

THREE CREATIVE FIGURES TO CODESIGN WITH VULNERABILITIES.

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Taking the vulnerability of existence seriously places the concern for *care* at the heart of spatial design. As Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher argue, the practice of care can “be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web”¹. In the 21st century, another civilizational policy is announced within the uncertainty and disorder: the advent of ecological sciences based on the recognition of the interactions of living organisms and their environment, as synergistic or symbiotic ecosystems, participating in the awareness of the toxic character of the nature-culture division and of unlimited exploitation; also of the awareness of a community of the terrestrial destiny of the living. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, precariousness, misery, exclusion – so many challenges to be faced that call for diversification and locating new common grounds. These are far-reaching issues, since they involve considering political changes that combine environmental, social, economic, cultural and mental dimensions. The changes to be made are crucial. It is a question of not blindly pursuing the will of *arraisonnement* (*Gestell*) but of sparing and rethinking the community meaning of an earthly destiny. Regarding such awareness, how can we politically and poetically open the possibilities of a world based on vulnerabilities? How to revive the urgency of the common between human and non-human by mobilizing individual and political responsibilities? What new forms of ecological and solidarity *codesign*² can work to make the Earth habitable? Such are the questions concerning our contemporary condition. Every day they press a little more upon our manner of living and working, but also on our habits of thinking, doing and designing. This essay will not pretend to answer these questions *directly*. Rather, it is a question of looking at them from a bias angle; of seeing how today they stimulate the partial and situated reinvention of other ways of being, of co-living with vulnerability.

¹ Joan C. Tronto and Berenice Fisher, “Towards a Feminist Theory of Caring” in *Circles of Care. Work and Identity in Women’s Lives*, eds. Emily K. Abel and Margaret K. Nelson (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 36-54.

² We speak of “codesign” in order to emphasize that any spatial design activity involve a multiplicity of agents (human and non-human, social and political, in long- and short-terms). Codesign is both “design with” and “design for”.

First, we propose to look at the history of what makes us vulnerable today, insisting in particular on the devastating effects of conceptual and political figures of progress; then, we question the possibility for new figures of change to emerge, enabled to eradicate old hegemonic figures and to care for the diversities and uncertainties of our contemporaneous condition; and finally, we present a sketch of what could be three creative figures of codesign, named here the Smugglers, the Totem-performers, and the Punk-sowers. With these new figures, and tracking how each of them can be involved in spatial design practices, we propose to set forth a sort of common imaginative ground to (re)think how to live with our vulnerabilities.

Looking Back: What Makes Us Vulnerable Today

On 9 August 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its latest report. The experts' predictions were more alarmist than ever: “Many of the changes observed in the climate are unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years, and some of the changes already set in motion [...] are irreversible over hundreds to thousands of years”³. Looking ahead, the threat is indeed as critical as acute. Nevertheless, in order to realize the full extent of such a worldly change, we need to look back: how did it happen? How to apprehend the changes to come in a way that considers the past?⁴ In other words: how to apprehend the change within the exhaustion and devastation of our existing situations?

In this essay we examine the questioning of what makes us vulnerable and, above all, the questioning of what we inherit. More precisely, we want to support the idea that the devastation of our living milieus and the resulting vulnerability are the product *and* the vector of the exhaustion of our thinking patterns.

In *Dreaming in the Dark* (1982), Starhawk argues that what shapes the modern Western culture can be understood as a set of narratives that we tell ourselves over and over: narratives that engender our expectations and actions, creating in each of us structures of thinking that condition our ways of being and acting. Starhawk addresses four of these narrative figures: *The Apocalypse*, a narrative that shapes a structured and structuring sense of time, a unique and unidirectional becoming targeted at a catastrophic grand finale; *The good boys/girls versus the bad boys/girls*, a narrative that from the earliest age infuses a dualistic pattern, that which founds the entire Western value system; *The Great Man receives the whole truth and transfers it to some elected ones*, a narrative that authorizes the source of a universal truth, locating itself outside our embodied experiences, both individual and collective; *The Rise/The Fall*, a double narrative spread deeply within our cultural imagination, serving like the *mise-en-scène* of our value systems and power structures, staging all of our everyday expectations⁵. The four are “power-over narratives”⁶, ensuring some human groups

³ Post on the IPCC Website, entitled “Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying”, 9 August 2021: <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wg1-20210809-pr/>

⁴ Emilie Hache, “Introduction – Retour sur Terre” in *De l'univers clos au monde infini*, ed. Emilie Hache (Paris: Ed. Dehors, 2014), 11-25.

