



Design for the Cthulucene:

Common land, Vulnerability
and imagination in Famagusta

With thanks to Esra Can
for introducing me to this
wonderful place, alongside
the many people that
inspired these stories.
The experience has changed
my perceptions of urban
practice for good.

Figure 1, William Lawrence,
Panorama Photo by the Ayluga
Wetlands in Famagusta,
Cyprus, December 2024



Intro

The following stories fabulate an alternative future for the Ayluga wetlands in Famagusta, Cyprus. As well as contributing to the rich body of imaginaries in Famagusta, they aim to reflect my own journey of learning in this context. Through this process, I hope to share ideas about urban practice; drawing from a place facing issues that, while present elsewhere, often unfold with greater urgency.

Although created to retain water during the British colonial period, these wetlands now hold ecological and cultural importance. They are valuable for common land and habitats locally, alongside ecological corridors on a broader scale. Despite this, and despite the illegality

of building there, the land around (and of) the lake is being developed at an alarming rate. This manifesto hopes to act as a counter imaginary to the poor quality, financialised development encroaching on this precious site.

These narratives follow a collective of those inhabiting the new developments who come together through shared vulnerabilities to develop interdependent and caring ways of relating; both each other and the wetlands.¹ They explore how 'queer use' of landscape, space and culture can disrupt colonial, nationalist or capitalist

¹ Akbil, Emre, Alex Axinte, Esra Can, Beatrice de Carli, Melissa Harrison, Ana Méndez de Andés, and others, Urban Commons Handbook (Barcelona, Spain: dpr-barcelona, 2021)

* to inform this approach, I hope to contact the Queer Cyprus Association in Famagusta to find out about how queer communities live in and experience this context.

Figure 2, William Lawrence,
Photo by the Ayluga Wetlands,
December 2024



narratives which reinforce the status quo.¹

They ask how local communities can claim territories² and spatial agency³ in opposition to destructive development approaches, how spaces can support speculative fabulation⁴ and radical imagination⁵, how they can meet housing demands in ways that are suited to earthly survival, and how they can live amongst the new structures - which are not going anywhere - in thriving ways.

Informing the stories and throughout the text, there are methodologies in green, connections to precedents in orange, contextual information in indigo, and theory and concepts in red.

1 arpa, Elena, 'Queering the Soil: Reimagining Landscape and Identity in Queer Artistic Practices in Cyprus', Image & Text, 36, 2022, 1-20 <<https://doi.org/10.17159/2617-3255/2022/n36a20>>
2 Escobar, Arturo, Territories of Difference : Place, Movements, Life, Redes (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008)
3 Awan, Nishat, Nishat Schneider, Tatjana Till, Schneider, Tatjana, and Till, Jeremy, Spatial Agency : Other Ways of Doing Architecture (London: Routledge, 2011)
4 Haraway, Donna Jeanne, Staying with the Trouble [electronic Resource] : Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham, North Carolina ; London, [England]: Duke University Press, 2016)
5 Haiven, Max, and Alex Khasnabish, The Radical Imagination : Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity, First edition. (London, England: Zed Books, 2021)

storying as care

Attention
Touch
With
Detail

Lecture: Emma Cheatle, 'Storying as care': Ecologies of Care Symposium (Nov 2021): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1R9g43W8pCMN70SAiUliD9pfhYio_5rTB/view?usp=drive_web [Accessed 10 December 2024]

SF

science fiction
speculative fabulation
string figures
speculative feminism
science fact
so far

Haraway, Donna Jeanne, Staying with the Trouble [electronic Resource] : Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham, North Carolina ; London, [England]: Duke University Press, 2016)

Butler, Octavia E, Parable of the Sower, Warner Books ed. (New York: Grand Central Publ., 2000)

Faith and Belief Systems

Parable of the sower

Adaptability and resilience in an unstable world
Vulnerability, mutual care and interdependence
Characters shaped by emotional and physical displacement

Emphasis on the role of found families for those living outside the mainstream

Spirituality and entanglement between life, death and memory

Liminal characters occupying space inbetween social categorisation

Vagabonds!

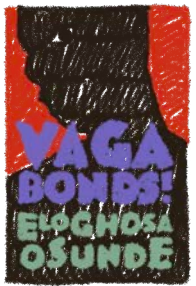
individual and collective imaginings

Characters embodying elements of the city and personifying the city

Osunde, Eloghosa, Vagabonds! (London: 4th Estate, 2022)

Characters and stories inspired by authors such as Octavia E. Butler and Eloghosa Osunde.

Taking precedence from Osunde's Vagabonds!, the stories will jump between different characters and themes, from situating, to speculating and enacting, to situating again¹, to allow for a sense of ambiguity and individual interpretation.



1 Haiven, Max, 2021.

Defining Care

Care as labour.

Care as interdependence.

Making care visible.

Mending broken relationships.

Fitz, Angelika, Elke Krasny, Brian Dorsey, and Timothy Savage, Critical Care : Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet (Vienna : Cambridge, Massachusetts: Architekturzentrum Wien ; MIT Press, 2019)

Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria, Matters of Care : Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017)

Collective definition of 'Disruptive Care'

"Making visible and disrupting the existing state of broken relationships through an active understanding of, and appreciation for, the interconnectedness of all things."

Collective definition of disruptive care established by the 'Disruptive Care' MArch Studio, 2024

Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene

Colonial narratives

Neo-liberalisation and privatisation

Extractive and neo-colonial practices

Enclosures, enclaves & contestations

Multiple Breakdowns

Staying With the Trouble

'our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places.'

Haraway, Donna Jeanne, Staying with the Trouble [electronic Resource] : Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham, North Carolina ; London, [England]: Duke University Press, 2016)

Anthropocene: Transformative impacts of human activity.

Capitalocene: An age of rapid depletion of resources as capital races to extract every last drop of fossil fuel.

Plantationocene: Simplification of complex systems for extraction.

Cthulucene: A time of change, of stirring up and 'nurturing what might still be'

Key theory underpinning this includes the collective understanding of *disruptive care* established by the *Disruptive Care* MArch studio, and Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble*.



