

A Tender World - Transience, Control and the Inevitable

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A Tender World - Transience, Control and the Inevitable

«A tenderness that is also sore, like the skin around an injury»

Introduction

Tenderness doesn't have to mean showing gentleness, kindness, and affection only. Words obviously mean different things depending on context, time and culture. The same word can taste different in the speaker's mouth, vibrate differently in the writer's hands, depending on just the state one is in. So what do I mean by tenderness in this context? Allowing myself first to be subjective, the writing *I*, I came to define tenderness in this context as a certain kind of vulnerability. As in the vulnerability of being alive in this world, and sharing that state with everything in it, by assuming that everything is alive just by consisting of countless known and unknown particles in constant movement and entropy.¹

If we accept this premise, then everything is interconnected in some way just through this - change, process, movement and mutability.

Tender can also mean being easy to chew - soft, eatable, edible. Ready to be eaten and digested, like rotting meat eaten by microbes, or prey already giving in to the hunter. Surrendering to the forces of life is a state of vulnerability. But whereas vulnerability can sound exactly vulnerable and dangerous, tenderness tastes more like acceptance; a humble realism. Tenderness is accepting things as they are and how they change, at a deep level. In that sense, tenderness is giving in to uncertainty, staying with chaos and trouble.

Tenderness and vulnerability can even be read as an antidote for the dominating reflex, the hierarchical and vertical complexes of modern civilization, where man is supposed to rule and control his surroundings, in fear of being ruled by them.² The premise of the following is also that human civilization needs deep change, which should be obvious by now, considering the ecological crisis and mass extinction it has produced. If the need to rule and separate is vertical, then the state of adherence/attachment is perhaps, a state of horizontality.

Transience

Why is this important, why is this my interest; enough to start this thesis from? Perhaps it is the presumption that human life needs tenderness to be bearable at all. Maybe even interesting.

The first week of my first year in the MA studies started with an invitation to have an introduction to *Iskrem og Samtaler / Ice Cream and Conversations*, a conversation café held in Kurant.³ This was in a series of talks about impermanence, transience and uncertainty, arranged by artist Malin Lin Nordström, former BA Graduate at Tromsø Art Academy 2020, as part of her graduation work.

¹ Whether there is life on Mars or anywhere else in the universe, would be an obsolete question from this perspective. Artist Egill Sæbjørnsson poses the question in the video work *From Magma to Mankind*, 2013: «Why is there this thick line dividing what we call animate and inanimate matter? Why don't we decide that there is no line?»

² Valkeapää, Nils-Aslak. "The Sun, the Thunder, the Fires of Heaven." *ReVision* (Summer 1998).

³ Kurant is an artist-run gallery space founded in Tromsø 2009 by Kåre Grundvåg, Line Solberg Dolmen and Geir Backe Altern, then students at Tromsø Art Academy.

(Event text:) *If nothing is permanent, we will all die, and everything is constantly under change. What if the most precious thing in life is its uncertainty? Mortality and transience is a condition for things being overwhelming and unbearable, but also a condition for things being meaningful. How do we acknowledge that vulnerability? Our world is shaped by the stories we tell each other. Which narratives form our perception on life, transience, change and uncertainty? How can we make sense of the world we live in, and how do we move forward?*⁴

With this given outline as a starting point to the conversation, I held an introduction based on a conversation Nordström and I had earlier, circling around climate change in general, and more specifically the feeling of loss and uncertainty when the surrounding as we know it changes drastically; and how we react to it.

The introduction further addressed themes around the feeling of personal connection to a given landscape, mortality and impermanence in western versus eastern philosophy, the concept of life after death, clinging and letting go, described partly through anecdotes from personal experience. It resulted in a conversation ranging from aging and technology, artificial intelligence, Post-humanism and human responsibility and agency in the face of the Anthropocene; nevertheless in a searching and open-ended way. Somehow the theme of death and impermanence seem to humble people since we all are victims to it. There is really no right or wrong around the topic, given the ephemeral nature of it: when talking about transience or death in a bigger plural, arguments soften, voices change their pitch, time changes its pace.

