

# THE PATH TO CONFLICTUAL HARMONY

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A DIALOGUE IN THE CONJUNCTION POINT OF ART, DESIGN & THE SOCIAL SPHERE

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**INCLUDING CONVERSATIONS WITH:** Non-profit strategist Ihsan Kellecioglu (SWE), designer Pomme van Hoof (NL/SWE), art/design activist and journalist Gunilla Lundahl (SWE), psychologist Maria Bergström (SWE), professors and scholars in Visual Learning Ulla Lind & Anette Göthlund (SWE), and artists Danielle Deadwyler (US), Oscar Lara (PE/SWE) and Hanna Lundborg (SWE).

**JOHANNA TYSK**



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# INTRODUCTION

**With case studies from two participatory mural art processes, KOKO Labs introduces a transdisciplinary space where three professional subject positions – Jo, the artist, Hanna, the designer, and Tysk, the community organizer, describe their collaborative process from their differing viewpoints.** These characters illustrate the inner transdisciplinarity\* of Johanna Tysk – consisting of separate skills, several modes of thinking and sometimes conflicting agendas. The conductor of the interview is KOKO, the cross-eyed chicken who acts as spiritual overseer of all KOKO Labs activities.

**This conversation also serves as an introduction to the working concept of “conflictual harmony”, which is used as a starting point for conversations with various professionals from the spheres of art, design and social work.** This evolving concept, which serves as a lens to view practice through, not an ultimate truth, points towards a space where the tension of differing social, disciplinary or cultural perspectives can be used, not fixed. A space where seemingly opposing or conflicting elements can “battle” in a way that allows for fruitful co-creation, new knowledge, and a more just and enlightened way of relating to each other, ourselves and our surrounding world.

In this space, we are searching for creative and strategic ways of moving beyond internal and external power dynamics, where one side violates or instrumentalizes the other in a power play locking creative energy into static hierarchies or silos. We are also

not looking for “bad compromises” that add little value to either subject position, or tries to force a static unity onto a situation in fear of conflict and diverse expression. What we call a conflictually harmonious situation is in contrast one that appears when the “play” between different agencies or entry points can result in a fruitful meeting that adds value to both subjects involved. A “conflictually harmonious” situation is not necessarily “joyful” or “easy” all the way. It could also be challenging, demanding or difficult for one or the other counter parts, especially when rigid power structures and identities are involved. What defines it is a certain dynamic of moves and counter moves, a creative act of sorts. A “conflictually disharmonious situation” would by contrast be static, hierarchical and oppressive.

Through specific examples and thought models provided from conversations partners in fields such as art, psychology, non-profit management, design and art pedagogy, the abstract concept of “conflictual harmony” becomes more defined, touchable – yet evading any desire to pin-point it or turn it into a static utopia.

*\*Transdisciplinarity refers to a holistic approach to problem-solving, locating links within a total system. It can be practiced through a group of people of various backgrounds coming together to work towards a common aim. It can also refer to a single practitioner using methods from several disciplines to rise above the inherent restrictions within single disciplines.*

# KOKO INTERVIEWS JO, HANNA & TYSK

## Welcome :) Who is Johanna Tysk and where are you from?

**Jo:** I am an unlimited soul inside a material body. I come from the same source that we all come from and to which we will all return. I am an artist, and I strive to understand that which cannot be understood.

**Hanna:** I am a mediator, a designer. I search for form and patterns in chaos, ways forward. I was raised in Akalla, a suburb of Stockholm, to Swedish parents, both teachers.

**Tysk:** I am a community organizer. I see structures, power dynamics, dysfunctional social patterns. I was born in the African-American community of Atlanta and raised in the multiethnic and intercultural Stockholm suburbs.

## What is your agenda?

**Jo:** I want to move beyond the alienation we've built into our societies, from ourselves and our surroundings... I have always had a sense that there is more to all of this than what we take for granted. That there is more beauty, more life. That behind the layers we show, or the self-denial we are taught, there is something more true. We're just taught to embrace one side, one identity. I want a society that allows for this mess, this inner diversity, reality as paradox, everything intertwined. I want to see what this looks like.

**Tysk:** I want social justice. I want to change the dynamics of what perspectives are heard, what is validated by society, what is dismissed, hierarchies of race, class, gender, age, you name it. I have seen, on a very intimate level I would say, how constructed ideas and value systems connected to race, cultural background, concepts of "normality", play out in both internalized ways and very real, structural oppression. And I know this is not natural, this is not how it's supposed to be.

