

LISTENING TO THE COMMONS

„otte1“künstlerhaus art residency



ECKERNFÖRDE



I have traveled to north before, to Baltic coast but never to these parts, to a little town of Eckernförde in Germany. I came here seeking a time and space to create a new artwork and catch up on all of the piled up side-work that accompanies an artist creative process, the boring but mandatory stuff that takes ones energy and time: applying, finalizing previously started projects, posting, documenting, seeking fundings. What I found was a serene, quiet landscape with pleasantly rainy weather, sandy beach, fairy tale kind of wandering streets with wild flowers blooming in its every corner making me wonder if I am getting lost in a nearby wilderness.

I could not have imagined that I would find what I didn't know I deeply needed and to be supported in that. A time to rest, recharge and enjoy life and playfulness of art making; slow down; enter a self reflection on my approaches to work and to myself; to learn again with water, the sandstones, wind, wood, moon, birds and people.

In this remote little town I found amazing stories that resonate with my work. I was inspired by their impact and caring spirit. I left with stronger and much needed reassurance in the research I stepped into arriving here.

It all started with a question that turned into a video essay of experiences, landscapes and thoughts that informed this journey...

Where are we heading ?

So what would happen with
this ecological entanglement
if we where to



Screenshots from a video essay made during the residency

Then we started the walk !

EcoSomatic Protocols of Kinship walk route around the Bucket lake

WALKING, TALKING PONDERING WE EXPLORED

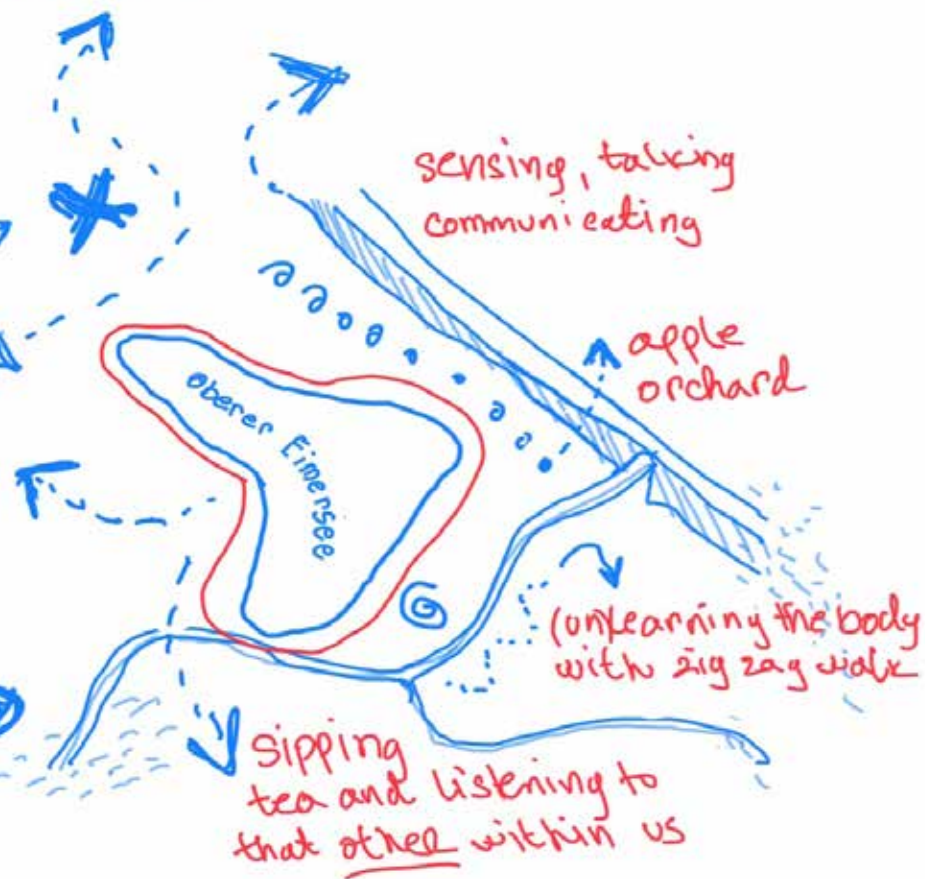
Spec

up the hill shifting
perspective

a new habitat formed
with a community effort
so today many more
"other" communities can
inhabit it!

meeting spot

ulating better
futures



I discovered stories that brought comfort to my solastalgia. Story of a bucket and apples, small but meaningful actions driven by collective strength and resilience, narrating the bright side of human actions. I found encouragement in the story of a listening bench fostering care, communication and deep empathic listening. These stories found gaps in our capitalocentric ways of living, bridging them with some thoughtful actions, sitting with needs, and working through them. Through collaborative, self-organized processes, narrators created new commons for their communities, offering fresh pathways to navigate a fractured value system.

