

AERIAL

LINEAR

After Progress

ABOUT

FILTER

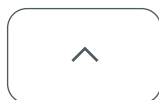
Flourishing

Æ coop

At dawn, the fields of the Food Zone turned silver. While the night shifts had not yet begun, human activity seemed to retreat to make room for the pseudofungus. One could see it progressing from day to day under the low light coming from the West. The mycelium was deposited on the foliage in a thin layer of shining filaments, visible only during those hours. This soft and faint iridescence, in absolute contrast to the ultraviolet lights of human cultivation, evoked spiderwebs gorged with drops of dew. Lost souls regarded it as a sign from heaven, but the pseudofungus was well grounded in the land, where its network was ever expanding.

If one listened carefully, one could almost hear the pseudofungus proliferating, making the plants shiver, enveloping them as if under a nocturnal wintering canvas.





Rob' (forty kilometers from Madrid)

I finally arrived at the 44b charging station. I am invigorated by the effort as much as I am exhausted.

For about twenty kilometers, the road was really bad. One can see that nobody maintains the main routes between the autonomous regions anymore. Some bumpy patches of old tarmac remain, with cracks wide enough to trap my bicycle wheels. I expected to be overwhelmed by a powerful smell, but the old asphalt remained cold and dusty.

Though now muted and tired, the deadly business of this material is nonetheless present, as an evocation or a ghost. I remember my teacher of High Modern History telling us stories about roads and oil, while having us smell crumpled leaves of pitch trefoil. I realize only now that she was trying to make a mark in our minds with her heady hints, frightening us little Madrilenians. It makes me smile affectionately. Because here I am, Mrs. Loïsa: on the road, heading away from Madrid! I have left my hacienda; I have gone, alone, to reach Bruxl (well, if I ever get there). And I am touching some old petroleum tar! I am caressing the lines of this terrifying history with my fingertips, feeling the tiny rocks coated with hydrocarbon binder...

If you could see me, Mrs. Loïsa, sitting on the ground, on a patch of asphalt, at the 44b charging station with my bike, you would say to me: "why did you leave Robertæ?" (you were the only one calling me by my full name). I still remember you asking me about the history of the beginning of the 21st century, with your left eyebrow raised like an "I", while your right eyebrow was drawing a horizon... Well, my dear Mrs. Loïsa, I volunteered in my hacienda to bring seeds to Bruxl. I had to: it's the city where my parents come from, you know? And there, things are going very wrong. The pseudofungus that has invaded the crops in their Food Zone is out of control. Their "politicians" - well, I should rather say their authoritarian puppets - have just passed an emergency law imposing the spreading of fungicide on all crops. Including personal planters! You would certainly ask in your loud voice: "So what Robertæ, you're riding all those highways for your great aunt's geraniums? Don't we have enough to do around here?". No, it's much more complicated than that, Mrs. Loïsa. It has to do with the history of high modernism: with the history of long oil tar roads, with the food autonomy of Madrid and Bruxl, with the extinct insects that you taught me to cherish.

All these ideas came to me while pedaling these last hours. At the be



when I made the decision to leave, it was much more vague. I was shaken up when I heard the news this morning... “Another one of your tantrums?” Yes... But I have changed Mrs. Loisa, and my tantrums have transformed. I want to pick up where my parents left off, I want to go back to Bruxl and participate in changing the world. I want to sow the seeds of something (well, I’m actually carrying three kilos of seeds).

Édouard (in Bruxl)

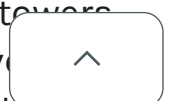
I met Carmen in an online role playing game. I’m not sure who invited her there, probably one of her friends from Tati (Nelson or Mehd maybe). At first, I didn’t pay too much attention to her, or anybody.

I was playing to play, to win, not to talk to people. Anyway, most conversations were limited to monosyllabic outbursts when winning and swearing the rest of the time. I remember her laughing all the time. She was losing but not whining, and in any case she really wanted to play: she was truly into it. Her avatar was a bit ridiculous and you could tell that she didn’t take herself too seriously. After a few encounters, since she was making me laugh, I opened my microphone and started talking to her a little. She had the kinds of weird expressions of people coming from other places, but not much of an accent, except when she was impersonating an anarchist from Madrid, which I thought was very funny.