**Hanna:** For me it's all an investigation, I want to understand how things work. I see many missing communication links in the structures we've built, leading to knowledge incapsulated within specific social or political perspectives, or disciplinary structures. I want to understand how different systems can connect to one another. What is the secret logic that "unlocks" tension points between different perspectives or disciplines? How can we use this logic to more efficiently transform society in the direction we say we want to go in?

## And what would you like to share with us today?

**Hanna:** We would like to share two processes of mural art that the three of us created along with groups of children and youth at community houses in Fisksätra and Tensta. These are both multiethnic suburbs to Stockholm, struggling with similar issues of social marginalization. By sharing our thoughts, our different roles in these processes, as well as our initial drafts around a concept

we call “conflictual harmony”, we would then like to open up for a broader conversation inviting in a range of contributors from the fields of art, design and the social sphere.

**Great, so let’s start with Fisksätra, tell us about the context and how the process started?**

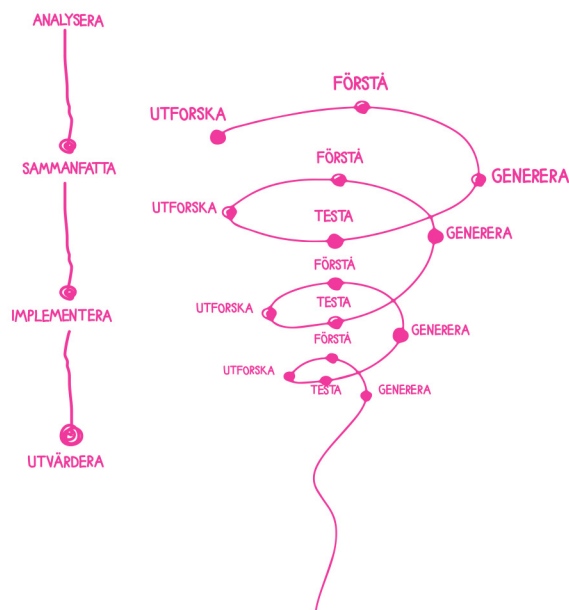
**Tysk:** Well, the painting took place as part of a “Creative Studio” for children aged 6-12 years at the local community house. Somewhere along the way we discovered this huge room, a pass-through area, connecting a school and a youth center with the community house and school cafeteria. The room could be described as a no-mans-land, not really belonging to anyone and not being cared for. With support from the community house, we so decided to initiate a sort of “guerilla painting” where we involved the kids in shaping their own surroundings and expressing their ideas and unique perspectives in a very real, physical way.

**Hanna:** The process started out with pretty open-ended drawing exercises, to get a feel for the site and the thoughts and ideas of the children. We also engaged in ethnography-like investigations of the particular area. Based on this information, we then arrived at a first concept for further exploration.

**Jo:** This is when I was inspired to create a background of water, strong waves, and a fiery pink sky... Also outline a festive character with a kind of multiethnic feel, representing the ethnic make-up



*Johanna and Fisksätra kids in front of “Mukribu.”*



*Illustration from socialinnovation.se*

of the area. I left the essence of the character unfixed though, as I wanted to explore it further with the kids!

### Before you go further, could you tell us a little more about your process?

**Hanna:** Sure! You could say that the design process forms the backbone, or the skeleton, in both mural processes we will share with you today, providing a kind of framework for participation. I would describe this process as a symbiosis of the linear process, according to which much of conventional management practice is structured these days, and the open-ended process of much art practice. The linear approach can be best described as analyze–

conclude–implement–evaluate. The design process on the other hand is more like a spiral, where you explore–understand–generate–test in a spiral kind of form. It’s really about using both your left and your right brain. Intuitive and analytical. You start with the context, and the desire to understand the situation at hand. This is the explorative, “open” phase, where you engage your counter part in the creative process without the frames set too firmly. You then go back and forth between opening up, to generate as much content as possible, and narrowing down, to move things forward.

**Jo:** I want to point out that this process can not be clearly defined, learnt passively, or owned... It doesn’t happen this way. You can formulate certain approaches or things to consider, but never pin-point things. Whatever you call yourself as a professional, at the end of the day it comes down to your own agency, your own personality when leading such a process. There is also a mystical element to this spiral process I would say... It’s a symbol used in much ancient symbolism, representing the movements between the inner (intuitive, intangible) world and the outer (matter, manifested) world, maybe you could call this the objective and subjective spheres, who are in reality intertwined... A process like this then needs to be understood both intuitively and intellectually, through your own being.

