenging the anthropocentric ontologies that have been haunting sciences for decades (Haraway 2016, 30).

We highlight these examples of methodological developments to underpin the need to challenge the conventions of research on ecological issues. Resisting capitalist social norms entails challenging the structures that have been established through it; in the economies of science, and especially in those of climate and sustainability, the natural and social sciences are still valued the highest as means to approach the crisis (Castree et al. 2014, 6). However, argued by Butler, in times of great suffering - as when facing an ecological crisis - we look for orientation and understanding (2023). Adapting to the changing conditions on Earth, as well as coming to terms with the changing orders between the human and non-human world, requires new guidelines. Artistic practices encompass the ability to guide our emotions and redistribute what it means to live through these difficult emotions. Employing feminist and phenomenological perspectives, our study seeks to enrich the development of pluralistic methods in ecological research. Through a research-based performance, we contribute to the field of Human Ecology by broadening methodological horizons, demonstrating how artistic practices might assist societal transformation.

In sum our theoretical framework, it suggests that capitalism goes beyond the realms of economy, as it shapes our social interactions and values. Hence, values such as individualism, productivity and rationality are reinforced by the social organisation of capitalist society while social reproduction, care and embodiment are neglected. Feminist perspectives imply that repairing the broken relationship between humans and non-human nature requires fostering reciprocal care and emotional understanding. Additionally, theory advocating for embracing difficult emotions and fostering community offers insights into

cultivating shared hope and connection amidst the crisis. In response to the need for collective engagements and embodied understandings of the ecological crisis, this research turns to the performative space to craft its methodology. This will be explained in more detail in the next section.



## 4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section we account for our methodological framework, herein the ontological and epistemological foundation of this inquiry, and the methods of data collection and analysis. After presenting our ontology, epistemology, and inspiration from artistic research, we reflect on our situatedness, as this is the foundation from which we as researchers can be understood. As our research is both a methodological testing of a performance and research of what this performance enables, our methodological framework will furthermore consist of a description of our performance and the refinements that were made during its three manifestations of it, herein its location and participant groups. Hereafter, we present the methods used for data collection. Lastly, we discuss ethical considerations and limitations in relation to our research. With that said, we now turn to a description of the methodological basis of the research - our ontology.

### 4.1 ONTOLOGY: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

“For the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house”.  
(Lorde [1984] 2007)

Making research that methodologically goes beyond the usual modes of science entails breaking away from the conventions of knowledge production (Caretta 2015). As we highlighted in our theoretical framework, a project that centres the researcher in the field cannot be persuaded by the old myths of objectivity in academic research (Haraway 1988). The Enlightenment project left its traces in science in the search for an objective truth, guided by a western, male gaze determining what is objective and scientific (ibid., 581). The ontology that arose from the Enlightenment was based on the Cartesian duality between mind and body, emphasising the mind's independence of the body (Abram 1996, 55; Merchant 1989, 2). This laid the foundation for the positivist sciences where the visual sensory organ was perceived as instrumental to good science (Haraway 1988, 583). As argued by Haraway (1988), the positivist male gaze represents a disembodied science that claims access to a universal truth “from nowhere” (ibid., 590). But in fact, she remarks, "vision is *always* a question of the power to

see" (Haraway 1988, 585, original italics). The consequence of scientific knowledge being founded on these assumptions is that it has suppressed and neglected the essential aspects of human existence that escapes the eye and cannot be quantified (Harcourt 2018, 17). It has devalued the sensual, emotional, and psychological aspects of human life, and favoured the quantified (Lorde [1984] 2007). But as Audre Lorde claims, embodied forms of knowledge "are not pathological but redemptive, and it is within this knowledge that our real power is rediscovered" ([1984] 2007, 110).

Writing in the 21st century, we find ourselves with the legacy of a positivist paradigm that remains a backdrop in the most powerful institutions of society (Gay-Antaki 2021). The ability to address the ecological crisis within these institutions have thus far proven inadequate (Green 2020). Feminist scholars have long argued that it is exactly because we try to fix the ecological crisis with the same tools that have created the crisis, that we do not see the transformation needed (cf. Haraway 2016, Merchant 1989, Salleh 1997). Following these lines, this thesis is based on an understanding of knowledge production as situated in a world that has already been interpreted (Lincoln & Guba 1994, 110). Knowledge production is thus situated within the specific context, in which it is produced (ibid.). That goes for both the participants of the research as well as the researchers carrying out the research (ibid.). Therefore, scientific knowledge can never represent a universal objective truth (Haraway 1988, 581). Instead, feminist research rests on an understanding of ontology as consisting of multiple embodied knowledges "where both researchers and participants are appreciated for their *situated knowledges* and *partial perspectives*" (England 2006, 288, original italics). In other words, instead of aiming for a universal truth, knowledge production can only reach a comprehensible understanding of reality by considering the multiplicity of partial perspectives (Lincoln & Guba 1994, 110). Thus, placing ourselves in the feminist critical theory paradigm we write against the rational paradigm within scientific knowledge production. We seek new pathways of situated knowledge production to grasp what it means to live

through an ecological crisis and find other ways of knowing and connecting in and with the crisis.

#### 4.2 EPISTEMOLOGY: THE FIELD OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Our research does not take the shape of conventional qualitative research, where we as investigators observe and participate in the everyday activities of the investigated. Rather, we have created a designed activity where knowledge is produced through collective and individual reflection. As we set out to gain knowledge about the embodied experiences of our participants, the field of phenomenology has been influential in shaping our epistemological stand.

The discipline of phenomenology emerged as an uprising against the Cartesian principles in the sciences that dominated the early 1900s and sought to solidify the mind into an object (Abram 1996, 31). First introduced by Edmund Husserl, and later elaborated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, it pursued to “describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in our direct, sensorial experience.” (Abram 1996, 31). Thus, in line with the feminist critique of positivism, phenomenology tries to capture the realm of subjectivity that has otherwise been a taboo in science production (ibid.). Phenomenology seeks to “return to the things themselves” (Husserl in Abram 1996, 31). This means, trying to comprehend the world as it first occurs in our consciousness, rather than through a theoretical and conceptual lens (ibid.). By returning to the things themselves, phenomenology aims to reveal the directly felt and lived experience of phenomena (Sjørsløv 2015, 148). This also includes the senses, memories, dreams, and phantasies in the empirical reality as these concepts likewise express the lived life of individuals (ibid.). In this way phenomenology is compatible with our feminist ontology, as it encourages situated embodied knowledge (Lindhardt 2014, 14).

As mentioned in the previous section, the post-Enlightenment hierarchies of the senses have typically placed sight at the top, because it is associated with a reflective and objectifying distance (Lindhardt 2014, 19). In the field of

phenomenology this has been impeded by making fieldwork that encourages emotional, multisensory, and participatory methods that downplay vision (Lindhardt 2014, 19). In our case this has translated into taking away the vision from our participants, in order to challenge them to direct their attention to other senses. In this way, designed activities can enhance and amplify what already exists, even if it may not be immediately perceptible to the senses (*ibid.*). This aligns with the nature of feminist ontology as it challenges conventional ways of knowing and the one-sided focus on sight as the most important sense in which to understand the world.

Qualitative research gives rise to epistemological questions, particularly regarding how researchers can gain knowledge about others' subjective experiences. The answer in phenomenology is, "through the body - one's own as well as that of the other" (Abram 1996, 31). Especially Merleau-Ponty contributed to this debate, by placing the body in the centre of human perception (Merleau-Ponty in Pink 2009, 26). He argued that consciousness is only reachable through the body (Merleau-Ponty in Sjørsvlev, 92). Approximately, consciousness is not a mental process of a mind in a body, but rather it is intimately tied to the body and its experience in the world (Pink 2009, 24). This means that the body is recognized as interlinked in its environment, and the senses we get as parts of a bigger system, which is also tied into the feminist ontology of understanding individuals as interconnected with their environments. It is through the body's engagement with the world that we gain consciousness and reflection of the things around us (*ibid.*, 25). Following this, 'embodiment' points to the ability to learn and know through the body, which is essential for our research (*ibid.*).

As we perceive our own body from within and other bodies from without, this offers a difference in means of perception (Abram 1996, 32). Overcoming this difference, Husserl argued that the gestures and expressions of other bodies, when viewed from an external standpoint, seem to mirror, and resonate with



one's own bodily movements and gestures (Husserl in Abram 1996, 33). This empathic resonance creates a sense of familiarity and understanding between oneself and others (ibid.). As a result, the researcher and the research object are seen as inherently connected and thus knowledge is a transaction between the two (Lincoln & Guba 1994, 111). Following this, our methods have been shaped by an attempt to capture our subjects' realities as close to their felt experience as possible, since this offers valuable insight in the potential of our performance. To support this, we have included reflections on site of the performance for a direct impression of the experience and facilitated interviews in which we guided the participants back to the experience. The phenomenological epistemological stand aligns with the nature of critical theory, where reality is considered a "to be [reprehensible] that was once plastic, but that was, over time, shaped by a congeries of social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors, and then crystallized" (Lincoln & Guba, 110). As both phenomenology and feminism view inquiry as transactional, it prompts researchers to be aware of their own bodily experiences and placement in the research room (Pink 2009, 25). We have tried to accommodate this, by including self-reflections that consider how our own bodies affected our participants' experience. It has moreover inspired us to use storytelling in our *Journey Through the Performance* to evoke the reader's senses by bringing the sensory experiences of our participants to life.

#### 4.3 ARTISTIC RESEARCH AS METHOD

To facilitate our aim of promoting embodied research, we have designed an explorative and artistic empirical data collection. We thus step on the grounds of artistic research. In this field of research, the practice of art is conveyed in a way that generates knowledge and understanding (Lebech 2019, 23). Thus, artistic research differs from research-based art as the artistic practice is not merely a product of research, but a methodological vehicle, where "research unfolds *in and through* the acts of creating and performing" (Borgdorff 2010, 46).

Artistic research breaks the conventional academic boundary between concept and embodied knowledge, when the researcher becomes an artist, and thus the research itself becomes performative (Lebech 2019, 20). As mentioned previously, artistic practices bring the researcher to the centre of praxis, where research is enacted through the body (cf. Hallberg 2021). This has enabled us to rethink research beyond the traditional methods. Our data collection methods had to reflect a research project in a designed field, as well as encompassing our double role as researchers and performers. As argued by Sofie Lebech the process of artistic research itself is performative as developing research always centres around the performative event: “it is *performance thinking* and *performative thinking*” (Lebech 2019, 22). Thus, doing artistic research is a constant interaction between grounding the performance in academic research, as well as the research on the performance manifests itself through the artistic practice.

Defining the performance genre is difficult due to its many variations and blurry nature (Carlson 2013, 110). However, it has been emphasised that performative spaces “is more often like a workspace than a formal theatrical setting” that focus on body and movement activities (ibid. 114). As a designed activity and workspace, the performative space shares in some sense the character of the laboratory, a ground for testing methods, as well as the ethnographic field study, capturing the lived reality of people (Borgdorff 2010, 57). In the performative workspace, the interactions between researchers and participants are dynamic and interactive (ibid.). Both audience and performers play a role in shaping research as it unfolds. This exchange makes the space transactional, where each interaction takes part in shaping the overall experience and the direction of research (ibid.). This inherent characteristic of performative works spaces thus highlights how artistic research is not self-contained, rather it is deeply rooted in its situated framework. According to Henk Borgdorff (2010), the process of knowledge production in artistic practices is generated in close relation to its relevant context (ibid., 47). Thus, it becomes crucial not only to reflect on the participant groups of a specific performance, but also on the location and the performer's participation and interference in the study. All this takes part in forming the audiences' overall experience.

Artistic practices support a feminist ontology as it places the researcher in the centre of the knowledge production, thus avoiding the disembodied search for objective truths. Moreover, research takes place in a dynamic and interchangeable space, where the participants take part in forming research. With the focus on bodies and movement in performative spaces require attunement to how bodies act in the world, and therefore fits well with a phenomenology epistemology that takes the interaction between bodies and its environment seriously.

#### 4.4 SITUATEDNESS

“I am an actor and observer; I am an artist and audience. And then there is an extra dimension: this type of project cannot avoid a self-reflective meta-discussion about the method in which it lives, becomes, and exists.” (Lebech 2019, 8).

In this quote PhD Sofie Lebech (2019) reflects upon the different perspectives she undergoes, when doing artistic research. The artistic space and theory has been new territory for us; it entailed stepping on new grounds of developing a performance and understanding how this could be used in an academic context. Maya has through her visits at *Sister's Academy* and *Sisters Hope Home* been inspired by the work of *Sisters Hope*, a research-based performance group who explores what a sensuous society would look like. Thus, inspiration has been drawn from Maya's encounters with and embeddedness in the Sisters Hope projects. As means of marking beginnings and ends, Naja have previously been engaged in performing various forms of rituals among friends. While these rituals did not have spiritual intentions, they acknowledged the power of communality through change. These backgrounds provide a solid understanding of the role of facilitating in performative spaces, allowing for resonance with the participants' experiences and acknowledging of their role herein. From a phenomenological perspective, this enables us to deepen the understanding of the participants' experiences (Husserl in Abram 1996, 33).

Both of us come from a Danish middle-class upbringing and are thus shaped by a modern western perspective, influencing the interpretations of the research.

For instance, our conceptualization of senses is biased by being brought up in a society that divides the senses into vision, hearing, touch, taste, and smell (Pink 2009, 51). These are thus the main senses that we have been aware of throughout our research. This five-sense division is embedded in the practice of modern western scholarship, and other cultures might address the sensorium in a very different way (ibid.). However, as our research subjects come from the same western culture as us, this might not be an issue since it offers a useful reference point (ibid.). Nevertheless, we have tried to stay open to the senses raised by our participants, in order to learn from other sensory ways of knowing.

Our background as Danish citizens, being very privileged in terms of conformity throughout our lives, moreover, reflect a degree of ontological security in relation to the changes occurring in relation to the ecological crisis (Giddens [1990] 2007). Coming from a high-income country, we are part of the global elite who bear the biggest responsibility for the ecological crisis, while the consequences of the climate breakdown are felt elsewhere (Hickel 2021, 1). Therefore, we are aware that our bodies are less affected than people of the Global South, whose ontological security is highly compromised in this crisis. Our choice to make the performance is to take seriously our privileges and to highlight the complex emotions at stake in order to come to terms with and move forward in a crisis that is unevenly distributed (cf. Hornborg 2019).

During our research we undertook several roles, as we were both facilitators, artists, audience, friends, and teachers. Our different participant groups, which will be elaborated in section 4.6, saw us in light of our relationship to them and thus our positioning shifted along the way. For our friends, we encountered a non-authoritarian role whereas the American students, due to the educational context, might have seen us in light of a teaching role. Furthermore, we cannot escape cultural, gendered, ethnic and generational biases as these are factors that shape our informant's perception of us and our understanding of the research (Pink 2009, 50). For instance, our gender and ethnicity might have played a notable role in shaping the participants' experience of us as trustworthy. As we had a dominance of female helpers, it reinforced societal norms that associate

caregiving roles with women, which we were aware of during the performance. Further, our gender also played a role in how the touches were perceived, as particularly male participants expressed that they perceived them as rather intimate. In the ideal world, our choice of female or male helpers would not have mattered. However, in this reality (cf. historical realism, Lincoln & Guba 1994), we find ourselves being biased by social and cultural constructs of care as especially attributed to the female body. While care is enmeshed with heteronormative projections of reproduction and the female body, the common exploitation of nature and care rests on male capitalist structures of domination (Harcourt 2018, 18-23). Therefore, our choice of female helpers was approached as being a source of resistance towards these dominant structures and as a commitment to give more space to feminine traits in a society where it has otherwise been neglected (ibid.).