Eventually, we ended up playing several games in the same team, and I was teaching her how to play a little better. I wouldn’t say that I turned her into a warrior, but she was definitely learning more than with her friends, who were more interested in showing off with their terminal than in really explaining how to use an interface more efficiently. Anyway, she ended up defending herself quite well with the basics I taught her.

I have to say that I was spending a lot of time on these games at the time. There were a lot of them but this one didn’t require too much attention. It was The Age of Dithering, a game set in the early 21st century where you have to find resources and survive in the middle of a collapsing world, with some pretty crazy survivalist rules. I was playing it at work, as a dilettante.

My father-in-law had worked hard and mobilized his most important connections to find me a job at Angola. I spent my days in those icy towers filled with overheating servers, cleaning the scripts of the city’s survival programs. Pseudo-secret stuff, which hardly anyone cared about, but the



bosses were keen to make it a super important security issue. As if we had any privacy left anywhere anyway. The job wasn't very demanding, I had to run scripts to clean other scripts, all of that from a tiny office, with household robots as my main colleagues. I quickly programmed routines to do as little as possible and to be able to play quietly, watching that everything was OK in a corner of the screen, giving two or three priority programs access to the servers, checking that everything was running smoothly.

I was bored out of my mind, but as long as I didn't say anything about what I was seeing on the cameras and how messed up the whole surveillance system was, I was getting paid. So, from time to time, I would even take brews of zwiin at work to immerse myself more deeply in the games. Thanks to zwiin, the VR seemed more intense without me needing to push the limits of the servers (at the risk of being spotted). And the time passed more quickly.

When Carmen suggested - as if it was normal - that we meet for "a drink somewhere", I thought at first that she was joking. I wasn't very physical in general. Plus, at that time, it was the beginning of the OoL fungus crisis, there were cops everywhere and transportation controls all over the place, but she didn't seem to care. I didn't feel too concerned by this crisis yet, but it gave me a good excuse to refuse to meet Carmen in a bar: I told her how my cousin had been checked because he had mud on his shoes, and I cut off the conversation.

Once the fungus had enveloped the crops in its great silver filaments, all that was left were parched, blackened and blistered leaves. Only the root vegetables were still surviving as best they could.

To stop the insatiable progress of the fungus towards the forest and the inhabited areas, humans had eventually lit large fires.

A persistent and pungent smell invaded the atmosphere of the city. Now, amidst the thick smoke and the remains of charred crops falling from the sky, the only perspective was the orange dances of a few blazes burning in the distance.

*In that way, they were hoping to protect their beech forest, which had required so many sacrifices, but also their homes and their green wa
without which the urban temperature would kill thousands of people every*



summer.

They would have to import their food from elsewhere anyway.

Rob' (around Perpignan)

I passed the Pyrenees along the coast. I avoided Barcelona because I think my father would never forgive me for stopping there.

I am progressing well, but I really need to rest. It is not so hot here because the wind is permanent. This powerful wind usually blows against me, but I am grateful because it supports the reproduction of large grasses and holm oaks along the roadside. Today I washed myself again in the Mediterranean Sea. At Paulilles, the water was full of jellyfish and people were bathing in their wetsuits. I decided to do my laundry using sea water and everything was dry (but a bit stiff) in just a few minutes.

Yesterday, I slept in a camp of young Catalans who were running away from their military service. I tried to enlist them for my mission in Bruxl, but they were nihilists. They were actually nice, but I left them discreetly in the morning. That much bitterness terrifies me; it reminds me what I was told all my childhood about the people of Bruxl...

Here, the sun rises over the sea: an unforgettable spectacle, which gives me the strength to continue.