**Tysk:** When discussing a process like this, I would also like to add in the elements of your own built-in prejudice, your own experience of different social settings, and your own sense of social identity/s

connected to these perspectives. The more clear you are on where your own “limits” go, the easier it will be I think for you to investigate that which might seem “new” to you from a stand-point of curiosity, openness, and humility.

### So what happened next :)?

**Hanna:** With the initial concept outlined on the wall, we then decided to experiment with how much freedom we could give the children without losing quality in the final work and coherence in communicated meaning. Question explored: what is a fruitful tension between freedom and structure?

**Jo:** This was bit of a scary process I would say, as I challenged myself to give up much control, and decided to give the children a little more freedom than I’m comfortable with to see what happens... First round of free expression, I had stress hormones all over! I thought: gah, this is UGLY!

**Hanna:** We decided though to trust our ability to bring coherence into diverse expression, which is really a design skill we have practiced for many years. This meant that we would go over the painting along the way to add elements and colors to bring symmetry and harmony. Then juggle between allowing free expression again, and pausing and looking at what we did, what coherence and meaning we can find, what elements can be repeated or what needs to be worked on more, in a sort of dynamic “pulse” re-

sponding to what’s happening on the wall.

### What did happen on the wall?

**Jo:** Mukribu appeared :)! A Muslim-Christian-Buddhist with the universe on her dress, and the water, air and diverse components of Fisksätra at her very finger tips... Sunflowers appeared, fish of various sizes and shapes, a bird thinking in numbers, letters approaching Mukribu as just another element for her to play with, a clock with numbers spread around... A mystical and philosophical world filled with all the contradictions children of this area encounter through their various backgrounds. The meaning thus emerged from seemingly random choices made by different people, and developed along the way, in the process. When you allow for this spontaneous formation of meaning then a character like this gets a life of her own. This really is the bliss of creation.

**Hanna:** This is a sort of “magic” that can be trained I think, through the lens which you choose to see the world from. If you believe there is unity in diversity then you will find it. It’s also a process that we have found works for us whether we’re designing a book cover, with opposing ideas between publisher and author, writing a script, exploring conflictual situations in search for a way forward, or directing a festival with a working team of various cultural, social and disciplinary backgrounds. After a certain intake of material, things get a life of their own, and the form starts emerging out of a diversity an “untrained” eye would maybe at



first interpret as a chaotic mess, or containing opposing elements that you can not imagine would function in a harmonious whole. I believe there is a sort of “system” to this, a logic to how the synthesis works. This we don’t expect to ever fully understand, but we can reveal it in little pieces along the way, adjust, rethink, question, share...

**The two of you seemed very synced in this process Jo and Hanna... What are your thoughts around this whole process Tysk?**

**Tysk:** Well, I’m thinking about the fear of chaos that Jo mentioned

earlier, that she herself experienced in the process, but with the help of Hanna could challenge and overcome through inventing new ways of seeing and doing along the way. It really illustrates much of what upholds many of the hierarchies and socially dysfunctional situations we see, with certain groups exercising control over others. In relation to this specific situation involving children, you could label this an adult fear of chaos. Really a lack of strategies and approaches to deal with this perceived chaos or that which threatens the “set order” of things, however dysfunctional this order might be, in a way that doesn’t imply an unhealthy exercise of power over your “counter part”. Also an inability to see the potential inclusion of what is considered “ugly” in a harmonious



whole, rather choosing to see it as a threat. This fear was very tellingly expressed by the school janitor, who interfered with the painting by brutally painting over what he thought looked too much like graffiti, without first seeking a dialogue with us, who had informed the school about our idea to paint the wall before we started, but not received any response. We were told that the principle and staff supported this mission somehow, fearing that the wall would encourage the children to scribble on the walls. Interestingly enough, during this whole process, six weeks of an “open sketch” in a room where hundreds of children pass every day, the only person to touch the wall when we were not there was the janitor.

### **So how did you deal with the situation?**

**Hanna:** We decided to “work with the materials of the situation”...This meant having conversations with the children about how we could transform what the janitor did instead of erasing it. Simply put, we might not like what he did, but we’ll see what happens if we see it as part of the art work, and respect his aggressive act as a contribution in its own right. Result being that we ended up with several good ideas that we wouldn’t otherwise have thought of.

**Jo:** My favorite one a talk bubble using some of the paint from the janitor’s “contribution” as a background, that pedagogically explains that “this is children’s art”!

