

# COMBAT

# ARTE, ARTIVISMO E CIDADANIA. UTOPIAS E FUTUROS IMAGINADOS

# ART, ARTIVISM AND CITIZENSHIP: UTOPIAS AND IMAGINED FUTURES

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Art, activism and citizenship. Utopias and imagined futures

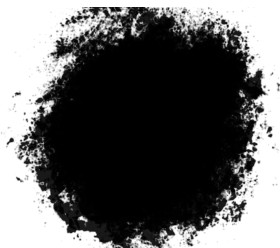






# **Os Exercícios em Equipar Arte Socialmente Sensível**

## **The Exercises in Equipping Socially Sensitive Art**



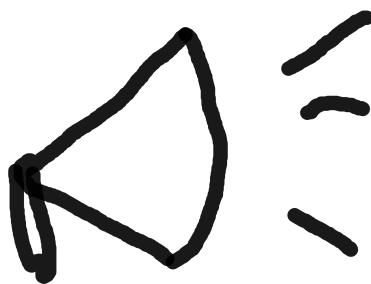
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## Resumo:

Este trabalho considera a relação entre as condições sociais e políticas na Polónia nos últimos anos (2019-2022) e o processo de criação de obras da artista Joanna Wowrzeczka. Procurando uma nova linguagem para a sua ação, combinando todos os aspetos do seu trabalho (como conferencista, política, ativista, e organizadora), ela começou a coser e a bordar roupas. As roupas, mas também o próprio processo de fazer, tornaram-se uma experiência inesperadamente densa para a artista, o que a obrigou a abrandar e a enfrentar um trabalho emocional. Os trabalhos criados não se tornam resultados, mas apenas uma parte do processo em curso de construção de uma nova linguagem no campo alargado da arte, e ao mesmo tempo tornaram-se dispositivos etnográficos.

**Palavras-chave:** Etnografia criativa e aberta, arte engajada socialmente, vestuário, fazer

## Abstract:

This paper considers the relationship between social and political conditions in Poland in recent years (2019-2022) and the process of creating works by the artist Joanna Wowrzeczka. Looking for a new language for her action, combining all aspects of her work (as a lecturer, politician, activist, and organizer), she began to sew and embroider clothes. The clothes, but also the doing process itself, have become an unexpectedly dense experience for the artist, requiring her to slowing down and face emotional work. Created works become not outcomes, but just a part of the ongoing process of building a new language in extended field of art, and at the same time they have become ethnographic devices.

**Keywords:** Creative and opening-up ethnography, socially engaged art, clothing, doing



## 1. Extended field of art. Toward creative and opening-up ethnography

Recent years in Poland have demonstrated that rebellion, activism, self-organization, helping, and sensitivity to the harm of others can take place not only in the face of urgent and pressing situations, but they can also be areas of everyday life. In the last 3 years, a wave of street protests and demonstrations (also during subsequent lockdowns) have swept through Poland, showing not only moods and social problems, but also acts of resistance and hope. In the spring of 2021, protests against the introduction of abortion in Poland took place even several times a week. Ordinary residents often stood behind the organization of these protests, demonstrated the power of grassroots initiatives. Then since February 24th 2022 (the date of Russia's attack on Ukraine), the war situation in Ukraine directly affects the social structure in Poland. Since then, more than 2 million Ukrainian refugees have come to. In a context like this, Joanna Wórzeczka, artist and sociologist, engaged in different fields of communication and agencies, based on her experience organizing protests and coordinating help for war refugees in her hometown Cieszyn<sup>77)</sup>, started to seek a new language and devices for her activities to communicate with others, rebuild the community, and look for a common good. In accordance with Chantal Mouffe, she questioned the existing and dominant institutionalized orders and courses related to economics, politics, art, and science (Mouffe, 2013). that required not only formal arrangements with external institutions but also the preparation of appropriate tools that would be able to contain a set of necessary elements (printed lyrics, loudspeaker rack, whistles, pipes, etc.). Starting with the need for clothes that are ready to grind the protest activism, which apart its basic meanings and functions, would additionally constitute a kind of communication tool. The artist designed some clothing + instrument that is at the same time: the message "what / who I am" - differentiating, but also building a bond; a piece of artwork; a reservoir of memory - it is something that collects, absorbs, carries what happened before and what is happening; and communication instrument - the outfit is to support / facilitate / build communication. In this case, clothing becomes a multiplying communication tool. Thus, this kind of tool becomes a trigger for new ethnographic reality as an ethnographic device (Sansi, 2015).