On the road, I use the mantras that my biological mother taught me. I was listening mostly to please her; but I realize now how valuable they are. They really help me moving forward. The nihilists made me appreciate how lucky I am to have been encouraged by my community in my adventure (I must say that the news from Bruxl were particularly disturbing). Before I left, my comrades held a vigil and the hacienda donated fresh seeds for future Bruxl free crops. Although I've been part of the pollinators' team since I was eight years old, my comrades reminded me of growing tips for newbies. It was touching and annoying at the same time. I nevertheless had to argue with my parents who would have preferred that I make my contest under different conditions - and especially elsewhere than in Bruxl. My father finally reassured himself (or gave the impression) as he ceremoniously offered me a silky bristle pollen brush and an oak wood collector to slip on the tip of my index finger; all this while talking to me with great insistence about



sister who is already there.

She confirmed what I already knew very well: in Bruxl the measures are more and more drastic. In fact, nobody knows very well how the pseudofungus *Oomycetes Lacrymans* spreads. And surely they are a bit out of touch: they only approach beings and their reproduction in a utilitarian way. When they realized that their fungicide was not working, the business-as-usual government successively took many measures (I don't remember the exact order): they limited the movement of people (because they were probably carrying spores on their clothes and shoes); wind turbines were also restricted to avoid stirring up spores even further; they practiced a kind of slash-and-burn, a hygienic version consisting in burning a buffer zone between their Food Zone and the residential areas.

And then also - well, I should say especially - they told the population, basically: "we stop all nonsense" because "the situation is serious", that is to say that all the gardens, the vegetable gardens, the ornamental flowers, every single plant in the city, have been eradicated. They want to starve the pseudofungus. The application of fungicide - a measure forbidden by the Copenhagen agreement! - then the slash-and-burn operations have certainly decimated the last pollinating insects still present in their city.

Sometimes the millions of pedal strokes calm me down, but as soon as I think about the big picture, I explode. Fortunately, in a way, my anger helps me to move forward. I'm going to have a hard time finding serenity because I've just learned that the latest measure they've come up with is to target the few remaining free seeds in private homes! Some scientists advising the government swear that seeds are where the pseudofungus travels best. Like: a single grain of wheat could contaminate an entire silo. Like: the Commune's cucurbit plants could form a dangerous reservoir of the fungus, drastically threatening the survival of the entire population. I don't understand why they never ask themselves about the danger in the way they grow their food. And of course, O, their Operator, is already talking about releasing bio-modified seeds that would be resistant to the fungus.

I asked my sister if the Bruxlians are rebelling, resisting, but she doesn't know. She is in love (again). Since she has been in Bruxl, she boasts a lot about - and I quote - "exploring the possibilities offered by her carnal envelope". Not only has she already chosen her gender before she turned 18, but she seems to be heading towards a sexuality centered on "little-technophiles-without-much-interest"...



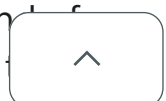
Edouard (in Bruxl)

After two weeks of negotiations, I finally accepted to meet Carmen physically. She had given me an appointment at Parvis in Voltaire. I went there with an O'cab using my father's premium subscription. I had to share it with a large family with two kids who had obviously never used the service, and were so astonished and loud that I got there in a really bad mood. After that, Carmen arrived late and she didn't even apologize, as if the time of her arrival was the time, that's all. I had been waiting for almost forty five minutes and then she was there and she was talking to me, as if we had known each other since we were kids. I don't think I had ever met anyone who talked so much. It was good for me because I didn't know what to say anyway, and she was telling me all kinds of stuff and made me laugh a lot. She had come with a recumbent bike that she had repaired herself for a person from Tati. She had taken the liberty of using it to come here before returning it to its owner. I hadn't been on a bike since I was ten years old - since my father had decided that I could take autonomous transports on my own. We couldn't have had a lower compatibility score: I was programming scripts and she was into sculpture, mechanical stuff, the kind of things that really had nothing to do with my life.

I was very nervous: it was notorious in the family that I was seven semesters late on my puberty and now I had a "first date", which was, to top it all, physical. But somehow Carmen made me feel comfortable and seemed to find me perfectly normal. As normal as her own tardiness in a way, as if I had always been there.