The following poetic text I wrote for Nork Magazine : Green Issue, 2019, was used as a pre-reading for the conversation:

The illiterate

So be it. I venture on a trip to see what's up there, above
city air.
I find myself wandering up a mountain path. One step
leads to the next.

*If you say A, you have to say B. If you do A, B will ask to
be done.*

For every step I take – an opening of the eye. The
thoughts are silenced, but my eyes can see. The air is
thin - The signs are there. I can close my eyes, but I know
that as soon as I open them, I will see them again.

If pain must come, may it come quickly

I wander between stones. I sit down in grass, in heath.
The light is soft and bright. Further up there is snow.
Patterns of meaning, like script, a text unfolded, a
message that is everywhere, surrounding density.
Breathing, swaying in the wind or pulsating.

I can't read. I touch them with my fingers

They move. I move – from one place to the other. If I
stay too long, I get lost.

Parting is such sweet sorrow

⁴, 2020, accessed 21st Nov, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/events/751677595663870/>.

The message is hidden.

It's clear – that I can't read. I'm supposed to, but can't, simple as that.

It's everywhere, and I have to leave every message behind and go on, surrounded by secrets. Images reveal themselves, but remain a riddle

The only thing we share is that we breathe

I feel like something is buried in the lake. But I have to go on.

I'm surrounded, by constant flow of meaning that can't be deciphered

It's here

The secret, surrounding me

Illiterate I am. They are telling, I am listening with my eyes but there's no use. I listen, I listen, I listen.

I close my eyes and listen with my inner ear instead because I cannot read or listen with my eyes. I am not good at reading up here.

Maybe it was – a misunderstanding, the signs – do they mislead? Coming from a human realm, projected on these surfaces, hiding the core.

I listen, I close my eyes and listen, I try to catch the message if there is any.

This is not a distant planet

Eyes closed, in the darkness I see something with my ears, the wind, a cry, I hear the sulking, I hear crying, so I cry too - the loss, the goodbyes, the fear, I care for all the fear. The parting and pain, I see it and I hear it, in the darkness, and from my own sulking voice, and my feelings mirroring what is there and in there, in here, my home.

The next thing I know is that the only thing I know, is how to read that a storm is coming

That we always move.

A certain tenderness that is also sore, like the skin around an injury

But everything flows

That we are



From *Iskrem og samtaler* conversation café, August 2020, Kurant. Photo: Kristine Røed

Deep Adaptation

When first introduced to the concept of ecological grief, or eco-sorrow, some years ago (before the collective focus turned from ecological crisis to the still ongoing pandemic caused by Covid-19), I wasn't really prepared for definitions of it other than negative, or in worst case, unbearable. In the podcast *Emerge: The Meaning and Joy of Inevitable Social Collapse*⁵, University of Cumbria sustainability leadership professor Dr. Jem Bendell is interviewed about the the academic paper *Deep Adaptation*⁶, which was released in 2018. In the conversation topics from this paper are discussed, for example non-linear self-reinforcing negative feedback loops in climate systems: changes that are not linear or predictable anymore, but far beyond human control to foresee, predict or reverse. As well as the existential and psychological implications of collapse acceptance. The paper was originally turned down for needing revision and for reaching unhelpful conclusions, but has later inspired an international movement, introducing the three approaches: *resilience*, (what are the valued norms and behaviours that human societies will wish to maintain as they seek to survive?); *relinquishment*, (letting go of certain assets, behaviours and beliefs,

⁵ Bendell, Dr. Jem. *Emerge*. Podcast audio. The Meaning and Joy of Inevitable Social Collapse 1 hr 12 min. Accessed 21st Nov, 2021. <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/dr-jem-bendell-meaning-joy-inevitable-social-collapse/id1057220344?i=1000433295127>.

⁶ Bendell, Jem. *Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy*. Institute for Leadership and Sustainability (IFLAS), University of Cumbria (02 Nov 2018).

where retaining them could make matters worse); and *restoration*, (rediscovering attitudes and approaches to life and organization that our hydrocarbon-fuelled civilization eroded).⁷ ; ⁸

These are terms and concepts much used amongst movements like Extinction Rebellion⁹ since then and until today.

