

Vague Borders and Infinite Sensibilities of Land, Body, and Water

This performance panel-session was part of the 2-day Symposium *Imaginative Futures: Arts-based research as Boundary event*, at Arizona State University, AZ, by Dr. Kajsa G. Eriksson

This is the COMPOST.

This is the compost as Art, as Education, and as Research.

This is a re-cycle and a re-turning, as in turning over, and over, and over event.

This arts-based panel session took the form of *compost*, a compost of embodied experiences, material experiments, and performance, all of which became a palimpsest of boundary events. The panel presented ethical issues in connection to land, bodies, and water; the agents of adventurous and sustainable futures. The panelists were invited to explore vague borders and infinite sensibilities through the force of art and art education. In the format of compost, the panel embraced chance, fluidity, and simultaneous activity. Vagueness, slowness, the comfortable, and the uncomfortable were all part of this session; soil, breath, and rhythms were its organizational modes.

The panel was held outdoors in a small park surrounded by trees in a busy area of the ASU campus in Tempe, Arizona. Being outdoors allowed for the event to include forces of weather, sounds of the urban environment, and the fluid movement of people in public space. Being outside, also raised questions of how to provide electricity, in this case for the sound equipment, and it raised questions on how the panel session relied on the contribution of external sources, and where those sources originate. Also, the outdoors decreased access to screen-based equipment, and it made the event material, environmental, sensory, and body-based rather than focused on representation.

The organization (and intentional lack of organization) of the panelists, in tandem with the audience placement and movements within the space all contributed to making the event vague. Scheduling was done through the use of cues of improvised sounds played by student Hannah Whitaker. The sound was welcoming to people as they entered the space. An introduction by the host and panelists began after everyone had arrived. After the introduction, the music was played throughout the parallel activities, until the energy level of the event required something else to happen. The collective performance reading by Maya Weeks began as the music was ending. As the final conclusion, Carol Padberg organized a moving circle in which everyone had the opportunity to use the microphone and say something about the event.

The invited panelists of the session were invited to re-cycle, and/or re-turn to discarded research and artworks in order to allow them to come alive as part of the compost. Prior to the session, ideas on how to connect art, education, and research as compost had been shared among the panelists. The vague organization of the event took great care to accomplish these goals, as these experimental formats had been considered in detail, in order to avoid more

normative routes of organization. By re-turning, and turning the event over and over again, other options for art, education and research were revealed.

Caitlin Foley and Misha Rabinovich contributed “Good Vibrations and Microbial Diversity”. A recent study at Augusta University in Georgia, found that vibrations are healthy for the microbiome. The healthiest microbiome is teaming with a diverse array of bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. Microbes also play a critical role in the process of composting both in our guts and our gardens. The opportunity was taken to boost our microbial health with mini microbe massagers (which also happen to massage our muscles). As the participants vibrated with each other, they were prompted to share ideas and conversations about how to maintain healthy diversity in both microbial and human culture.

Dan Barney contributed “A proposition for Creating conditions for a Compost Culture: Pedagogical Necromancy and Monstrous Transformations”. Barney believes that compost is created by a particular proximity of waste or excess, and if the conditions are met, death is transformed into a dynamic lifeforce. The attempt was made to bring particular conditions into close proximity in a slow and gentle manner that required finesse and collaborative efforts. Failure was recognized as opening the possibility for giving rise to new concepts and forms. Examples by two artists were shown as an example of what could be created together... a compost planar form of nitrogen and carbon. Instead of a singular form, a colony of joined leaves connected with spun hair was created.

Maya Weeks contributed “Left out in Weather,” a poem that embodies a form of multispecies-encounter-as-compost by using salvaged language around oceans, climate, geopolitics, gender, and more. Maya transcribed some of the poem’s text onto fragments of palm trees that Kajsa had collected and set them up throughout the panel environs. She brought copies of the poem with various sections highlighted for panelists and participants to also read aloud during her performance, which resulted in spontaneous collaborations.

Hannah Whitaker contributed improvised sound waves and Brian Seaman added digital memories and visual traces in 360 degrees.

Kajsa G. Eriksson, the compost host and caretaker, contributed “128 Future Fossils”. The piece is a re-turning to 128 plastic objects in the home, and the re-making of these plastic objects into self-drying clay. These 128 clay objects were placed on the ground in an organizational/non-organizational attempt to create a space of compost movements. The objects created chains of relations on the ground, the chains were open-ended in order to not create any distinct forms, and instead the shapes invited other connections and relations to be made.

The expectation of the panel session was that knowledge would take on adequate form when necessary. Therefore, paying attention to the specific, and the surprising appearing was invited

as a strategy. What stood out as result where issues of a different difference of a timespace/spacetime.

The simultaneity of different art, educational and research activities going on at the same time proved to be less problematic than anticipated. The vague vegetation of participating mindbody movements seems to have created an unusual engagement. Discussions started and disappeared, a certain fluidity of movements and actions could be noted. Since the organization of the event was inherent to its physical organization and placemaking, the overall structure and was not something you had to consider during the event, there of the fluidity perhaps. Rather being part of, and contributing together unfolded the fleeting moments.

During final conclusion, organized as a circle of people moving to each one use the microphone, the re-charging of energy and the feeling of being energized stood out as something that was mentioned as part of the event. The floating feeling of a spacetime that was not cut up in pieces or organized through clocktime was one ingredient creating this. After the session the experience of time, as in clock time, was not experienced during the session. Time as in organized linear time came back after the session ended. The feeling of being energized seems to be connected to the refusal to cut up of time and space into usual formats and units. The idea of timespace as circular rather than linear as part of an art, education and research event is here not analyzed but rather experienced. The panel session as compost also gave new energy to future possible organizations of art, art education and research.





