#### 4.5 DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE

The empirical data for this thesis was gathered during three manifestations of our performance and through three data collection methods. The content of the performance has been refined according to feedback from our participants, and thus this section provides an overview of these adjustments and choices. Since we have already accounted for a detailed and immersive description of our performance in *Journey through the Performance* this section is a systematic overview of the methodological choices, learnings and refinements.

The performance was carried out by us, Naja and Maya, alongside four assistants, who varied a bit from performance to performance. For the sake of clarity throughout the thesis, we refer to ourselves as “the facilitators” and our assistants as “the helpers”, to distinguish the respective roles. As demonstrated in Table 1, the performance unfolds in five sections. This includes the ritual structure of a separation phase, liminal phase, and reincorporation phase, elaborated in our theoretical framework. Additionally, we have added an arrival

and a resolution phase, to indicate the changes in the course of action and shift in music during the performance.

Phase	Time	Course of Action	Text & Music in Soundscape
<b>Arrival</b>	10 min.	All participants stand outside the performance room. A helper welcomes them and asks for silence. Facilitators read a letter outlining expectations. Participants step forward individually to be blindfolded. A helper provides blindfolds.	Silence.
<b>Separation Phase</b>	00:00 - 30:00	Helpers lead participants to wash their hands with essential oil. Participants are guided to different spots in the room. They are comforted by gentle strokes on arms and shoulders.	Music by Rone, "Liminal Space". Blended with bird song.
<b>Liminal Phase</b>	30:00 - 34:45	Facilitators push participants around or walk into them. Participants are placed in a circle without awareness of it.	Music by Ugandan Methods, "Beneath the Black Arch". Different sentences in various languages. Sentences become more extreme and chaotic until they blend together.
<b>Resolution Phase</b>	34:45 - 39:44	Blindfolds are removed. Facilitators make eye contact and offer a caring shoulder squeeze. Facilitators join the circle, a light is in the middle. Holding hands in silence.	Music by Hania Rani, "Eden". Poetry combined with prose advocating solidarity. Has been inspired by Kae Tempest's song "Tunnel Vision".
<b>Reincorporation Phase</b>	20 min.	Facilitators guide a meditation and reflection to sum up the experience. Ending by a collective sharing where everyone voice a word, expressing how they feel.	Silence during meditation; bird song from beginning during reflection.

**Table 1:** Timetable and overview of performance, separated in five sections.

The most prominent changes in the performance atmosphere involve the shift in music and touch, as well as the transition from being able 'to see' to 'being blindfolded'. As demonstrated in the table, the participants initially arrive and are told to wait in silence, until the facilitators read a letter<sup>3</sup> outlining expectations. At the first manifestation of the performance, we had one of our helpers reading out the letter for practical reasons. However, since the letter constitutes the initial interaction between the audience and the performers, it felt somewhat foreign that it was not us, the creators of the performance, who introduced it. Thus, we decided to revise this detail, to undertake the responsibility of reading the letter ourselves. Furthermore, we revised the content of the letter to explicitly mention the presence of the helpers and reassure participants that they could confidently rely on their guidance. This was

<sup>3</sup> See appendix C for the welcoming letter.

a way to clarify the expectations of an interactive performance, which relies on the participants' ability to surrender.

Following the letter, participants are one by one invited to step into the performative room, become blindfolded and guided by the helpers. Unaware of what will happen next, they are guided to a place where their hands are washed. In the meantime, they hear calm and anticipating music, bird chirping and water dripping from our handwashing. During the separation phase everything unfolds in a slow pace to reassure a calm and surrendering atmosphere. After the hand washing, participants are guided to different parts of the room, where they get comforting strokes from the helpers.

The next profound change occurs when the music shifts from calm to more abrupt, electronic music. This indicates the liminal phase, where different climatic facts are read out on the soundscape in various languages.<sup>4</sup> Our aim with this phase was to mirror a news stream full of dramatic statements about the ecological collapse and particularly the tipping points we are headed towards. Thus, the movement in this phase mirrors a feeling of chaos and alienation during ecological breakdown, as participants are being bumped into and moved around. Facilitators and helpers begin to place the participants in a circle, but since they have a sense of disorientation and chaos, they will not know of it. The pace of the facts speeds up and accelerates into a climax, where all voices chaotically blend together and collapse.

A final change in music indicates the phase of resolution. Here, participants listen to a calm and contemplating piano piece. A candle is placed in the centre of the circle, as the facilitators begin to take off the participants' blindfolds, holding eye contact with each participant for a short time, until moving on to the next. Meanwhile, a poem<sup>5</sup> is recited in the soundscape with the last two

---

<sup>4</sup> For full text, see appendix D, text 1.

<sup>5</sup> For full text, see appendix D, text 2.

sentences: *“If we can’t feel it, we can’t face it, so take my hand and find warmth”*. Facilitators then join the circle, and everyone holds hands for a while. Initially, during the first performance, we encouraged people to repeat these lines as a mantra, aiming to amplify a sense of solidarity. However, our feedback revealed that speaking out at that moment seemed overwhelming. The mere act of holding hands and listening to the music proved powerful on its own.

As the music comes to an end, one of the facilitators guides a short meditation, inviting the participants to close their eyes and listen to their own breath. The choice to do a brief meditation stemmed from feedback received doing our performance at the Copenhagen Degrowth Festival 2023, suggesting a transition out of the ritual atmosphere. Thus, the meditation was meant as an invitation to contemplate the experience, before putting it into words. Following the meditation, participants were introduced to a writing exercise, prompting them to express their experience on paper.

After providing the participants with 10 minutes for the written reflection, we gathered in a circle again for a collective reflection where each participant voices a single word capturing their experience. When revising the performance, we additionally introduced a more comprehensive collective sharing, where we invited participants to voluntarily share their reflections with the others in the group. This choice stemmed from feedback received at the first performance, where several participants expressed a need for an extensive reflection period and a curiosity in learning about other’s experience. The collective sharing thus presented an opportunity to transform the participant’s experience into words and foster a deeper sense of understanding between the group members.

#### 4.5 LOCATION

Location is key, as it shapes the first impression and expectations for a performance. Our performances took place at two different locations due to unforeseen obstacles that required us to change the venue between the first and



second performance. Consequently, the atmosphere and first impression of our performance has changed slightly throughout the research.

The first performance took place at New Little Club, a volunteer-run clubhouse fostering creative entrepreneurship. The venue comprised three rooms, echoing the three-folded structure of our performance: a room for the separation phase, the liminal phase, and the reincorporation phase. Further, the absence of windows in the rooms proved beneficial to shield the participants from external distractions and create an immersive atmosphere. Unfortunately, due to regulations in Copenhagen Municipality, New Little Club had their licences removed without warning and had to shut down on February 29th. Therefore, we needed to find a new venue for our performances on March 12th and 14th.



**Location:** The performance space, Democracy Garage.

Luckily, we were offered a new location at Democracy Garage, a place that facilitates participatory democracy workshops. The new location was just one big room and thus we had to rethink the separation phase of the performance. With a large piece of fabric, we screened off part of the venue, creating a space

for entering the performative space without being able to see what was in the room. Without the space for waiting, we placed participants outside and had them wait in silence, and afterwards brought them in one by one to the performance space. This meant that the performance started already before stepping into the room, and therefore the yard of Democracy Garage became part of the experience. The change in location had an impact on the experience of arriving at the performative space. In spite of being an old car repair shop, Democracy Garage has a more “polished” atmosphere. Further, it has a lot more daily visitors than New Little Club, which could have had a slightly disturbing effect on the arrival. In contrast, arriving at New Little Club, which is situated in an area of containers used for workshops and studios, is a more dystopian setting with a sense of mystery and anticipation. However, New Little Club, which is almost like a small shed turned into a club, had cold and dirty floors, while Democracy Garage had linoleum floors and were much warmer. Therefore, we were able to make participants take off their shoes and invite them to sit at the floor for the shared reflection for a more casual feeling. In the end, we found that the atmosphere inside Democracy Garage better represented our aim of creating a warm and embracing atmosphere with the high ceiling, warm lights from paper lamps and loads of space around, in comparison with the dystopic and techno-underground atmosphere at New Little Club.

#### 4.6 PARTICIPANT GROUPS

We facilitated the performance three times with approximately three different participant groups. In the analysis we will not refer to the specific participants, but rather indicate which participant group they were part of in order to protect the identities of the participants. Therefore, we have also decided to use the neutral gender pronouns they/them/theirs for all our participants. Rather than testing individual differences in participant groups’ experiences, this research aims to elicit the experiences occurring within the performative space. Thus, making the background of participants less important for the study.

For each performance we chose to interview approximately one third of the participant group. In this way, we were able to get a thorough impression of the participants' experience of the performance. Based on background knowledge from our pre-performance survey, which will be elaborated later, we selected a representative sampling of each group, reflecting the relation to the ecological crisis across the participant group.

Performance	Participant group	Participants in total	Participants interviewed	Date of performance	Date of interviews
Performance I	Convenience sample of people in the researchers' networks	18	6	Feb. 22, 2024	Feb. 23 - 26, 2024
Performance II	College students from CIEE	15	3	Mar. 12, 2024	Mar. 13 - 14, 2024
Performance III	Climate activists	7	2	Mar. 14, 2024	Mar. 17 - 18, 2024

**Table 2:** Overview of performances and conducted interviews.

In general, our participant groups reflect young people, in the age of 20-30, who are aware of the climate crisis. This was a deliberate sampling choice in the research since, as a consequence of past generations' activities, it is the youth who will experience the severe effects of the ecological crisis. Not surprisingly, the awareness among many young people has led to fear of an uncertain future on Earth (Sandborg 2023). Some of the participants were very engaged in climate activism, some through their studies, while others were aware of the crisis but not actively engaged with it in their daily lives, besides in everyday consumer choices. Other than sharing the same age group, the three participant groups consisted of different socio-ethnographic features that might have influenced their perception and response to the performance.

The first participant group was chosen through a convenience sampling of friends and network, who were easy to reach out to and interested in our

research project but had no engagement with the research or method previously. The characteristics of the participants that might have influenced responses is that some of them were from Maya's network of a climate meditation group and thus they were used to dealing with the climate crisis in a contemplative way. Others, mostly among Naja's friends, were part of various climate activist groups and to a greater extent approached the performance from the politics of acting here and now. One limitation of choosing this sampling group is the potential bias inherent in their relationship with us as friends. They may feel inclined to express themselves in a manner they perceive as more socially desirable, a phenomenon commonly referred to as social desirability (cf. (Edwards 1957). To overcome this issue when conducting our interviews, we chose to interview each other's friends. We also found it to be an advantage to know people beforehand, since it more easily created trust and reliability in both the interview and performance context.

Our second participant group consisted of American college students from CIEE<sup>6</sup> who were taking the course "Climate Change and Policy". This group differed from the others, as the students did not choose to be part of the interactive performance out of free will. Rather, it was part of their curriculum, which meant they might have considered the performance as educational rather than explorative. As this group was in their early twenties, on average a couple of years younger than the other participant groups, it might also have influenced their inclination to engage in exploratory activities. Moreover, their nationality, which differed from the other samples, might have influenced the participants' responses to our project. The United States is a complex context, with a highly polarised political environment, decades of misinformation campaigns against climate science, and a large percentage of climate change sceptics within the population compared to other Western nations (Norgaard 2011, 68). In Denmark, there has been a greater willingness to undergo a sustainable transformation and a higher trust in the government's ability to act (OECD 2024). Also, in terms of living through climate change, the two locations differ.

---

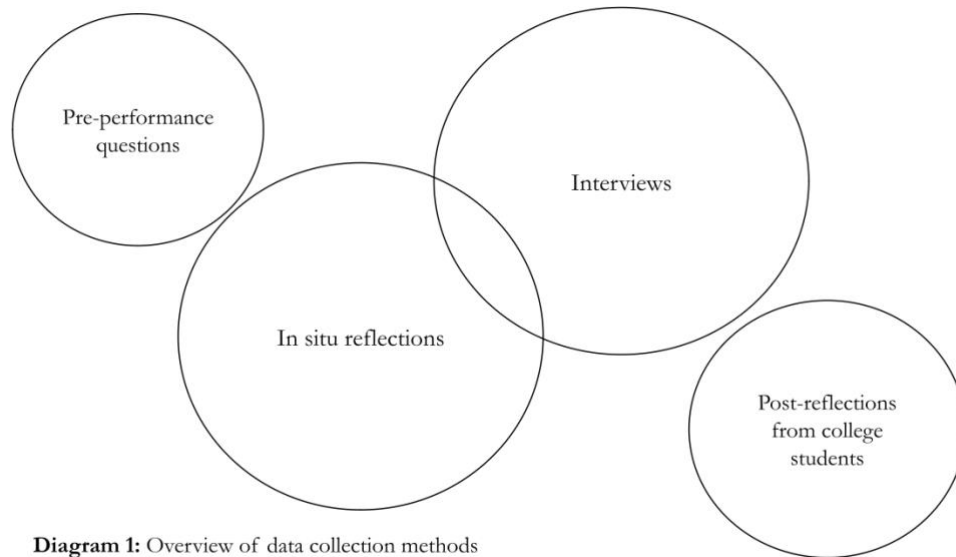
<sup>6</sup> A non-profit organisation for study abroad and intercultural exchange programs.

While the United States has undergone wildfires, cyclones, storms, floods, and droughts (Jay et al. 2023), Denmark's climate is changing to a much less radical degree. These factors all played a part in how our participants might have perceived the performance. However, we found that certain themes were cross-cultural, due to the ecological crisis' global nature and the common experience of being involuntarily involved in a crisis that affects the security of the future.

Our third participant group consisted of climate activists from the “Green Youth Movement”, a youth-led volunteer group. We reached out to several activist platforms located in Copenhagen, but unfortunately did not receive as many respondents as we hoped for. Speaking to the activists who joined our performance, they articulated that the time of the performance conflicted with other activities in their activism, making it difficult to recruit people. Therefore, our third participant group consisted of a mixture of climate activists and people from our network that we invited last minute.

#### 4.8 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Our data collection consists of four units, where the most important for our findings are the in situ reflections and interviews. The pre-performance questions were gathered prior to the performance, the in situ happened during the performance and the interviews and post-reflections were conducted a few days after the performance.



**Diagram 1:** Overview of data collection methods

#### 4.8.1 IN SITU REFLECTIONS

We have gained inspiration from Hallberg (2021) who uses the concept *in situ* reflections to describe the method of conducting data in her artistic research. In situ reflections refers to material which is generated during the artistic manifestations both by the researcher and the participants (ibid., 38). As Hallberg writes, this reflective process allows for “alliances between cognitive processes and sensuous and devoted moves of the immersed body” (ibid., 238). In practice we asked participants to share their experiences of the performance on notes<sup>7</sup>, while being in the room where the performance took place. Afterwards we facilitated a room for sharing the reflections and created a dialogue for the participants to reflect on what just happened. The advantages of using in situ material as empirical data, is that it generates insight in the experiences of the participants while they are immersed in the performance. However, the limitation is that participants might feel obliged to perform and express themselves in a certain way that corresponds to the performative space. This is why our interviews are considered as equally important in contributing to our primary empirical data, as they offer another way of expression that might be less “artistically performative”.

---

<sup>7</sup> In situ questions in appendix E and examples of reflections on next page.



"A Fear/A fear of surrendering/To decay  
/Into just a sheep of its time/Who at last  
has let go/of responsibilities bestowed/to  
the flock that now releases/falling at  
ease/without flapping or/stopping the  
others/free fall/falling at ease"

EN frygt  
EN frygt for at lade sig  
overgå  
for at lade sig forfalde  
til blot et lemming  
af sin tid  
Der langt om længe  
har ladet sig  
fragive til  
flokken der nu lader  
sig falde  
falde trygt

Maya  
Jeg følte mit hjerte i hvert et touch  
Jeg lavede, som om det brændte gennem  
mine håndflader. Kunne mærke en  
sårbarhed i rummet, som om andre  
også mærkede det.  
En tristhed, sorgmodighed over at være  
fælles i denne krise og føle sig magtesløs  
over det hele.  
Jeg blev meget rørt over at se  
alle mine venner dukke op, at de  
gider tage tid ud til det.