⁵ Starhawk, *Dreaming in the Dark : Magic, Sex and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982). Our reading of Starhawk is based on a recent French edition : Starhawk, *Rêver l'obscur: Femmes, magie et politique* (Paris: Ed. Cambourakis, 2003), 60-65.

⁶ Starhawk differentiate three kinds of power : “power-over”, “power-from-within”, and “power-with”. See also

control over others, but also allowing humans to dominate natural milieus. From another perspective, the anthropologist Anna Tsing posits that these kind of narratives shape not only our modern culture, but more specifically what could be called the figure of progress. She describes some of the narratives that forge this figure: “The economic growth must be perpetual”; “The biodiversity loss will make room for new spaces”; “Only very large-scale developments enable our systems to be more efficient”.⁷ While the belief in a better life is at the core of these narratives, we are now realizing how they have made our living conditions on earth vulnerable. That is, Tsing argues that we live in a time of collapse: the collapse of all great narratives that shaped the figure of progress, a collapse going hand in hand with the very awareness of “the fundamentally precarious dimension of human life, but also of the life of animals, of plants”⁸. The devastation of our milieus (natural, social and mental) has been made in the name of progress, “enforcing a property right that is, above all, a right to exploit, extract, abuse and destroy all forms of interdependency”⁹, and it is within these ruins¹⁰ that we must learn to think and design new ways of living.

What we inherit from history is a devastating illusion forged in the figure of progress and held by the armed arm of domination. It is in this mirage of progress that we still find today what makes us vulnerable. The mirage, forged in Promethean certainties, conceals that any human settlement is *always already* vulnerable, which means intrinsically exposed to damage. A vulnerable world is a world threatened by its own exhaustion, or its very dissolution, whether it is an ecological, social and/or political world, even a human, non-human and/or more-than-human world. But if vulnerability is an inherent condition of inhabited territories, vulnerability can also be understood as a fertile terrain for political imagination and the collective invention of others modes and forms of living. In that sense, learning to codesign with our own vulnerabilities is first learning to turn away from the figure of progress in order to open other ways to compose alternative figures, both pluralistic and partial. Such multiple figures are needed to eliminate the modern narrative figures who claimed to have all the answers, at all times and in all places. As designers, it is about choosing other figures to orientate our ways of thinking and acting; other figures enabled to blur all the certainties that the encompassing mirage of progress relentlessly proffers.

Call for New Figures of Change

In these times, facing the expanding vulnerability of our *inhabited milieus*¹¹, we are called to create forms of rebirth defining new ways of living with the exhaustion of our milieus: a call for a metamorphosis that favors both the autonomy of peoples and the establishment of a common

Starhawk, *Truth or Dare : Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery* (San Francisco : Ed. Harper, 1988).

⁷ Anna Tsing, “Imaginons un art de vivre dans les ruines du capitalisme”, an interview with Nastasia Hadjadji, published in *L'ADN* 23, October 14, 2020. <https://www.ladn.eu/nouveaux-usages/anna-tsing-vivre-dans-les-ruines-du-capitalisme/>. Translated by the authors.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Isabelle Stengers, *Résister au désastre* (Paris : Ed. Wildproject, 2019), 18. Translated by the authors.

¹⁰ A term borrowed from Anna Tsing, and also Isabelle Stengers after her : *learn to live in the ruins of capitalism*.