At that moment, what really impressed me was that she was tactile: I didn't like it very much. I had been told that people in Madrid had this tendency: touching your terminal while talking... That over there, they don't have the same distance. It was often said (in jest) that in Madrid people hug each other just to say hello. Fortunately, she didn't do that.

After that, I thought I'd show Carmen how to make personal tracking with some algo's and the city cameras - I still had access to them from my work's servers. I thought it would make her laugh. I was doing that sometimes to entertain myself, it was kind of like a video game basically. The fun was in not getting caught. But it didn't please her at all: at that point I should have known that it was a sensitive topic for her... But, deep down, I was kind of under the influence. When I saw her reaction, I minimized the whole



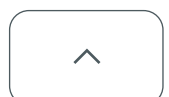
saying that it was a joke and we changed the conversation.

I think we discussed the new dietary restrictions. I was then eating Jerusalem artichokes, carrots, potatoes, Jerusalem artichokes, potatoes, Jerusalem artichokes again. I was a bit saturated with stoemp. Carmen lived in Tati and there were lots of people in Bruxl for whom the OoL crisis was really difficult. Root vegetables had become expensive, but that was nothing compared to everything else that now had to be imported. There were a few hydroponic labs that had been spared, but every day we would hear about new contaminations that closed down cultivation facilities. Like almost everyone else, I was waiting for O to release their new seeds.

Rob' (in Mauves)

Once I arrived in the Rhone Valley, I had to find a place to rest for at least a day or two. My father had told me about a distant cousin who owned a mill in Mauves. Unfortunately, it had been impossible to contact this cousin, José, before my departure because he had disappeared from the social networks. "You'll have to do it the old-fashioned way", my dad had told me, that is to say by showing up at José's place without warning.

In this region, the successive floods of the river devastated many crops. The landscape, although rough, is magnificent. One can feel the arrival of spring, the grass is of an intense green, the birds fly in flocks. I notice that there are not only vineyards: there is also a certain number of almond trees. Their little white flowers seem to be calling me; I dare not interrupt my journey before arriving in Mauves, although I know that the trees will not make any fruit without some assistance...



With the events in the South, many humans are heading North and I have befriended Sylvia, who is also embarking on an adventure. As is often the case with Italians, Sylvia was assigned her biological sex at birth but she seems to cope with it perfectly well and is not lacking in audacity. On the road, we had more or less the same rhythm and we usually met in the evening during the stopovers. At the beginning, she was barely available to discuss with me because she was giving conferences every night through the VR of her bicycle helmet. Meanwhile, I couldn't resist observing her: she was terribly charismatic, concentrated in her consultations. Sylvia was a shaman, back in Italy. She was continuing to provide healing and guidance to her community. Then, almost a week ago, her helmet crashed, so we got closer.

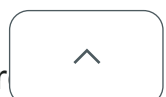
By dint of spending our evenings together drying our rain-soaked clothes, lending each other precious portions of drinking water, exchanging pieces of soap and soup powder, or repairing flat tires, we got into the habit of taking care of each other. I entrust her with my techniques for making time pass; she appreciates my mother's mantras and, in return, she helps me delve into my dreams to explore the future.

I finally found cousin José: he is a big gruff guy, but he is adorable. He accepted to welcome us in his mill with Sylvia, as well as three Portuguese who joined us two days ago. Last night, we celebrated, ate, danced, drank highly fermented tea and I fell asleep on my small travel mattress without worrying about the soreness of my body for once. The good news is that the river is navigable and a crew offered me a ride on a cargo boat in exchange for my workforce. What a joy to be able to sail for a week!

My heart is heavy, however, because Sylvia is leaving for Ireland and our paths will part. This morning I tried to convince her to come with me to Bruxl, but she thinks that it is a waste of time to try to have an influence there (and she certainly knows a lot about influences...). She is planning to join an autonomous Gaelic community that is quite intriguing. They pollinate their crops with a system of soap bubbles... I am delighted with the idea of such a delicate and poetic technique. Sylvia promised she would observe it carefully and report back to me.