I felt my heart in every touch I made, as if it  
burned through my palms. I could sense a  
vulnerability in the space, as if others felt it  
too. A sadness, a melancholy about being  
united in this crisis and feeling powerlessness.  
I was deeply moved to see all my friends show  
up, that they take the time to do it.

I feel touched and moved. In my  
body ready to act collectively.  
I don't feel alone fighting climate change  
because I know that there are so  
many souls fighting this all over  
the world.

I feel touched and moved. In my body ready to act  
collectively. I don't feel alone fighting climate change  
because I know that there are so many souls fighting  
this all over the world.

Illustration 1: Examples of in situ reflections.

#### 4.8.2 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In order to capture in-depth understanding of the participant's experiences, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 participants in total. These have been transcribed and coded thematically. Our codes were created through processing the in situ data, where several codes were identified from our theoretical framework. After processing the data from the interview, we revised the codes according to newly arisen themes. Each interview lasted between 45 and 65 minutes, which was enough to go through the whole experience of the performance. Semi-structured interviews have the advantage of sustaining a structure that is guided by the researcher while at the same time staying open for new themes raised by the participant (Flowerdew & Martin 2005, 76). Pink describes the interview as more than a mere conversation, calling it "a social encounter - an event - that is inevitably both emplaced and productive of place" (2009, 82). Following this, the interview is a place for shared knowledge and reflexivity between interviewee and interviewer (ibid.). For us, it allowed an intimate space where the participants could account individually for their experience. The limitation of using the interview as a method for this project was the distance it created from the actual experience.

As a way to overcome this, we formed the interview guide<sup>8</sup>, with inspiration from the micro-phenomenological interview, which encourages interviewees to recall an experience on a concrete level rather than the meanings and associations attributed with it (Heimann et al. 2023). Thus, we structured our interview in accordance with our performance and went through it step-by-step, making the participants recall their bodily sensations in the different phases. We paid attention to which words the participants used to describe their experience, and repeated their description as a way to examine whether these were the words that aligned most correctly with their experiences. Here, the in situ reflections were helpful to make the participants recall their experience of being immersed in the performance. If a participant found it difficult recalling parts of their experience, we would sometimes ask them to close their eyes and go back to the

---

<sup>8</sup> Interview guide in appendix G.



specific part of the performance, describing the atmosphere, sounds and smells for them. This interview approach aimed to capture participants' direct experiences of the performance, rather than prompting them to analyse or reflect on it.

#### 4.8.2 PRE- AND POST-PERFORMANCE REFLECTIONS

Signing up for the performance, participants had to fill out a brief survey<sup>9</sup> about their personal relation to the ecological crisis. We chose to ask these questions to get an overview of the group's personal relationship with the subject. When conducting interviews, we also used the participant's responses to deepen our understanding of how the performance might have affected them.

We had planned to conduct a post-reflection survey for all of our participants a couple of weeks after the performance to examine the performance's effect on them. However, we found that the material we gathered *in situ* and by conducting interviews were more than enough. Common to both the micro-phenomenological interview and *in situ* reflections is that they both encourage a method that brings the informants as close to their experience as possible. Thus, we assumed that a post-reflection survey would be too far away from the original experience to be of any relevance to our research. Nevertheless, we chose to include post-reflections from the college students since several of them had a hard time expressing themselves *in situ*. Since they were already assigned to do a post-reflection<sup>10</sup> through their education, with questions similar to those asked in our *in situ* reflections, we had an easy way to obtain this data. These reflections were written the day after the performance took place, which meant that the participants were still fresh in memory and experience.

#### 4.9 ETHICS

Ethical codes are crucial for any research project, as it entails a commitment to comply with basic human rights (Pink 2009, 58). According to Pink, the best way to ensure that a research project is ethical, is to make sure it

---

<sup>9</sup> Survey questions in appendix B.

<sup>10</sup> Post-reflection questions in appendix F.

is collaborative between researcher and research subject (ibid.). As our research is based on a performance that we ourselves facilitated, we had to be clear about the purpose of the research without revealing information that would demolish the immediate experience of the performance. This was a challenging task, as it meant that we had to leave some aspects of the intentions of the performance out, while still being transparent about our research intentions. A way of ensuring collaboration was to confirm the consent at different states of the performance: through the invitation, the welcoming of the participants, when blindfolding them, and when introducing the in situ exercise. Moreover, we made sure to ask if any of the participants had any concerns about being blindfolded or touched during the performance in the invitation survey. In the welcoming letter, we clearly stated that participants were at all times welcome to take down their blindfold and step out of the performance if they felt uncomfortable. And finally, when introducing the in situ reflections we reminded participants of the research aim of the performance, stating that they were always welcome to withdraw their consent of sharing their reflections with us.

Our participants were very generous with sharing personal information when reflecting on the performance, but also in interviews. Something we are truly grateful for. To provide a space for honesty, participants need to trust in us as facilitators and interviewers.<sup>11</sup> Through our performance we aimed to provide space for trust and surrender through practices of care. Moreover, during interviews, we aimed at creating a careful and trusting space where participants could speak freely. However, the efforts to create trusting spaces do not always pay off. The interviews with the American students were much harder to conduct with a micro phenomenological approach. Since we did not build up a relationship with the students before conducting the interviews, the meeting seemed quite formal. Rather than having an informal and unstructured conversation it became a more structured interview where we guided the conversation more, for them to talk. We felt like we were in a more facilitating

---

<sup>11</sup> The theme of 'trust' will be discussed in the analysis.

role than in the other interviews, where it felt more like a friendly conversation. The students were more anticipating, waiting for us to ask them a question, and not speaking freely. This could be due to our age difference and the educational context or that it might have been the first time they were ever interviewed. As already mentioned, we tried to overcome this issue by including post-reflections from the college students.

#### 4.10 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

An apparent implication of qualitative research is the issue of generalisation. How are we able to draw any general conclusions from the partial perspectives of our participants? In our research we created a space for knowledge where the phenomenon that we studied - our performance - was portrayed equally for everyone in the room. However, how the performance was experienced might have differed highly, according to different angles of perception. According to Abram achieving “objectivity” in phenomenology is more a striving for greater consensus among a plurality of subjects, rather than coming to terms with “one” reality (Abram 1996, 32). Thus, from the epistemological standpoint of phenomenology, our research can be seen as a representation of different subjective experiences perceiving the same phenomena, which together constitute an intersubjective experience (Abram 1996, 32).

According to Mike Crang and Ian Cook (2007) a way to validate truth claims in qualitative research is through theoretical sampling, which refers to a sampling approach that tries to “appropriate groups of people who may be concerned with, and/or involved in living through, the research problem and encouraging them to teach the researcher about it from their various perspectives” (ibid., 14). Our sampling strategy is limited to young people in the age of 20-30 from Denmark and the US, and our conclusions might only be valid to this segment. However, our choice of this particular group was based on the assumption that the performance could be particularly beneficial for young people who are specifically exposed to concerns about the future state of the planet. Thus, we

tried to choose a sampling group according to the quality and positionality of the information that they could offer to our research.



## 5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this section, we present our findings, which is based on a careful reading of our empirical data. Our analysis is divided into three main sections, separated according to the three-folded structure of rites of passage. In the first part of the analysis, the separation phase, we show the effects of the performative space and its ritual structure on our participants. In the second part of the analysis, the liminal phase, we explore in which ways the performative pace promotes deeper and embodied connection among participants and how it fosters caring ways of being. In the third and last part of the analysis, the reincorporation phase, we discuss how a performance, as an artistic practice, can serve as a vehicle for repairing our connections to the world, fostering care as a transformative social force to counter capitalism. Together, the three phases seek to answer our research questions.

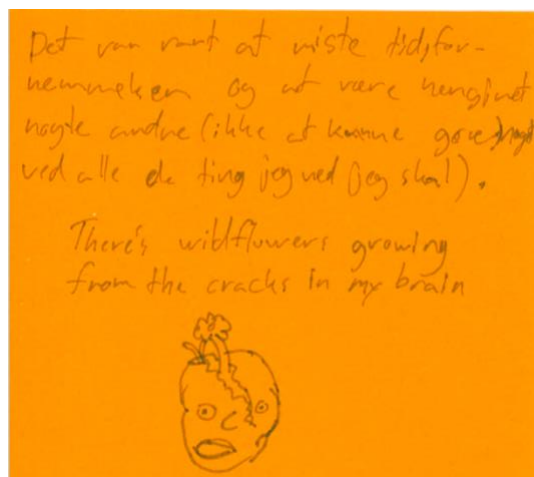


## 5.1 THE SEPARATION PHASE

The demarcation of the beginning in a performance is important in order to set the frame for the performative space and the expectations within it. Noted by Turner, the separation phase is marked by the entrance of a new space beyond the norms and social structures of society ([1966] 1977, 94). This shift enables a change in everyday life (ibid.). Taking Turner's perception of how rituals and performative spaces can turn the mundane and taken-for-granted everyday life upside down (ibid.), this section serves as an exploration of the effects of the performative space and its ritual structures on our participants. We examine how the structures of the performance heightened consciousness and how structures of care created embodied ways of knowing and connecting that challenges capitalist societal norms.

### 5.1.1 TIME AND SPACE

The experience of time in capitalist societies is often described like a straight arrow shooting from the past, crossing present time, heading towards the future (Mann 2008, 4). In this linear perception of time, our senses are constantly fixed towards the future and evaluating the efficacy of time passed (ibid.). Entering a performative space acquires coming to terms with the transition into a space that goes beyond the routine and usual measures of time. In our context, the participants knew that they had engaged themselves to a 1,5-hour performance. However, they did not know what this period of time entailed. This meant they had to surrender themselves to a period of time, which they could not structure themselves. As one participant noted, in their in situ reflection: *"It was nice to lose the sense of time and be devoted to something else (not being able to do anything about all the things I know I should)."* (In situ, performance I).



Knowing that they would be guided and facilitated through the experience provided them a space where they could surrender to being led, contrasting to their everyday lives where time and pace is managed individually (Sharma 2014, 28). When asked what the performative space did to their experience of time, a participant noted: *“There is a presence that is easier to grasp. Because, then it's just so much about the moment. Because you can't predict what will happen, or use what one has just experienced for the next thing. It's completely outside of what you do and are.”* (Interview, performance I). The dedicated time to the performative room thus created an opportunity to direct the awareness to the here and now. This was further enforced by the guiding touches that worked as a reminder of becoming present in their body. As one participant described, it brought them back into the room, when their thoughts began to wander:

“There was a period when one stood for a while without anything happening. And there I worked a bit with myself to not be too much in my head, because I started thinking about all sorts of things and forgot somehow that I was at a performance. But then when those hands kind of come, it's like, well... Well, then you're sort of awakened out of it and called back into the room.” (Interview, performance I).

Thus, the touch worked as a guidance for this participant to direct their awareness towards their own body instead of getting carried away by a stream of thoughts.

When arriving at the venue of the performance, participants were soon told what to expect, herein to lean into the helpers guidance during the performance and to wait in silence until entering.<sup>12</sup> Several participants elaborated how the formalisation of the performance, through the reading of the welcoming letter, created an anticipating atmosphere and a common consensus for how to behave in the soon-to-come performance. It invited them to let go of everyday conversation and *“enter into another world or mindset”* (In situ, performance I), as a participant articulated. Some participants also described how it helped them to direct their attention, in contrast to everyday life where it is more scattered. An example stems from the following participant:

---

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed description of the welcoming letter, see appendix C.

“You kind of have a common set of rules for the social codex, because it's a bit turned upside down in such a performance situation. So in that way, I think it set like, yes, it set a bit of a mood. And then this thing with, I think, people sat in silence. I think that created a mood with a different focus than the very scattered attention one has out in the world on all sorts of different things.” (Interview, performance I).

This aligns with Turner’s conceptualization of the ritual space, as a place of limbo where other ways of being with time and space become available. As another participant noted, it breaks with the “normal”, *“because it's not what you normally do. So the fact that you do something that is so significantly different set up. Then you are also more present, I think.”* (Interview, performance I).

As several participants came rushing from work or school to make it in time, they noted how the performance invited a shift in pace. As one participant explained about entering the performative space:

“I thought a lot about the pace. Because I could feel that my body was like... Fuck, it could take so long. That's what I noticed. That my body seemed to have been in a different pace. (...) But I think it was pretty good to have that little space where you could just calm down and accept that now it's going slowly.” (Interview, performance I).

The participant refers to the space that was created as a transition to the performative room, where participants were invited to wait patiently in silence until being let into the room. Here every move from the helpers and performers was intentionally slow. For some, the slow movement and soft touches seemed like a provocation to their bodies, which might be due to its contrast to the usually high pace of modernity (cf. Giddens [1990] 2007). In the following quote, a participant explain how they felt almost relieved, when the electronic music started, and the performance shifted to a faster pace:

“So when that chaos came in, I was like... Damn, how nice. Now something's happening, or, now I can follow along, or like... There's something that naturally takes over my focus. [...] It's probably that chaos and that fast pace, it suits more the pace I came with. So it's also a place where I just felt comfortable. And something that could just absorb. So I think I'm left with such a... It's also... Wild. That I need there to be such a basic state of stress and chaos for me to feel comfortable. And what's loving and tender is hard to accept.” (In situ, performance III).

Thus, according to this participant, being deeply embedded in an experience of a fast-paced everyday life made the part, which was meant to be



“uncomfortable” relieving since it was closer to their everyday pace of life. The usual state of “*stress*” and “*chaos*” of everyday life made the slow pace in the performance difficult to absorb.

In our performance, this was articulated by a participant, as they reflected on how the performative space allowed time for self-reflection, which the pace of everyday life almost never allowed: "*I don't feel like there's time to think about things in everyday life. I just think this [the performance] actually made me think about something. Yes, it just made me think. And it's strange to say, but like... I don't think we always think. Or maybe 'reflect' is the right word.*" (In situ, performance III). As the example shows, surrendering to the performative spaces provided a space for the participants to step back and reflect on how the pace of capitalist time affects their modes of being. Taking time to reflect and digest the impressions that are already available is not something that is encouraged in the capitalist way of life, where efficiency and productivity prompts us to focus on the next move (Mann 2008, 4; Sharma 2014, 28).

Tracing back in history, during the Industrialisation the Western perception of linear time became constructed as labour time was established (Malm 2016). Andreas Malm (2016) suggests that the introduction of machines, which did not depend on natural cycles but ran on coal power, enabled labour to become regulated and scheduled, and thus transformed time from an abstract experience to a concrete measure (ibid., 262-268). Gradually, capitalist production has pervaded all aspects of society by means of making people dependent on the exchange of money through work, thus creating unstable social conditions, forcing people to structure life around labour time (Mann 2008, 4). In the performative space, we encouraged participants to let go of everyday expectations of productivity and ‘labour time’. Moments that are rarely available in a society of productivity.

The presented findings show that the performative room offered a space detached from everyday time constraints which had the possibility of embracing a more present, reflective mode of being. In this way the performative space,

being detached from everyday life and expectations, allowed an experience of devoting participants to a timeless space. Entering the liminal space enabled a way of distorting the fast-paced sense of temporality that pervades capitalist societies. Thus, it allowed a shift in focus, from external distractions to internal contemplation, fostering a deeper engagement with bodily sensations. However, the level of surrender to the performative space depended on the form of engagement the participants undertook. This will be elaborated in the following section.