¹¹ See Chris Younès, Benoît Goetz, “Mille Milieux – éléments pour une introduction à l'architecture des milieux”. *Le Portique* 25 (2010) – <https://doi.org/10.4000/leportique.2471>; Chris Younès, *Métamorphoses vivifiantes des milieux habités*, in *AlterArchitectures Manifesto*, eds. Thierry Paquot, Yvette Masson-Zanussi, Marcos Strathopoulos (Paris: Infolio, 2012).

ground allowing the sharing of our capacities to create, imagine, and relate. What is at stake are synergies and synchronies: active ways to forge new—or to renew—alliances between humans and non-humans, local and global, rural and urban, feminine and masculine, material and spiritual, profane and sacred. Synergies and synchronies are matters of both sociopolitical and ecological dynamics; they form attachments and arouse entwinements between the whole and the parts, taking into account what is visible and invisible. To reconsider how to live and create synergistically involves a vivid diversity of practices and knowledge that take part in the reversal of extant models, imaginaries and value systems, engaging together with other perspectives of solidarity and frugality. Such a paradigm shift, disturbing all dualisms (nature/culture, thinking/making, etc.) while taking measure of our vulnerabilities, leads one to question *figures* of another kind. According to Donna Haraway, a figure “is never purely visual, nor purely textual, nor purely auditive, a figure is a mode of materiality which can be multi-sensorial”. Furthermore: “The modality of figuration is not fixed, it is an open modality, an open set of possibilities of figuration”¹². Figures at stake creatively work within or around consolidated systems to explore the possibility of alternative becomings.

Potentialities of such figures are our core concerns, but further precision is needed regarding the naming of the “figure”. The figures are conceptual frameworks. They sketch the outlines of ways of thinking, acting and designing, yet without fixity. The definition of “figure” refers to what is relatively characterized, more or less defined, and thus never completely determined. We then consider that figures operate as some sort of compass: they allow one to orientate ways of thinking and acting without ready-made paths.

Most importantly, figures are constructed using words. Language is our most potent tool proffering the real in both form and structure¹³, and words are formidable weapons in (re)shaping modes of representation¹⁴. Today more than ever, it is about forging words to relearn how to say and see, grasp and feel, but also to imagine and engage other ways of living with and within what makes us vulnerable. As Emilie Hache suggests in facing what is happening to us all: we need “new narratives, new metaphors, and new concepts to support such a world transformation”, calling for “a new aesthetic, in the sense of a renewal of our modes of perception, of our sensibility”¹⁵. Whether ordinary or extraordinary, the necessary subversions of our ways of living, acting, and designing go along with the subversions of our ways of speaking, naming, and describing. A social life, made of accelerating paces and lull periods, of multiple bodies and minds involved, of heterogeneities and pluralities, unfolds beyond any sense of total control to better adapt to circumstances and unfolding situations. It requires words then to apprehend the meaning and powers of this social vitality, to learn from its creativity, as well as its possible exhaustion. We must readjust our conceptual frameworks to pursue new naturo-cultural alliances above and below illusionary dualisms. In that sense, we propose to sketch out the features of what appears to us as three emerging figures that suggest other ways to see and feel, to tell and to think how to codesign with vulnerabilities.

¹² Donna Haraway, “Le rire de Méduse. Entretien avec Donna Haraway, par Florence Caeymaex, Vinciane Despret, Julien Pieron” in *Habiter le trouble avec Donna Haraway*, eds. Florence Caeymaex, Vinciane Despret, Julien Pieron (Paris: Ed. Dehors, 2019), 81-82.

¹³ Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark : Magic, Sex, and Politics* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1982).

¹⁴ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble : Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016).

¹⁵ Emilie Hache, “Introduction : retour sur Terre” in *De l'univers clos au monde infini*, ed. Emilie Hache (Paris : Ed. Dehors, 2014), 11-25. Translated by the authors.

Sketching Out Three Creative Figures of Codesign.