**Tysk:** The approach we chose could also be labelled a sort of strategy of “non-violent resistance”... Where you do not allow an act of aggression, or an opponent who expresses values very different from your own, to make you enter a space of war, but rather uses the “opposition” to more clearly define who you are, what your strategies are, what you believe in.

**Hanna:** I would like to point out however that the design approach does not offer standard solutions, the way many ideologies or theories connected to the social sphere do. It’s all about operacy, what has been called a “reflexive conversation with the materials of the situation”. Simply put; What works in a given moment based on what you want to achieve? In relation to the school, our approach managed to “relax” a tense situation, and opened up for a reasonable conversation with the principal about challenges they faced in relation to the kids. After this occasion, we were allowed to finish the mural work without further intrusions, and with an increased understanding of the larger social dynamics our work was happening within. We also ended up using this approach with good results when the children would complain about each other’s contributions. Thus we encouraged them to continue working on that which seemed unfinished or unfit, resulting in many elements that 4-5 kids had added their touch to.

### **So tell us about the second case study, in Tensta, where you worked with a group of teenagers 13-20 years old?**



**Tysk:** Sure, this situation was in a way more socially challenging in its initial state, stepping into a youth center where vandalization of walls and furniture was a common problem, reflecting a general apathy connected to society as a whole. The assignment in this case to involve the youth in the creative process of creating art work for their walls, as a way of increasing their sense of pride and ownership of their own space. Here we were faced with a group of young men telling us “no one cares about this mural, someone’s gonna destroy it soon as we’re done anyway”. The general attitude was a jokingly distance to a self-image of being “animals

in a cage”, and a veneration for gangster imagery. Challenge very much related to lack of exposure to visual representations that goes beyond the “dangerous and useless guy from the ghetto”-stereotype. We faced the pretty difficult challenge of how to invite the participation of these boys, and at the same time not cement a self-identity that hits boys from these areas at a very young age, both from the surrounding society and older mates.

**Hanna:** We felt very conflicted at first, considering a “compromised solution” which could have been for instance to write “Tensta

163” in graffiti letters on the wall.

**Jo:** I don't believe in compromise however ;). I believe in creating extraordinary things, things that have not been seen before...

**Tysk:** We also didn't want to stop at a solution that doesn't really bring anything new to the table for the participants we're working with... That would not be responsible social work, which is much about opening up new possibilities or mind frames, based on an understanding and a respect for where people are, what their comfort zone is, what makes them feel seen and validated, and what their struggles are in relation to a larger societal context.

**Hanna:** To sum up, what we wanted to search for instead of a compromise, was an unexpected symbiosis of seemingly opposing ideas, something that maybe many of these boys would first oppose. Sometimes serving is about leading, even in opposition.

### So what happened :)?

**Jo:** We took their ideas...and twisted them! Starting with the idea of the can't see, can't hear, can't speak monkeys, which in these circles is connected to a gangster identity... I looked up the true root of these symbols, which is connected to Buddhist philosophies of taking responsibility for your thoughts, actions and words. I pointed to this through Buddhist ornaments on the monkeys. I also let their tongues out, as a reference to Einstein and a sort

of genius all-encompassing spirit... Then I put you KOKO growing from their heads, dressed up in Tensta-style street wear inspired by ideas from the boys. Underneath a prison like wall with barb wire, visualizing the prison many young people experience their situation as. The KOKO-monkeys floating out and beyond, creating a beautiful mind-fuck!

**Tysk:** The first reaction we received when we presented the idea to create something on the wall that had its foundation in their ideas, but took in to another level, was protests from a select group, and more threats of how the murals were gonna be destroyed unless they got exactly what they wanted in the form of straight-out gangster images... This is the kind of situation where any “logical or standard solution”, unless you go for a compromise which we just mentioned we don't quite believe in, is doomed to fail, and where intuition, integrity and an acute sense of what the deeper needs of the situation are have to take front seat for a fruitful situation to appear... After careful thought, and discussions with the youth leaders at the center, we decided to go with our gut feeling of sticking with the “Buddhist monkeys”, which in all honesty were also very much in line with the boys' weird sense of humor too, in spite of protests.

**Jo:** It is my firm belief that people sometimes need to be provoked out of their comfort zone... When possible with grace, humor and a playful attitude, and the setting of art can create this!

**Hanna:** Through visual expression, it is also possible to acknowledge and confirm what people experience as their reality, but “twist things”, add unexpected elements like what Jo is talking about, that point to a “widened mind space” of opportunities that is not well-defined but felt and experienced...