In this paper, we present the process of creating a kind of artistic-ethnographic project combining ethnography with tools from the expanded field of art (Estalella & Sánchez Criado 2018; Pussetti, 2018) that provoke reflections on the creation of experimental ethnographic realities and seek new languages to describe them. Our cooperation was predominantly based on action research during the described situations. It is also a participatory observation, long conversations, and mutual inspiration of ideas. However, what is important at this stage of the process, which has not yet been completed, is the joint search for new tools that escape established patterns, negotiate the language, cooperate with people, and bringing out the community. Searching for the tools of socially sensitive art, one of the tasks of which is to activate the imagination, also in the ability to see that certain resources may run out and that certain scenarios may not come into existence. From an anthropological point of view, this is an attitude towards unexpected situations that can become types of cracks in the existing cultural descriptions of reality. Toward an anthropologically understood cultural practice as the skill of everyday life and any creative process that goes beyond the "naturally" paternalistic criteria of competence and artistic value. This kind of 'third zone', which

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<sup>77)</sup> Cieszyn is a small town in southern Poland, on the border with the Czech Republic. In the past one of the most important cities of Austro-Hungarian Galicia region, currently probably unknown. On the exception of all whose follow colleex's actions and works- 2nd colleex workshop had place in Cieszyn. We want to emphasize that we talk about the perspective of not big Polish cities like Warsaw or Krakow, but a small one. This is an important argument when it comes to building grassroots policies beyond the so-called centers.

emerges, also brings to mind the words of the Cuban artist Tanja Bruguera, who discusses the very concept of *arte util* as bringing art back to where it belongs, in other words, to the realm of social praxis. As she jokes, we need to restore Duchamp's urinal to a restroom (Bruguera, 2011). We also refer to such conditions of the present day, in which, apart from grass-roots culture, we also deal with knowledge and power centres that are completely external to local actors (cultural policies, economic conditions, new technologies). Creative and opening up ethnography (Rakowski & Rosal, 2018) makes it possible to cross the apparent oppositions that have formatted the modernist institution of art, between high art and everyday creativity, the utility and aesthetic value of art, or between an expert and radically democratic understanding of artistic competences and aesthetic play (Ranciere, 2004; Sansi, 2015). The workshop of creative and opening up ethnography thus participates in the process of diffusion of the expanded art field itself by strengthening practices that occur outside it, thus allowing them to maintain their own specificity or potential when they come into contact with the institutions of the field of art. We reflect on alternative models of engagement in the field and beyond the field of art and anthropology, aiming at processes of 'unlearning' scientific automatisms while constantly 'learning' to engage with local ontologies and (re)shape possible futures. This could be a useful way to build a much more engaging and slow future that opens up to other forms of participation, collaboration, and engagement between art and anthropology practices.

Through the projects described in the article, our aim is to present our research experiences and examples of situations related to a part of the unfinished process, the final effect of which is unknown, because it is transformed in the experience of people, successive stories and events of refugees from Ukraine, reflection on individual elements of clothing and their cultural meaning and a sort of ethnographic 'affective turn'.

## **2. Exercises. From X-Knitting Factory to Masking Mesh.**

There were two crucial points in the search for new ways of working, expressing, and communicating. The first was the material history of Juwenia Knitting Factory<sup>78.)</sup> and the second is the background of the events and actions after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile there were also many other situations, such as a humanitarian crisis on the border with Belarus and involvement in helping Afghan migrants, working at the grassroots level with a group of young people, black marches of women, and the next waves of the pandemic. All these events had a major impact on the life of a small town, Cieszyn, and thus on Joanna's life and work. Getting involved in each of the activities resulted from a sense of injustice, from an attempt to create possible situations for the creation of the common good. Supporting refugees on the border with Belarus and, as a consequence, bringing a family from Afghanistan to Cieszyn was, in a way, an exercise in organizing adequate forms of assistance for refugees, especially those who differed from the religiously monolithic, catholic Polish society. On the other hand, this situation somehow has prepared the local community for hosting a few months later thousands of Ukrainian refugee (see Figure 1). The sense of this kind of art is to activate the imagination and to imagine that something may end, not to exist. From an anthropological point of view, we also focus on the unexpected building of new ethnographic realities.