The figures we propose are built as conceptual characters - not fictive ones but ones enabled to produce fictions; to initiate, generate and cultivate new types of narratives. Also, our figure-characters account for the multiple stories that are crafted through actual discourses and practices; killjoy-stories which trouble the way things are and all forms of hierarchies that support them¹⁶. Of course, our actual discourses and practices are already inhabited by various figures-characters – for instance, the Benjaminian figures like the *Flâneur* and the *Storyteller*, also Lévi-Strauss' *Bricoleur*, or Agnès Varda's *Gleaners*. And we propose the possibility of three others: three modest figure-characters that inhabit today's spatial design practices, operating as compass in order to orientate designers towards the invention of new ways of working in uncertain times.

The aforementioned figures are the Smugglers, the Totem-performers, and the Punk-sowers. Their specific features are almost falsely—*artificially*—dissociated, whereas they would rather tend to merge, to complement and enrich each other like a synergic common work. But apprehending each apart from the others, the idea is to question and track how these figures can be involved in spatial design practices.

To give the figures substance we lend them our words crossing with words from many others. These figures should be understood not like some leading ones, such as the figure of progress, featured as the warrant of any human conquests over decades, which led to today's ecological devastation; a devastation of natural milieus and social and mental devastation¹⁷. Instead, the three figures tend to be gatherers, setting a sort of common imaginative ground to (re)think how to live with our vulnerabilities.

***Smugglers** – those who redesign living milieus by passing through all the borders inherited from the 'Great Division', mainly the division erected between nature and culture.*

At the borders traditionally erected between theoretical and practical, intelligible and sensitive, nature and culture, various ways of rethinking our practices are contemporaneously emerging. Speaking about borders is also to insist on the importance given to what it would be like to pass through them. In other words, it is because there are borders that smuggling is possible¹⁸. From one side to the other, despite the vigilant efforts deployed by the Western thought-police, ideas flow. The figure of the Smugglers draws attention to anything happening at the borders enforced by the geography and hierarchy of knowledge; both are inherited from the legacy of modern scientific thought.

Urban milieus appear as fertile experimental fields for Smugglers. Cities are like quasi-

¹⁶ See Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, op.cit.

¹⁷ Isabelle Stengers describes this triple devastation following Guattari's argument. See Isabelle Stengers, *Résister au désastre* (Paris: Ed. Wildproject, 2019); and Félix Guattari, *Les trois écologies* (Paris: Ed. Galilée, 1989).

¹⁸ The idea of “smuggling” has been mentioned by Vinciane Despret, during a public talk with Philippe Descola, as part of the cycle of international encounters entitled “Les dialogues du contemporain”, moderated by Laurent de Sutter, at the Institut français and Odéon – Théâtre de l'Europe (2015-2016).

organisms that in a sense escape from human mastering and any radical and hermetic divisions between natural and cultural components. The question is to imagine how human establishments can be developed in interaction with other living beings to initiate interfaces in coevolution and cooperation and between the wild and the cultivated. The work of landscape designer Kongjian Yu, founder of Turenscape (1998) is evoked. Yu's urban projects deploy a stimulating eco-aesthetic integrating both the living and the elements dynamics of the site¹⁹ in large parks where the human is delicately present. At stake are multiple new alliances between living organism and machine, human and animal²⁰, always based upon a necessity to question the heterogeneous encounters of natural and cultural matters²¹ while disturbing their traditionally established borders.

What the Smugglers (re)invent always traverses transgressive ground. This doesn't mean that they act solely on the impulse of subversive pleasure. The will to transgress established borders is not animated by the illusion of being able to definitively eradicate them, but instead it opens the possibility of thinking them afresh. The Smugglers shake-up the usual ways of doing and thinking more than they knock them down. They (re)compose with their experienced failures in order to smuggle other doing-thinking practices into manifold identified breaches.

Such design attitudes can be particularly observed within the frame of the European competition, open to architects, urban planners and landscape architects under 40 years of age²². A broad range of these young designers engage the urban project through the experimentation of new forms of hybridization between cultural and natural, tectonic, atmospheric and biological elements. With a continuous reciprocity between scales ranging from the ecosystem to the neighborhood or the urban block, the Smuggler project reconsiders the processes of transforming inhabited milieus by paying critical attention to the multiplicity of its agents and components – because they are natural and artificial, social and political, human and non-human – and more specifically to their modes of relation, collaboration, articulation, and exchanges.