Édouard (Bruxl)

It was around this time that I received a promotion at work. They wer



looking for people to investigate the illicit trading and reselling of seeds and plants that were proliferating underground due to the crisis. They chose me because of my expertise. This new job was definitely more exciting than checking scripts for urban surveillance: there was quite a bit of traffic in the hidden networks.

While doing this, I must admit I wasn't thinking too much about the implications of the whole thing. The bosses had convinced us that these people fooling around in the parallel markets of crops were really messing things up: we all had to behave, make an effort; it would not be easy, but the new seeds would soon be available. These selfish activists were only worsening the crisis. O was all over the news announcing the latest developments of their seeds; they were broadcasting the work done in their labs live, turning their communication into a soap opera.

Anyhow, I must say I had fun debunking frauds. I was probably even a little overzealous at first. With all the pressure, I was losing my mind. And add to this Carmen, who was calling me all the time, and asking me to do one thing after the other. I wasn't so much against physical meetings anymore - with her at least, even though her intensity had some disturbing effects on me: I was sweating (so much!). And I would jump every time I received a message and think about it for hours, even though I was also very busy monitoring the parallel markets.

I had always used zwiin brews only to enhance my immersion in virtual reality, to forget the material world around me. But because I was so nervous when we met with Carmen at my place, I decided to take some. She had suggested that I play some shared music and dim lights. Then, we went for a walk in a game but I was strangely connected with her, in my room which was all the more present, flavored with her smell. At one point, I laid my head on Carmen's legs as we were laughing hard. We were making fun of my avatar, of hers, but I wasn't defensive: her good mood and spontaneity were contagious.

That's when she kissed me. First gently, but then she stuck her tongue in my mouth and I hated it: I didn't know how deep she wanted to go, my saliva was like foam, my tongue was clumsy and heavy while hers was quick and vivid; I thought about all those germs we were sharing and I asked her not to do it again.

It was after that that I told her (evasively) about my new job. I didn't



understand her reaction at first – I even thought for a moment that she disapproved of the fact that I told her about it regardless of the confidentiality... Well, although she tried to hide her reaction by abruptly changing the subject while twirling her beautiful hair, I could see that she was furious, maybe even a little disgusted.

Everywhere in the streets of Bruxl, on the facades of buildings, between each augmented reality advertisement, the same human face had appeared. The human had medium-length hair, styled backwards. He looked confident. The figure was probably trying to inspire trust by using short sentences including numbers and by adopting a sharp diction, the eyes always directed forward. It appeared to be of an age in the middle of a typical human's life, with no extravagant body changes. The voice was only softened by a slight prettification effect.

The face was promising the imminent release of bio-modified seeds. It was now and then superimposed pictures showing humans at work in the laboratory, producing – according to the comment – the new O seeds that were resistant to Oomycetes Lacrymans. Close-up images showed the seeds, coated in fuchsia pink, spinning on their axis, sublimated by side lighting. Usually the clips ended with fields of golden wheat as far as the eye could see, quivering in the breeze.

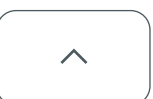
Fuchsia was everywhere: the clothes, the kitchen objects, the lights in the transports, the hair of the weather forecasters. The whole city seemed to be adorned with a new color in order to direct the citizens' hopes towards biotechnology.

Rob' (Towards Dijon)

I made all the necessary repairs to the boat's navigation equipment and the next lock is only two hours away.

We passed old industries with their threatening skeleton leaning over the shore, as if ready to collapse into the polluted waters. But in general, the banks of the Saône in Burgundy are beautiful. I even spotted a few purple herons fishing – they apparently haven't disappeared completely!

I took the time to think and carefully observed the package of dried r that cousin José offered me when I left his mill. As someone who only



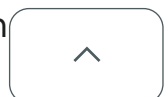
seeds and vegetables (fertilized by myself), I was overwhelmed by this gesture. José spoke to me at length about his fifteen-year-old cow, called Hertziene, whose life had been beautiful yet eventful in this Rhone valley. He asked me to think of her when I ate strips of dried meat. I felt nauseous... I have eaten cellular meat a few times, but never from an animal that has lived! As I share this in my journal, I realize that I am getting tired of recording my life and my journey - I want to just look with my eyes, smell with my nose...