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<sup>78.)</sup> Factory's former building is the present seat of Political Critique in Cieszyn, founded by Joanna Wowrzeczka



**Figure 1:** The Black March, Cieszyn 2020

**Source:** Anna Bodnar

The artist diagnoses the crisis of ties and communities, and therefore her works are exercises that equip her with imagination, empathy, and the communicative ability (and efficiency) necessary for such extensive activities, not limited only to purely artistic practices. They are an introduction, sometimes building a new language, methodology, imagination, and the courage to break boundaries.

The artist finds her work and techniques in an environment, in situations of conflict, in the cultural context in which she lives and works. This is how the works were created, in such circumstances the current work and her passion for sewing and basting clothes also began. She calls her actions / works 'exercises of various ways of interaction', where action, events, and works are only the result of shared courage, collective creation: from being together, through exchange of experiences, to cooperation (Stokfiszewski, 2016, p. 15). The artist is aware that even if the area of her activities did not change, for all the participants (including herself), it ended with a new perspective, experience, vision, and imagination. (Wowrzeczka, 2017, p.26).

This, in turn, is close to the idea of Tim Ingold, who wants to overcome the hylomorphic model by replacing it with an ontology that gives priority not to form but to matter, the process of formation as opposed to the final product (Ingold, 2010). Bishop describes this situation as follows: A work of art from a product conceived as finished, suitable for transport and sale becomes a project in a long-term process with an undefined beginning and end (Bishop, 2012 ).



## 2.1. X-Knitting Factory. Bonding

Starting with the ex-seat of Juwenia, the Knitting Factory. The traces of previous activities found in various corners of the building clothes, fabric, buttons, documents and abandoned binders with a fragment of this no longer existent world of work. A binder with buttons from the 90s, a binder with fabric samples and zippers, another with patterns of tracksuits, skirts, blouses, pants for children with specifications, and finally two binders with patterns of patches.



**Figure 2:** The series of thousands of punctures, Cieszyn 2016

**Source:** Joanna Wowrzeczka

There is a product specification. In this case, the number of punctures. Designs of patches have become a pretext for reflection on the consequences, responsibility, work, and the possibility of building something separate, suitable for the present, but rooted in this, best of all, in the distant past. The discovery suggested a new language and removes the distance. Sewing, designing, and basting was the language of the place where most of the staff were ordinary working-class women. Joanna began to embroider and baste, slowly discovering her new language in that experience. On the basis of the finds, the artist made a few works, mixing her paintings with embroidery. The organisational diagram was transferred to the canvas with a needle and thread. The paintings became more of notes, endless painting departments. At the same time, she also asked whether painting can think, produce ideas, and critically analyze reality? To conclude, she announced that artworks are only for the reproduction / representation of real and imaginary worlds. Here, she started to search for a new language that removes the distance.



**Figure 3** :The series of thousands of punctures, Cieszyn 2016

**Source:** Joanna Wowrzeczka

nShe reconstructed basting as a useful category in discovering history, restoring it to its present, and shaping a vision for the future. As Victoria Mitchell underlines 'thread marks a boundary not only between the material and the visual, but also between the visible and the invisible' (Mitchell, 2006, p.340) Basting is no longer just a quick stitch that is easy to remove; it has become an inspiring cognitive category that helped us as a community activate our imagination and prototype connections that no one had thought about, as well as the plating of torn, torn pieces of the world. Basting can be done not only with thread, wool, fabric, but also with gesture, theater practice, images, and visual art. Each of these areas should be related to specific stories and associated with the reason for extracting from oblivion, i.e. with the future. These Joanna's works were the beginning of paintings that connect the history of the place, the Juwenia Knitting Factory, with its contemporary life and vision for the future.