The argument is that near term social, or societal collapse is inevitable, not just probable or likely - and that the business of usual of believing in the possibility of coping with, or solving climate change is useless. Extreme weather events and other effects of climate change *will* increasingly disrupt food, water, shelter, power, and social and governmental systems, according to this position. From a collapse acceptance perspective it's better to face the inevitability of collapse and find new ways of organizing and changing society on a deep level. This awareness and urgent need for profound adaptation (that has been present in various alternative, indigenous or feminist movements for ages) seem to become more relevant and acute as time passes and the negative feedback loops in the biosphere accelerate - but are they integrated in the collective consciousness, or in society and public debate in general? The answer seems to be no.

Deeply considering the possible (or inevitable?) collapse of what is known and dear to us, is not for everyone. Integrating, contemplating death and loss in a way that is more than rational, will be hard for most people. But it concerns everyone - and acknowledging it could possibly open up the discussion and make it easier to talk about in order to develop new ways of coping in a constructive way - at all levels of society. Believing that technology, trans-humanism, or a green-washed capitalistic model could ever save us from the very profound biospheric changes that we are already facing, seems unlikely, but that is yet another discussion.

The paper Deep Adaptation reviews some of the reasons why collapse-denial may exist, in particular, in the professions of sustainability research and practice, therefore leading to these arguments having been absent from these fields until now. Eco-grief, loss and collapse acceptance do not have to be unbearable - according to Bendell, acknowledging transience and collapse can be meaningful and even joyful as we adapt new ways of organizing that will benefit society and life, regardless of the form of the collapse. The way in which such a transformation or adaptation would have to be deep, lies perhaps both in the practical and existential aspects of the transformation. Change leaves us vulnerable, but a tender or accepting approach to life as it evolves, could open up new doors.

There are inevitable contradictions here, just like inevitable upcoming changes - if tenderness is staying with trouble, can it also be a cure for trouble? Could tenderness transform the state of the world we live in, and how? Do horror or terror need to be transformed? In Buddhism one can distinguish between the unavoidable suffering that life consists of anyway (hunger, cold, heat, separation) and the self-created suffering, produced by the mind (craving, addiction, denial, refusal). In any case, suffering cannot be eliminated, only transformed. A nightmare doesn't go away by refusing or denying it's existence. It transforms by taking action, moving, looking into it, into its face or form.

⁷ *ibid*, pages 22-24

⁸ Meador, Ron. "New Outlook on Global Warming: Best Prepare for Social Collapse, and Soon." *MinnPost* (15 October 2018).

⁹ Extinction Rebellion (abbreviated as XR) is a global environmental movement with the stated aim of using nonviolent civil disobedience to compel government action to avoid tipping points in the climate system, biodiversity loss, and the risk of social and ecological collapse.

Tenderness versus Empathy, Feeling versus Knowledge

The habitual use of the word tenderness would perhaps, as stated in the beginning of this text, invoke ideas of gentleness, kindness, and affection; feelings and behaviour linked to, or originating in something similar to empathy, a relatively new concept in Anglophone cultures¹⁰. Scholars have been trying to unwrap and explain the difference:

Social feeling is understood as the foundation of civil society, an emotional connectivity that underlies pro-social action. These 'ordinary affects' are commonly expressed in the concept of empathy, a transpersonal state of emotional extensiveness. But this term was only introduced into Anglophone cultures in the first decade of the twentieth century, gaining purchase on social explanation over twenty years later. This essay examines competing understandings of social feeling in this period of transition, which resisted situating it in relation to those individual processes of perception, 'inner imitation' and projection that spoke of empathy's origin in aesthetic theory. By contrast, psychologists, sociologists and political theorists invoked an innate capacity for association and 'fellowship' - the 'gregarious' and 'herd' instincts - with altruism as the expression of that transindividual formation in externally directed action. In these models, emotional extensiveness was tangled up with questions of creaturely sociability, the dynamics of collectivity and mutual tenderness, moving beyond the problem of perceiving 'other minds' to imagine the inner states of others in their social embeddedness. Hence they speak to contemporary concerns with our capacity to respond to 'distant suffering', the everyday consolations of association and human presence, and the ability to effect social change.¹¹