Figure 3, William Lawrence, Photo of new developments encroaching onto the Ayluga Wetlands and the line of Eucalyptus trees that surround it, December 2024

Figure 4, James
Taylor, Photo of
illegal construction
into the land of the
lake, December 2024





Figure 5, William Lawrence, Photo of waste dumped on the Ayluga Wetlands, December 2024

Figure 6, Owais Abid, Photo of waste dumped on the Ayluga Wetlands, December 2024



- Yasmin: Jasmine flower, symbolising mystery and grace



- a sleek, patchy cat with golden eyes that glimmer in the light
- Some say she is an ordinary stray, others see her as the soul of the wetland and its guardian. Her moods reflect the health of the lake and the people and critters around it.
- She has a complicated relationship with time, appearing in stories and folktales across generations.

Yasmin

I am Ayluga, I have always been ayluga, I always will be, even once it is gone...

I don't remember when they came. They dug the lakes, then planted the trees to reduce them, then cut down the trees to save the lakes. Some say they knew best... I know they loved to make things inside out. The buildings, inside out. Friendships, inside out.

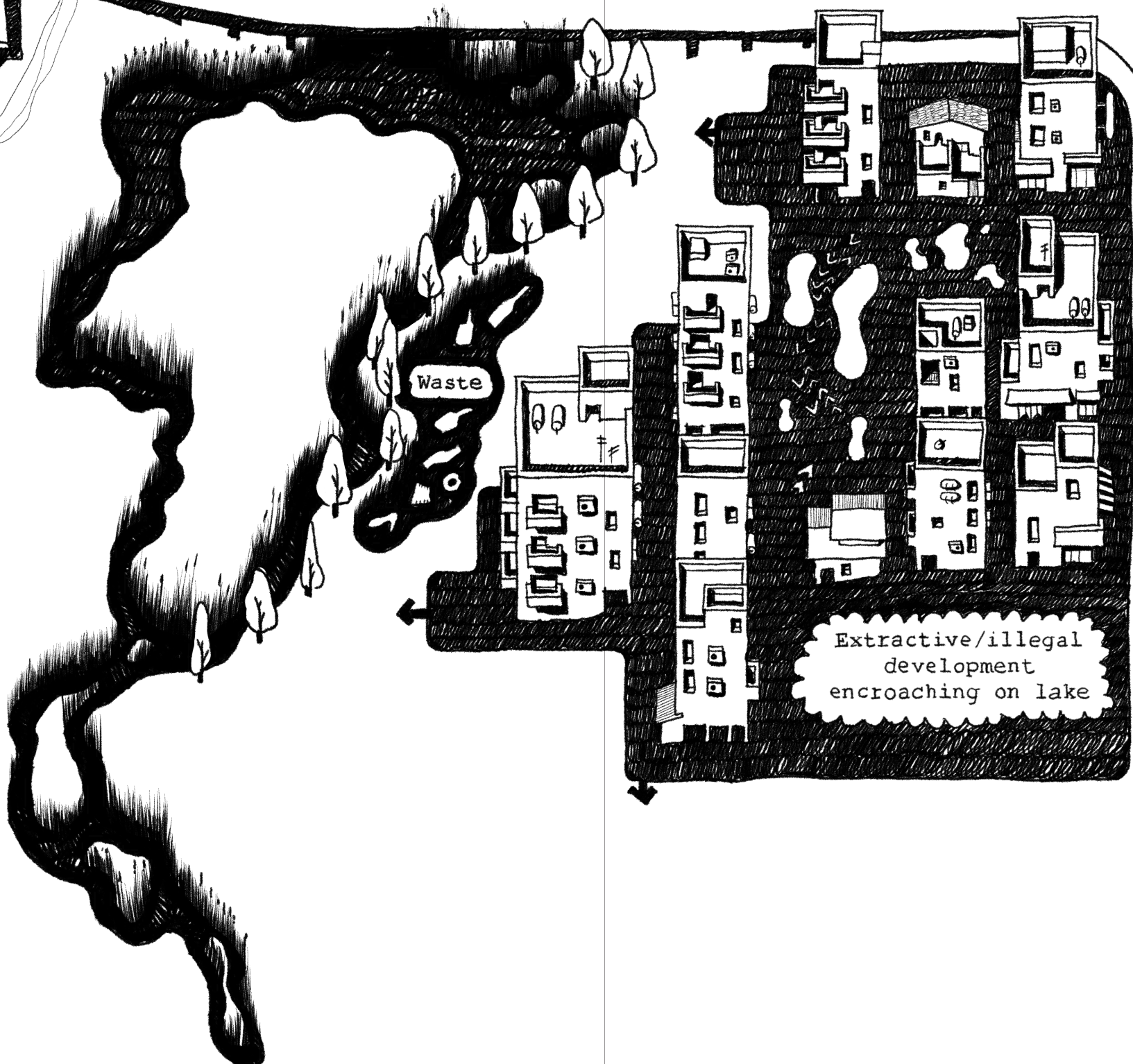
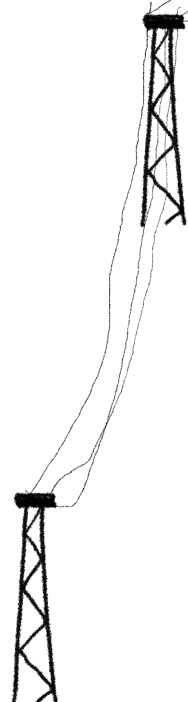
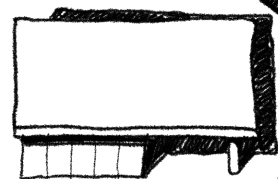
This territory is hali arazi*.. or, for now. It was. Before it is built on and diminished, built on and subdued, built on and vanished.