## **2.2. # Exercise of Equipment**

The background of the events and actions after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine raised the question of what you can do if you are antiwar? How to help without supporting aggression, weapons? How to build a new future? The answer was not only numerous direct aid actions taking place every day (donating houses for temporary housing, preparing food, buying clothes and necessary products), but it was also about connecting to the current, difficult situation, without colonizing it or exoticizing it. This situation resulted with the work Exercise of Equipment # Elementary tank. Based on the creation of a masking mesh, i.e. a common matrix and hundreds of weaves made by various people, giving a sense of connection, bonding relationships, mutual support, woven from





**Figure 4** :Exercise of Equipment # Elementary tank, Cieszyn 2022

Source: Eva Rossal

single gestures of strong protection. Touching the pieces of recycled fabrics allows us to look and connect the past situation with the present one, without colonising it. The action was also about showing how important it is to do something together, how important community is. The mesh through action, bonding, created new relations. And these two points: Juwenia Knitting Factory, from the past to the future and the war situation and at the same time the utopian faith in relationships, in the community, here and now, have become two clutches that change the course of thinking about art, activism, politics and science.

These projects are the birthplace of ephemeral communities, called up at the event, aggregating and further producing what is common and what is already a new situation. It is a form of 'setting in motion' social life which makes it possible to create alternative modes of action. Moreover, as Nicolas Bourriaud wrote, it can create an 'alternative production line' (Bourriaud, 1998) which produces forms, including prototype forms, that are able to reprogram what is social and again subjectivize both art and everyday life. So, in yet another perspective, these are artistic and ethnographic devices which produce reality, shaping it to allow a new form of social imagination to appear, one which in some ways is not even found in existing social realities.

### 3. Doing. Clothing

Clothing is a highly flexible and precise instrument of cultural expression that constitutes an integral part of social fabric at its most general as well as most private level, as a social form and a substitute for the body, a complex connection between the private body and its public significance; it is as Nina Felshin underlined, it is 'a dense coded system of signification that transmits psychological, sexual, and cultural messages' (Felshin, 1995, p.20). Clothes are also considered the second skin and, as Renee Baert points out, they are a membrane that separates and joins, that surrounds and divides. Like skin, clothing is a border."(Baert, 2001, p.21). That is, clothing itself is an ambiguous message and, through additional functions, it multiplies and broadens the area of its functioning and meaning. They may serve as a manifestation of opportunism, rebellion against social norms, but also as meaningful like a communication tool/device. It can evoke and extend corporeality by connecting and using additional tools to create relationships with another human being.

Clothing can be understood not only as material body covering, but also as Roach-Higgins M.E., Eicher underlined "a combination of modifications made to the body and / or body accessories"(Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992, p.1). We can also treat clothing as an extension of the body as a research tool, then these clothing evocations will be our link and, at the same time, the border with the outside world, something materially embodied, communicating, and at the same time provoking communication, as an expression and medium of identity communication. But through clothing, we can exercise sensitivity, going beyond the strict code and crossing the culturally constructed patterns of functioning of

clothes as objects to be seen, aestheticizing, giving identity, social status, etc., thus becoming part of the capitalist fashion market. In this context, everyday practices related to clothing are an example of cultural domination, subordination, and resistance against all modern capitalist pressure and at the same time a kind of 'art of resistance' to contemporary commercial models, but also to the dominant social and cultural elites.

The artist in the shoes of a local government official as a protest organizer in her small town designed the idea of *The clothing* device that would be ready to fit all the necessary items during the protest activism, but also in the day-to-day situation of her social and political works. Ultimately, her work required not only formal arrangements with external institutions but also the preparation of appropriate tools that would be able to contain a set of necessary elements (printed lyrics, loudspeaker rack, whistles, pipes, pens, papers, etc.). In designing of a clothing device, the area of art can generate new forms of social consultations, participation, communication in the field of social conflict, tensions between different social groups, the world of management (politics) and the rest of society. Artists who challenge the situation inform and open minds, which can lead to new ways of perceiving, understanding, and responding to social conflict or lack of clear channels of communication. *The clothing* itself is an ambiguous message, and through additional functions, it multiplies and broadens the area of its usefulness and meaning. They may serve as a manifestation of opportunism or in contrast, of rebellion against social norms, but also as a meaningful communication tool can evoke outside the body extends corporeality create relationships with another human being.

### 3.1. Work in progress

Fabric, patterns, cuts, and decorations are the result of cooperation with various social groups: from residents, through city activists, to artists, and anthropologists. The list of necessary elements of the clothes was created in the course of conversations with protesters (with different intentions). It is supposed to be comfortable, referring to urban protests (cities/towns are a natural environment for organizing civil opposition, because cities also have institutions representing the authorities). It has to be attractive (in the sense that draws attention, but also composed). The key to sewing has not been what the garment is supposed to look like, but what social problems will be embedded in its structure. This is how she sees her work in direct and metaphorical level, but also how people see her role, with these attributes, hence *The clothing*-tool has appropriate markings, but also pockets for specific matters and necessary items.