This abstract can be read as a critique of the concept of empathy. Tenderness, in this definition, must not be confused with empathy - if empathy is «inner imitation», the reflex of attempting to imitate another mind in order to feel a response, then tenderness is more similar to adherence or association - more closely linked to the 'herd' instincts.

In the second part of the aforementioned conversation café *Iskrem og samtaler*, Maria Danielsen, philosophy doctoral student at UIT, introduced the conversation with background in topics from the MA Thesis *Understanding the World and Ourselves in a Different Way: A study of Aesthetic Experience*. The thesis issues the question of meaning in experience with art and aesthetics. Throughout the thesis Danielsen investigates whether or not we can acquire knowledge or/and experience something true in aesthetic experience:

According to Kant it is not possible to gain knowledge through this kind of experience. It follows from his system of philosophy that ties all knowledge to concepts. Aesthetics judgements are not to be subsumed within definite concepts and Kant therefore concludes that to gain knowledge from aesthetic experience is impossible. I will, with the help of Kant, explain how understanding and imagination functions in order to make judgments. In ordinary perception their activity decide on the nature of things according to definite concepts, but these concepts do not cover the meaning of an artwork or the meaning of the beautiful in nature. I will therefore take a closer look at what aesthetic judgments are founded upon and contrast Kant's claim against the theories of Heidegger, Gadamer and Dufrenne. Each of them offers a distinct perspective on art and aesthetics that shows that, contrary to Kant's claim,

¹⁰ Swanson, Gillian. "The Tender Instinct Is the Hope of the World: Human Feeling and Social Change before Empathy." *New Formations* 79 (September 2013).

¹¹ *ibid.* abstract.

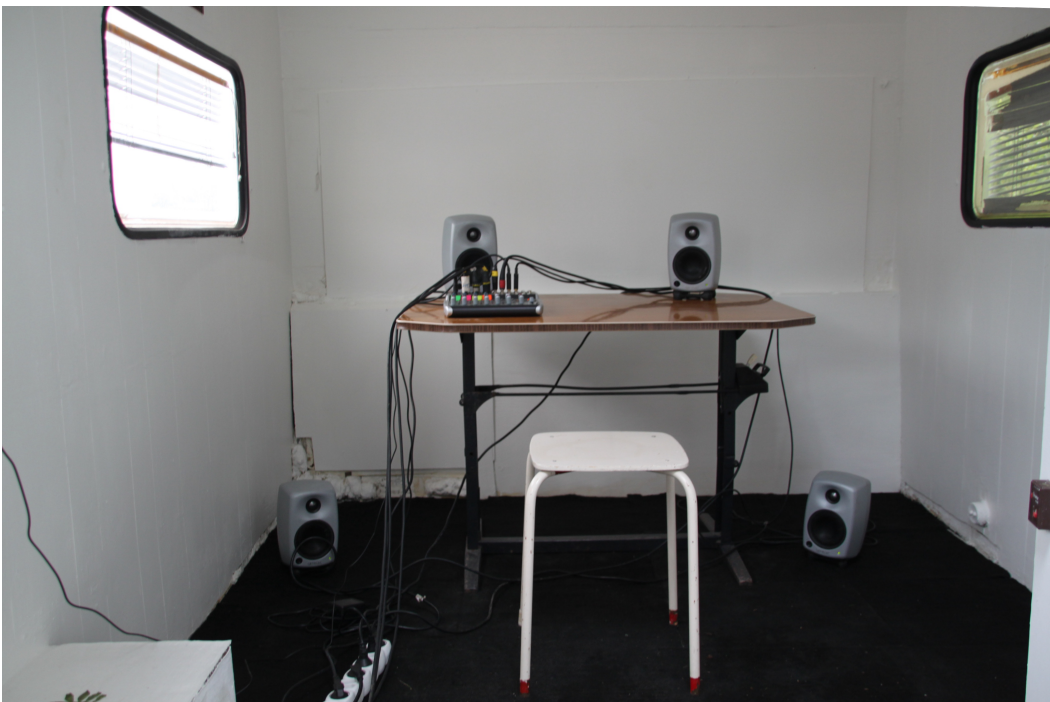
*we can gain knowledge of a particular kind in aesthetic experience. According to Heidegger, we can even experience something true in aesthetic experience.*¹²