I don't have much company on the boat: I quickly realized that my enthusiasm to join Bruxl to engage in a political struggle would find little echo here. Only Max - a seven-year-old child accompanying his uncle, a boatman - likes to listen to my stories. In the evenings, we watch the stars from the deck. Sometimes we curl up together in a blanket and I adapt the tales of the Madrid desert about extractivism to his river world. I tell him about the role of extinct insects and how to honor their memory. I hope to sow seeds of love and rage in him that will blossom later.

As time is long, apart from these evenings with Max, I have divided my days into two types of inner journeys: the mornings are dedicated to exploring my past - and that of the generations that came before me; the afternoons are more tumultuous as I explore the future and my dreams of a change for Bruxl.

My parents left Bruxl more than sixteen years ago. My biological mother was then pregnant with us (thanks to the pro-natalist policy of the city, one could still proceed with double fertilizations). She had been brought into this reproductive project by my father and my elected-mother. They were both activists, they had lived through the great techno-scientific transformation of Bruxl and decided to move to Madrid - the birthplace of my elected-mother.

My sister and I had a beautiful childhood. My memories are burning hot and dirty with earth, yet joyful and lively. They are marked by our hacienda where we would always find caring adult arms. Our parents had "welcomed peace" and often told us about the raids they had carried out before we were born. They told us that they had since found more constructive ways to engage in transforming the world, but we felt that they had buried their activist past a bit too quickly. When we were seven years old, Carmen met her own elected-mother and gradually abandoned the revolutionary spirit that had in



When I was eight years old, for the Day of Remembrance of the Deads of Modernism, I officially enacted pollinating insects. That day, I promised myself that I would return to Bruxl to continue the unfinished work of my parents.

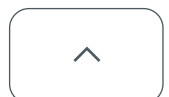
Lately the clouds have been so dense that I am seriously short on solar energy. So I am cutting back on my connection with my relatives and on the news. I try desperately to connect with activist networks in Bruxl that I could join, but I realize that my skills to access those who have to hide from their Operator are quite limited. I keep getting bright pink error messages preventing me from contacting anyone who is involved in alternative reproductive techniques to those proposed by the O labs. I left Madrid galvanized by the international calls in the face of Bruxl's phytosanitary response to the pseudofungus, but I realize now that my skills as a pollinator and memorialist of mutual breeding practices won't change anything if I don't find an echo and mobilized people there.

I feel more and more desperate...

Édouard (Bruxl)

After our physical meeting, Carmen left me without much news. She seemed distant and I first thought it was because of the kiss, so I didn't insist too much. But she ended up telling me that it was my professional activities that had turned her off. She really touched me when she confided in me. Her parents were activists in Bruxl and had fought against O at the time they privatized all seeds meant for cultivation - they had finally left for Madrid where alternative ways of living are experimented and non-laboratory techniques of plant reproduction are advocated.

That's when she told me that Rob', her twin, had arrived from Madrid with free seeds. Her explanations were a bit confusing because she was using a lot of metaphors, which I had trouble understanding. She said that diseases like the one we were going through with the OoL are typical of monocultures. I already knew this but I suppose I had chosen to forget... I also knew that Bruxl and Madrid had adopted radically different relationships with living things twenty years ago! My opinion was simple, we could be very happy that the new seeds of O were ready so quickly, we had certainly avoided the catastrophe and a new famine.



But Carmen didn't really think that way. She explained to me with great intensity that activists like Robertæ were trying to maintain cultivation methods in memory of the insects. That our monocultures based on bio-modified seeds privatized by the Operator had already been the struggle of their parents. That the new seeds stamped with the fushia pink of O would not call any insects back, that plant reproduction would be permanently limited to laboratory practices.

