

# We need places to fall in love

Introduction  
Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro

We don't  
know what  
to expect.  
We think  
the context  
will produce  
something  
together.

When Roland Barthes introduced his 1977 seminar on *How To Live Together* at Collège de France, he acknowledged a personal fantasy: the desire to study small groups of people living together. His main research materials were stories of the life of monks on Mount Athos, which he seemed to idealize as an example of pure balance between individual life and collective life. Retreat activities—research, mysticism, asceticism, eremitism—are combined with social activities—meals shared with others, manual tasks—without following strict rules. Each category of rhythms, the personal and the collective, is organized with more or less flexibility according to monasteries or groups on Athos. At the heart of Barthes' fascination lies one word: *idiorrhythmy*—the possibility of the self to beat within the social score—which he borrowed from the great French scholar of Greek Antiquity, Jean-Pierre Vernant.

One may think of these religious communities as deeply ecological practices: spirituality through material sobriety, vegan ethics, rural labor, sustainable land use... Some monasteries are still without electricity today. A place outside modernity, more concerned with human elevation towards God than accumulation of goods or knowledge, Athos has apparently resisted the rise of the global spectacle and carried across centuries the utopia of an "idiorhythmic society".

The current reality, which I was able to witness during a short trip to the peninsula, is more complex and certainly tangled in accelerated globalization. Barthes might have been surprised to discover wi-fi network in monasteries, monks driving high-speed boats to get around (enjoying like

most us the advantages of cheap fossil energy), computer-based libraries, cell phones, and more HUVs than donkeys. Perhaps most paradoxical: though access is restricted and in particular forbidden to women, Athos is part of the Greek State; but in this time of lasting economic crisis throughout the country, it has all the appearance of a tax

heaven. Monasteries manage billions in donations from Orthodox communities worldwide, and do not pay a euro of tax to the State.

Thinking of Athos today reintroduces the question "how to live together?" from a global perspective, fifty years after Barthes' seminar. The *Great Acceleration* for instance, an online monitor of the Anthropocene, charts global socio-economic data such as population, GDP, energy, etc., since the mid-1700s, in parallel to atmospheric and earth data—greenhouse gases, temperature, ocean acidification, etc.: all curves are exponential. Fantasy becomes anguish, and the exploratory investigation proposed by Barthes becomes: how long may we still live together? We are disrupting incredibly rapidly the conditions of life and, for many species including our own, the

possibility of life itself. An irreversible, multi-degrees climate change looms ahead, as do multiple and interwoven collapse scenarios—peak oil, resource depletion, debt, decline in crop yields, biodiversity loss... Larger systems of organization seem fragile: Europe was yesterday driven by ideas of integration and construction; it is now witnessing a return of fascisms and divisions.

In Greece, resilience (the capacity of a society to survive a collapse scenario) is a necessity, forced upon the people by austerity conditions. At the end of the spectrum, a country like Switzerland, home to wealthy corporations, could afford a citizen-led, voluntary "transition" to a steady-state economy relying on locality and low-tech principles. If you visit Basel in June, you can of course attend Art Basel. The

petro-intensive art fair epitomizes the accelerationist dynamics and the high frequency markets that set the pace in artistic institutions today. At closer glance, you can also meet a multitude of inhabitants who are changing their lives and life around them, by practicing democracy on micro-levels, saving seeds, gardening together, producing their own electricity, repairing stuff, sharing knowledge, supporting local economy through a local currency, or advocating an unconditional basic income.

Weaving social processes and turning to more resilient forms of self-organization is not only an adaptive strategy in the face of the chaotic times to come. It opens up spaces where we can hope, fall in love, make together and be together. •





## Préambule

« Nous ne savons pas ce que nous faisons  
là, mais nous savons que nous allons vivre  
quelque chose ensemble. »

C'est sur ces mots de Christopher Crimes que  
notre rencontre a commencé. Nous c'est des  
artistes, des militants et des chercheurs  
de tous horizons, animés par le désir de se  
rencontrer et de faire naître de nouvelles  
forces de création.

Invités à Bâle par Nature Addicts Fund,  
nous y avons passé cinq jours au mois de  
juin 2016. Nous sommes allés à la rencontre  
de cette ville le long d'un parcours qui  
nous a menés de lieu en lieu, là où les gens  
vivent et là où ils inventent des manières  
de vivre ensemble. D'une rive à l'autre,  
guidés par Stéphane Verlet-Bottéro, affréteur  
de cette semaine de rencontres, nous avons  
traversé des lieux aussi hétéroclites  
qu'une école d'art, une galerie, le quartier  
général de la campagne pour le revenu  
universel, des jardins et un conservatoire  
de graines devenues rares.

Pour cette édition, les discussions  
collectées lors des rencontres ont été  
réunies le long d'un cheminement qui va de  
la chute au rassemblement en passant par  
l'amour et la remise en question des valeurs  
traditionnelles.

Les textes moissonnés ont été retranscrits  
presque tels quels, avec la croyance  
que la spontanéité de l'oral laissera  
transparaître quelque chose de fondamental  
que la réécriture tend à faire disparaître.  
Ces morceaux choisis doivent se lire comme  
des bribes d'une pensée complexe, faite  
de rapprochements ambigus, d'accords et  
de contradictions, issue d'individus qui  
s'organisent pour observer et prendre en  
main leurs conditions de vie.

Une édition à dominante anglaise bariolée de passages en  
français et de quelques uns en allemand pour transcrire la  
diversité des dialogues, la position particulièrement  
européenne de Bâle et la dimension de localité au coeur de  
la rencontre (suivant l'idée illychienne qu'une Europe  
post-mondialisée et énergétiquement plus sobre abandonnerait  
l'hétéronomie d'une grammaire unique).