*"Hali arazi": the peoples land

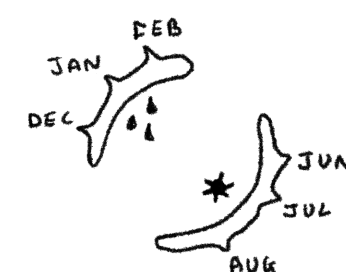
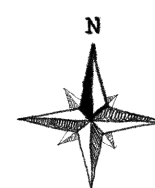
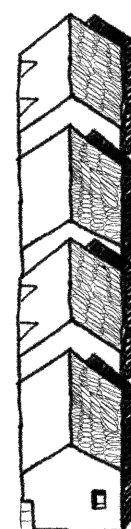
Prevailing
wind



Nicosia



Old Town



* "the people's
land"

- Adara (Ada) Erythraea
 - Adara: origins in Greek ('Adrasteia', a mythological figure representing inevitability and balance) .
 - Ada: Means island, implying an island as a whole
- Erythraea: from the Greek word 'erythros,' refering to parts of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.



- Architect turned builder with a Palestinian father and Cypriot mother displaced by historic conflicts
- Carries a sharp tongue and short patience, yet holds a profound love for people and their creativity.
- Ada dreams of creating a self-sustaining community around the lake.

Ada

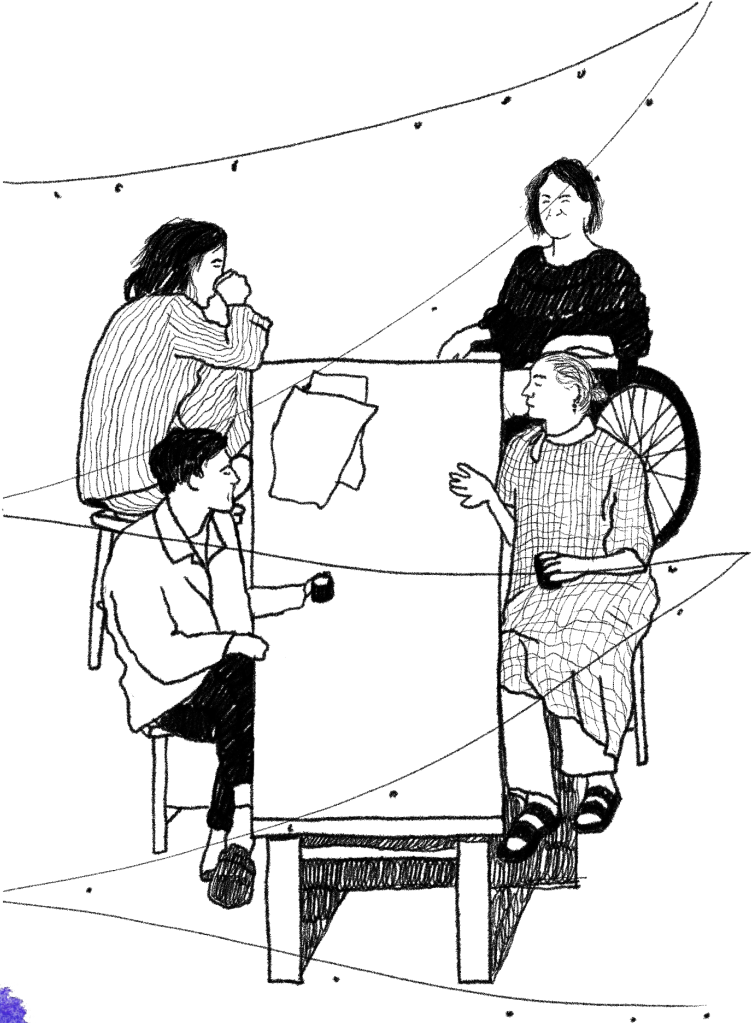
Ada often thought of the stories about communal ovens her grandparents had told. How the community came together, the collective joy and resilience they shared.

This building felt so far away from that. So separate and independent.

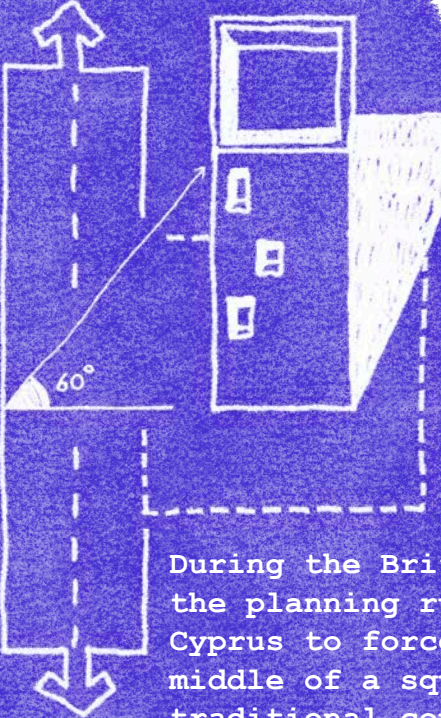
It had been a long summer and Ada felt like her flat was simmering.

Along with a few of her neighbors, she started to sit out in the gap between their building and the next. It was still hot, but they felt comfort from the occasional breeze and the shade of the buildings.

She sat out there every day. Drawing, dreaming and imagining.



She had not met everyone in the building before. Students came with reading, artists with making, children with playing. Even in the winter it had become a regular space to come to eat, to talk, to be.



During the British Colonial period, the planning rules were changed in Cyprus to force building in the middle of a square site rather than traditional courtyard typologies.

These rules are still followed, leading to large gaps between buildings.

Lawrence, William, "Interviews with staff at One Small Thing's Hope Street for ARC566 Dissertation" (Hope Street, Southampton, 2024)



Attlee, Edwina, Strayed Homes: Cultural Histories of the Domestic in Public (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022)

"Spaces where you could wash, eat, sleep and daydream in the company of strangers"

spaces that 'reveal collective vulnerability'

Intimate/public → Intimate in public

Strayed Homes¹



As people started to know each other, to understand each other, they started to pick up and support each other. Everyone did and shared what they could. Someone would bring food or do some gardening one day, the next someone else would be mending their clothes or walking their kids to school.