According to this line of thought, systems of cognition that are too rigidly tied to concepts, result in ruling out aesthetic experience as too chaotic to gain knowledge from. It could be interesting to consider if collapse acceptance or tenderness could be understood mainly as aesthetic experiences, not conceptual ones. Understanding through concepts is safer than understanding through feelings - feeling renders us vulnerable. Danielsen further highlights how f.ex. Micheal Dufrenne argues that the particular feeling that encounters with art impart on us is knowledge indeed; it is a way of knowing that makes meaning possible. Or, as he himself phrases it: «The supreme proof of feeling's depth is that it is intelligent in a way that intelligence as such can never be.»¹³

Perception, Sound and the Uncontrollable

In my practice I mainly work across the mediums of installation, text and performative work, and more recently, sound. My interest lies in the perception of inner and outer space, and often the works deal with hidden or forgotten forms of knowledge and experience. Text in the form of automatic writing is sometimes incorporated in my projects, either as a process or an end in it self.

The result can be installations where I combine elements and mediums - the way I present, or install works, sometimes reflects the process leading to it. In this way I try to keep some of the fragility or openness of the initial idea phase, where potentiality is key and the connections are open - this certain lightness or transparency is something I usually strive for, or maybe rather allow, in my approach. It is in a sense, about letting the works breathe, without penning them into a rigid form.



Temporary Observatory, 2021. Live atmospheric sound from speakers. Photo: Maija Liisa Björklund

¹² Danielsen, Maria. "Understanding the World and Ourselves in a Different Way: A Study of Aesthetic Experience." MA, UIT The Arctic University of Norway, 2018.

¹³ Dufrenne, Mikel. The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience. Northwestern University Press, 1953.

I've worked with sound in my two last projects. In a sense, working with sound, and especially live sound, offers an opportunity to give up control to a certain degree - leaving things up to the already existing. It's of course possible to alter or manipulate the output of the sound through technology, but live atmospheric sound will always be unpredictable in its essence.

In June 2021 I presented a project in *Failure, Understanding, Care (&Kunst)*, called *Temporary Observatory*. During ten days, situated between Kongsberg Satellites facilities and Tromsø Geophysical Observatory and the lake of Prestvannet, the F.U.C(&K) caravan (aka The Arctic Agency for Environmental Research Methodologies & Artistic Practice) was transformed into a temporary observatory, using a combination of live sound miced into the caravan from condensation and contact-microphones, and a sound piece in the nearby forest, from speakers hidden under ground.



Left: *Loud Speaker, Soft Speaker 2021 / Temporary Observatory*. Sound from speakers hidden under ground. Photo: Maija Liisa Björklund
Right: Kongsberg Satellites, Tromsø. Photo: KSAT

(From exhibition text:)

Kongsberg Satellite Services (KSAT) is a Norwegian-based company and the world's largest ground station for support of polar orbiting satellites. They are a provider of ground network services and maritime monitoring services. KSAT is owned equally (50/50) by Space Norway AS and Kongsberg Defence & Aerospace AS. Tromsø Geophysical Observatory is a research institution under the Faculty of Science and Technology at the University of Tromsø. It was established in 1928 and merged with the university when it was founded in 1972. / What position to observe from - the surface, the churning insides of earth, the serenity of space? Some signals will be considered relevant, picked up - calculating the next move. Where to direct the attention and what filter to use? There is no clean signal, there is noise surrounding everything existing, and loss in translation from one form to another.¹⁴

¹⁴, 2021, <https://theartcagency.com/projects-and-artists/maiija-liisa-bjorklund/>.