### 5.1.2 THE CRITICAL GAZE AND THE DEVOTED BODY

Facilitating our performance, we experienced that participants' dedication to it relied heavily on whether people managed to surrender themselves to an embodied mode of being. Here, Hallberg's (2021) conceptual framework 'The Critical Gaze' and 'The Devoted Body' is useful to understand different participatory positions at play in a performative room. The critical gaze refers to a participant who watches from a critical distance, whereas the devoted body refers to a participant who immerses and devotes themselves more fully (Hallberg 2021, 43). This conceptual framework is helpful for understanding the different ways people positioned themselves in the performance, where some participants seemed to easily devote themselves to an embodied way of being, while others kept a critical distance.

The critical participants often paid attention to our choice of methods to evoke their emotions. They would reflect on our choice of sounds, smells, and the framing as well as wording in the performance. These participants were most often involved in similar artistic practices in their personal life, and thus took a critical and analytical stance to our performance. An example is the following participant, who explained how they became inspired by the format, but nevertheless temporarily had a difficult time being present in the performance: *"Because I'm very much in a creative process with something similar, I just got a lot of ideas and was very inspired. So that probably also has something to do with why I had a bit of a*

*hard time being in my feelings about it.*" (Interview, performance I). Since some participants were already engaged in the field of arts, their experience was shaped by their existing conceptual and theoretical framework.

According to Hallberg, the critical gaze inhibits and limits the alternative mode of being that the performative space offers (Hallberg 2021, 43). The critical meta-language in the critical gaze blocks the possibility of new approaches emerging (ibid., 43-44). This was also the case in our context, as few of the participants did not leave the critical gaze and thus were not able to immerse themselves fully in the performance:

"I just felt like my mindset [was] different and I didn't know what to expect and no one told me what to be thinking in my [head] other than climate change and I was just totally thrown off and felt [like] it wasn't for me. I'd much rather read a paper about the study than participate in the study" (Post-reflection, performance II).

This highlights how cognitive frameworks, including critical perspectives, shape embodied experiences and affect how we engage with the world. According to Merleau-Ponty's perspectives on sensation, sensation can only become embodied, when processed through "a body of knowledge" (Merleau-Ponty in Pink 2009, 24). "A body of knowledge" refers to the idea that interpretations of sensory experiences are influenced by our pre-existing knowledge and attitudes (ibid.). In this context, the participant's sensory experiences were filtered through a lens of scepticism or judgement, and thus they did not manage to immerse themselves into the performance.

In contrast to the critical gaze, the devoted body "is sometimes in the process of 'losing language' in its attentiveness to another more sensuous and poetic mode of perception" (Hallberg 2021, 43). This was also the case for some of our participants, who seemed to stay with the sensuous experience, rather than trying to explain how they felt:

"I would describe myself as very sensory. Like a beetle with antennae. Just sensing things. And it's not really rational. It's just an experience. So in that way, it wasn't like there were any images manifesting themselves. It was just

this experience of being with other people. And a feeling of love. And openness. And vulnerability. And that we stood here together. And for me, it's a very bodily experience." (Interview, performance I).

This indicates that for some participants the performance enabled a bodily and sensuous mode of being. As this mode of being has often been neglected in western parts of the world, we suggest that it offers an important learning. In Western cultures we are mostly cultivated to consider perception as a cognitive and mental process to acquire new knowledge (Sjørsløv 2015, 158). In this learning process, embodied knowledge is often forgotten (ibid.). The insistence on the priority of the intellect has been at the cost of the cultivation of other forms of beings, including the emotional and bodily ways of being and knowing (Escobar 2020; Haraway 1988; Salleh 1997). As our performance invited participants to rely more on their bodily information than their intellect, it challenged the critical gaze as a superior mode of being and understanding in the world.

### 5.1.3 IMAGINATION AND SENSATION

As mentioned in our methodological and theoretical framework, vision is often seen as the primary sense in Western society (Haraway 1988, 586). The post-industrial way of living directs our attention away from senses, which we have otherwise relied heavily on (Abram 1996, 46). For our participants, it became apparent how much they rely on their vision in everyday life, when it was suddenly deprived: *"Lacking vision gave me anxiety at times, especially when we were getting moved around. I really needed to utilize my other senses and it heightened my feelings a lot"* (Post-reflection, performance II). As the participants became blindfolded, they were separated from the world they knew. Instead of relying on their vision they had to rely on sound, smell, and touch to navigate in the room. This meant that the bodily experience of sensing and feeling became intensified, as demonstrated in the above quote. Another participant described how the intensification of other senses, than the visual, stayed with them after the

performance, as especially touch felt different: *"I was a bit overstimulated afterwards. It's just that, you close off one sense, but it also just intensifies that thing where the sound becomes even more pronounced, and the touch was like... (...) Like, my fingertips, they were really overstimulated, and could feel everything very well."* (Interview, performance I). Our performance thus challenged the prioritisation of vision by offering participants the possibility of learning to direct their attention to other senses.

Our aim with the performance was, among other things, to create a space, where people could pay attention to senses they might not normally be in touch with. As demonstrated, the participant's sense of especially touch and smell became more prominent than usual. For some participants, lacking vision did not only lead to a heightening of other senses, it also activated the participants' imagination, which becomes prominent in the following in situ:

"I vividly remember that through the experience breathing & touch felt more prominent than they usually are. This experience is like nothing I've been a part of. It felt like intense meditation. During, I felt like I could see the birds flying above. I felt like I was alone in a rainforest. The touch is what reminded me where I actually was. The image was like a blue sky peaking through a canopy of trees. I'm now reflecting after the performance and I feel really calm, almost as if I shouldn't speak. I could compare this to an out of the body experience where I was still so aware of my body." (In situ, performance II).

As demonstrated in the quote, the sense of imagination, or creativity (cf. (Crapanzano 2004), was evoked as the participant sensed that they could "*see the birds flying above*" and felt that they were "*alone in a rainforest*". Section 5.2.3 will illustrate other examples of this and how the creativity and imagination sparked in the performance, created connections and identifications with the realm of non-human nature. The above quote suggests an immersive and multisensory experience of imagination, relating to what anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano (2004) has emphasised about imagination as embodied and multisensory. According to him, imaginative practices have mistakenly been perceived as "dominated by the visual" but are in fact invoked by multiple senses (Crapanzano 2004, 23). As he writes: "Can we not 'imagine' the beyond in

musical terms? In tactile or even gustatory ones? In proprioceptive ones? In varying combinations of these – and perhaps other senses” (ibid.). From this perspective, imagination can be embodied and multisensory rather than simply cognitive (Pink 2009, 39).

The activation of creativity and imagination through the heightening of senses was also articulated when participants were encouraged to reflect on their experience directly in the performance space. We provided freedom for expression in any preferred form, though guidance was available through three reflective questions. However, many participants chose to either draw, write short exclamations or poems. When asking a participant why they had chosen to write a poem as a way to express their thoughts, they replied: “*Because what I experienced wasn't really super mental. So it was more about interpreting emotions or conveying some feelings. And I definitely think that poetry can do that. So that's why.*” (Interview, performance I). According to this participant, their immersive and emotional experience of the performance defied merely answering our questions as this form of expression compromised the depth of their experience. This is also interesting in relation to the devoted body’s inclination toward a more sensuous and poetic mode of perception, resulting in a loss of language (cf. Hallberg 2021, 344). In her artistic research, Hallberg shows that during the imaginative process, the loss of language happens as the devoted body directs their attention toward its other activated and heightened bodily senses (ibid., 350). In such processes, the poetic and sensuous modes of expression become more prominent in conveying their experience (ibid.). Accordingly, as participants were deprived of their vision, other senses were activated through enriching sounds and smells in the room and emphasising touch, which led to a bodily and multisensory experience. The experience of touch will be elaborated in the next section, where we look at care as an appearing theme.

#### 5.1.4 A CARE-FULL ROOM

From facilitating the three performances, we experienced that the participants' ability to surrender themselves to the performance rested on our own mode of participation. Our mental and emotional state and preparation influenced how much we were able to care for the participants. As one of our helpers emphasised, it was a process of letting ourselves immerse in the present moment in order to let the events unfold in an organic way:

“Thinking about who takes care of those who take care of others. That as a facilitator, I also need to be in my own experience. Remember to receive while giving. Be interested rather than interesting. Thinking about transition and how to take care of each other. Others feel more, when I also feel. ” (In situ, performance I).

Thus, our own ability to be present in our own experience, or to be “devoted bodies”, was necessary to allow a state for both giving and receiving. If we allowed this to happen, we experienced that a caring bond arose between us and the participants. As one of us articulated in an in situ: *“I felt my heart in every touch I made, as if it burned through my palms. I could sense a vulnerability in the space, as if others felt it too.”* (In situ, performance I). This sense of caring bond is what this section will elaborate on.

Care was practised through touch as a way to make the participants both calm, surrendering and receptive to impressions. It was for instance exercised through the hand washing, which was described by some participants as getting *“hugs through the hands”* or *“gliding into a world of comfort”* (interview, performance I). As touch is often the primary means to provide comfort and care, whether through a gentle hug, a reassuring hand, or a soothing stroke on the back, tactile sensations can convey empathy, support, and reassurance.

For many of our participants, the physical touch was what stayed with them after the experience, which was often connected directly to the emotional response to the performance. Since the body is a container of emotions, being touched by other hands might trigger emotional response as it awakens bodily

memory (Pink 2009, 24). One example in our case was a participant, where memories from their deceased mother got evoked through the touches:

“At times, I couldn't distinguish between touch and the sensation of it - it's probably care and the power of faith. And the beauty of our connection. I began to ask myself; Who touches me? Embraces, comforts, supports, and lifts my burden. I imagined the Gods of nature and Mother Earth. Who has ever touched me in that way? I was reminded of my deceased Mother. The power she has left behind her. I miss her touch, her hugs, and her comfort. Maybe she was one of those Gods? Souls? I believe nature brings me closer to you, Mom.” (In situ, performance III).

As the quote indicates, touch and sensation evoked an emotional longing for the participant's deceased mother. This illuminates the embodied nature of emotions, as the caring touches embraced emotional sensations. Another participant explained how the touches evoked memories from their childhood of how their dad would correct their posture. The soft and kind touches reminded the participant of the lack of similar touch in the relationship with their father:

“Proper posture has always been important in my family, but I always felt like my dad focused on mine the most. My dad and I weren't exactly close. This made me a little emotional as I felt such kindness through the soft touching. When the music and talking began, it absolutely reminded me a lot more of our actual relationship; rushed, panic inducing, and rough bumping. I wasn't intensely physically abused by my dad, but enough to somehow bring back those memories of longing for loving touch” (In situ, performance II).

Both of the above respondents thus express a longing for care and loving touch, which was associated with parental care. As we practised care, the touches evoked memories and emotions tied to their relationship with their parents. As parenting is often a person's first experience with care it is an important part of feeling cared or uncared for (Weintrobe 2021, 89). However, parental care exists in a cultural and societal environment of care and uncare (ibid.) As Weintrobe puts it: “parental containment comes already embedded in layers within layers of society's frameworks of care, all of them containing structures.” (ibid., 90). By “frameworks of care” Weintrobe refers to the social environments that shape our interactions with each other, some of which are more caring than others



(ibid., 83). Thus, we are able to create or recreate environments where reciprocal care can more easily thrive.

As for the social fabric of neoliberalism, it does not exactly create a thriving environment for care. In a neoliberal culture we are told to expand our fortunes, spend our money and care about self-interest (Weintrobe 2021, 41). By urging consumerism, privatisation and individualism capitalism embraces greed and entitlement, which according to Weintrobe detaches us from our caring self (ibid.). Thus, caring for each other and the environment often becomes neglected in societies driven by capitalist interests. The lack of care in everyday life, might explain why longing and craving for comforting touch emerged as an occurring theme: “*The gentle touches were incredibly comforting. I was just waiting for the next one and envying those who stood around me. If there were any around me.*” (In situ, performance I).

However, not everyone was able to surrender to the careful touches, as some participants experienced feeling mistrusting:

“I also struggled with the blindfold. Mainly because of trust. My body was rejecting being led while blindfolded out of fear plus mistrust that I didn't realize I had. That made me reflect on how trust interacts with my mind + body on a daily basis. And additionally why I am a mistrusting person.” (In situ, performance II).

Trust is an important part of care, as it raises the question: do we trust the people who claim to care for us? According to Weintrobe, scepticism is a natural mechanism to care, as it helps individuals navigate potentially risky or deceitful situations (2023, 92). However, she suggests that we can work against this scepticism, by insisting on the generosity of care (ibid.). Care in its essence, she says, seeks to give without expectation of return, to offer compassion and support unconditionally (ibid.). Yet, this generosity of care is not without its challenges, as the hard work of care is the work of repairing *that* which has been broken (ibid.). Countering neoliberal cultures of un-care thus means building social environments that enable repairing the lack of trust deriving from these uncaring environments. A participant noted that environments of care could be one step towards change:

“Some of my main takeaways were the trust that we must put onto others, and that no matter how alone we may feel as we’re bombarded with arguments and reports, if we ‘wake up’ and take each other's hands, we can find not only comfort for ourselves, but also it's the only way any real change can be made. It made me realize how much we need to trust each other and come together if we want to make a real difference.” (Post-reflection, performance II).

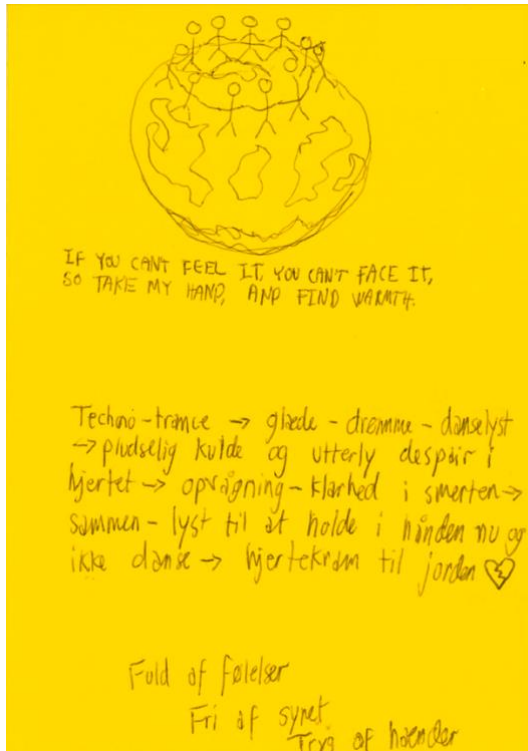
The performative space as a caring environment can be considered as a place of repairing trust. What the mistrusting participant noted was that their feelings of mistrust were challenged when they felt that their expectations of un-care were not met. Our performance thus offered a site for participants to consider their relationships with trust and compassion, ultimately pointing towards the transformative potential of caring environments in countering the capitalist norms of individualism and self-interest.



## 5.2 THE LIMINAL PHASE

After the phase of separation, the liminal phase begins. All attendees are in a limbo, unknown to what will happen (Turner [1966] 1977, 94). According to Turner this state of being has the potential of creating a shift in mindset, turning social norms and structures upside down and picture and play with alternatives (1986, 22). This chapter will illustrate how the liminal structures in our performance have the potential of providing alternative ways of knowing, feeling and connecting to the ecological crisis. We do this by emphasising the transformative power of emotions and how these are connected to the ecological crisis throughout the performance. We illustrate why our performance's focus on emotions is valuable in times of crisis, and especially how grief can be an important catalyst for change. Further, we demonstrate how the performance offered a space for community building, which poses to be important in resisting capitalist norms.