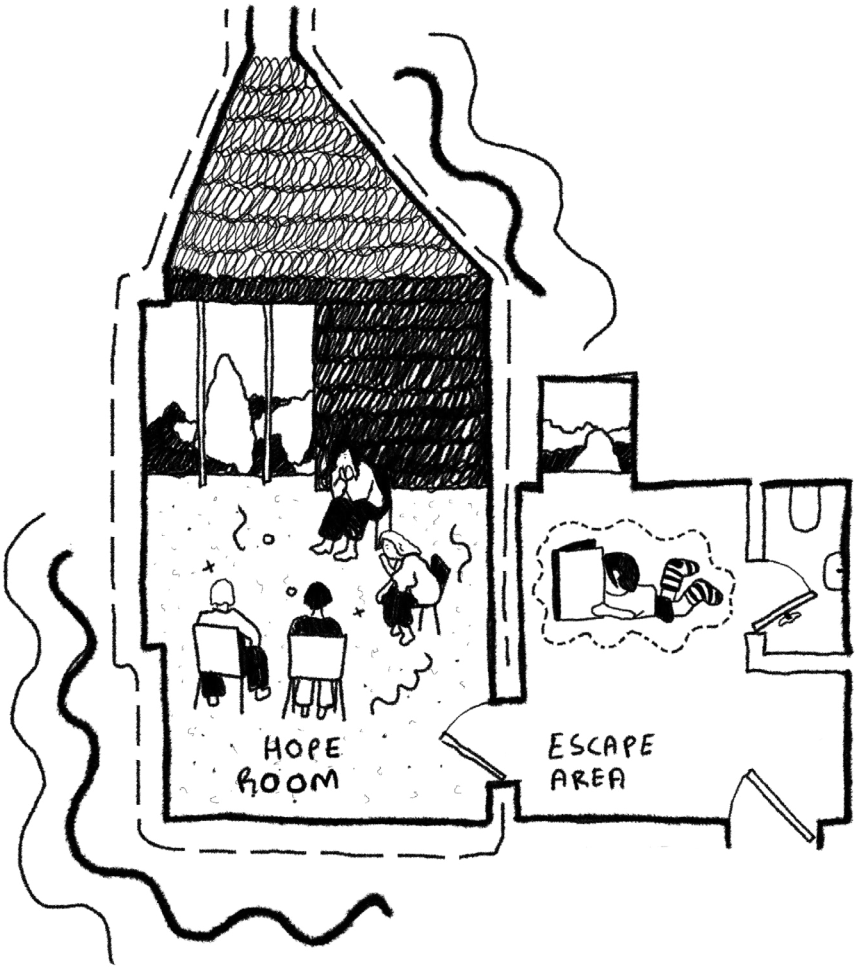
There is no judgement in this space in-between, its an unspoken agreement to respect difference.





Figure 7, Photo of the Hope Room at Hope Street. Illustrating the calming materials, lighting and form. (Fotohaus Ltd. 2018)

Figure 8, William Lawrence, Illustration of the Hope Room at Hope Street (where the healing trauma therapy takes place) from ARC556 Dissertation. Illustrating the layers of privacy, spatial hygiene (referring to the potential discomfort of spaces being used for therapy as well as other uses) and calming atmosphere

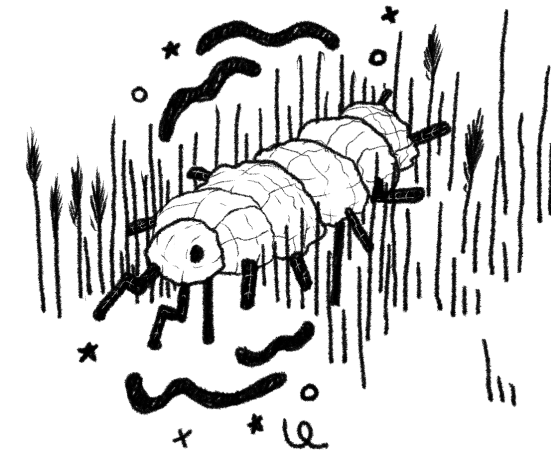




Ada wanted to archive their tales. Her notebooks filled with drawings, imaginations, histories and places. How can we shape this space together?

The topic of the wetland is always brought up. The life it holds and the threats to its future.

This summer was particularly dry and many were worried it would go completely.



They started making a walking route. Collecting artefacts of litter and plantlife to archive in the in-between space.

Some made lanterns from leaves and reeds. Imprinting stories of those that inhabit and depend on it.

Made installations and follies with the waste that was constantly piling up.

Territories of Difference

Territories:

Place, landscape, culture, worldviews, knowledge.

Colonial Difference:

When globalisation causes economic, cultural and ecological transformation to align with western 'modernity'.

Political Ecology of Difference:

People mobilising against colonial difference from the perspective of their current and historical territories.

Escobar, Arturo, Territories of Difference : Place, Movements, Life, Redes (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008)

Lara Scharf, 'Episode 2 On Cooking Futures w/ Cocina CoLaboratorio' Confronting Radical Imagination, podcast, Apple Podcasts, 25 July 2024 [Accessed 5 Jan 2025].

Kitchen table as a ground for collecting stories and narratives

"everyone wants to eat and everyone wants to share that with someone"