The Smugglers invent new alliances. They assemble *facts* with new *concerns*²³, contradictory interests with divergent intuitions, and yet without seeking ways to settle them too quickly—once and for all. Because the Smugglers care for the difference they can make, the inventions are held open in order to explore the pluralistic becomings of existing institutionalized situations.

¹⁹ About interactions between natural elements and spatial design thinking, see Chris Younès, Thierry Paquot (eds.), *Philosophie, ville et architecture : La Renaissance des quatre éléments* (Paris : Ed. La Découverte, 2002).

²⁰ This may echo the features of another figure; the cyborg figure as defined by Donna Haraway. See Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the the Late Twentieth Century” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Routledge, 1991).

²¹ For further readings, see Daisy Hildyard, *The Second Body* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2018); Nathaniel Rich, *Second Nature: Scenes from a World Remade* (Macmillan, 2021). We thank to Paul Robinson for those suggestions.

²² See Céline Bodart et Chris Younès, “Synergies naturo-culturelles et agencements de projets” in *Villes et architectures en débat. European*, eds. Chris Younès, Alain Maugard (Marseille: éd. Parenthèses, 2019).

²³ Referring to Bruno Latour's works, calling for shifting from matters of facts to matters of concerns. See Bruno Latour, “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern”. *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 30 (2004): 225-248.

As a conceptual figure, the Smugglers address new ways of thinking, doing, and feeling, moving from the realm of oppositions and secured borders to the care for multiple interdependencies.

Totem-performers²⁴ – those who renew our attention to living by crafting symbiotic alliances with selected animal species.

Learning alternative ways to apprehend inherited vulnerabilities matters. It is about crafting new conceptual frames within which to consider them, which means frames that are “made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen–yet²⁵”. This is what Donna Haraway proposes as the Chthulucene in seeking a more speculative and creative distance from normalized terms such as Anthropocene or the Capitalocene. Such a call for “multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with” can be found in contemporaneous forms of thinking and artistic practices. The need for multi-specific stories spreads and multiplies to the point where the animal question itself seems to be reshaped as a sort of Totem embodied in beings of reference from which they engage other modes of thinking and interactions with exhausted ecosystems.

In contemporary literature, for example, we can refer to the writer Jean Marie Gustave Le Clézio. Throughout his work, Le Clézio describes regenerative forms of existence in which humans live in a nature-culture symbiosis connected by multiple links to a milieu not perverted by the separations manifested in a frantic race towards profit. The creative resistance that runs through his work takes a double form: on one hand, a call for the destruction of the “*immonde* spaces” (the filthy places of the world; the non-world), misery and distress spaces produced by dominations and exploitations of bodies and ecosystems; on the other, a quest for saving another, more animistic, way to reconcile and cohabit the Earth. “*I am not looking for a paradise*”, he explains, “*but for a land*”. Le Clézio dedicates his novels to the pursuit of the bearers of light, the old men, women and children of nomadic peoples. His heroes, or rather anti-heroes, are in their beauty a testimony to the precariousness and capacities of biotic and poetic communions with the mineral, the vegetable ... the animal.

Such revisions of the animal question echo like an acute need, progressively interfering with the design issues inherent in human settlements. It is to question “the spatial and material place we give to animals in domestic or natural space: how, on a planet with increasingly visible limits, can we cohabit and make all forms of life cohabit?²⁶”. It is through ethology, philosophy and anthropology that the animal question entered ongoing architectural debates. Such extra-disciplinary encounters offer fresh thoughts regarding normalized architectural

²⁴ We borrow this idea of "Totem Thinking" from the research work of Florence Taché, architect and student of the Post-Master "Recherches en Architectures", ENSA Paris La Villette, Gerphau-lab. (2020-2021).

²⁵ Donna Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble*, 55.