### 5.2.1 IF WE CAN'T FEEL IT, WE CAN'T FACE IT



IF YOU CAN'T FEEL IT, YOU  
CAN'T FACE IT, SO TAKE MY  
HAND AND FIND WARMTH

Techno-trance --> joy --> dreams -  
desire to dance --> sudden cold and  
utterly despair in the heart -->  
awakening - clarity in the pain -->  
together - a desire to hold hands now  
and not dance --> heart hugs to Earth.

Full of emotions  
Free from sight  
Secure in hands"

(In situ, performance I)

Our performance aimed at providing embodied ways of supporting the processing of difficult emotions arising in the ecological crisis rather than

denying them. During the liminal phase of the performance, we played with symbolic oppositions like being blind/having sight, feeling isolated/connected, dark/light, as ways of exposing different experiences of navigating in the ecological crisis. According to Turner, symbolic oppositions and correlations are important tools for learning during the liminal phase, which can become re-embedded as bodily memories among the participants (1986, 42-43). The establishment of these oppositions occurred from the second part of the liminal phase to the part we call the resolution phase, where the blindfold became a powerful marker of the contrasting emotions of feeling isolated versus connected to a community. The part where participants were blindfolded, being pushed around and overwhelmed by the loads of information about the state of the climate was supposed to mirror a sense of isolation and powerlessness; emotions that are often mentioned as reactions to the ecological crisis in the global North (cf. Norgaard 2011). Constituting our choices in creating the performance, this symbolic isolation likewise resonated with our participants, who described how the blindfold gave the illusion that they were alone. Moreover, the touches in the performance were supposed to reflect the emotional reaction that we aimed to provoke, isolation and powerlessness, thereby enhancing the emotions that arose. Likewise, a participant noted how it created a strong effect that the physical acts in the performance seemed like a metaphor for the experience of information overload in the crisis:

"I thought it was pretty cool, being moved around like that. Because it's like, I don't know if that's what you've intended, but the thing is, that you constantly have to orient yourself towards new information that comes, and that you become a bit scattered over time and then become like, what should I choose to focus on? And then you just end up being a bit paralysed." (Interview, performance I).

Many participants described this phase as mirroring the sense of being overwhelmed by the complexity of the ecological crisis with words like feeling "*small*", "*powerless*", "*hopelessness*" and "*despair*". Mirroring their everyday experience of the crisis, as a result of these emotions many participants describe a sense of becoming "*paralysed*", like the participant above described it. Sociologist Nikolaj Schultz highlights the existential dread that can arise from

acknowledging the ecological crisis, as individuals in Western contemporary societies are confronted with the realisation that their very existence contributes to environmental destruction (Schultz 2023, 12). Acknowledging the overwhelming consequences of one's own infliction in the crisis, was described as a paradox between the urgency to deal with the crisis on the one hand, but on the other, knowing that their efforts go unnoticed by politicians. A sense that was fortified during the liminal phase of the performance:

"It was very much a feeling of powerlessness, I think. On one hand, really relating to [the ecological crisis], and actually.... Well, I find it really sad. But on the other hand, also to be a bit immune. Or not immune, but sort of... Create a bit of... Yeah, I couldn't quite grasp it. No, I think I came to think of the same feeling as it can sometimes be when your news feed is so exaggerated that you have to shut it off." (Interview, performance I)

After the blindfolds were removed and the participants were released from their isolation, they realised that although they had initially believed themselves to be scattered, they were actually standing together. According to our participants, this realisation proved to be a powerful contrast. From a feeling of alienation and isolation, they now came to recognise themselves as part of a unity. As a participant described it:

"So feeling that sense of community, which was there, was really nice. And then the contrast to how many people might not care about it. So an acceleration of being in it, together with some other people who also care about it. And then a sorrow over how much the world doesn't steer in that direction, you could say, in terms of taking a stand on it" (Interview, performance I)

Instead of becoming paralysed, the oppositions in the performance aimed at providing a space where the difficult emotions could become mirrored and recognised by others. As a participant explained, the contrasts created a form of collective resonance of living through these emotions together with others: *"In a way, it was a nice contrast. And I also think [the contrast] was something that made it beautiful. In a way, finding the harmony and resonance that also emerged in the room. Finding it amidst all the chaos that was happening"* (Interview, performance I). As the performance played with contrasts it evoked emotions that participants could relate to in reference to the ecological crisis. Another participant explained the relief of being provided with a space that brings a way to connect to the emotions of the ecological crisis:

“It felt as if something was punctured, something that is present all the time but is easier to feel together when space is created for it. There were emotions and connection, alienation and separation. I can feel the effect on my body in terms of using a lot of energy to keep the weight down. It manifests as small tensions. There is a kind of hope in the grief and in feeling it together” (In-situ, performance I)

The level of engagement in the ecological crisis, the fact that the world is changing is something that is felt in most of us. And as the quote above shows, it takes energy to keep down. Therefore, we need these spaces to facilitate the process of mourning and to enable hope and empathy. In the next section we show, in which ways the performance gave space to lift the grief from the realm of paralysation to active and productive forces of hope, and connection in dealing with the crisis.

### 5.2.2 A LIGHT THAT SHINES HOPE

“Around a small light, I am led, jostled, shaken, we swirl around, blind to the world that is in decay. Called by sounds and longing, longing to hear the song of the earth. A generation that must mop up the past from the floor, learn to listen from a place of hope. A hope of removing the blindfold. A hope of daring to feel the earth we stand on again. A hope of lifting together. A hope of letting the love for the earth guide. My dear, let the curtain fall. Untie the knots that bind you. Wake up to feel the earth that already calls on you.” (In situ, performance I).

In the quote above, the participant plays with symbols from the performance, as the blindfold becomes a metaphor of ignorance and denial to the ecological crisis. As we have mentioned in the previous section, symbols are useful in evoking emotional response in rituals and performances (Turner 1986, 42-43). In the last sequence of our performance, where we removed the blindfolds from the participants, and invited them to hold hands, they realised that they were gathered in a circle around a candle. The light can therefore be seen as a symbol of hope for a better future.

Hope has for a long time been recognized as a political force for change within critical theory (cf. Bloch 1995). In social movements hope is often practised as a way to bring the future into the present (Krøijer 2015). As Ana Cecilia Dinerstein and Séverine Deneulin (2012) writes: “The utopian function of hope

alters the given past–present–future temporalities by articulating the possibility of anticipating the future within the present.” (Dinerstein & Deneulin 2012, 594-595). Inspired by Bloch's notion of the “not-yet-become”, this assumption of hope offers a transformative tool to address the injustices in our present and picture an alternative future (Bloch in Dinerstein & Deneulin 2012, 594). The introduction quote captures the generational injustice of the climate crisis, as the young generation must learn to accept the past and find hope in each other to move forward. In many ways, the young generation needs hope to avoid getting paralysed by the depressing trajectory led by the past (Sandborg 2023). In our performance, hope was found in a sense of belonging to a community.

As our performance played with finding ways to feel solidarity, many participants articulated how hope was generated when they came to realise that they were standing together in a circle. Accordingly, several participants described the experience as “*being on a journey together*”, and “*becoming aware that you are not alone*”. The sense of community that was generated in the room aligns with Turner's description of ‘*communitas*’ which promotes an experience of having gone through something extraordinary in a group. According to Turner, the state of being in a ritual, where group members are all equal, without place or position, and must submit to unknown instructions, creates a space for comradeship and egalitarianism (1966, 96). Likewise, our participants, described how they felt connected to each other after the experience, as it created a feeling of community building:

“I reflected on the ways that each person had gone through the experience and in the end we all had each other to rely on and a sense of community built around our shared experience dealing with climate change. It also felt comforting to remind myself that I'm not alone in my worries and struggles with dealing with anxieties about the climate crisis and so I must lean on others and work together to combat these issues.” (Post-reflection, performance II).

“Belonging” was a word that many participants chose to use in the final round of reflection, and it seemed to resonate throughout the different participant groups. As one participant notes in their in situ reflection: “*I am small, feeling a*

*sense of belonging. I saw chaos, mess in the world, I saw a light. I opened my eyes, there was a light.*”(In situ, performance III). Literature on social movements, shows that hope is created through feelings of collective action (Kleres and Wettergren 2017; Krøijer 2015). Accordingly, the quote above indicates that the feeling of chaos and grief became bearable through the sense of belonging with the community, which creates the sense of hope. The feeling of “belonging” was further strengthened by the eye contact which was held after we removed the blindfolds. A participant described this as a feeling of being “seen” by the other person. *“I feel like we're genuinely looking at each other. And not just looking for the sake of it. But more like... You have me. Or we have each other.”* (Interview, performance III). Thus, the light, the circle and the eye contact became symbols of hope, created through a sense of community.

Hope can be radical, in the sense that it might even exist during the most unbearable times. As pointed out by the philosopher Jonathan Lear (2009) hope goes beyond mere optimism, as it entails a commitment to meaningful action and engagement with the world even when it seems most dark. For our participants, hope for a better future was found in the feeling of belonging to a generation *“that must mob up the past from the floor”* (in situ, performance I). Supported by a sense of community, participants found that the performance created a space for recognition of being involuntarily involved in a crisis, which will have great consequences for their common future. Such dark realisation offers a possibility to feel radical hope. Confronted with the ecological crisis, we argue that hope is needed in order to find meaning in taking action.

### 5.2.3 BECOMING ONE WITH NATURE

So far, we have demonstrated that the performance created a feeling of solidarity and sense of belonging to a community. However, the performance did not merely allow for connectedness between the participants, it also gave rise to the connection of human and non-human bonds: *“I felt like I wasn't witnessing*



*climate change as a human, but as nature itself. I felt like I was feeling what it feels like to be nature, calm and peaceful and then all of a sudden disrupted and destroyed*” (Post-reflection, performance II). Left to themselves, immersed in birdsong and with the soft strokes from our helpers, many participants accounted for experiences of connecting deeply to the realm of non-human nature<sup>13</sup>. In the example above, the participant expressed a such profound connection to the natural realm that it made them adopt its perspective and identify with the experience of ecological destruction.

Other participants accounted for similar experiences of connecting to non-human nature. Common for these experiences was a positive connotation to nature, as it created a sense of calmness, peace and groundedness. As the introductory quote demonstrates, non-human nature is perceived as “calm” and “peaceful” in its origin, until being disrupted by human activity. Some were longingly remembering nature walks from their childhood, others imagined entering a tropical jungle and some experienced becoming a tree, grounding through its roots. Another example, is from the following in situ where the participant reflects upon a memory from a forest they used to visit in North Jutland:

“The forest grows wilder and wilder the further you go in, and the feeling is that you're going back in time. Small hills and unevenness make the terrain come alive, and plants grow wildly. Before long, you reach a lake... You can't reach one side of the lake, but the height of the trees sends reflections all the way to me. And here I stopped... Here I put down roots... My legs turned into a trunk and didn't have the human feeling of blood pumping around. Birds chirped and landed in my treetop. I was nature... I am calm. Gusts of wind sway me. Hikers touch my trunk as they walk by, and gently pick the mushrooms I grow by my roots. But I can't stand like this forever. The smoky machines, ignorant people see me. A resource for their growth. Their growth over mine. A cold steel hand. A saw, and I lie in the withered, soft, fallen leaves... I am dead...” (In situ, performance I).

Again, this reflection shows profound identification with non-human nature, as the viewer changes the perspective from observing nature to becoming a tree.

---

<sup>13</sup> We understand the concept “nature” in line with Andreas Malms definitions that nature differs from the human realm as 1) it has not been built from the ground up by capital forces 2) consists of processes beyond human control (2018, 8-9)

As we have mentioned elsewhere, the logic of capitalism entails viewing non-human nature as a finite resource. To challenge this, is to call into focus, the forgotten interlinkage between human and nonhuman. As articulated by Arne Naess (2008), humans have the ability to expand their empathic connectedness with other beings, from concerning one's nearest, like family and friends, to identifying with potentially everything. Accordingly, through the process of self-identification, we enable greater awareness of the interconnectedness with human-environment relations (Naess 2008). Our performance allowed for such realisation through the identification with the nonhuman, and in this way, it challenged disconnections that have been reinforced by capitalist norms. The experience described above goes hand in hand with Haraway's popular saying "make kin, not babies" (2016, 161), as she dares us to expand kinship and care relations to go beyond our blood relations. She argues that making kinship with nature is to acknowledge the inextricable entanglement between humans and nature that has been overshadowed by capitalist economics (ibid. 99-104). Therefore, not only did the performance enable identification with non-human nature, it allowed a space where the relation to the non-human was perceived - not as merely a finite resource - but as equal.

The identification with nature demonstrates an interesting finding, as our performance did not really possess anything "natural". The recorded bird songs from the internet, which we used in our soundscape, were merely a representation of nature. The debate over what nature is, remains complex since nature doesn't constitute any definitive category (Soper 1995). Our goal here is not to provide a set definition of nature. It is to illuminate how our participants' statements reflect identifications with nature that encompasses the ability to reimagine human's relation to the non-human world in order to sustain life on the planet. As this was not a finding, we sat out to discover, it remains unclear why exactly the participants identified with non-human nature throughout the performance. Without sounding too speculative, reasons could be found in the imagination which was created from activating other senses than the vision, as described in section 5.1.2.

Another possible reason could be found in a heightened awareness of the breath. As our performance engaged with the participants' bodies, several described how they became more aware of their own breath. An example is from the following participant, who reflects on the senses that came into play during the performance:

“As a result of the experience, I also became more aware of my own breathing. There was breathing during periods of standing still and quick breathing in moments when the sounds got louder and more intense. I'm unsure what this represents but I did feel a level of interconnectedness during the performance because of this.” (Post-reflection, performance II).

Becoming aware of one's own breath is a way to become aware of how we react towards what we experience in the world. As the intensity grows, our heart raises and the breath get faster. Deep breaths calm our nerve system and makes us relax. But breath also reminds us how interconnected and dependent we are on the environment. Although invisible to the eye, air is what connects us with other species, and our lives depend on it (Abram 1996, 136). Thus, becoming aware of one's own breath can foster a realisation of the interconnectedness of human and non-human relations. Another participant explained how the performance brought them closer to their “spiritual” side, as it reminded them, as mentioned earlier, of their deceased mother. The participant connected this spirituality to the cycle of life, that nature grows and dies, which likewise applies for humans: “*I believe that we are connected through what we come from, nature.*” (In situ, performance III). Both of these examples propose an awareness of the interconnectedness of human and non-human nature, as we share the same journey of living and dying on this Earth.

In line with ecofeminism, this reawakening of the interconnectedness of human-environment relations can serve as an uprising against patriarchal structures that have attempted to separate and control non-human nature (Merchant 1989, 2; Salleh 1997, 88). To repair this relation, we have argued that care could counter the capitalist structures of economic self-interest. As mentioned, if care is practised reciprocal, then care becomes a collective practice that benefits the greater whole. As participants became connected to themselves it fostered a

connection beyond the people present in the room but extended to the non-human realm. This sense of interconnectedness points to the fact that in order to care for others, we need feeling connected to ourselves. This perspective will be discussed further in section 5.3.3.

### 5.3 THE REINCORPORATION PHASE

So far, our analysis has pointed to how the performance created other ways of knowing, feeling and connecting that contrasts capitalist norms. First, we showed how the performative space, detached from everyday time and space, created other ways of moving, sensing and feeling than the modes of capitalist norms. Secondly, we showed that the performance enabled a space to feel the emotions at stake in ecological crises and connect with them in an embodied, caring, and empathic way. These sections have especially focused on our first two research questions. This chapter seeks to address our third research question: *Why are such artistic practices important in dealing with an ecological crisis?* Naming the chapter “the reincorporation phase” indicates how we see our performance being “incorporated” in society, herein how artistic practises translates into embodied and caring forms of being in the world. We discuss why such artistic practices are important in dealing with and moving forward in an ecological crisis.