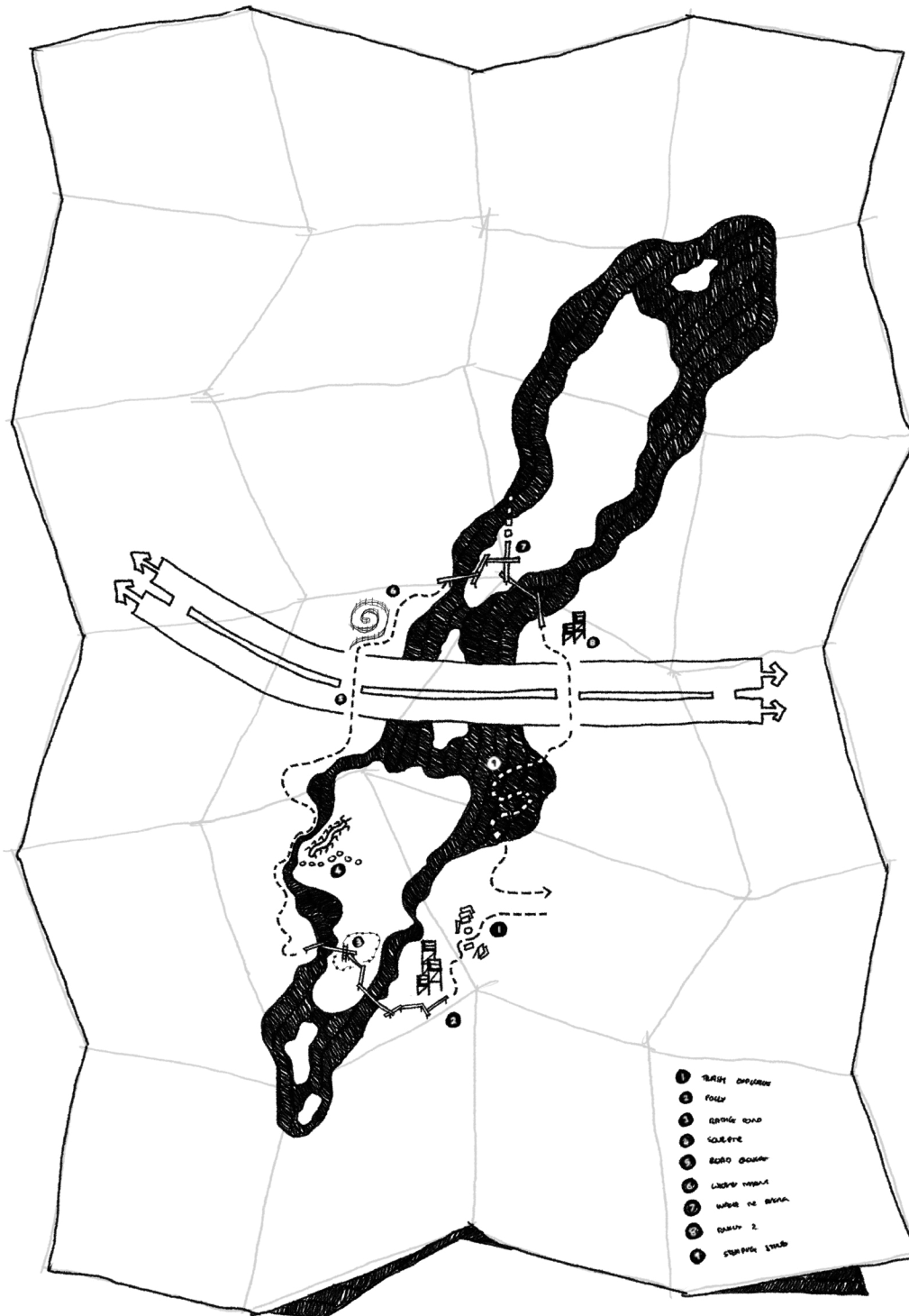
Participatory archive of seeds, recipes and stories to claim and celebrate territories

cololaboration and experimentation

collectively finding and building agency

CoLaboratory Kitchen

Ada wanted this place to be visible. For people to know that there are those that care for it, and that it cares for them.



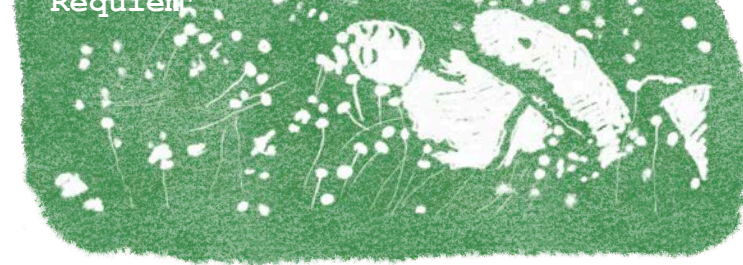
'Queering the soil'

Reimagining landscape and identity in queer artistic practices in Cyprus

Queer use: repurposing, reimagining or engaging with landscape, culture and spaces in subversive ways

Christa Papista, 'Cypriot Requiem'

Parpa, Elena, 'Queering the Soil: Reimagining Landscape and Identity in Queer Artistic Practices in Cyprus', Image & Text, 36, 2022, 1-20 <<https://doi.org/10.17159/2617-3255/2022/n36a20>>



They worked with artists and makers, and with MAKAMER (a womens association in Famagusta hoping to make the wetlands into a natural life park), building common practices along with non-human companions.

Claiming this territory without encroaching on or depleting this place that belongs to the critters.



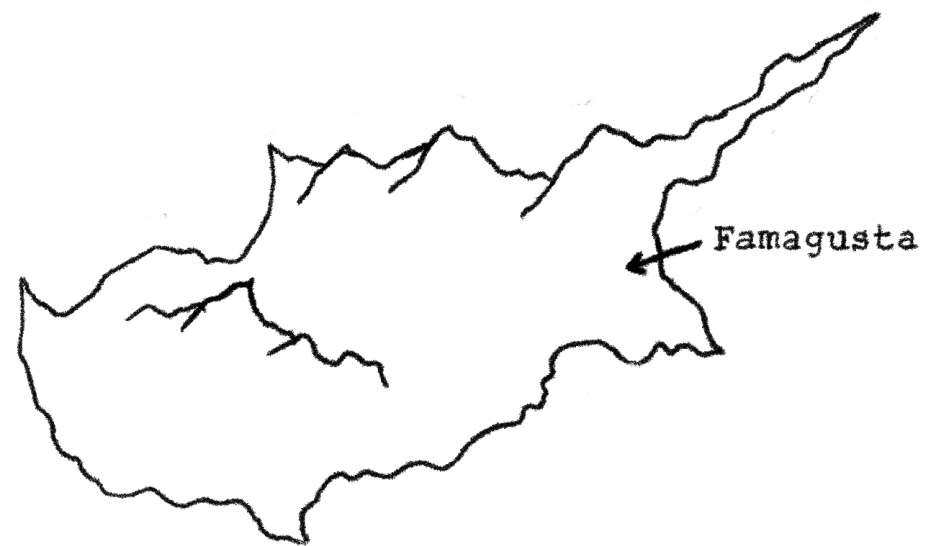
RE/SISTERS: A lens on Gender and Ecology, 5 October 2023 - 14 January 2024, The Barbican, London.

Performing Ground

positioning ones self in the landscape to subvert relationships, hierarchies and dualities of the human and more-than-human.