Resonating with these stories, I spent my time exploring and weaving in fragments of our shared experiences, thoughts and actions, building connections between these stories and my own aspirations.

Many thank to all who contributed to my research:

Norbert W. and Matthias H. for logistics and implementation support, to Erika R.R. and Michael P. for their inspiring work: cared listening and nature's restoring, both forming new communities. To Frauke, Dagmar, Marina and Christian for joining me in a walk and sharing their thoughts and energies.



Picnic, game, apple pie and some knowledge exchange



Upper Bucket Lake (Oberer Eimersee) is an artificial lake made in 1990

Bucket lake as a common

In times of environmental precarity and eco-anxiety it is easy to feel that small actions are insignificant against global challenges. Yet, plugging a culvert with a bucket as an act to protect the land from unnecessary housing expansion showed us otherwise. It is a proof that transformation is achievable through small, cheap, intentional efforts. Seemingly insignificant actions can bring about lasting change and create a whole new habitat. One that invited birds, fish, insects, plants allowing non-humans to reclaim their place.

For humans it is a reminder that we are not separate from nature but active participants in its flourishing. Bucket lake is now a multispecies common.

This action helps us acknowledge that the role of humans in this ecological entanglement can be one of stewards, not dominators. Michael's action is a proof that we are not powerless and that everyday acts of care, resilience and effort can bring about necessary change and serve a larger community.

I enjoyed its wavy spiral path, apples, birds, fresh air and soft grass. We took a walk around it seeking reconnection and listening to Nature whispering.



This restored wetland in Rendsburg-Eckernförde (Schleswig-Holstein, Germany) was created by Michael Packschies

Bucket lake is:

a home

a place of coexistence

a place to relax

a place where life thrives

a common that is shared, enjoyed and cared for

a non harming micro action approach to solving big issues

an inch wide mile deep emergent strategy

Bucket lake is a gesture of care and hope, available and empowering.

Example of knowledge at hand that ignite technologies of the self. This is what I seek to open us up to through my work.



Communicating, touching, interacting with (non)human and navigating shared technologies.



EcoSomatic Protocols of Kinship

We are the Nature and we are wired for connections!

EcoSomatic Protocols of Kinship are site-contextualized to enable a shifting perspective of known environment. For Eckernförde, they were particularly reframed to allow us to establish connection with the habitat around the Bucket lake. To learn from small, slow, planetary well-being actions and to envision better futures.

Protocols are an embodied way to situate human tacit knowledge through gentle movements, conversation and speculative fabulation. Protocols are a set of embodied technologies: breathing, tactile listening, proprioceptive movements; plant knowledge, speculative thinking, taking a form of a guided soma-linguistic forest bathing.

To enact them, we collectively performed what I call a soma-linguistic choreography that brings forth ancestral, (non)human knowledge, sidetracked somatic tools for being in this world, seeing, listening, understanding.

Awakening us to symbiotic relationships, interdependence and interconnectedness, exchange and reflection we re-discovered that we are Nature. In this way they enable for technologies of the self to emerge, new carries bags of fiction to be formed that can help us stay with the trouble and move towards earthly futures.

"...it matters what ideas we use to think other ideas (with)."

- Marilyn Strathern

"Breathe in and out! Repeat, in and out, feel the grass and soil beneath your feet, the buzzing sound of the bees and let these words flow through you."

Connection

coming back to our bodies, grounding and rooting with networks underneath

Collaboration

observing the frogs and trees, sharing what collaboration can and should be

Listening

to the tree, our guts, the wind, ourselves

Shifting perspective

touching the ground, seeing from below up on the hill

(Un)learning

slowing down, reverse walking and speculating with unfamiliar

Together we explored how these concepts relate to intertwined threads between nature-technology-society, how can they bring forth new knowledge and potentially enact technologies of the self.



Picnic game. Speculating on potential futures, symbiotic relations and exchanging knowledge.







EcoSomatic probes designed for Bucket Lake walk (homemade tea made from apples near Bucket lake, a postcard and a game prompt)

Zig Zag walk. Exploring the concept of (un)learning and discussing how is reconnecting with nature tied to technologies.