#### 5.3.1 A SHEEP OF ITS TIME

A Fear / A fear of surrendering / To decay into just a sheep of its time / Who  
at last has let go / of responsibilities bestowed / to the flock that now releases  
/ falling at ease / without flapping or stopping the others / free fall / falling at  
ease (In situ, performance I).

We begin this section with the above in situ reflection to highlight the friction of our research in relation to the ecological crisis. Why should structures of care and embodied knowledge at all be important in dealing with the ecological crisis? Can it be considered resistance or is it merely reinforcing the lack of action represented in society thus far? As the above poem reveals, a fear rests in

our society of becoming “*a sheep of its time*”. When asked what the participant meant by this expression, they responded:

“It's that fear of just letting oneself slide through it a bit. And I think I became aware that there's also a side of myself that thinks it could be easier that way. But there's also one that got eager and precisely wanted to confront that image of myself, and that side which we all probably have to some extent. If we want to, we can easily surrender to taking the easy choice.” (Interview, performance I).

By “easy choice” the participant referred to the choice of looking the other way, while the planet burns. This draws parallels to thoughts on denial put forward by the field of psychoanalysis and social psychology (Norgaard 2011; Randall 2009; Weintrobe 2021). The emotions evoked in relation to loss, like fear, guilt and anger are rarely addressed in relation to the ecological crisis, although they are common reactions. According to Norgaard (2011), the global North's inability to take action in the lived reality of the ecological crisis, stems from a collectively negotiated denial. Which emotions we *think* are relevant and irrelevant, or which problems are near and far, is learned through social norms, shaped by society (Norgaard 2011, 7). Thus, people tend to block out or distance themselves from certain information in order to follow norms of emotion (ibid.).

The inability to connect with the difficult emotions arising was similarly articulated by many of our participants. A participant described how the inability to connect with them was in fact that the problem was too vast: “*I found it boundary-crossing to be confronted with something that is essentially one's greatest fear, and something I often distance myself from, as it is tremendously incomprehensible.*” (In situ, performance I). Another participant described that before dealing with the ecological crisis, usually a queue of worries first has to be solved:

“What fills me the most is if someone close to me is feeling bad. I use a lot of energy thinking and worrying about them. And when they feel better, the next worry sort of moves in. Or the next ring of worries moves in. So it's like... What's happening in Palestine. Or what's happening around the world. And then the outermost and most important circle is like the climate crisis. When there is hope on all other fronts, then there's still this huge thing... Then everything else doesn't really matter” (Interview, performance I)

As described by the participant above, only when the everyday life seems stable, they are able to deal with an incomprehensible issue like the ecological crisis. As the participant describes, in the end, the near issues seem small compared to the ecological crisis. Merely thinking about the crisis evokes unpleasant feelings like guilt, powerlessness, fear and concern, especially for people who live in the countries that bear the greatest responsibility for it (Norgaard 2011, 7). As Norgaard puts it: “The present environmental crisis threatens not only people’s sense of how the world is (a “good place,” as many want to believe), but also the meaning of their sense of the continuity of life” (Norgaard 2011, 82). As a reaction to this, Norgaard shows that for most people in the global North, the climate crisis is at arm's length as they reorient their attention in order to live on with their everyday lives (ibid., 214). Thus, she argues that the collective denial of emotions creates a false sense of stability in life. What Norgaard draws attention to is that “the good place”, in fact, is not very good as it causes environmental destruction (ibid. 82). Norgaard further highlights that the ecological crisis threatens the feeling of ontological security as it confronts us with unbearable scenarios (ibid. 83). Thus, we need a certain level of ontological security in order to continue our everyday life, however, as Norgaard underpin, what the capitalist system currently provides us is a false sense of ontological security.

Therefore, we need to acknowledge that dealing with these difficult emotions is part of realising the urgency of these times. Like Judith Butler indicates: “We have lost, are losing still and we’ll continue to lose unless this acknowledgement of loss lifts us, not only from melancholia, but towards resistance to - and reversal of - the destructive processes themselves” (Butler 2023). To avoid becoming “*a sheep of its time*” is thus not to deny one’s emotions, nor is it to rise from the blind surrender of melancholia, dreading the losses of the world. It is to face reality through mourning. In this way, articulating emotions in the performative space, is to deal with the difficult emotions instead of denying them. Fully acknowledging the damage that the crisis has caused, is a means of moving forward and resisting the destruction. Returning to our literature review,

the performative space becomes a scene for political contestation that has the ability to disturb and distribute emotions in the ecological crisis (Ranci re 2011, 13). Thus, we ought to create spaces where it is socially acceptable to feel emotions arising when faced with the climate crisis. As shown, our performance provided a space where articulating these emotions could be mirrored and recognised by others to truly understand the seriousness of the ecological crisis. This resonated with the majority of our participants, who realised that they had been missing spaces like these. As one participant explained:

“I definitely feel like this field trip has made me change the way I should approach climate change. I was always into researching the problems we face but never truly connected to it on a deeper level. After this, I realised it’s equally if not more important to be emotionally invested in this since it is not a short term problem with a short term solution.” (Post-reflection, performance II).

As stated in this quote, there is no easy solution to the ecological crisis. However, we are in dire need to take action. The performative space offered participants alternative frameworks, emphasising emotional engagement in addressing the ecological crisis, alongside dealing with it intellectually. It afforded participants an opportunity to connect and process emotions that many expressed that they usually do not give space. In this way, the performance emerged as a space for political contestation, challenging prevailing social norms of dealing with the ecological crisis and redirecting participants' focus towards alternative emotional frameworks. In the following sections we illustrate in which ways the frameworks, the performance offers, enable processing the difficult emotions occurring in the ecological crisis, in order to deal with an uncertain and daunting future.

### 5.3.2 SILENT RESISTANCE

While the capitalist societal norms seem almost inescapable, many already put great effort into addressing how our economic system is driving the world towards environmental destruction (Kothari et al. 2014; Paulson 2017). The awareness and sense of urgency is specifically pronounced among the young generation, who, in the end, become the ones who have to deal with them (Sandborg 2023). With the sense of urgency that it requires to undertake this, it

might not seem that there is time for care and contemplation. As one participant noted, as a reaction to our performance: *“I am left with a sense of calmness, but also a bit flat because the revolutionary energy that was built up was not channelled into a concrete project/action”* (in situ, performance I). According to this participant, the performance fell flat, when their expectations were not met. This perspective represents the idea of productivity in activism that demands that the collective power immediately has to be turned into action. With the eyes set on direct action, other perspectives might be blinded. Instead, we insist that resistance can take many forms. Marxist Paul Lafargue (2012) argues that the importance of rest and relaxation is not about being lazy, but to insist that it promotes physical and mental well-being and has the creative potential of enabling social, collective power. This suggests that resistance against capitalism does not need to take the form of direct action as such. We acknowledge the struggle of the many people that go on the streets to address the urgency of the ecological crisis, and we believe that it is an important way to demand accelerating the sustainable transition. However, we encourage our readers, just for a moment, to step back from this idea of productivity that demands turning collective power into action. As Larfargue suggests, there is potential in rest and care (ibid.).

As mentioned previously, fixing broken relations can be perceived as a resistance to structure of uncaring and economic individualism. Repairing bonds of care and trust locally holds the potential of building communities of reciprocal care, practising care collectively that benefits the whole. This was also recognised by our participants. Noted by one of our helpers, the performance had promoted reflections on how global crises are rooted in local relations as well: *“Thinking that everything needs to be resolved locally. Between you and me. Fix a relationship here, take care so it doesn't spread. We need to make an effort to translate it right here.”* (In situ, performance I). Likewise, another participant articulated how the performance reminded them of the need for building communities that can support each other emotionally: *“I felt very connected to myself as well as those around me, which made me consider how important community building can be when discussing policy changes and activism in general* (Post-reflection, performance II). Thus, the



performance gave rise to reflection of the importance in creating relations of care outside the performative space. Establishing these communities does not only support each member in their struggle for a just and sustainable transition, but it contrasts capitalist societal norms that makes sustainability seem like an individual choice.

Similarly, another participant described how the performance reminded them that it is the broken social bonds between people that they fight for in their activism: *“I have found the root. MY root and my meaning. Connection and wholeness, a bond being destroyed”* (in situ, performance III). Being reminded of the power of the collective, this participant became aware of the broken bonds that need repairing. Following Butler's (2023) framework on mourning, grief can be a productive force. Mentioned previously, Butler argues that mourning is important in order to acknowledge what is being destroyed through this crisis, since only then can the resistance against capitalist patterns of destruction take shape. Another participant describes in the same manner that while the ecological crisis might seem frightening, the collective force that was built in the room left them with a feeling of being inspired to continue their efforts:

“To focus a lot on the things one has, as a way to find strength to act to preserve them. (...) That was actually the feeling I left with. A desire to make and do something. And also just such... Also just such pride in the fact that I actually think I do a lot of things already.” (Interview, performance I)

Structures of care and space for emotional contemplation allowed participants to connect with themselves and their emotions. Letting the difficult emotions take up space and recognising that these emotions were shared by others, participants were encouraged to reflect on what is actually important to them in their everyday life. The performative space reminded participants that the near relations of care matters. In this way, resistance can take various forms. They can take place as stepping back in order to resist the pace of capitalist society and to create caring communities. By repairing these near relations, care can spread like ripples in water.

### 5.3.3 AN ECOLOGY OF MIND

As we have demonstrated in our analysis so far, performative spaces encompass a potential of change and connection that contrasts the mundane life (cf. Turner 1966). In our context, it provided a space for participants to return to their sensing bodies and the emotions that lay underneath the surface when continuously confronted with the reality of the ecological crisis. Thus, it allowed the participants a shift in focus, from external distractions to internal contemplation, fostering a deeper engagement with the present moment.

Several participants described how their mental health, on the one hand, is connected to the state of the world, but on the other hand, that their ability to deal with environmental issues are compromised when their emotional life is out of balance. In this way, mental health presents itself as a vicious circle: the failure to address mental health concerns reinforces societal norms driven by capitalism, which, in turn, exacerbates mental health issues. Additionally, the collective negotiation of denial will become more rigid, making it even more difficult to be confronted with the reality of the situation (cf. Norgaard 2011; Randall 2009). Thus, building healthy mental minds is an important stepping stone of building resistance against the environmental crisis and the underlying capitalist structures. This was also recognized by some of our participants, who found that the performance created a space, where they could balance between an “inner” and an “outer” sustainability<sup>14</sup>:

“I think it's at least equally important that we begin to experience greater mental well-being. And better relationships. And better family relationships. And better self-acceptance. Greater self-acceptance. I believe it has so much to do with the way we act in the world. And also consume. I think that's so important. And a place where there is also self-acceptance and a sense of caring towards oneself, but also feeling supported. And you created a space where I truly did.” (Interview, performance I).

According to this participant, the ability to enact structural changes begins with mental well-being, which subsequently translates into other interactions with the

---

<sup>14</sup> According to Woiwode et al. (2021) inner sustainability relates to various aspects of human existence and interactions such as consciousness, mindsets, values, worldviews, beliefs, spirituality and human–nature connectedness, whereas outer sustainability refers to our material world.

world. The quote resonates with ideas put forward by anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1972), who has sought to create awareness of an ongoing interaction between our patterns of thought and our interaction with our environment. He argues that destruction of nature can be traced back to humanity's loss of understanding of the interconnectedness with our environments (1972, 491). Bateson urges us to recognize that the mind is not separated from "its material base", but that mind and body are connected as well as they are connected to the environment (ibid., xi). Just like an organism has an impact on its environment and the environment impacts the organism, so does the way we think impact our actions towards our surroundings:

"There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds, and it is characteristic of the system that basic error propagates itself. It branches out like a rooted parasite through the tissues of life and everything gets into a rather peculiar mess" (ibid., 492).

In this way, preventing environmental destruction entails replacing the destructive thoughts in which the destruction of the world is rooted. Artistic practices can thus be a helping hand on the pathway to constructing new epistemologies, as they play with other ways of being and knowing about the world (Escobar 2020). Exactly the word "play" is something that fascinated Bateson, as he described it as a way to practise new skills and exploring habits of thought and reactions. "To play" is to temporarily replace an imaginative situation with a real phenomenon (Bateson 1972, 175-177). As for our performative space, it temporarily offered alternative ways of knowing and connecting that made participants reflect on their own patterns of thought. The next quote from an in situ shows a participant's experience of replacing the tension from the ecological crisis with building new communities:

"It felt like, from when tension was building it then felt like a transition to building something new and kind of making this sense of community. I felt like I was slowly returning back to that peaceful sensation" (In situ, performance II)

"Returning back to the peaceful sensation" refers to restoring the peace that had been established in the separation phase. It mirrors the structure of rites of passages; returning to "the common world" from "the world of transformation"

(Model 1); returning to the world they came from with new insights. The reincorporation to society offers a potential to bring the reflection and insight into the “common world”.

Although we cannot prove that our performance directly leads to the transformation needed to fully address the ecological crisis, it did foster a greater sense of interconnectedness. From a perspective that takes emotions seriously and sees them as action drivers, identification with our surroundings leads to more empathic and caring relationships with our environment. Identification requires empathy, which motivates concern for the well-being of others (Milton, 2002, 82). Thus, creating spaces where empathy can thrive is an important part of dealing with an ecological crisis. Societal structures can either facilitate or inhibit empathic and caring relationships with the environment (cf. Weintrobe 2021), which will affect the connections we engage in; with each other and with the non-human world. In line with feminist theory, creating communities based on reciprocal care enables a multidirectional and commoning systems of care that goes beyond the relations that we are in touch with in our everyday lives (Gómez Becerra & Muneri-Wangari 2021). Temporarily offering alternative ways of knowing, feeling and connecting, we have showed how the performative space enabled participants to explore habits of thought and reactions. As a space for playing and exploring, the performative room provided an opportunity to perceive taken-for-granted rules, institutions and structures in isolation and imagine how they could be different. Guided by symbols, where senses, emotions and memories become evoked, the ritual structure of the performance was useful in means of resisting capitalist rationality and disembodiment and moreover embedding new imaginaries and directions for attention within the sensory memories of the participants. This also applies to reimagining human interconnectedness with non-human nature, as it practises caring bonds that can resist the destruction of natural environments.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the potential of a performative space in dealing with and moving forward in an ecological crisis. The empirical data for the thesis was collected during three manifestations of the performance in the spring of 2024. The performance took place in Copenhagen and hosted three participant groups, comprising individuals aged between 20 and 30 years to more deeply analyse its potential on young people. The methods used for data collection in this thesis have been inspired by artistic research and phenomenology, using reflections on site to gather information during the immersed experience of the performances. Further, interviews with 11 participants in total were conducted to deepen the insights of the participant's experiences.

The research questions that guided the analysis and findings of the thesis are the following:

- 1) How and why does the performance create other ways of knowing, feeling and connecting that challenges capitalist societal norms?
- 2) How can artistic practices enable embodied and caring ways of being in the world?
- 3) Why are such practices important in dealing with the ecological crisis?

To answer these questions, we have engaged with theories that challenge the economic and social implications within capitalist society and raise the importance of embodiment in dealing with the ecological crisis. To sum up, our theoretical framework suggests that facing an ecological crisis, we urgently need new strategies to challenge the capitalist system. Capitalism's pursuit of capital accumulation and resource extraction has pushed the environments to the brink of collapse. By devaluing social reproduction, care, and embodiment, capitalist structures have justified the control, extraction, and exploitation of natural resources in the pursuit of profit. As the logic of capitalism has become part of every layer of society, its values are difficult to escape to, which leaves us with societies that fail in dealing with the ecological crisis. Instead, the populations most inflicted in the crisis collectively deny the reality of the crisis, to avoid the

difficult emotions of fear, guilt, and concern for the future. Rather than denying our emotions, feminist scholars suggest that we must confront the reality of the ecological crisis by returning to structures of care and embodied knowledge. Only by doing so can we cultivate hope and empathy for the planet and its inhabitants.