Through highlighting the already existing atmospheric sounds from the outside, and doubling them inside the caravan, senses get sharpened; it functioned as a mirroring and an amplification of sorts. While the antennas and satellites of Kongsberg Satellites are directed to space, and earth monitoring from space, the receptors around the caravan are directed to the immediate surroundings: the birdlife around the lake of Prestvannet, traffic, weather, voices and conversations around the caravan, as well as the occasional turning of the antennas at KSAT. There was definitely a surveillance aspect to the work as well, as one could hear the conversations of people outside the van and in the forest, transferred to the speakers inside the van (this was something I, for ethical reasons, chose to inform the audience about).



Temporary Observatory evolved closely tied to the already existing curatorial framework of F.U.C(&K) caravan, which is a project initiated by artists Ruth Alexander Aitken and James S. Lee, using a 60's caravan converted into an exhibition space. The project uses the constraint of radical environmental-consciousness as a means of abandoning the readily available and seeking out new paths for art making and exploration -

doing, instead of doing about. The the rules, or manifesto of the project furthermore provided for a chance to improvise and let go of control:

The rules:

1. No use of air travel to transport artists for exhibitions/presentations or to transport art- works or materials to be used for the project.
2. Art works included in the projects shall be made from re-used, re-appropriated or recycled materials. Items used in the production of the projects should not be shop bought (unless the item will expand the life-cycle or protect the life of other items in the projects, if required by the artist).
3. There will be no use of electricity inside the project space apart from electricity generated from renewable sources.

I realized that this approach is one I've already partly adopted, consciously or unconsciously; but navigating within this set framework made it easier to follow and stick to. It brings to mind the way it seems impossible to hope for actors within a framework of supply-and-demand driven capitalist societies to act «morally» or in a sustainable way. There is a need for rules and regulations, not just moral compasses that could turn their arrow in any opportunist direction.¹⁵

¹⁵, 2009, accessed 21 Nov, 2021, <https://www.lmd.no/2009/03/kapitalisme-og-evolusjon/>.

Sonic Meditation, Listening as Activism

As part of the research for the MA work, I'm looking into artists who used sound in their practice in various ways. One of them is Laurie Anderson, American avant-garde artist, who I really began to discover some years ago. She is both a visual artist, composer, poet, photographer, filmmaker, vocalist, instrumentalist. In short, she might be described as a storyteller - her way of telling stories through a variety of mediums is daring and has been pioneering in many ways. She is most known for her multimedia presentations, but I recently discovered other works by her, for example the audio diary *Nothing in my Pockets*, which is a two-part sound diary, kept between July 4 and October 4, 2003. It contains recordings, or sound notes from the places she went to that year - tours in Italy, being back in New York. It also includes visual documents and text excerpts from the audio recordings. Some sound notes are directly linked to sound in itself as subject - for example when Anderson thinks she's playing music on instruments with musicians in the park, but suddenly finds herself having a duet with an owl instead. This work, and other audiovisual works by Anderson interest me since I've worked with similar ways of using audio voice narratives in previous works like *Synesthescap* (2020) and *Kuljin, kuulin* (2021), and imagining new ways of framing and working around them - how to bind stories together, while keeping the lightness of the fragmentary.

Andersons' film *Heart of a Dog* from 2015 is another fragmentary meditation, on connection and loss. It shifts between being straightly narrative to experimental in the way the story is structured visually and sonically, always alternating and blurring the lines between the intimate or private and the political - for example through juxtaposing the 9/11 attack and the terrier Lolabells' new experience of being exposed as prey for the hawks along the Californian shore. The film is a drifty ride through quickly alternating topics, but is held together by the artists' voiceover always looping back to themes of perception, connection.

