

To whom it may affect,

What does collectivity mean? What does collectivity do?

Which is the meaning to be found in collective approaches to publishing practices?

What are the different (mis)understandings of “acting collectively”, or “publishing collectively”? What are the forms into which collectiveness can transform?

Is there a collective understanding of collectivity?

Where does collectivity start, and where does it end? Does it ever start? Does it ever end?

Who does it include, and who does it exclude?

Does collectivity have an inside? Does it have an outside? Is publishing a border? A landmark? A cliff?

How is an audience positioned? How does an audience adopt a position?

What is an invitation? What is a host? What is collective responsibility?

How do we practice collective agency?

Where do we learn to act collectively? How do we train to act collectively?

To whom it may affect,

The aim of this publication, rather than drafting answers, is to invite whomever these questions may affect to think along and take a position towards unresolved issues lingering above the un-demarcated field where collectives care to publish.

“PUBLIQESHIONS” (PUBLISHED QUESTIONS)

This is a method suggesting making a private concern public, by formulating it as a list of questions. It may be applied by one or more people at an advanced stage of a process leading to publishing.

Start by gathering the questions, these may be questions relating to issues that were either at the origin of or encountered throughout a research process. The questions may be carriers of disconcerting situations, unresolved affairs, controversial matters or sensitive issues needing to be handled and shared with care. If the list needs to be edited, it may be useful to think of a narrative. Which questions may represent “access points”, and therefore placed at the start of the list?

This method may be helpful in situations where a process is aimed at being published rather than a “set” outcome. Questions are used as a format to invite a potential audience to think along with those who “make things public”, and through their interrogative nature, they demand their listener to position themselves. A list of questions may be shared with an audience before a text or to introduce a publication, a presentation, etc. After the list is published, do not expect immediate answers—let the questions simmer. Let them become new meeting points for discussions.

What follows is a corpus of four letters respectively addressed to Jeanne van Heeswijk, Erica Gargaglione, Carolina Castro and Chaiyoung Kim (Chae)—but also to all of them at once, and ultimately, “to whom it may affect”.

Each addressee is concerned with collective approaches, whether their practice comprises rehearsing collectiveness, inspecting and documenting mechanics of self-organised cultural organisations, actually co-organising activities within a cultural organisation or, more particularly, questioning the effect of intimacy on publishing practices through experiments.

To whom it may affect,

At last, I would like to acknowledge all addressees for having played a consented or incidental role in the process and the publication of this epistolary chronicle.

Departing from a local issue—itsself stemming from the context-specific process of a collective publication—these letters intend to give an account of recurring conflicts in collective processes.

The publication of private missive represents an invitation and a record of the relations involved in a collective process. The latter being particularly challenging to document or sometimes overridden by its design when published. This series of epistle is punctuated by a collection of methods to practice collectiveness in publishing contexts. In turn, the suggested methods may be (re)enacted and adapted to any collectivity.

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To whom it may affect,

Dear Jeanne,

Thank you for referring me to the work of Augusto Boal after we briefly exchanged on the practice of role-playing. I am only starting to get acquainted with his oeuvre and look forward to diving deeper into it. Such an accurate reference made me curious about your own work. You mentioned having been trained to rather be “a listener” than “a speaker”, which is something I indeed sensed through our conversation.

I had to find out about your works differently, then! So, I visited your website, and as I wasn't yet familiar with the “not-yet”, I first decided to read your contribution to “Slow Reader” titled “Preparing for the not-yet”.

I bounced back to your website which required from me an unusual involvement and a lengthy amount of time to assimilate its navigation. The works you produced are documented in such a way that the relations to contributors, places and contexts are made visible. Simultaneously, these relations are proposed as a route to the website's navigator.

To whom it

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To whom it may affect,

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The literal function of “zooming-out” (signified by a “-” button) allows the viewer to understand each work in perspective with one another, to materialise the relations between “works”, “contributors”, “participants”, “places”, etc. In short, an ambitious attempt to track down all the relations and conditions involved in the production.

In turn, “zooming-in” (signified by a “+” button) allows us to land within a specific node (a specific intervention, participant, exhibition, and so on). The net(work) is perceptible at every level, even when diving in the most specific node, an “exit” or bifurcation is systematically proposed which is how I ended up exploring corners, entering backdoors and organically tracing my own way through this net.

Before parting ways, on the day we met, you expressed the wish to hear more about the role-plays produced in the course of my practice. I had mentioned an experience involving various personified kitchen tools and staged into a role-play intended to facilitate the decision-making process of a group of 12. Each character’s description depicted an attitude which was also the condition of participation in the discussion.

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Choosing kitchen tools, condiments, furniture and appliances was a conscious decision not to circumscribe the participants into stereotypical human “personality traits” (such as “shy”, “leader”, “sceptical”, etc.) but instead, instruct a way of relating to others through language constraints (eg: “The Bread Knife will only express in negative sentences”, “The whisk will only participate using interrogative sentences”) or through exaggeration of the relations (eg: “The Tea Cup only has the chance to talk when the Olive Oil facilitates that for them by calling their name”, “The Pepper Mill’s only way to suggest an idea is by building up on what has been proposed by the Sea Salt”).