"Placing the body in communion with the land"





Due to its Geographic location between Europe and the Middle East, Cyprus often acts as a transitory point for people seeking sanctuary.

The location of this site, near the university in Famagusta, means that refugee students form a significant part of population growth.

Yasmin

We receive visitors often. Travellers seeking a safe place to nest, voyagers seeking a safe place to rest, children of conflict seeking.. anywhere but there. Seeking a home.

It's, of course, a great opportunity for the greedy to make money. They build whether they own the land or not. endless terrible, shining and crumbling towers. None for affordable rates.

I can't see the future of Ayluga sometimes...

- Baran Mehri
- Baran: Persian name meaning rain
- Mehri: Persian surname meaning kindness and compassion

- An ecology student studying micro-organisms in the lake.
- Radiating a quiet strength, Baran is sensitive to their surroundings and goes quiet when there's too much going on, often becoming distant and absorbed.
- Sought sanctuary in Famagusta through studying at the university
- Moved with their daughter, Nila, who formed an instant attachment to the wetlands.



Baran

Baran attended a meeting to discuss the building where they live. Her neighbour, Ada, was adamant that it doesn't work. Way too hot in the summer and cold in the winter nights.

Not like the old town. Ada is always talking about courtyards with dripping water and shaded dead end streets.. the safety and community they support.

They talked about the vulnerability of their lives here. Unaffordable heat in winter and air-conditioning in summer. Baran mentioned how inaccessible and hard to understand the systems were; how there was no space for care and maintenance planned in. How do we clean and repair the building? Where do we do laundry? Can we share appliances and tools?

How can we preserve rain water? How can we use waste water?

Thinking of Nila, Baran raised the lack of play and education spaces nearby. How far away her overcrowded school is.

The dead-end streets and courtyards, as well as sheltering from the sun, provide layers of privacy/intimacy.

This allows for a level of community and interdependency which is less encouraged in the recent, sprawling highrises.



The walled city in Famagusta exhibits traditional building practices in Cyprus.

Residents Association
'self-determination'
pay rent and act as shareholders

HabitAT - Solidarity association
'Capital Neutralisation'
HabitAT holds the 'valuable property' to prevent speculation

Schlör - affordable spaces for residents and neighbors

direct loans to finance purchase, renovation and construction
'Solidarity financing'

GABU Heindl Architecture,
'Schlör', GABU Heindl Architecture, 2025, <<https://www.gabuheindl.at/en/overview/living-and-working/schlör.html>> [Accessed 15 Jan 2025].

Over the next few evenings, they worked together to reimagine the building. Adding spaces for them to share and spaces for the whole neighbourhood to use. They discussed how they could acquire the building in the future. How can we build new economies of solidarity and interdependence?



Some explored how to use the waste materials around. How they can shelter, shade and ventilate. How to craft beautiful courtyards and dead-end streets in these concrete and steel monoliths

Baran enjoyed an afternoon preparing a meal with Ada.

They talked through their story - like many in the area - having to leave their home country with nila, coming to Famagusta for the university.

How hard it was to explain why they had to leave. Why her mother couldn't come...

Emre Akbil, Esra Can, Melissa Harrison and Urban Commons Research Collective, *Commoning Vulnerability*, online video recording, Architecture and Landscape Research Matters, 19 November 2024, <<https://sites.google.com/sheffield.ac.uk/alarm/previous-talks?authuser=0>> [Accessed 6 January 2025].

Commoning Vulnerability

living in a time of multiple breakdowns and increasing collective and individual vulnerability. -> generative potential from vulnerabilities and breakdown

Achille Mbembe - Radical Vulnerability

Judith Butler - Mutual Vulnerability as a baseline for earthly survival

Intersectional City House - interdependent socialities

Hands on Famagusta - urban detachments as affective commons

Making Kin and Oddkin

Haraway, Donna Jeanne, *Staying with the Trouble* [electronic Resource] : Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham, North Carolina ; London, [England]: Duke University Press, 2016)

'We are at stake to each other'

'We are humus, not homo, not anthropos; we are compost, not posthuman'

Staying with the Trouble calls for us to make-with in diverse assemblages of human and non-human oddkin towards multispecies thriving.



Intersectional City House

'Barrier-Free House'

Solidarity as the starting point for the project.

Generative relationship based on understanding each others vulnerabilities.

Using collective power to transform a vulnerable position into agency.

Akbil, Emre, Alex Axinte, Esra Can, Beatrice de Carli, Melissa Harrison, Ana Méndez de Andés, and others, *Urban Commons Handbook* (Barcelona, Spain: dpr-barcelona, 2021)

Just cooking together while Nila played, it felt easy to open up. Baran often struggles when there are lots of people or noises around. They described how they close up within themselves.

She seemed to really care about their experience. What could make Nila and them feel safe.

Mağusa Kale Pasajı

A space carved out by young people in an unused bazaar in Famagusta old town.

Formerly the home of the Queer Cyprus Association in Famagusta, it represents a safe space in the city.

Holds markets, concerts, events, workshops and acts as a bar in the evenings.

Korniienko, Gala and Kyle, Stephanie, Et. Al., *Designing for Neurodiversity* [webinar] (London: Royal Town Planning Institute, 2021)

Design for Neurodivergency

concept of 'reverse inclusion,' where meeting the spatial needs of unique individuals benefits the wider population

'escape-scape' of sensory refuges embedded into urban landscapes

flexibility and adaptability

compartmentalisation of space to be predictable and readable

limit sensory pollution

spaces to be around activity and people without being involved



Figure 9, Crystal Yeung,
Photo of Magusa Kale
Pasaji, December 2024



Figure 10, GABU
Heindl Architecture,
Intersectional City
House (GABU Heindl
Architecture, 2016)

Over time the in-between space became a hub for design and imagination reaching far beyond this building. Implanting the experiences and vulnerabilities of those that live there - and their concern for the wetlands - into every part of urban life.

Design for the Pluriverse

'Design is about creating cultural meanings and practices, about designing culture, experience, and particular ways of being.'

autopoiesis: Self-producing.