Elin Már Øyen Vister is an artist and composer I got to know back in 2017 through colleagues, and recently, a workshop at Tromsø Art Academy. Øyen Visters' art practice is interdisciplinary, moving across field recordings, installation, composition, performance and sculpture. They have since 2010 worked with the project *Soundscape Røst*, located on the island of Røst on the tip of the archipelago of Lofoten. The project deals with how the soundscape is changing in pace with the decreasing sea bird population in Røst, due to the ongoing climate change. Øyen Vister is preoccupied with listening as an art practice, through ways of composing, sensing and experiencing the world - inspired and influenced by composer, performer and humanitarian Pauline Oliveros' *Deep Listening Practice*.¹⁶

Pauline Oliveros developed in the 1960's and 70's a philosophy of listening, that can be described as being about opening her own and others' sensibilities to the universe and facets of sounds. Her career spanned fifty years of boundary dissolving music making, through her work with improvisation, meditation, electronic music, myth and ritual. She described *Deep Listening* as a way of listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you are doing. Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, of nature, of one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds.¹⁷

¹⁶ , 2021, accessed 21 Nov, 2021, https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elin_M%C3%A1r_%C3%98yen_Vister.

¹⁷ , 2016, accessed 21 Nov, 2021, <https://paulineoliveros.us/about.html>.

These practices and philosophies are in the background of my research, and possible material for the final work, either as part of the process or the final outcome. There are many ways to implement these approaches to listening and situating oneself in the surrounding, and the context. The setting for the MA show in Tromsø Art Association could be the starting point in itself - to actively use what sound is already there by for example mic'ing or echoing the sound from outside to the inside (or even vice versa) in similar ways as in the aforementioned *Temporary Observatory* work I did in F.U.C(&K). Both the building in itself, the surroundings and the peoples' voices and sounds during the opening day and exhibition opening hours could be the material in itself. Playing with the inside/outside dimension could also be interesting in terms of referring to the ongoing process and pilot-project of turning the building into Kunstens Hus / House of the Arts. The municipality has decided to keep the historical building in its ownership, instead of selling it to the University or some other investor. The idea is for now to keep and develop the building as a centre for art exhibitions, art production and to include existing and future artist-driven initiatives; and at the same time opening it even more to the public. The media debate regarding the current and future use of the building has been at times polarized and overly negative. It has righteously focused on the indeed critical material state of the building (which is in urgent need of restoration); but lately, blamed the current users, or the art community, for the recent kittiwake¹⁸ nesting invasion on its front side, which is due to climate change. Chasing them away by for example using hostile architecture¹⁹, would only move the problem elsewhere. Addressing the increasingly chaotic co-existence of both humans, wildlife and different cultural and social standards or preferences, could be interesting to work further with, using sound or other means to connect inside and outside in a variety of ways. Referring to Oliveros' philosophy, listening can be political, or a form of awareness raising or activism:

While she spent years immersed in introspective experimentation, Oliveros's "Sonic Meditations" shouldn't be mistaken for escapism or disengagement. The composer described listening as a necessary pause before thoughtful action: "Listening is directing attention to what is heard, gathering meaning, interpreting and deciding on action." Following her years of private group experimentation, Oliveros began to share her "Sonic Meditations" in print and in performance... When she first published them, in a 1971 issue of the avant-garde music magazine *Source*, the composer opened with a radical introduction: "Pauline Oliveros is a two-legged human being, a female, lesbian, musician, composer, among other things which contribute to her identity." She understood the specific force of this revelation: in 1974, she wrote, "How many of you out there think you are in the minority? If everyone came out of the closet the world would change overnight." That same year, in her expanded "Sonic Meditations" score, she added, "Healing can occur . . . when one's inner experience is made manifest and accepted by others." ²⁰

¹⁸ The black-legged kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) is a seabird species in the gull family Laridae.

¹⁹ Hostile architecture is an urban-design strategy that uses elements of the built environment to purposefully guide or restrict behaviour.

²⁰ O'Brien, Kerry. "Listening as Activism: The "Sonic Meditations" of Pauline Oliveros." *The New Yorker*, December 9, 2016.