I find the environment of the kitchen to be a great metaphor for a lot of situations. Having worked in many restaurants’ kitchens, ran a bar for a short while, and very often hosted friends for dinner, I noticed a similarity in the workflow:

- Cooking • Serving
- Publishing process • Publication
- Backstage • Stage

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Bummock • Hummock (the submerged part of the iceberg and its emerging tip)

The previously mentioned role-play was part of a series of experiments tirelessly pushed by alternating members of our group (XPUB, class of 2023) and originating from our need to self-organise in the process of publishing (which took place at least three times

Let's imagine that the dish—coming out of the kitchen to be served to guests—is a publication being launched. In the kitchen, we'll look at the dish from the perspective of the kitchen tools, condiments, furniture and appliances. Let's blur the human presence for a moment (facilitator? narrator?): Elements participate collaboratively in the elaboration of the dish. Each of them has an attributed aptitude or function, some can even achieve tasks they weren't designed for (eg. A fork can replace a whisk to beat an egg, although this replacement has its limits: The fork will hardly whip egg whites to a meringue consistency. Also, an equalitarian role inversion is hard to imagine: The

whisk will have difficulty replacing a fork to prick a potato.). In kitchen chemistry, some condiments will enhance certain unsuspected flavours: Add a spoon of sugar to shallots while they fry, and their smell will instantly intensify. Sometimes there are missing condiments and limited appliances, but the imperativeness to eat persists, and the same dishes are achieved otherwise.

Things can get messy too, in my kitchen/laboratory. Experiments and failures are a big part of the learning process. But is it about learning to cook, really? Is it about “mastering” the dish? As you wrote in the text aforementioned, “Preparing for the not-yet”:

“All of this is about growing, but, again, not about ‘growth’ in the capitalist logic of accumulative continuity. It is very important to think about growing without necessarily having a point on the horizon. (...) How can we practice the collective without seeing that as aiming towards a fixed point in the future?”

To me, this experimental kitchen is about learning how to operate together and finding ways to compose while acknowledging each other’s needs, aptitudes, desires, and obsta-



cles. The dish may just be an excuse, but also a way to test out the audience's reaction, and receiving feedback in the kitchen may also help us adjust (Perhaps the Sea Salt could leave space for the Vinegar to express its drizzling sharpness, the Oven could stabilise its temper, etc.)

The dish that is “published” is not the endpoint, many meals, and many dishes will follow. The same one will probably be served another thousand times, with possible variations in the process.

“X- KITCHEN”

This role-play-based exercise may be performed by a group of people at an early (but not necessarily initial) stage of a collaborative process. By inviting participants to engage in a group discussion through the enactment of scripted roles, this exercise aims at shuffling and exaggerating customary social roles. As a result, this experiment may stir unanticipated group dynamics and is overall intended to lead to concrete constructive decision-making.

Each role's succinct description consists of a set of behavioural conditions imagined to stimulate affective relations among participants and between participants and the subject being discussed.

One or two participant(s) volunteer(s) for facilitating (and documenting) the session. The participants that are not facilitators get a randomly attributed role which they may keep secret.

Roles: The following pages may be photocopied and each role description cut and distributed to the participants.

copy + ✂-----

“The Table”

...will be the one opening each the conversation for every topic;

...is not able to ask any questions;

...is confident in their ideas;

...is opinionated and vocal about the majority of topics being discussed.

“The Toothpick”

- ...will exclusively express themselves in short and precise sentences;
- ...is obsessed with pasting or reading definitions on any occasion;
- ...will care to clarify keywords and ambiguous words.

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“The Olive Oil”

- ...will keep track of the topics that need to be discussed and make sure they are all covered;
- ...will make sure everyone’s voice (especially “Tea Cup”) is being heard;
- ...loves making lists.

copy + ✂-----

“The Bread Knife”

- ...will exclusively start debating with a negative sentence (eg. using “no”, “not”, “do not”, etc.);
- ...is concerned with “worst case scenarios”, concern which may create a debate;
- ...is focused on challenging the weakest point of an idea.

“The Honey Pot”

- ...will mostly interact with “Bread Knife”: Based on “Bread Knife’s” doubts, “Honey Pot” will attempt to formulate compromises;
- ...will mostly start their sentences by acknowledging and follow with an alternative (eg: “I understand where these doubts are coming from, but...”)
- ...may feel supported by teaming up with “Sea Salt”;
- ...is optimistic and accomodating.

copy + ✂-----

“The Tea Cup”

- ...will exclusively talk when “Olive Oil” gives them a chance to do so;
- ...will engage in-depth once given the space for it, can support or be supported by “Toothpick”;
- ...(if using a text editor for collective editorial, always write sentences in parentheses);
- ...is an introvert but an original thinker.