²⁶ Excerpt from the presentation of the seminar day organized by the EHESS at the Mucem (Marseille) in November 2018: “L’architecture et la question animale – le geste technique”: <https://lafabriquedesecritures.fr/larchitecture-et-la-question-animale-12-novembre-2018/> (Excerpt translated by the authors).

and territorial issues. We can refer here to the philosopher Vinciane Despret. Despret invites one to think about how to inhabit territories as a bird or as an octopus in order to revisit what makes a territory and to reconsider how living beings compose their territorial coexistences²⁷. Regarding the territorial approach to the animal question, we can refer to Baptiste Morizot's works²⁸: following the animal trails, he observes the modes of diplomatic relations in play in their living territory and questions how such relations require adjustments and reciprocal shaping with larger predators such as bears, wolves or snow panthers to be able to find mutually beneficial forms of cohabitation between living beings.

Considering that “each animal is a way of inhabiting the world” and that observing them is also a way of “learning with them how to multiply [worldly] stories”, ethological studies may provide rich perspectives to learn how to codesign with our vulnerabilities. According to Vinciane Despret, “the study of the multiple ways of living and inhabiting could open our imaginary to other ways of conceiving what it means to find a place in the world and make this place a home with others who have themselves found a home”²⁹.

As a figure, the Totem-performers are those who weave a creative fabric for cultivating new narratives with animals, multiplying dis-anthropocentric stories. They are performers because their decentered narratives must be performative. Breaking away from any dominant narratives, they necessarily proceed via contamination and collaboration.

***Punk-sowers** – those who relearn to live in uncertain times by cultivating new kinds of earthly bonds, growing new senses of the communities and other ways of living together.*

No Future! Although with differing concerns, the penetrative punk motto still resonates through the challenging times we're facing³⁰. If we propose to reflect on the punk figure, it is to posit how contemporary concerns about the future can stimulate the reinvention of our relations to places, to shared lands and common resources, to all what offers a ground connection (*prise de terre*) to our collective becomings. In this sense, the punk is today one who sows, cultivates, and regenerates our human and earthly bonds. The exhaustions of natural and social milieus are indeed extremely interconnected. As Isabelle Stengers states: “It is not only the Earth that is poisoned, polluted, overexploited, it is also how our communities are built”³¹. The Punk-sowers represents those who want to answer for this double devastation.

²⁷ See Vinciane Despret, *Habiter en oiseau* (Arles: Ed. Actes Sud, 2019) ; and Vinciane Despret, *Autobiographie d'un poulpe et autres récits d'anticipations* (Arles: Ed. Actes Sud, 2021).

²⁸ See Baptiste Morizot, *Sur la piste animale* (Arles: Ed. Actes Sud, 2017).

²⁹ Vinciane Despret, “Politics of terristories”, in the abstracts book of the conference entitled *Multispecies Storytelling in Intermedial Practices* – Linnaeus University, Växjö – January 23-25, 2019.

³⁰ Emerging in the mid-70s, Punk is a cultural movement, both anarchist and protester, supported by the creation of a new musical genre. As a motto, “no future” expresses the punk world view, the losing faith in what the future could still offer for young generations.

³¹ Isabelle Stengers, “Un autre visage de l'Amérique ?” (Postface) in Starhawk, *Rêver l'obscur: Femmes, magie et politique* (Ed. Cambourakis, 2015), 361-380, 377. (Translated by the authors).

Through his political ecology works, Ivan Illich leads a radical criticism of the industrial production-oriented societies alienated by the gigantism of their tools and bureaucratic institutional processes. Such a critique suggests the reconsideration of society as "convivial". Nowadays, in opposition to the totalitarian and ideological vision of capitalism, libertarian and democratic devices are emerging as self-managed and cooperative places; third places³²; places and zones to defend; vacant places, metamorphosed into intermediary ones, propitious to contemporary artistic creations³³ and practical collective actions³⁴ and so on. Quests for justice, emancipation, and mutual solidarity are intertwined in anyplace. In such political and existential experiences³⁵ – which are at once sensory, cognitive, emotional, and civic *finite* places are becoming *infinite*³⁶. The Punk-sowers proceed via situated immersion: they immerse themselves in the ordinary experience of situations in order to relearn how to see and feel them. They invent new rituals to collectively engage other forms of attention and discussion; they imagine new dynamics of gathering to open alternative ways of creation and negotiation.