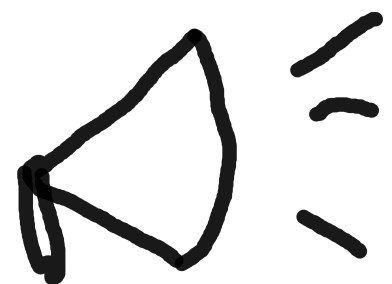


Figure 5 :Doing, Cieszyn 2022

Source: Eva Rossal



Everything was sewn by hand or on a machine. Her manual work forced the artist to stop and think about many issues. The process of making clothes has opened and provoked a series of moments requiring *slowing down* within the situation of sewing, embroidering, thus *meeting the reflective* on possible futures and faced an unexpected emotional work. The ethnographic site specificity of Joanna's work is embedded in the *process of doing*. In this case, *doing entails* a set of various activities that interlock and pierce each other, overlap and connect basting, sewing, embroidering, ripping, sewing on, and hemming. Seeing the clothes Joanna made, we do not see the number of punctures made by the machine, hundreds of pierced hours, pain in the spine, tearing eyes. In this case, all work and effort are sewn into these clothes, as if in a lining that is invisible on the outside. More than once she complained about the amount of time (many laborious hours, days), the effectiveness of that work time. On the one hand, frustration with sewing that it takes so long, and yet so much could be done at that time. On the other hand, in precious time, the art of *slowing down*. The *slowing down* experienced while sewing is a way of anticapitalist resistance to social economy. Where capitalism requires us to devote every hour, sewing with its arduous pace, mistakes that can only be washed off and sewn again, distorts the capitalist perception of time in terms of profit. The sewing encouraged reflections around the notion of *slowing down* as a useful practice towards a more engaging future. Behind each of her gestures there was *creatio continuo* and the material effect was not the end of the work. As Tim Ingold underlined:

What we had thought to be an object was revealed as what we call a thing. And the thing about things, if you will, is that far from standing before us as a fait accompli, complete in itself, each is a going on - or better, a place where several goings on become entwined (Ingold, 2010, p.95).

The experience of slowing-down made the *whole doing* important, not just the outcome. There, in this arduous and repetitive activity, embodied knowledge is generated. This is again in line with what Ingold proposes when he points out, in accordance with Deleuze and Guattari (2004), to overthrow the hylomorphic model of Aristotle and 'to replace it with an ontology that assigns primacy to the processes of formation as against their final products, and to the flows and transformations of materials as against states of matter' (Ingold, 2010, p.92).

### 3.2. Texture of Trobairitz and the Orange Tunic

The *clothing* set allowed her to change the language of art and its tools. The shift into the language of fabric, sewing, and embroidery allowed the creation of a different medium. As long as Marshall McLuhan considers that 'the medium is the message', doing clothes, sewing, and embroidering is more egalitarian, more feminist, going beyond the academy and institutions, the medium of the artist. She wrote down through her sewn and embroidered things the most important ideas, concepts, and a kind of her credo.

An ordinary button jacket, maybe a bit vintage, bought it in a second-hand shop, became the first garment that Joanna took to the workshop and exchanged for *Trobairitz*- female Troubadour jacket. It wasn't really about the form or the cut of the clothes, as Paul Klee said "Form is the end, death, form-giving is life" (Klee, 1973, p.269). A figure known from the Middle Ages, previously a man, a wanderer, usually entertaining the upper class with his singing performances, telling local situations, such a human Facebook. In the feminized version, the *Trobairitz* woman is a missionary for a good cause, her task is to build peaceful messages. A missionary woman for a good cause, passing on to the local situation wandering.

An average orange tunic became the beautiful clothes that stand out from the crowd. The embroidered symbols, the glowing mycelium with white led lamps, the brain, Joanna's face in a circle, water, grains, flowers. Symbols of megaphone, scales, eye, ear, mouth, notes communicate the basic principles, the artist's specific labour code, where the primary role is played by: doing, lighting, listening, noticing and taking notes, and further rendering in the form of adequate actions. This is the effect of working as a contact in fields: artist-activist-politician-scientist, and it reflects how people see her through these attributes. Hence, *The clothing-tool* has appropriate markings, but also pockets for specific matters and necessary items.