“The Whisk”

...will exclusively participate with interrogative sentences;

...is never too assertive;

...will focus on mostly addressing the Table (but is invited to intervene at anytime too).

copy + ✂-----

“The Jug”

...has the ability to highlight the idea of one other character of their choice: The Jug will internally pick a character at the beginning of the session and will exclusively respond to them, aiming to trigger the further development of an idea;

...is dedicated to seeking potential in someone’s idea;

...will care to rephrase important ideas when they are unclear.

copy + ✂-----

“The Pepper Mill”,

...will build upon “Sea Salt’s” ideas and aim to make them more complete;

...will express by stating the pros and cons of each suggestion;

...is analytical, sharp and clear when they express.

“The Sea Salt”

...will express with sentences starting with “Let’s” (eg: “Let’s not forget, we only have two weeks!”);

...will offer a concrete and simple alternative when the group conversation seems to spiral;

...is realistic, pragmatic and sassy;

...will remind the group when something is off topic when the conversation is too long or repetitive.

copy + ✂-----

Variant: This exercise is ideal for a medium-sized group (10 participants) but can surely be adapted to a smaller or larger group. Depending on the group’s size, certain roles may be removed from or added to this list. If imagining new roles, keep in mind that the conditions for participation must affect other characters or affect the group in general.

The beginning phase of the discussion is supported by a script where designated participants are invited to express themselves at an allocated moment. During this slow-paced phase, participants get acquainted with their roles.

Suggestion for a script: In the following example, the script is intended to be legible and responded to by all participants simultaneously using an online document for collective editing. The use of such a tool is recommended for both documentation and facilitation purposes.

Start of the script—

The facilitator defines the aim of the discussion: (...)

The facilitator announces the timeline of the session: (...)

“Table” gives an opinion: (...)

“Olive Oil” lists the important topics to discuss during this session: (...)

“Whisk” asks an open question: (...)

The facilitator answers the question: (...)

“Bread Knife” starts a debate by stating their doubt on a specific point: (...)

“Honey Pot” attempts to comprehend “Bread Knife”: (...)

Everyone thinks out loud

Each character types here one question (set timer)

Table: (...?)
Whisk: (...?)
Toothpick: (...?)
Olive Oil: (...?)
Honey Pot: (...?)
Tea Cup: (...?)
Bread Knife: (...?)
Sea Salt: (...?)
Pepper Mill: (...?)
Jug: (...?)

Everyone reads each other's questions

The facilitator attempts to answer every questions: (...)
“Table” gives an opinion: (...)
“Bread Knife” expresses a doubt: (...)
“Sea Salt” offers an alternative solution: (...)
“Bread Knife” gives a doubt about this solution: (...)
“Pepper Mill” attempts to highlight both perspectives and builds on
“Sea Salt's” solution: (...)
“Olive Oil” triggers “Tea Cup's” opinion on a chosen point mentioned in the

conversation so far: (...)

“Tea Cup” responds: (...)

“Honey Pot” supports “Tea Cup's” idea: (...)

“Toothpick” goes back through the conversation and clarify points, words or concepts aforementioned: (...)

“Jug” chooses a character to address: (...)

The named character answers “Jug”: (...)

“Toothpick” clarifies more points: (...)

“Whisk” raises a question: (...)

Everyone thinks outloud

Each character types here one idea “to keep” and one idea “to discard”

(3 minutes)

Table: (...)

Whisk: (...)

Toothpick: (...)

Olive Oil: (...)

Honey Pot: (...)

Tea Cup: (...)

Bread Knife: (...)

Sea Salt: (...)

Pepper Mill: (...)

Jug: (...)

Everyone reads each other's thought

End of the script—

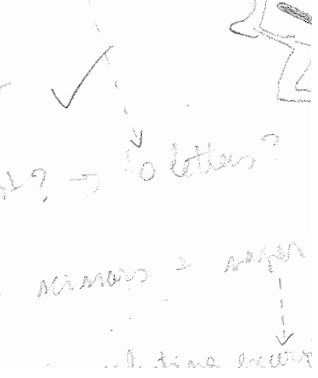
Start of the free form conversation (announce role-name before typing)—

(!) Keep in mind the aim of this discussion (announced at the beginning)

At a further point of the exercise (which is indicated by the facilitator), the partly-scripted discussion evolves towards a 'free form' discussion. The session ends according to the timeline pre-established.

So, out of everything you might find in your fictional kitchen, using that space as a metaphor for publishing collectively, which tool, condiment, furniture or appliance would you choose to describe the way you relate to other roles involved in the collective process?

1) X-Kitchen ✓
2) editorial instruction
for collective pen
(Bubblization)
game with feet



This letter, addressed to you and authored by my hand, was written with the intention to be published and therefore the narrative in it also considers a potential audience.

Till next time,
Kimberley

To whom it may affect,