Autonomia: Creating the conditions for changing norms from within.

'To live as we like and not as imposed on us.'

Autonomous Design: Where communities come together through communal concerns to practice the design of themselves, using their own knowledge.

Escobar, Arturo, Designs for the Pluriverse : Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds (Durham, North Carolina ; London, England: Duke University Press, 2018)

Design through: thematic clusters and design labs, interactive exhibits, creating art and communication media, and activating intersections between 'communal design histories' and 'expert design'.

Sometimes the same people stayed there every day, sometimes others showed up. Artists with installations and performances about the lake, engineers with solutions to logistical problems.

They developed a local currency and time bank for volunteer and invisible work. A local network to communicate and share knowledge. There was even talk of a micro energy grid.

Haiven, Max, and Alex Khasnabish, The Radical Imagination : Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity, First edition. (London, England: Zed Books, 2021)

Radical Imagination

Situating: Framing Past and present in order to disrupt

Enacting: bringing speculations back to the present and creating spaces where difference can coexist

Speculating: connecting to the future to change how we act in the present



Odhams Walk

Reaching high densities while maintaining a comfortable townscape of streets and courtyards.



A House with Four Gardens

Permeable screens allow for light and air movement as well as connection to nature throughout the home while still shading and maintaining privacy.

Yasmin

There are whispers of a place. For caring about Ayluga and its people and critters. For rethinking and remaking how we live here. For futures of multispecies thriving..



- Miriam (Maz) Khouri
- Miriam: significant name in both Christianity and Islam. Often implies 'beloved' or 'rebellion' - reflecting her multifaceted nature.
- Khouri: Arabic surname meaning 'cleric,' anchoring her in cultural heritage and tradition.



- Artist and schoolteacher, interested in artistic ways of processing personal and collective memory.
- Raised by grandparents who told stories of the wetlands as a spiritual and sustaining place, she grew up around the lake and watched it change.
- Sensitive but passionate and deeply disturbed by the enclosures around the lake as well as Famagusta more widely

Maz

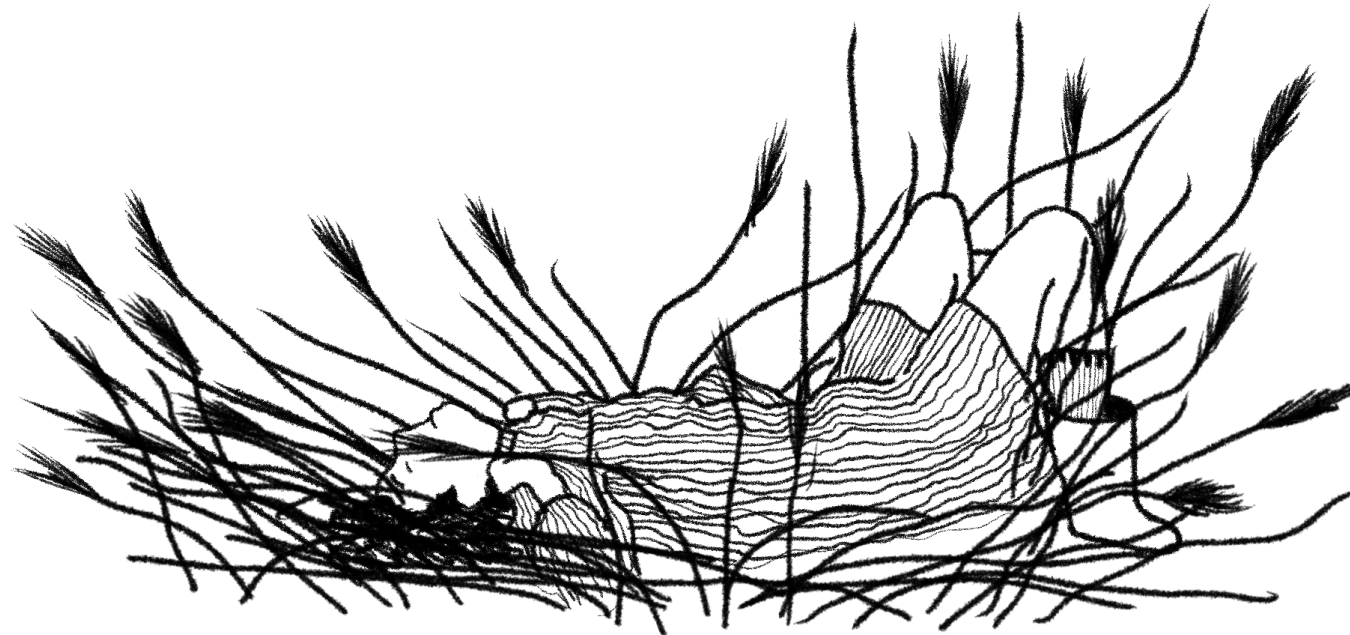
Maz had heard about a Space in the gaps. A place where you can go and nobody asks why. Where you can stay and work and be. It stuck in her mind.

A place for imagining and experimenting. They held cultural events, art showings, open discussions...

Spending time there, the journey took her into the Ayluga wetlands. The people she met saw the landscape, along with every tree, bird and insect - each invisible bacteria - as one of them.

"Hello, its nice to meet you. I'm Maz"

She spent all her spare time there. Learning, drawing, making with this community.



Reconnecting with ourselves and land and waters around us, Sheffield Transformed festival, 2024.

Radical Nature Awareness

A mode of radical interdependence between human and non-human.

Introducing ones self to landscapes, trees, rivers, ecologies to develop a reciprocal relationship

reinterpreting the self and the body through this relation to the non-human slowing down and listening, directional hearing, isolating different sounds

Posthuman Interaction Design

Liu, Szu-Yu, 'Posthuman Interaction Design: Designing with, through, and for Human-Nature Interaction' (ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2020)

'challenges human superiority, exceptionalism, and isolation'

'dis-objectifies' non-humans and holds them with equal importance as humans

seeing stakeholders as ecologies of human and non-human rather than individuals

forest school allows for designing-with non-humans as children form bonds with nature and bring that into their world-view



She would later help start a forest school for the wetland. The imaginaries that come from the children!