I must admit that I was rather sceptical. Pollinating insects had almost disappeared before I was even born. Well, I had seen the Robobees at the Green Tower and in Voltaire; and people from the Commune even had a few real honeybees in migrating hives... But I didn't know that young people my age could actually wait for butterflies and wild bees to return! It had been a long time that the laboratories of O had been taking care of most of the plant reproduction, and if the seeds had to be pink from now on, the problem for me was mostly one of taste.

In the end, I tried to understand what Carmen was telling me because she was affected and upset by my activities, nothing more. I didn't understand half of these issues of "plant sensuality" as she called them (I felt strongly about her using those words though). And I stupidly accepted to help her, well to help Rob'... Because without me, neither of them knew how to contact the darknet.

Rob' (towards Charleroi)

Last night I got my period synchronized with the alignment of Mars, Saturn and Jupiter and I couldn't celebrate this with anyone because people here don't understand the importance of astrological cycles. I share my disappointment with my sister, but she hasn't answered me for several days.

Lately my guts are regularly twisted into a million knots: I left so excited with a revolutionary project and now it terrifies me. My belly feels like lead... These sensations are all the more frequent and vivid the closer we get to Bruxl, as I don't even know where or to whom I should go.

This morning, I laid on a container at the front of the boat to warm my body in the sun while sucking on artichoke leaves. I was thinking about my plan to give back the ability to reproduce plants to the Bruxlians. Many of them lost the essential knowledge of how to mediate the fertilization of plants



Since there are almost no pollinating insects left, the people of Madrid have made the choice to do it with their ten fingers. The technique is not simple because it is necessary to be tactful to convince a flower to entrust its precious pollen, some do not like mechanical substitutes and need suppleness and softness. They are often too narrow for our fingers and we have to caress them with a brush. In Bruxl, when insects became too rare to pollinate their fruits and vegetables, they didn't accompany the last bees in the reproduction of plants; they chose to have laboratories do the work instead. They didn't understand the value of the inter-species sensuality that supports our lives, and relegated the work of reproduction to its simple utilitarian aspect.

In the early afternoon, we arrived at a lock and stopped while passing a barge. I was eager to get some news when I discovered that a couple was coming from Bruxl! They told me that their neighbors, like many others until then, had been making some cucurbits grow year after year by hand pollination (or sometimes mechanically with the robobee) but that it would be impossible from now on with the new seeds from O.

The portrait they depicted to me was terribly depressing.

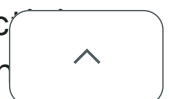
With the new measures, the Bruxlians will have to buy every year their "certified" pink seeds as well as their young plants of tomato® or cucumber®. With such species, not only is the disappearance of free food crops inevitable, but all the efforts we have made and have committed to make to honor the memory of insects will be lost.

I asked them if they knew of any underground networks of resistance, but the couple abruptly changed the topic and asked me a thousand questions about Madrid...

After they left, my stomach was again in a state of incessant spinning and I even had tears in my eyes. I was only one or two days away from my goal... and Carmen was still not answering me!

Edouard (Bruxl)

In the end, Rob' had no idea what to do when s-he got to Bruxl. Without my help I don't think s-he would have been able to find the network of ac even though there were actually a lot of them. I had been following th



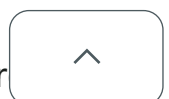
while because of work and I had even started to know them individually. I had my favorites, I was making little scenarios to understand their psychology from the traces they left, their connections, etc.

All in all, when Carmen asked me to help Rob' connect with those who were trying to oppose O's bio-modified seeds, I got interested. It was mostly, I think, because of the imagery that it triggered. I got excited because I thought about survivalist games like *The Age of Dithering*, which tell the story of forbidden gatherings in dark sheds; like for example early 21st century environmental activists gathering to oppose the Operator's monopoly, etc. So I admit it, it was more for the fun (and for Carmen) because, deep down, Rob's and the activists' project seemed a bit crazy to me. But at the same time, if a bunch of weirdos want to titillate pistils, I don't see why they should be prevented to do so! It is true that O had exaggerated a little bit by targeting all the gardens, all the individual planters as reservoirs of the mushroom. Now, I didn't mind it either if O released pink, green, red or purple seeds of more productive, more nutritious grains, fruits and vegetables every year - with fun projects like the shrimp tomato for example.