The following notes and reflections are from the aforementioned workshop with Elin Már Vister Øyen, that was set up as a collective space and a teamwork in February 2021, intended as an open multitude of perspectives and use of somewhat less normative knowledges and techniques compared to straight academia. All the notes are recorded in the same space (the Black box of Tromsø Art Academy) after 20 minute sessions of listening, and are meant as a way of describing what Deep Listening within this framework can be like.

The first thing that strikes me, is that I find myself within a soundscape, in the middle of a massive cacophony of sound. There is so much happening everywhere, it surrounds me like a cloud, or a forest. I can hear the humming or drone-like sound (Norwegian; drønning, susing, Finnish; suhina, kohina) as a backdrop to everything. Distant, but at the same time I'm in the middle of it, like I'm inside a cave, or a womb. Maybe more the latter - I feel like I'm inside another body, or under water. The humming-roaring reminds me of that. Sometimes the sound is more insisting, murmuring.

The first meeting with the «sound jungle» calms down a bit, and I start to hear more «separate» sounds - someone moves their body. The sound is a bit plastic-like, gnarling (N.gnagende, F. nakertava). A couple of times there were some very powerful vibrations in the floor, and the sound of something dumping, possibly on the floor downstairs, or something hitting the wall. I feel the vibrations in my entire body. It shakes me up. Now as I'm writing and listen to the small sounds in the room afterwards simultaneously, they feel tender, almost intimate, as if after a ceremony. Sounds of activity, life; something is living. As if the world is whispering.

The sound of someone ascending the stairs, sweeping steps, and the humming of a male voice. First I was sitting upright, facing the back wall and the projection canvas. Then I turned around and laid down facing the door (which was left with a crack open during the whole workshop). Distant conversation from other rooms. Laughter. A voice like a high-pitched dark tone, insisting, metallic in its timber. I felt a bit tired at the end, maybe because of low blood-sugar. Remembering the beginning - when the soundscape «flushed» over me, encompassing me. Being swallowed, engulfed. The murmuring sounds, probably from ventilation, gave me bodily associations, while the actual bodies moving in the room, gave me associations of something artificial, plastic. The language we have for describing sound - In Finnish there is a much bigger vocabulary than in f.ex. Norwegian. Maybe because of the many dense forests, there has been a need to describe to others what you hear, when you can't see as far as in more open landscapes. Also when you talk less, there is more space for listening to other sounds. I was reminded of the importance of hearing, or listening to outside sounds even when being encapsulated by walls - keeping a door open, a window open. I guess we weren't made for being inside a box, we are meant to experience the entire living world and feeling part of it, like through the thin skin of a temporary shelter.

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Dark, dense and eerie to begin with. I practiced Ujjayi breathing in the beginning to help me focus. The candle-light flickering behind the eyelids. As if it was night, suddenly. The murmuring is there again - very clear, but it feels as if it's further away, and therefore more threatening. There is less of the bodily feelings, of being inside a womb. The murmuring starts to feel closer, as if it's in my own head. I tried to listen if there was any tinnitus-like sounds, but I couldn't hear any. The movements of people is exciting, the sound is leather-like - not plastic like yesterday. I think of rhinos, and their skin.

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There is not so much happening today. I think I might be a bit exhausted after three intense days. Sitting in a new spot compared to last time, further into the room, away from the door. The drone-like murmur feels now as if it comes from the opposite direction than of previous days, from the door facing the cantina. When I was in the previous spot by that door, I thought it came from where I'm now, closer to the backdoor and the library. There were some distant sounds from the kitchen or the stairs, that didn't make much impact. I was wondering if I'd got less focused - I might have become more passive and needy as a result of the expected stimuli, and thereby less vigilant or sensitive to what is going on. Sometimes I would jump from unexpected sounds - still audio sensitive, but perhaps in more nervous way simply because I'm exhausted. The soundscape, the dense cacophony of sound is gone. Stretching my body, listening to the sound of bones and cartilage. When bodies moved, it had a textile-like quality, like that of felt.

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Months later - I hear for the first time, through the storm, the sound that constantly changes, yet is always the same.

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