They help with the compost garden, make friends with the critters they come across and hold an endless curiosity.

Figure 11, Elena Silverman, Close up photo of the water in one of the lakes, December 2024.



Yasmin

Children love Ayluga. They understand those that inhabit it more than adults. They have a curiosity that hasnt been styfled.

Theyre not wary of 'that wont happen here'..

• Nila: means 'blue' in multiple languages, and is often associated with introspection, growth and resilience.

- Sweet but stubborn, she helps others see beauty in small, overlooked details.
- Nila only has faint memories of home, but carries her parents stories and waves them into her imagination.
- Facinated by wildlife, she makes crafty homes for critters and spirits out of waste.
- Drawing her sensitivity from Baran, Nila has an overwhelming ability to put people at ease.
- She has an imaginary friend called Parisa, who lives in the lake and works with others to keep it healthy.



• Parisa: Persian name meaning fairy-like

- Parisa is a proteobacteria, helping to decompose and recycle nutrients in the lake

Nila

Parisa and I were having breakfast in the in-between space when we noticed a cat watching the lake. It looked over at us, then started running.

We followed it through the
compost garden and the crops
growing tall.



Up an alleyway filled with
lanterns. By windows, under
benches and tables.

Was this the one they say is
the spirit of the lake?

Under a fallen tree crawling
with insects



In and out of ponds and
puddles

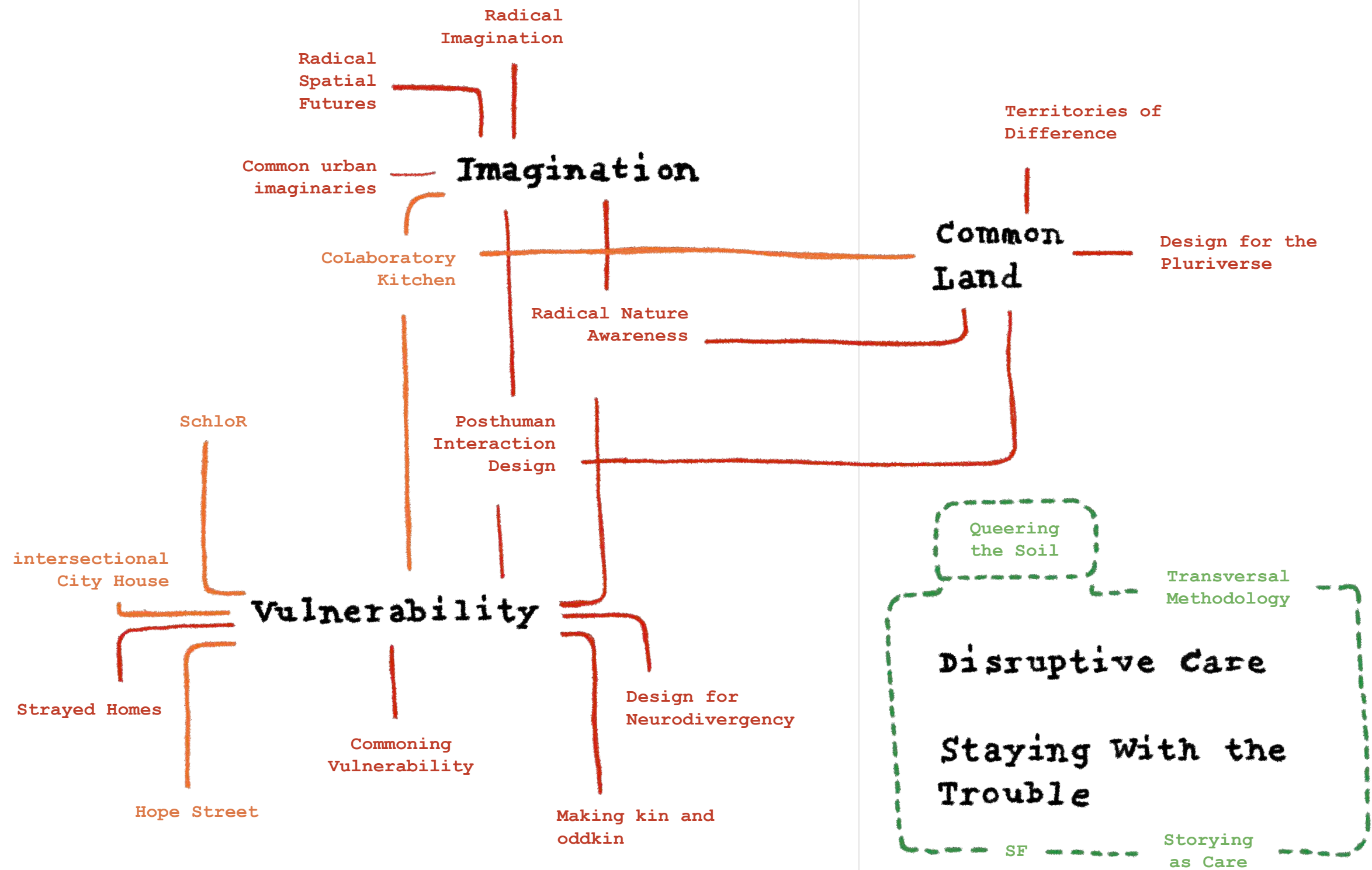
Then it stopped.
The creature was
still. Staring
at the fence...
how far had we
travelled?

A major colonial legacy in
cyprus is the presence of
borders and military zones.
While these are normalised
as part of the everydayness
of peoples lives, there is a
sense from some that things
cannot change while these
questions are lingering.

Urban practice in Cyprus,
therefore, has to challenge
and make visible these
divisions and enclaves,
while subverting neoliberal
nihilism and finding
solutions for the present in
spite of them

Figure 12, Aerial view of the Ayluga Wetlands from the north. The buildings in the front are a university campus which is also built into the land of the wetland. Metin Ziya Zungor, 2021.





Bibliography

Akbil, Emre, Alex Axinte, Esra Can, Beatrice de Carli, Melissa Harrison, Ana Méndez de Andés, and others, *Urban Commons Handbook* (Barcelona, Spain: dpr-barcelona, 2021)

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