In short, it wasn't "political" as they say. I was just a helping hand, it was family and it didn't seem so bad to me. Carmen loves Rob', even though she says s-he thinks s-he's some sort of prophet savior of the world (and of butterflies).

When we went to pick up Rob' at the pier, s-he was in a state of hallucination. S-he may be Carmen's twin, but I didn't really see the resemblance. We walked through the city, the weather was nice and Rob' wanted to "walk" while pushing per bike. This was just one of the things that made per look weird to me. Carmen was asking Rob a lot of questions about per trip, but s-he kept interrupting perself, amazed by the Green Tower, exclaiming in front of the simplest O'Cab that passed by, asking a lot of questions about politics... I was a bit envious of Carmen's admiration for per trip, so I made a little bit of a joke and lent per my glasses with the "full augmented reality" mode, so that s-he could see the real Bruxl. I thought s-he was going to vomit per vegetable bread. We laughed anyway. Then, while we were walking and Rob' was talking, arm in arm with per sister, I finally received confirmation from the resistance network of a meeting that was to take place that afternoon. When I told Rob', s-he jumped on me and kissed me - I almost fainted.

So there you go. I helped put per in touch with all these people, but fr



point of view, I didn't contribute much. What they do is not my problem. But deep down, I must say that I thought, who knows, maybe one day my kids will see butterflies and it will be a little bit thanks to me?

In the interstices that the fungus had explored - the mosses on the cornices of buildings in Tati, the window boxes on the balconies in Voltaire, between the mounds of the Commune - tiny, very strange shoots were now blooming. They shone softly with the western light at the end of the day and spread their stamens in umbrellas, ribbed peduncles, or a delicate calyx...

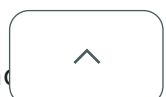
As diverse as they were, they all carried, very subtly, a slight smell of fungus.

About

The city of Bruxl is entering a period of strict quarantine: any trade of seeds is now forbidden because a mutated fungus has been detected in the city's crops. Our story follows the travel of Rob', a native of Bruxl who grew up and lives in Madrid. S·he is deeply concerned with what s·he sees as the beginning of a widespread privatization of seeds. S·he sets off to Bruxl in order to bring some free and reproducible seeds to counter the prohibition. The journey between the two cities is a long and exhaustive one: Rob rides per bike and embarks on ships along the remaining commercial routes of Western Europe. Along the way, the story unfolds this young idealist's hopes of spreading per know-how about the reproduction of domesticated plants in a world where honey-bearing insects have almost disappeared. In parallel it tracks the evolution of the situation in Bruxl where the fungus invades all the monocultures, as well as the news Rob' receives from per twin sister, who lives in Bruxl and is now in love with a technophile young man from the uptown neighborhoods.

Contributor bios

Æ coop is a collective for research at the intersection between the humanities and



founded in 2013 by Pauline Lefebvre (architect and PhD in architecture), Elsa Maury (visual artist and researcher in visual arts), Nicolas Prignot (PhD in philosophy and physicist) and Norbert Truxa (industrial designer). Æ emerged in the wake of their participation in 2011-12 in the experimental program in arts and politics (SPEAP) directed by Valérie Pihet and Bruno Latour at SciencesPo Paris. Æ coop developed the narrativist game 2061 as part of a research project commissioned by the Forum des Vies Mobiles. This research focused on the way young people imagine the balance between their physical movements and their virtual mobility, in a future where resources are scarce. Æ is presently writing a collection of short stories that are based on the narratives that came out of that game.

Directed by Dr Martin Savransky (Goldsmiths, University of London) and Dr Craig Lundy (London Metropolitan University). Generously funded by The Sociological Review Foundation, with the support of the MA Ecology, Culture & Society and the Unit of Play, Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