The stand-up collar of the orange tunic, surrounding the neck, is a particularly sensitive area on the body, and at the same time an important and strong part of the body that supports the head. No accidental place. Moreover, part of our speech organ is also located here. At the same time, the place was particularly vulnerable to suffocation, but also previously to decaptivation. As if the beginning of everything. Entry to share. And at this point, the artist highlights her core of her artistic work: ART OF COMMUNITY with her motivations: fasten the relationship between art and community (literally, you can see it on a stand-up collar) but also embroider, sew communities together through art. How to learn about the relationship between the artist and society in a non-hierarchical way - she claimed that the most important thing is experience, being with people, with all people, no matter which political side they represent.

On each arm, like badges, there are two patches: on the left AGENT OF CHANGE and on the right WAYS OUT. There are not empty slogans, but are based on certain rules that she took into account, all changes including climate change. This is the effect of working on a contact artist-activist-politician-scientist. Acting on various levels, not only in individual fields but also as a councillor of the city council, chairman of the Social Affairs Committee. As a politician, she introduces petitions, responds to needs, and talks. It is also a field, a



Figure 6 :Trobairitz, Cieszyn 2022

Source: Joanna Wowrzeczka



Figure 7: The Orange Tunic (front), Cieszyn 2022

Source: Joanna Wowrzeczka



training ground for exercising responsibility, which is an important category for her as an artist. Responsibility accompanies it visibly in the field of local politics. As she claims, the field of art cannot be free from responsibility, especially if it is socially engaged art. The slogan 'agent of change' remains in Alfred Gell worlds that "agents, initiate actions that are caused by themselves, by their intentions, not by the physical laws of the cosmos" (Gell, 1998, 16). Trying to be an agent of change, she first transformed the concept of "change", which has become adopted by various political and economic systems. According to some researchers, the commodification of culture has gone so far that there is no longer any space in which artists could play a critical role. There lies her utopian idea of bringing people the faith that there are other possible worlds, and as an artist she frees the imagination, as an activist she says, 'let's do it'.



**Figure 8 :** The Orange Tunic (back), Cieszyn 2022

**Source:** Joanna Wowrzeczka

One of the key concepts used by Joanna Wowrzeczka in her works is 'conflict', which she understands as the incompatibility in the structure of the system, the contradiction of group interests, which entails a social process that may end with a positive solution, but also a catastrophe. However, in her works, she does not assume conflict, and in the draft phase, she rather proceeded from a preexisting inconsistency. Working in some space, as she herself emphasizes in one of her texts, read in it the density of the unconscious, silent conflict, and the lack of someone who would feel responsible for 'repairing', stimulating the imagination necessary to reconstruct the existing inconsistency (Wowrzeczka, 2017). This is what the artist sees as the difference between artistic practice and activism, which arises when the conflict is open and one cannot observe its course without taking into account the side represented. But for both, the starting point is imagination and the need to build a team, coalition, group, and community of trust. That is another important concept in her artistic and political path. *Doing with people, not about them*. The image of the conflict described by the artist is also close to the metaphor of the mycelium, which will become one of the most important forms of descriptive actions that she undertakes. The mycelium structure, which is based in fact on the complexity of mutual relations, connections, is a model as a metaphor for the new construction of relations between the areas / fields of art, politics, science, and activism. It assumes an extended field of art that is part of everyday life, but also politics, not politics, it replaces the network society because it shows that each relationship brings something different. At the same time, the mycelium in its structure supports the harsh world (the roots of the trees are charged). The mycelium begins its work long before the mushrooms appear and its creation depends on the work of the entire team. Anna Tsing, proposing the category of mycological imagination, tentatively presents it as a multidimensional practice based on multiplicity. A complex and unstable modern world that breaks down into many pieces (Tsing, 2015). The creation of mycelium does not end; it recalls the process of sewing, embroidering, when we are not sure whether our last stitching will eventually close or there is an opening action.