To conclude on our research questions, we will first summarise the key findings of the respective sections in our analysis. Mirroring the three-phased structure of a rite of passage, our analysis consisted of three major parts: the separation phase, the liminal phase, and the reincorporation phase.

**In the separation phase**, we focused on the ritual structure of the performance and its effect on our participants. In section 5.1.1 we showed how the performance separated participants from their everyday life, allowing them to enter a performative time and space. By moving in a slow tempo and using touch to make the participants adjust to the performative space, the performance prompted a slower mode of being than the fast-paced rhythm of modern life. Participants explained how this made them aware of the perception of time and pace in capitalist society being stressful, chaotic, fast paced and scattered. With the analytic framework of the critical gaze and the devoted body 5.1.2 illustrated how the Western analytical gaze was challenged, as participants had to rely on their bodily information rather than their vision. Instead, participants were invited to adopt an embodied and sensuous way of being. In 5.1.3 we showed how blindfolding participants disrupted their reliance on vision and compelled them to engage more deeply with other senses like sound, smell, and touch. We suggested that a shift from the dependence of vision led towards a more multisensory experience. The enriched sensory expressions led to new modes of perception and offered a space for exploring poetic and sensuous modes of expression. In section 5.1.4 on care, we showed how the care that was practised in the room extended beyond physical sensation, as care itself cultivated compassion and emotional connection, as articulated by our participants. Here, trust emerged as an important theme, as some participants struggled with finding trust to surrender to the care. We suggested that care is a

way to repair the trust that is demolished in capitalist society, and showed how our performance offered a site for participants to realise the importance of trust and compassion.

**In the liminal phase**, we showed how the performative space enabled embodied and caring ways of being in the world. In section 5.2.1, we illustrated how symbolism used in the performance allowed participants to get in touch with their emotions. We found that playing with dark/light, being blind/having sight, feeling isolated/connected, despair/hope proved powerful as a way of establishing a collective space that could allow the difficult emotions when confronted with the ecological crisis to arise, affirming that the participants were not alone in their feelings. Section 5.2.2 showed that the connections that were established in the room fostered hope for a brighter future among the participants. Standing in a circle around “a light that shines hope”, participants found commonality in belonging to a generation whose future has been compromised by the past generations’ actions. We suggested that hope can be a transformative tool for imagining alternative futures (Bloch in Dinerstein & Deneulin 2012, 594) and an important emotion in the ecological crisis, as it entails a commitment to meaningful action and engagement with the world, even when it seems most dark (Lear 2006). In section 5.2.3 we showed that the connections, which the performance gave rise to, extended beyond the realm of human connections, as several participants described how it evoked feelings of interconnectedness with non-human nature.

**In the reincorporation phase**, we explored why the structures of care and embodied ways of being in the world are important in dealing with the ecological crisis. In section 5.3.1, we suggested that creating spaces for mourning is a necessary step in facing the daunting reality of the ecological crisis. Based on Norgaard’s notion of social organised denial, we argued that Western societies fail to address the difficult emotions arising in the midst of the ecological crisis, since it threatens people’s sense of ontological security (cf. Norgaard 2011, 83). We thus showed that the performative space can figure in political contestation over how to deal with the ecological crisis. In section 5.3.2 we suggested that

repairing bonds of care and trust locally holds the potential of building communities of reciprocal care. As such, we argue that resistance can take the form of stepping back from capitalist society and building caring relations. We showed how the performative space reminded participants that near relations of care matters. This was illustrated through several participants' accounts on how the empathic relations established in the room, and the hope it generated, which had inspired them to implement similar relations in their everyday lives. In section 5.3.3, we discussed the interaction between patterns of thought and the interaction with our environment. We argued that taking care of one's mental ecology (cf. Bateson 1972) can transcend to structural changes.

...

In summary, to answer our first research question, the separation into the ritualised space allowed a step back from everyday life and offered an alternative way of thinking and feeling than what dominates in capitalist society. Our performance enabled participants to envision alternative ways of being that do not reinforce capitalist social norms. The shift in time and space and enriching of secondary senses stimulated bodily, connecting, and sensuous modes of being, often forgotten in the capitalist way of life, where efficiency, individualism and rational thought dominate. Further, connection was enhanced through touch, care, and empathy, which allowed participants to become receptive to feeling their interconnectedness with each other and beyond.

As for our second question, artistic practices, as exemplified by the performative space, are assistful on the pathway to enabling embodied and caring ways of existence. By temporarily replacing established understandings of the world with other ways of being and knowing, these practices allow for the exploration of alternative ontologies. In capitalist societies, we need to explore other ways of being in order to deal with the crisis, as suggested by feminist theory. Artistic practices, as distributors of the sensible, can foster alternative ways of relating



to the ecological crisis. Accordingly, the performance emerged as a platform for cultivating a culture of care and embodying the values necessary for shaping a sustainable future.

To answer our last question, the significance of such practices in addressing the ecological crisis lies in their ability to cultivate emotional and sensory knowledge among participants. By providing a space for empathetic engagement and sensory exploration, the performative environment fosters an atmosphere where empathy can flourish and extend beyond the confines of the performance itself. Thus, these practices not only challenge existing societal norms but also offer a pathway towards meaningful engagement with environmental issues, essential for addressing the urgent challenges posed by the ecological crisis.

To recapitulate on our methodology and use of a research-based performance, we suggest that it offers an important tool for further research in the field of Human Ecology. As research-based performances not only criticise the status quo but also actively engage people in reimagining society (Lebech 2019, 12), it offers an impactful tool for research. Returning to our initial purpose of this study, this research set out to explore the potential for artistic practices where academia failed to provide a space for processing the difficult emotions arising in the ecological crisis. In our context, the performance emerged as a vehicle for cultivating a culture of care and embodying the values necessary for shaping a sustainable future. Thus, the performance contributed to the effort in the field of artistic research to validate embodied knowledge in academia. The performative space was deemed helpful in imagining alternative futures and countering the disembodied nature of capitalist society. In our literature review we mentioned how artistic practices encompass the ability to guide emotions and redistribute what it means to live through these difficult emotions. In this sense, artistic practices are inherently political when they render the audience new ways of understanding the world (Lebech 2019; Ranciere 2004). Our research findings support this notion by suggesting that the performative space provide embodied and sensory ways of dealing with denial of the ecological

crisis and provides opportunities to engage with and validate emotions that often remain suppressed (cf. Norgaard 2011).

Through the application of artistic and phenomenological methods, we were able to uncover subjective experiences that would otherwise remain unspoken and overlooked. As our research centred around subtle subjective experiences, we encountered challenges in interpreting our in situ reflections accurately. How could we ensure our understanding was correct? Moreover, did our dual roles as facilitators of the performance and researchers introduce biases? As previously discussed, in the context of artistic research, where the researcher becomes central, both researchers and participants are intertwined within the artistic space, collaboratively shaping research as it unfolds. Following phenomenological principles, the empathic connection between us as researchers and our participants enabled us to empathise and comprehend their embodied experiences (Husserl in Abram 1996, 33). We discovered that our own immersion and insight into these experiences facilitated a deeper interpretation and understanding of our empirical data, allowing us to emphatically lean into the experiences of our participants.

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abram, David. 1996. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Vintage.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2014. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Second edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bateson, Gregory. 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Bloch, Ernst. 1995. *The Principle of Hope*. Edited by Neville Plaice. 1. MIT paperback ed. Vol. 1. Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Borgdorff, Henk. 2010. 'Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research'. In *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, 1st Edition, 20. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. 2023. 'Om Klimasorg'. Økotanker. Accessed 7 February 2024. <https://podcasts.apple.com/dk/podcast/%C3%B8kotanker/id1693225024?i=1000617643302>.
- Caretta, Martina Angela. 2015. 'Situated Knowledge in Cross-Cultural, Cross-Language Research: A Collaborative Reflexive Analysis of Researcher, Assistant and Participant Subjectivities'. *Qualitative Research* 15 (4): 489–505. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114543404>.
- Carlson, Colin J., Gregory F. Albery, Cory Merow, Christopher H. Trisos, Casey M. Zipfel, Evan A. Eskew, Kevin J. Olival, Noam Ross, and Shweta Bansal. 2022. 'Climate Change Increases Cross-Species Viral Transmission Risk'. *Nature* 607 (7919): 555–62. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-022-04788-w>.
- Castree, Noel, William M. Adams, Peter Newell, Luigi Pellisconi, Kate Rigby, , Paul Robbins Libby Robin, et al. 2014. 'Changing the Intellectual Climate'. *Nature Climate Change* 4 (9): 763–68. <https://doi.org/10.1038/NCLIMATE2339>.
- Climate Imaginaries at Sea. 2023. *Climate Imaginaries at Sea*. <https://www.climateimaginariesatsea.org/>.
- Crang, Mike, and Ian Cook. 2007. 'Conceptualising the Subject'. In *Doing Ethnographies*, 7–16. London: SAGE.
- Crapanzano, Vincent. 2003. *Imaginative Horizons: An Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology*. University of Chicago Press.
- Curtis, David J., Nick Reid, and Guy Ballard. 2012. 'Communicating Ecology Through Art: What Scientists Think'. *Ecology and Society* 17 (2): art3. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-04670-170203>.
- Dinerstein, Ana Cecilia, and Séverine Deneulin. 2012. 'Hope Movements: Naming Mobilization in a Post-Development World'. *Development and Change* 43 (2): 585–602. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2012.01765.x>.
- Dodds, Joseph. 2021. 'The Psychology of Climate Anxiety'. *BJPsych Bulletin* 45 (May): 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjb.2021.18>.
- Edwards, Allen Louis. 1957. *The Social Desirability Variable in Personality Assessment and Research*. New York: Dryden Press.

- England, Kim. 2006. 'Producing Feminist Geographies: Theory, Methodologies and Research Strategies'. In *Approaches to Human Geography*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446215432.n27>.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2020. 'Chapter 4. Sentipensar with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South'. In *Pluriversal Politics*, 67–83. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478012108-008>.
- Extracting Us Collective. 2024. *Despite Extractivism*. <https://extractingus.org/exhibitions/despiteextractivism1/exhibition/>.
- Fisher, Mark. 2009. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Lanham: Zero Books.
- Flowerdew, Robin, and David Martin, eds. 2005. *Methods in Human Geography: A Guide for Students Doing a Research Project*. 2nd ed. Harlow, England ; New York: Prentice Hall.
- Foucault, Michel. [1978] 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*. Edited by Michel Senellart. Paperback ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Frantzen, Mikkel Krause. 2021. "'A Grief More Deep Than Me"—On Ecological Grief. In *Cultural, Existential and Phenomenological Dimensions of Grief Experience*, by Allan Køster and Ester Holte Kofod, 1st ed., 214–28. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003099420-18>.
- Fraser, Nancy. 2014. 'BEHIND MARX'S HIDDEN ABODE: For an Expanded Conception of Capitalism'. *New Left Review* 86 (86): 55–72.
- Friis, Maja. 2022. *Breathing Coral*. <https://visualscience.dk/portfolio/breathing-coral/>.
- Galafassi, Diego. 2023. 'Breathe'. In *Museums and Technologies of Presence*, by Maria Shehade and Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert, 1st ed., 170–81. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003334316-12>.
- Gay-Antaki, Miriam. 2021. 'Stories from the IPCC: An Essay on Climate Science in Fourteen Questions'. *Global Environmental Change* 71: 102384-. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2021.102384>.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. 'The Consequences of Modernity'. In *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, edited by Craig J. Calhoun, 2--243. Blackwell.
- Glazebrook, Trish. 2017. 'Feminist Intersections with Environmentalism and Ecological Thought'. In *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*. Routledge.
- Gómez Becerra, Marlene, and Eunice Muneri-Wangari. 2021. 'Practices of Care in Times of COVID-19'. *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* 3 (June). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2021.648464>.
- Green, Jessica F. 2020. 'Less Talk, More Walk: Why Climate Change Demands Activism in the Academy'. *Daedalus (Cambridge, Mass.)* 149 (4): 151–62. [https://doi.org/10.1162/daed\\_a\\_01824](https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01824).
- Hailwood, Simon. 2015. *Alienation and Nature in Environmental Philosophy*. 1st ed. Cambridge: University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139976749>.
- Hallberg, Gry Worre. 2021. *Sensuous society*. Sisters Hope.

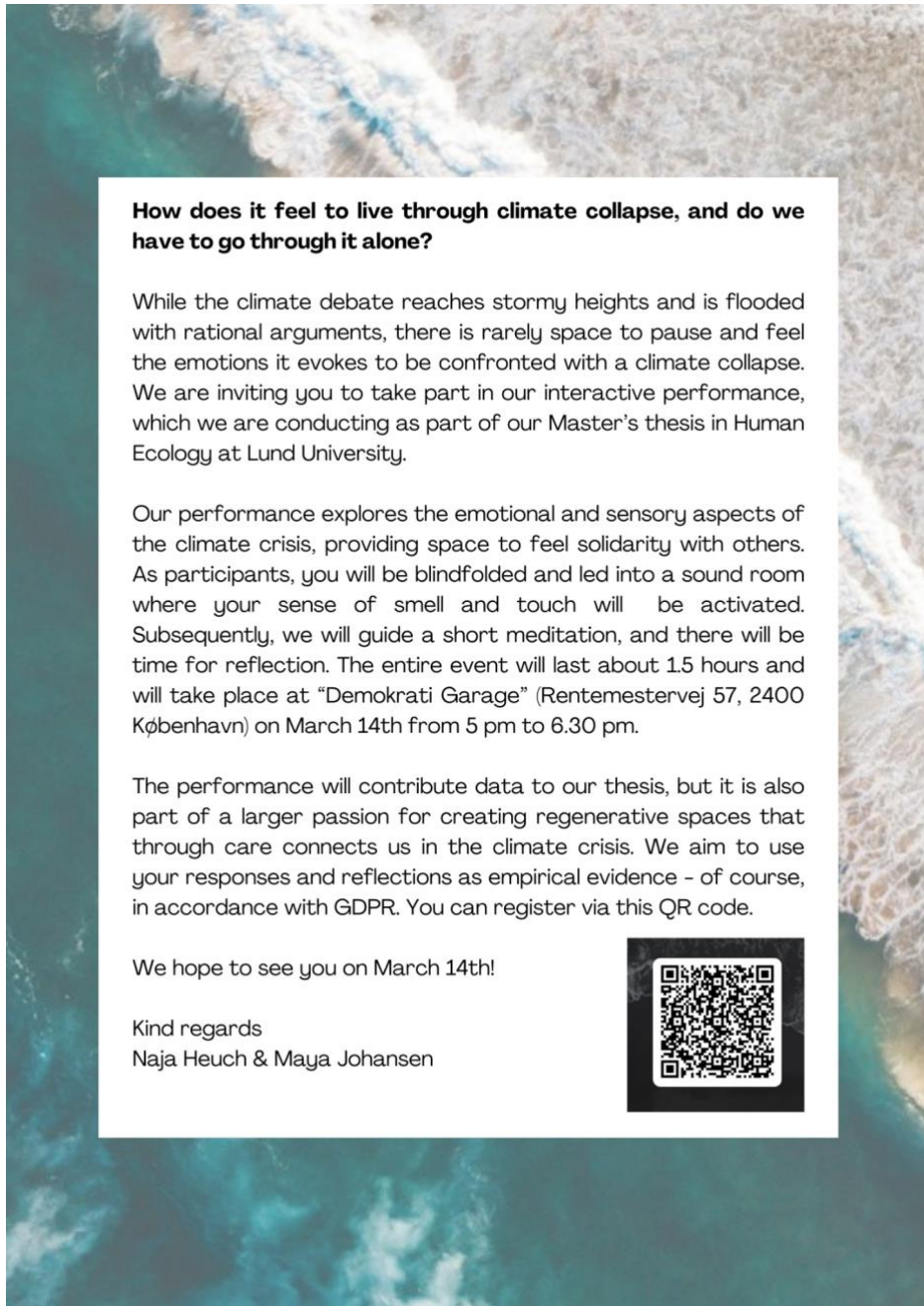
- Haraway, Donna. 1988. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>.
- . 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Experimental Futures Technological Lives, Scientific Arts, Anthropological Voices. Durham London: Duke University Press.
- Harcourt, Wendy. 2018. *Nature, Care and Gender: Feminist Dilemmas*. London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315648743>.
- Heimann, Katrin, Hanne Bess Boelsbjerg, Chris Allen, Martijn Van Beek, Christian Suhr, Annika Lübbert, and Claire Petitmengin. 2023. 'The Lived Experience of Remembering a "Good" Interview: Micro-Phenomenology Applied to Itself'. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 22 (1): 217–45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-022-09844-4>.
- Heras, María, Diego Galafassi, Elisa Oteros-Rozas, Federica Ravera, Luis Berraquero-Díaz, and Isabel Ruiz-Mallén. 2021. 'Realising Potentials for Arts-Based Sustainability Science'. *Sustainability Science* 16 (6): 1875–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-021-01002-0>.
- Hickel, Jason. 2021. 'The Anti-Colonial Politics of Degrowth'. *Political Geography* 88: 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102404>.
- Hornborg, Alf. 2011. *Global Ecology and Unequal Exchange: Fetishism in a Zero-Sum World*. Vol. 13. Routledge Studies in Ecological Economics. Florence: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203806890>.
- IPCC, 2023. Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (Eds.). IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland.' First. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). <https://doi.org/10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647>.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1991. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. 1st ed. Post-Contemporary Interventions. Durham: Verso. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822378419>.
- Jay, Alexa K., et al. 2023. 'Overview: Understanding Risks, Impacts, and Responses'. Edited by A.R. Crimmins, C.W. Avery, D.R. Easterling, K.E. Kunkel, B.C. Stewart, and T.K. Maycock. *Fifth National Climate Assessment*. Washington, DC, USA: U.S. Global Change Research Program. <https://doi.org/10.7930/NCA5.2023.CH1>.
- Kagan, Sacha. 2011. 'Aesthetics of Sustainability: A Transdisciplinary Sensibility for Transformative Practices'. *Transdisciplinary Journal of Engineering & Science* 2 (January). <https://doi.org/10.22545/2011/00014>.
- Kemp, Luke, et al. 2022. 'Climate Endgame: Exploring Catastrophic Climate Change Scenarios'. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119 (34): e2108146119. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2108146119>.
- Kleres, Jochen, and Åsa Wettergren. 2017. 'Fear, Hope, Anger, and Guilt in Climate Activism'. *Social Movement Studies* 16 (5): 507–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2017.1344546>.