**Jo:** Yes, is this not the power of art :)?

**Hanna:** It is also important I believe to leave some “room” idea and process wise that creates a situation for continuous contributions of the invited participants to shape a “growing art work”. This

allows you to respond to the needs of the moment, and also creates a situation of moves and counter moves, where you as the artistic leader can keep the relationship to your participants alive, active and playful, and you can learn from each other along the way.

**Tysk:** I would say it’s in a way about staying in the relationship, patiently, not “giving up” or start exercising your power in an oppressive way to avoid that which challenges you or is trying to “dominate you” into adopting a very locked position. I see it as your responsibility as the leader to make sure that the relationship is not “cut”, and that the focus of the leadership is serving, and the



needs of the relationship, which involves both you and your counterpart, are continuously considered in the process.

### What other needs did you sense and how did they direct the process?

**Hanna:** Well, we also perceived a need for an outlet for the destructive urges of many of the boys, an urge that can become constructive and creative even if dealt with in a good way.

**Jo:** Even add some raw beauty to the piece :).

**Hanna:** Yes :). This urge was first expressed by one boy grabbing the dark grey color and randomly splashing it onto the wall, outside the frames we had set for the painting. Since the paint was already on the wall, we encouraged him to keep going. He then went on to fill an entire area with grey paint, with several others joining in.

**Jo:** I then allowed them to write whatever they wanted, however they wanted on this wall, also add paint with their hands! This was an equally exciting and scary process, just like the painting in Fisk-sättra, but again I decided to trust Hanna's and my shared ability to find meaning and coherence in what was going on....

**Hanna:** After they were done we erased some words, and added a few elements representing the buildings in Tensta. We also added references to Himla af Klint's abstract visual imagery, which in

this context looked a bit like street art in the form of vinyl records.

**Tysk:** The boys ended up very happy with the outcome, interestingly enough. No one's left a single mark on the wall since it was finished six months ago. We were even given a spontaneous round of applause from some of the boys who had protested the most in the beginning. Sometimes participation can be about being seen, for where you are but also where you could go. It's not always about being absolutely involved in every decision, in a consensus-kind of way.

**Jo:** The magic happens I think when you as the artistic leader create space to challenge this way. But also allow this meeting to challenge and touch you also...

**Hanna:** Yes, it's about relationship, a meeting, where you hold different roles, yet meet on some sort of equal playing field.

### What does it take for an equal situation to appear between a leader and a group of participants?

**Tysk:** Well, this meeting will of course never be totally equal in absolute terms... Someone sets the direction for the work, makes the final decisions, and is also held accountable for the outcome. To create a fruitful situation, I think it's very important to acknowledge this fact, and enter the situation with a type of honesty about your point of perspective as an active subject. Who are you? What

is your agenda? Why are you there?

**Jo:** I also think that entering the situation as an active subject is necessary for you to produce both good social work and interesting art...

**Tysk:** Yes, because for a true meeting to appear you need a strong sense of I. Who else is there to see the other?

**Hanna:** This is an interesting point... It also connects to something I have noticed in much contemporary art discourse, which can best be summarized as a perceived tension between the “I” and “the collective”. Within contemporary art discourse, there is much emphasis on the autonomous artistic subject, free from any kind of collective responsibilities. Then people within the art world revolt against this, by putting all emphasis on the collective or the community, withdrawing from responsibility in a way, calling it “socially engaged” or “participatory arts”. This is seen as some sort of heroic act of giving up agency, but oftentimes results in, like Claire Bishop points out in “Artificial Hells”, irrelevant art and bad social practice.

**Jo:** The involvement of the “I” as “evil and authoritarian”, like much community art discourse is based on, only becomes oppressive I think when this “I” does not serve anything other than your own ego... Why couldn’t the “I” meet the collective in a healthy way?

## What could a “thought model” for this type of meeting be?

**Tysk:** One useful model could be that of the breakdancer, or the freestyling MC, who expresses oneself in response to the moves of “his counterpart”, in an intense meeting that requires you to pay close attention to the people you’re “battling”...

**Jo:** It’s a space where “the conflict” of the meeting with the Other triggers both parts to grow better, stronger, more imaginative, where the I/collective duality of much contemporary art discourse doesn’t exist.

**Hanna:** Also the DJ metaphor is interesting... Which is really about finding the “flow” and the rhythm which connects a variety of creative expressions into a unique mix, while paying close attention to the mood and vibe of an audience, in this case the participants.