nBean grains, hand-embroidered on a 1:1 scale (one bean 30 min), and drops of water falling on the lower edge of the tunic, trimmed with various flowers and plants. It assumes that the anthropocene formula has already run out and continues with the idea of 'doughnut economics' Kate's Raworth:

"The Doughnut consists of two concentric rings: a social foundation to ensure that no one is left falling short on life's essentials, and an ecological ceiling, to ensure that humanity does not collectively overshoot the planetary boundaries that protect Earth's life-supporting systems. Between these two sets of boundaries lies a doughnut-shaped space that is both ecologically safe and socially just: a space in which humanity can thrive."<sup>79)</sup>

For Joanna, it means that each decision is related to questions about the relationship with these two doughnut ceilings (ecological ceiling and social foundation). So, she always starts with a fundamental question: "What enables human beings to thrive? A world in which every person can lead their life with dignity, opportunity and community – and where we can all do so within the means of our life-giving planet"(Raworth, 2018, p.43)

The artist believes in the power of science and is aware that she will not be able to run away from being in the middle of it all and from herself. An individual, by definition, is 'in motion', searching for his or her own way, which paradoxically evokes 'the social'. 'The social', with all of its structural and economic tensions and the pressure which influence the daily lives of individual people, for example the market. jobs, migrations, and personal ambitions. Seeing in the actions of individuals only fragments of a their lost story, which probably never will be made together, as just in creating.

#### 4. Exercises in Understanding. To be continued...

I sew pictures left by children with refugee experience in second-hand jumpers, found T-shirts, or other clothing worn close to the body. (...) I took out my sewing machine and began, as best I could, without much practice, to apply the illustration to an old jumper of mine. This fierce connection of my clothes with the disturbing picture of the child, literally striking like a lightning, opens a window for mutual understanding based on intuition and the gestures of sewing, pinning and embroidering<sup>80)</sup>.

Joanna continues her work with war refugees. One of the experiences has become a stimulus for the *Exercise in Understanding*. She asked the Ukrainian people she met, who were looked after in various places in Poland, to try to draw something they want to convey, what they may be experiencing, but they lack words to say it, because we do not understand each other, because there are no words for it, there is only gesture. These drawings are later embroidered by the artist on clothes that come from people who help Ukrainians. In Joanna's work context, the field of a new experimental form of creative and opening ethnography is especially created. In this sense, ethnography, from the perspective of bottom-up, molecular social movements, gestures, and transformations, can create something like 'the useful good'. The *process of doing* turns out to be a different environment for the production of cultural knowledge when it reveals itself beyond the intentions and aspirations of the researcher, artist, or ethnographer herself when, for example, the situation of an

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<sup>79)</sup> Available at: <https://doughnuteconomics.org>

<sup>80)</sup> The artist's statement from the exhibition, where she presented the first seven clothes embroidered with drawings of refugees from Ukraine. The New Art Festival, Słubice / Frankfurt (O) (Poland/Germany) 2022. Available at: <https://www.labirynt.slubice.eu>



artistic and social project begins to reshape the way of seeing the world, also through researchers themselves, and allows a new field to emerge.

We can treat these types of situation as possible social crevices, where alternative ways of thinking, unexpected turns, critical models, and new possibilities of creation emerge. Bourriaud treats the crevices as a space of interpersonal relations which, adjusting more or less harmoniously and overtly to the global system, proposes other possibilities than those that are the most popular in this system, (Bourriaud, 1998) and, more important for artistic and ethnographic projects, that this rift creates around certain free spaces, permanent situations, the rhythm of which is opposed to the order of everyday life and favor interpersonal exchange different from the communication zones imposed on us.

This type of project allows anthropologists and artists to go beyond the well-trodden and worn paths of their practices, opening them up to new research possibilities. Approaching human practices and activities as manifestations of the art of life, the creative transformation of reality, as Paul Wills argues, we approach an understanding of COE as a creative encounter with another human being. The production of a 'living' research scene animated by entirely new experiences, situations, and perspectives arises, allowing us to subvert the apparent banality of the reality that surrounds us. The field in which a new form of this experimental knowledge is forged in a special way, or rather this experimental collaboration, is precisely paraethnographic artistic practices. This is an exceptionally important moment, because artistic activity appears here not only as a form of experimental co-creation, but also as an activity that changes the very process of cognition (Rakowski & Rossal, 2018, pp. 54-55).

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