From one situation to another, the Punk-sowers reinvent what it means to build a concerned community by the transformation of its milieu. *How to learn to unlearn* is always at stake. It is to learn to unlearn what a place is in order to experiment with new ways of inhabiting exhausted living territories (both in urban and rural areas); it is to learn to unlearn what a natural environment does (or does not) in order to enrich the possible cohabitation and interactions between humans and non-humans. *Learn to unlearn*, it is the subtitle of *Petit traité du jardin punk*, written by the landscape designer Éric Lenoir. His book is akin to a handbook on learning how to punk his/her own garden, or more precisely to “learn to unlearn” what a garden is: “Before being a reflection, the punk garden is an epidermal reaction, a riposte against concrete and the intolerable rectitude of living spaces. It invites us to discern the potential of any place to invest it, to improve it, to reclaim biodiversity and to move nature from a derisory, even non-existent, status to a remarkable one”³⁷. The figure of the Punk-sowers disturbs any status quo; it troubles every seemingly innocent question—what a garden, a place or the nature is—and open them to renewed and always situated issues—what a garden, a place or nature-culture interactions can be and still could become.

The Punk-sowers figure defines a decisive turning point for the earthly community, insisting on the necessary intersections of ethical, aesthetic and political issues to act together with troubling times. The Punk-sowers engage themselves with uncertainties, while reclaiming places to reinvent multiple ways to “make world”³⁸, caring for what arises between humans, and non-humans.

³² Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place* (New York: Paragon House, 1989).

³³ Murray Bookchin, *Essays on Dialectical Naturalism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990).

³⁴ Christophe Hutin (ed.), *Les communautés à l'oeuvre, catalogue du pavillon français de la biennale d'architecture de Venise 2021* (Ed. Dominique Carré, 2021).

³⁵ Chris Younès, *Architectures de l'existence* (Paris: Ed. Hermann, 2018).

³⁶ Following the expression of *Encore Heureux*, which launched this challenge on the occasion of the 16th Architecture Biennale (Venice, 2018): Nicola Delon, Julien Choppin, *Lieux infinis. Construire des bâtiments ou des lieux ?* (Paris: B42, 2018).

³⁷ Éric Lenoir, *Petit traité du jardin punk : apprendre à désapprendre* (Mens: Ed. Terre vivante, 2020).

³⁸ Hannah Arendt, “De l'humanité dans de "sombres temps". Réflexions sur Lessing” [1959], in *Vies politiques* (Paris, Tel/Gallimard, 1974), 19.

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“It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories”³⁹”.

Crafting with words, the figures tell stories in which conflicts and struggles are tangled with optimism; angers and fears forge new alliances with the need to believe in other vivid becomings. These proposed characters-figures are three different ways to translate what it means to codesign with vulnerabilities. That is, every figure holds only part of the story. None of them are in themselves a totality. They are bound together by what makes them diverse. Their narratives are about multiplying becomings, sketching a plural portrait of ways to care for what makes us vulnerable.

Their given names – the Smugglers, the Totem-performers, and the Punk-sowers – may conjure a smile or a raised eyebrow. And this is how it should be. Above all, let them not be unanimous. We wish these figures to generate debates just as serious as amused. We wish them to take part in “the collective invention of apparatus enabled to preserve ourselves from despair and cynicism, such as words that suspend the usual course of things and (re)create the possible”⁴⁰.

³⁹ Marilyn Strathern quoted in Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

⁴⁰ Émilie Hache, “Where the future is” in Starhawk, *Rêver l’obscur: Femmes, magie et politique*, op.cit., 20. (Translated by the authors)

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