Climbing up the nearby hill to gaze at the lake. Shifting perspective and coming back ... down to Earth.





Listening as a common

In this anthropocentric AI governed world algorithms communicate climate saving actions, they even provide us a listening ear in by themselves mediated conversations. This technology does amplify marginalized voices but do we really listen or we drift in the noise? We need to ask ourselves if we might have forgotten how to listen? Our bodies speak to us every second, this soil, water, air and other critters constantly speak to us too. Do we stop and listen? And if we do can we understand it anymore?

Listening is a an active, sensorial and intentional practice that comes in many forms. We dont listen just with our ears, but with all of our senses. Listening is an embodied way of knowing and of opening ourselves to others and the world. It is a shared resource that connects us across species, through it we fosters empathy and enable collaboration. When we listen deeply, we honor the voices of others, we acknowledge them and learn from shared encounter. It is a vital practice for reimagining both our technologies and ourselves.



Erika Rogger-Reichelt: Listening bench near a spa park in Eckernförde.

Being here, I spent time listening to the silence, my inner child and my body, sandstones and clouds. I learn and unlearn through embodied listening and fuse it in my artworks. It is a life long engagement. Ability to listen is our small, cheap, available technology of the self that can spark new knowledge and shift the ground beneath us.

I came here to create a new listening zone inspired by my Balkan roots and a family bench that served as a community gathering and listening zone. I found many benches, often similar to ones in my hometown. They are used in a way we mostly are familiar with them, people come sit in pair of alone and rest, often on their phones.

One spoke to me.



Erika at her bench. Photo from an older article about her project taken by Jessica Conrad

Erika felt the need to connect through listening. As she shared with me she practices listening in many ways, like while she attends to her garden, sitting with the cat that visits her from time to time or while gazing at stars. What Erika does is embodied listening. She noticed people are not listening anymore. Because as she says:

"listening comes from inside to outside" and that doesn't come easy. So she acted and asked the city to allocate one of the public benches for her project Listening bench. For a while Erika held a space for deep and community aimed listening, presence, dialogue and care at her bench. She sat on that bench once a week at a designated time and listened, having conversations with arriving strangers. She might have aimed to older population who felt lonely but attracted many. Listening, the act where we tune into our body sensing the presence of the other is crossgenerational. For generations who grew up in a zone of global networked communications and artificially mediated conversations and content, it might be even more needed.



Erikas initiative sparked others to follow: a zone in the center of Eckernförde and a similar bench in Berlin.

Listening, conversation, bench as commons

So much I have resonated with this project, because I myself have made a bench meant for us to practice listening. Listening to the nature, the non-humans and ourselves, seeking to nurture threads that connect us.

I went back to my Banat roots and a blue family bench we had in front of our house. This bench was not unique to my village nor the only one, in fact almost every house had one, made from scrapes and used by everyone. It defied the idea of territory and authorship and emphasized collection. Benches are a shared common I grew up with. Around them villagers would gather to tell stories, share some information, and connect. Sitting on one was an invitation to join for a conversation.

How can we re connect with the non-human within and around us, the soil, the air, water, people? How do we communicate when we speak different languages? How do we care and coexist in symbiotic relationship? What knowledge do we already have, forgotten that can help us in this?

These are the questions that guide me in this research where I am making a network of site specific bench inspired zones to navigate this and spread values that shaped me, that I see could be used as countermeasures to our AI capitalocentric era.

This is my technology of the self (Michel Foucault) presented as an emergent strategy (Adrienne Maree Brown).



Benches found in Eckernförde.



Banat bench with a Salix abra tree in the city garden of Zrenjanin-Serbia. First bench in the network of future bench inspired zones to reconnect, listen and communicate.

Echoes from the Earths Crust and Beyond

As a multimodal practice based research, this project navigates those questions that inhabit my being.

Through this rhizomatic network of site specific bench inspired zones, I aim to establish places to practice communication between humans and non-humans. These zones are activated with activities such as ecosomatic protocols of kinship or picnic events that foster collective storytelling. Bench inspired zone is an example of human technology and an accompanying plant is a example of non-human technology. They are brought together through these activities and an audio archive.

It was only natural to collect this story from Erika and include it in the archive that collect other people embodied knowledge, their ancestral wisdom about the land they cultivate, live on, defend and pollute. These multivocal stories are a displaced knowledge of the changing landscape reshaped by the technoutopian extraction of the Earth, knowledge of other beings and recipes for what comes after.