- Kovel, Joel. 2008. *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* Updated and Expanded ed. London: NBN International.  
<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350251007>.
- Krøijer, Stine. 2015. *Figurations of the Future, Forms and Temporalities of Left Radical Politics in Northern Europe*. Ethnography, Theory, Experiment 2. New York Oxford: Berghahn Books.  
<http://ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/login?url=https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctv6jmw9t>.
- Lafargue, Paul. 2012. *The Right to Be Lazy*. The Floating Press.
- Lear, Jonathan. 2009. *Radical Hope*. Harvard University Press.
- Lebech, Sofie. 2019. 'Thinking with Performance: Research-Based Aesthetics in Times of Conflict and Crisis'. Doctoral Thesis (compilation), Copenhagen.
- Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Egon G. Guba. 1994. 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research'. In *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Lindhardt, Martin. 2014. 'Fænomenologien i Antropologien'. *Tidsskriftet Antropologi*, no. 69: 3–26.
- Lorde, Audre. [1984] 2007. 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House'. In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, 110–14. Berkeley: CA: Crossing Press.
- Malm, Andreas. 2016. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam-Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. London ; New York: Verso.
- Mann, Geoff. 2008. 'Time, Space, and Money in Capitalism and Communism'. *Human Geography* 1 (2): 4–13.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/194277860800100212>.
- Marx, Karl. [1867] 1976. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Penguin Books.
- Merchant, Carolyn. 1989. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Milton, Kay. 2002. *Loving Nature - towards an ecology of emotion*. London: Routledge.
- Nadkarni, Nalini. 2003. *Views from Above: Old Trees, New Perspectives Branching Out for Conservation*. <https://www.nalininadkarni.com/>.
- Naess, Arne. 2008. *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess*. Counterpoint.
- Norgaard, Kari Marie. 2011. *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- OECD. 2024. 'Trust in Government'. OECD.  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/1de9675e-en>.
- Pink, Sarah. 2009. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. Repr. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Pinsky, Michael. 2017. *Pollution Pods*.  
<https://www.michaelpinsky.com/portfolio/pollution-pods-2/>.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2004. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. London; New York: Continuum.
- Randall, Rosemary. 2009. 'Loss and Climate Change: The Cost of Parallel Narratives'. *Ecopsychology* 1 (3): 118–29.  
<https://doi.org/10.1089/eco.2009.0034>.

- Rice, Jennifer L., Brian J. Burke, and Nik Heynen. 2015. 'Knowing Climate Change, Embodying Climate Praxis: Experiential Knowledge in Southern Appalachia'. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105 (2): 253–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2014.985628>.
- Salleh, Ariel. 1997. 'Ecofeminism'. In *Routledge Handbook of Ecological Economics*, edited by Clive L. Spash, 1st ed., 48–56. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2017.: Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315679747-7>.
- Sandborg, Laurids. 2023. 'Nye tal: Hver fjerde unge kvinde overvejer ikke at få børn grundet klimaforandringer'. Information. 20 April 2023.  
<https://www.information.dk/indland/2023/04/nye-tal-hver-fjerde-unge-kvinde-overvejer-faa-boern-grundet-klimaforandringer>.
- Schjødt, Jens Peter. 1992. 'Ritualstruktur Og Ritualklassifikation'. *Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift*, no. 20.  
<https://doi.org/10.7146/rt.v0i20.5334>.
- Schultz, Nikolaj. 2023. *Landsyge: en fortælling*. København: Gyldendal.
- Sharma, Sarah. 2014. *In the Meantime*. Duke University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw801>.
- Sjørølev, Inger. 2015. *Sandhed og Genre: Videnskabsteori i Antropologi og Kulturanalyse*. 1. udgave. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.
- Soper, Kate. 1995. *What Is Nature?: Culture, Politics, and the Non-Human*. Vol. 7. Blackwell.
- Takedomi Karlsson, Mariko, and Vasna Ramasar. 2020. 'Selling Women the Green Dream: The Paradox of Feminism and Sustainability in Fashion Marketing'. *Journal of Political Ecology* 27 (1): 335–59.  
<https://doi.org/10.2458/v27i1.23584>.
- Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Paperback printing. Cornell Paperbacks. Anthropology. Ithaca London: Cornell University Press.
- Turner, Victor W. 1966. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Symbol, Myth, and Ritual Series. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press.
- . 1986. *The Anthropology of Performance*. Edited by Richard Schechner. 1st ed. New York: PAJ Publications.
- Van Gennep, Arnold. 1960. *The Rites of Passage*. 1st ed. Vol. 3. Routledge Library Editions. Anthropology and Ethnography. Religion, Rites & Ceremonies. Florence: Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315017594>.
- Watts, Jonathan. 2024. 'Tenth Consecutive Monthly Heat Record Alarms and Confounds Climate Scientists'. *The Guardian*, 9 April 2024, sec. Environment.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2024/apr/09/tenth-consecutive-monthly-heat-record-alarms-confounds-climate-scientists>.
- Weintrobe Sally. 2021. *Psychological Roots of the Climate Crisis: Neoliberal Exceptionalism and the Culture of Uncare*. First edition. Psychoanalytic Horizons. London: Bloomsbury Academic.  
<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781501372902>.

## 8. APPENDIX

### APPENDIX A - INVITATION TO PERFORMANCE



**How does it feel to live through climate collapse, and do we have to go through it alone?**


While the climate debate reaches stormy heights and is flooded with rational arguments, there is rarely space to pause and feel the emotions it evokes to be confronted with a climate collapse. We are inviting you to take part in our interactive performance, which we are conducting as part of our Master's thesis in Human Ecology at Lund University.

Our performance explores the emotional and sensory aspects of the climate crisis, providing space to feel solidarity with others. As participants, you will be blindfolded and led into a sound room where your sense of smell and touch will be activated. Subsequently, we will guide a short meditation, and there will be time for reflection. The entire event will last about 1.5 hours and will take place at "Demokrati Garage" (Rentemestervej 57, 2400 København) on March 14th from 5 pm to 6.30 pm.

The performance will contribute data to our thesis, but it is also part of a larger passion for creating regenerative spaces that through care connects us in the climate crisis. We aim to use your responses and reflections as empirical evidence - of course, in accordance with GDPR. You can register via this QR code.

We hope to see you on March 14th!

Kind regards  
Naja Heuch & Maya Johansen



### APPENDIX B - PRE-PERFORMANCE SURVEY

We invited to the performance through a Microsoft Forms questionnaire, where they answered the following questions:

1. Why have you chosen the course on climate crisis/ chosen to engage yourself in climate activism / Are you engaged with the climate crisis on a daily basis? If yes, how? (depending on the participant group).
2. Which emotions (if any) arise within you when learning or reading about the climate crisis?



3. Do you feel disconnected or alienated from the climate crisis? Please elaborate.
4. During the performance you will be blindfolded and there will be physical touch involved on the hands, head, back and shoulders. Do you have concerns about this?

## APPENDIX C - WELCOMING LETTER

*Dear all,*

*This letter is a disclaimer, so please listen carefully. Our performance will be guided by us, Naja and Maya, and our helpers, who will blindfold you and lead you. As this is an interactive performance, you are part of creating the performative space, so we ask you kindly to lean into the helpers guidance.*

*The performance will involve physical touch on the shoulders, head, face, and back while you are blind-folded. It will also involve loud sounds. Some of it is intended to be uncomfortable, however we wish everyone to leave with a good experience. In response, we encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. You are always welcome to pull down your blind-fold and step aside.*

*We are here to share an interesting and explorative experience with you, and look very much forward to it. Once again, we remind you that this performance is part of our thesis research, and we will use your written reflections and verbal expressions as material for our assignment. With that said, we now encourage you to be silent, and step forward one by one to enter the room. When you enter, please take off your jacket and shoes and step forward to our helper to become blindfolded.*

## APPENDIX D - TEXT IN SOUNDSCAPE

### TEXT I - THE LIMINAL PHASE

“Climate change has played a role in the collapse or transformation of numerous previous societies and in each of the mass extinction events.”

“Climate change has caused substantial damages and increasingly irreversible losses, in terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and open ocean marine ecosystems.”

“The climate crisis has driven the world to the brink of multiple ‘disastrous’ tipping points, of which five may have already been passed.”

“Det är bra att det blir varmare eftersom fler dör av kyla än värme.”

Translation: “It is good that it is getting warmer because more people die from cold than from heat.”

“Lige nu mærker millioner, hvor cykloner bliver kraftigere, hvordan tørker bliver varmere og længere, og hvordan klimakatastrofer bliver hyppigere og mere ødelæggende.”

Translation: “Right now, millions are experiencing how cyclones are becoming more powerful, how droughts are becoming hotter and longer, and how climate disasters are becoming more frequent and destructive.”

“These changes will increase the number of forest fires in this area, destroying trees that take 100 years to regrow and releasing carbon stores locked into the forest soil.”

“Human societies are vulnerable to climate- triggered risk cascades.” (

“Carcinogenic, diabetic, asthmatic, epileptic, post-traumatic, bipolar and disaffected / Atomised, thinking we're engaged when we're pacified / Staring at the screen so we don't have to see the planet die”

“Parce qu'on a la rage, celle qui fera trembler tes normes / Parce qu'on a la rage, la rage a pris la populace et la rage est énorme” (

Translation “Because we have rage, it will shake your standards/ Because we have rage, rage has taken over the population and the rage is enormous”.

“Globally mobile capital will relocate factories to situations where labor power is cheap and disciplined – where the rate of surplus-value promises to be largest – by means of new rounds of massive consumption of fossil energy.”

“But it was our boats that sailed, killed, stole, and made frail / It was our boots that stamped / It was our courts that jailed / And it was our fuckin' banks that got bailed”

“Growth, growth, and growth”.

“This collapse will lead to sea level rises of 10 meters over the next few centuries, bringing the ground on which we stand today under water.” (The Guardian 2022).

“Ifølge Verdensnaturfonden WWF er biodiversiteten i kraftig tilbagegang globalt, og bestandene af en række fisk, fugle, pattedyr, padder og krybdyr er samlet set faldet med 68 procent siden 1970. Forskere vurderer, at tabet af biodiversitet er så stort, at der er tale om en økologisk krise, der kan sammenlignes med klimakrisen.”

Translation: “According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), biodiversity is in a significant decline globally, and the populations of various fish, birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles have collectively fallen by 68 percent since 1970. Scientists assess that the loss of biodiversity is so substantial that it constitutes an ecological crisis comparable to the climate crisis.”

“We’re facing climate breakdown. It’s completely out of control.”

“Yet, there are ample reasons to suspect that climate change could result in a global catastrophe.”

## TEXT II - THE RESOLUTION PHASE

What are we going to do to wake up?

We sleep so deep it doesn't matter how they shake us

*If we can't feel it, we can't face it*

*So take my hand and find warmth*

What are we going to do to wake up?

IPCC predictions of planetary apocalypse

*If we can't feel it, we can't face it*

*So take my hand and find warmth*

What are we going to do to wake up?

Stuck in twitter desk work coffee shop  
*If we can't feel it, we can't face it*  
*So take my hand and find warmth*

—*pause*—

The true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love  
It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking love.  
*With love, we find each other*  
*With love, we find our strength*  
*If we can't feel it, we can't face it*  
*So take my hand and find warmth*

## APPENDIX E - IN SITU QUESTIONS

1. Which bodily sensations are left with you?
2. Did any images or memories occur within you during the performance?
3. What do you take away from the performance?

## APPENDIX F - POST-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How was your experience and what were the main take-aways?
2. What senses came into play?
3. Has anything changed about your conception of climate change?
4. Do you think this approach/performance can be shared to more projects/people? How so?

## APPENDIX G - INTERVIEWGUIDE

Introduction:

- This interview is meant as a way to dive deeper into the experiences of our participants, as a way to validate if our performance was effectful. The way I will structure the interview is by going through each part of the performance, for you to recall how you felt in each part. But first and foremost I would just like to ask you: was it overall a good experience?

The performance:

- Did anything in particular make an impression on you?
- Have you engaged in such artistic practices before? If yes, can you tell us a bit about it?
- Can we go through the performance step-by-step?

Clarification:

- What was your experience before/after the blindfold was taken off? Did you feel isolated when blindfolded or more connected to the other?
- What senses got awakened during the performance? Did you notice any sensations that you are otherwise unaware of?
- Did you get any images in your mind during the performance?

Emotions:

- Which emotions arose during the performance? Do you normally connect these emotions with the climate crisis?
- Which feeling/sensation did you leave the room with?

Impact:

- Do you think there was a clear connection to the climate crisis during the performance?
- Do you see that this kind of method/performance could be useful in other contexts?
- Do you generally find it easy to talk with friends and family about the climate crisis?
  - Was the performance useful in creating a space to feel the climate crisis?