Jeudi après-midi nous rencontrons Mathilde Rosier au centre d'art Der TANK où est actuellement exposé son installation *In Revolution*. Dans son film, qu'elle décide de projeter renversé, plusieurs danseurs effectuent un ballet sous des voûtes de pierre, la tête en bas. Captivés, nous sommes tenus au seuil du conscient et de l'inconscient par cette vidéo. La discussion qui suit gravite autour de la notion de «laisser-aller» : dépassement de l'angoisse subie par la volonté de contrôle.

Mathilde Rosier est née à Paris. Elle vit et travaille entre Berlin et la Bourgogne.



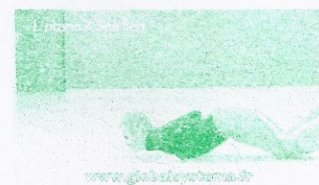
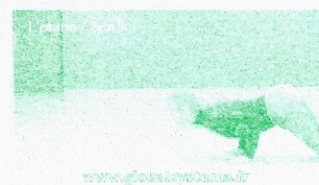
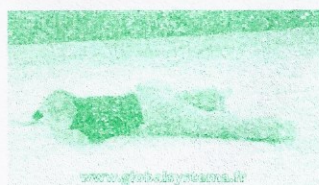
Mathilde Rosier

## Letting go

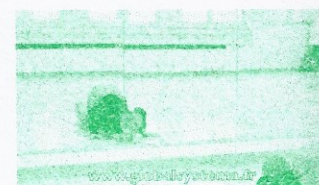
Der TANK  
21-06-2015



I am very concerned—as I think you all are—about the situation of the planet. But my way to deal with it, is trying to understand what is really the source of the problem. My interpretation is that anxiety is actually why people produce and consume too much. If we were not anxious, I guess, we would almost no longer have the feeling that we have to work and consume. This anxiety is caused by the lack of inner ecology. The outside ecology

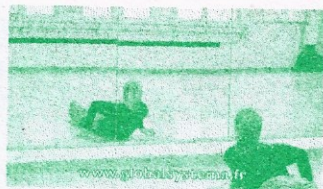


is really a problem. But the outside ecology is just a consequence of the inner one, which should be treated first. Ugo Bardi who was invited on Monday, was talking about matches: why don't people use matches instead of plastic lighters? This is basically a problem of inner ecology. And this problem, this question of inner ecology is linked to a misuse of the mind. Probably we receive too much information and get overwhelmed. I don't think that the mind



should be completely empty like in a yoga-practice. I mean, it's not a bad idea, it's already better than nothing. However, I think it's not really realistic to go in the direction of creating an inner void in the brain. Maybe it can just be a kind of step. Ultimately I believe in what Claude Levi-Strauss called *the savage mind*, characterized as a sort of mind that is prominent in more traditional societies that he studied as an anthropologist.

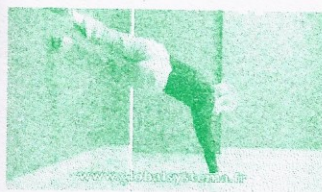




This savage mind is a form of intelligence that is not production-driven, that is not orientated in the direction of productivity. That's a mind purely creative but not in the purpose of serving productivity. So, when I started to make representations of the world upside-down, that was the fundamental of my questioning. Because when you look at things upside-down, especially dance, it creates a state of mind which is very interesting.



I think it's very difficult to remain focused on what the image is talking about; it becomes an abstraction. And this abstraction of the mind is what I am interested in. Without really using abstraction, but by putting the world upside-down, very simply. Putting the body upside-down is also representing this idea of letting go, of being in a state of release. Releasing this anxious idea that we should always grasp something, always rely on something to exist, to be somebody,



to give a meaning to life. During the screening of my film people don't think. They don't seem to have any thoughts. Particularly the children I work with feel this state of letting go. Life is much lighter upside-down, it seems. Also in the painting, the bodies upside-down without the head appear to me like bottles, and when you put the bottle without the cap, pffft... the content leaves the bottle.



Photogrammes : JMSistema, *Animals drills*, Youtube, 2014  
Mardi après-midi, Sophie Krier nous propose un entraînement de Sistema. C'est l'occasion pour nous de mettre en pratique nos discussions sur le « lâcher prise », sur l'utilisation de la force de la chute et sur la résilience (capacité pour un corps, un organisme, une organisation ou un système de retrouver ses propriétés initiales après une altération)





†  
 Sophie Krier & Henriëtte Gaal, *Hunnie*,  
 De Bovenlanden (Netherlands), 2012-2013  
 Photo credit: Sjoerd Knibbeler

In the course of a year long field research, *Hunnie* ('them' in local slang) designed and tested new forms of recreation and maintenance in De Bovenlanden. The polder is destined to exchange its agricultural function for a nature reserve in the context of a European side plan to link ecological zones and allow flora and fauna to migrate and diversify. *Hunnie*'s focus is the role of humans in relation to this man-made 'new nature'.

7  
 Katarzyna Przerzawska, *Playground*, cutted stones, painted metal tubes and polyurethane, Lublin, 2015  
 Open-air sculpture park as playground



If you've ever  
looked closely into the eyes of  
a nonhuman animal, even a chimpanzee, our  
closest relative, you may have noticed that those  
animals do not have "white" in their  
eyes.

The cooperative eye hypothesis is a  
proposed explanation for the appearance of our  
human eye. It suggests that the eye's distinctive visible  
characteristics evolved to make it easier for humans to  
follow another's gaze while communicating or while  
working together on tasks.

In French, there is an  
expression: "se regarder dans  
le blanc des yeux" (to look in each  
other's eye-white), which means looking  
at someone in a very intense and deep  
way, with a sense of challenge or  
love.