Collaborative in nature, this project situates a collective production of knowledge, forming a dispersed immaterial heritage about the symbiotic relationships between humans and non-humans.



Pebbles in AI shoe. Mix media (stones, photos, recipe) created during a residency.



Critical Mass



Sameness



Centralization



Categorization



(A)ldolatry



Obstinateness



(Un)learning

*"Small but mighty.
Persistently rubbing
of the edges of my mind.
Unseemingly. Morphed.
Binding pillars.
Difference in oneness.
I ponder on the
path (un)taken."*

Human / Natural assembly as a common

Within my work I am creating situations to spark ideas that can be used to think other ideas with and through. Darwin's approach to investigation and knowledge making inspired me. He said that *"every once in a while one should do a crazy experiment, like blowing the trumpet to the tulips every morning for a month. Probably nothing would happen, but what if it did?"* Pebbles in AI shoe is a work where I combined sandstones I collected during my stay with thoughts coming from Darwin, Strathern and Haraway tentacular thinking and shaped them into a recipe to think anew, unlearn and find new meanings and connections.

These randomly collected sandstones were found during my walks at the intertidal zone of Baltic sea and its shallow shore. I have been collecting stones for a while, not knowing why or for what purpose just that I connect them to AI. This bothered me just as a stuck pebble would bother me walking. It was then that I saw that some concepts are that pebble around this AI walk we are walking. Those that make you aware of how you walk, the shape of your foot and the texture of the path. These sandstones fit in as if they ones where one piece. I still didn't know what to make of them so I decided to use them as a recipe to cook up new ideas. Each stone has been allocated a concept representing an aspect that bothers my mind when I think about the affects and development of AI. They are ingredients for a speculative recipe to cook up fresh food for thoughts.

What new thoughts or better, countermeasures to issues of AI, you can cook up with this recipe?



Norbert W. holding a chosen Red cob apple tree seedling. Photo by Frauke R.

This *Blue marbel* is our habitat.

The common to be shared across species.

Speculative fabulation, listening, dialogue making, sensing, drafting recipes, choreographing collective experiences are my ways of navigating this world. The last piece that I discovered during my stay here shaped my final work. The apple orchard is another example of collective care, Eckernförde shared common. As part of the growing network of connecting and listening zones I am developing, Eckernförde is the second to get one. It takes the form of a resting spot accompanied with a recipe to guide and awaken the wisdom of the body, reconnect with the other around us.

Somewhere in the line of the orchard you will notice a new seedling of a red cob apple tree species. Near it you will find a plate with an engraved recipe.

This zone, resonates with what I learned from this landscape and its people. It is an invitation to immerse in the landscape we inhabit, gain a new perspective of it. Followed is a longer, guided form of a recipe.

May the next walk take you on an exploration of senses and oneness.



Apples from the tree. Photo by Frauke R.

Re-connecting with the other: Hey do you hear me ?

This world is a tapestry of voices. Trees are rustling, rivers are murmuring, rocks are echoing and humans are getting lost in the sounds of their own voices. Just because we don't speak the same language doesn't mean we can't communicate and connect. Just because a tree is still it doesn't mean it is not moving. Just because we don't see or hear something doesn't mean it is not here. Just because we are different and dispersed doesn't mean we are separated.

We are all interconnected by threads of our shared habitat. Attune to the threads that bind us.

Begin with an offering: A bit of water, maybe saying a few words of gratitude or intention to the apple tree. Now sit or lay down next to it and ground yourself in the present moment. Find 3 connecting spots: you, the tree and the landscape, non-humans around you.

Engage in Silent Dialogue: Close your eyes, breathe in and out these thoughts. Listen to the exchange of thoughts and feelings, how they echo in your body. Allow it all in.

Finding the threads: Gently stretch your body or rise up. What got stuck with you, a feeling, insight, memories, thoughts, sensation, words? Allow them to guide you in a small inch by inch movement while you observe, touch, listen to threads around. They will occur to you in many different ways and forms.

Weaving the story: Bring it all back inward, as a story weaved in through movement. As all is coming to your mind weave it in a shape of a story. Make sure your feet are firm on the ground, knees slightly bent and gently start moving both your hands from left to right creating an infinity symbol. Allow your whole being to be present with the movements and thoughts as they come together in a story.

Connecting: Gaze back to the apple tree. Share this story in any way you feel would bring you closer in connecting with it.

Project by Sunčica P.K

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