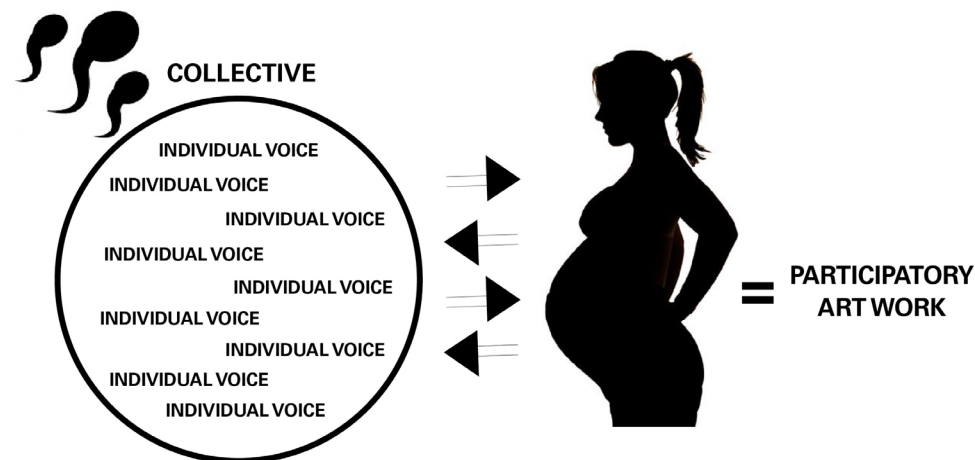
## Sometimes I am having trouble distinguishing who is the designer, the community organizer and the artist :).

**Hanna:** Yes! That is when you have entered a truly transdisciplinary state. We go in and out of these transcendent states and those where our roles and thoughts are more distinct and easily distinguished. Maybe you are starting to understand how this all works?

**I think you are starting to understand. I only ask questions ;). Do you have anything that could help us think of leadership in response to this meeting in a different way?**

**Jo:** One useful metaphor that has come to mind is my sense of motherhood in my most rewarding creative processes. The material I'm working with becomes the father. If I'm working with a collective it provides me with continuous material in an on-going creative act, while I receive and start forming and serving the baby and its needs, which is really a leadership position, a certain responsibility. It's almost like aligning yourself with a kind of creative force that is beyond your control in certain ways. The baby, the work of art, then becomes something that does not belong to either of you but reflects you both, carries your DNA.

**Tysk:** I find this way of describing the creative process very interesting from a structural perspective. The bodily experience of a creative act has been much associated with women, as well as Africans. Looked down upon in the dysfunctional "war between opposites" that we have given some examples of in this interview... In this case the mind is the winner and body the loser. Choosing to explore and also on a theoretical level stand up for this kind of description of a creative process – which is really about body in symbiotic exchange with the mind, where you can't really distinguish what is what – is really about changing these dynamics on a very fundamental level.



**Jo:** Yes... It's again about entering that state of paradox. A serving artistry where you reach a point of deep self-identity and loss of self simultaneously. It's like the image of the vase and the two faces. What comes the easiest is to see one or the other, but if you really focus you can see both at the same time. It's essentially about moving away from a dualistic way of looking at the world I would say... And discover that there is a space where these dualities can play out according to a yin and yang logic, where you can watch this conflicting dynamic without identifying with the opposing elements. A point from where you can serve the unity of it all, and enjoy, like artist Himla af Klint puts it, "the pain of duality dissolving in rejoice".

**Do you think this is the truth?**

**Hanna:** No one knows the truth. What we're trying to establish is

a sort of “model” to work from, not another truth to argue about. I prefer to see it as an overarching theory that practice can be tested against. We call this working concept “conflictual harmony”. It’s a point of departure, and something that will be adjusted along the way. Simply put, this model is based on the simple idea that under the right circumstances, seemingly opposing or conflicting elements or perspectives, can battle, or play, in a way that creates new visions of collectivity that allows for more diversity, more space, unexpected solutions or expressions. The leader is the one who sets the limits for how much diversity this space can allow, who kind of “holds” the space where this conflicting dynamic can play out, and leads the process forward. It’s really about using the tension, not fixing it!

### Kind of like we’re doing in this interview?

**Hanna:** Yes, exactly! In this instance you KOKO are the one who provides us with the space to work together in constructive ways. Without your firm but humble leadership of this conversation, and the space of conflictual harmony that this creates, Johanna Tysk would be in a very confused state ;). To overcome boundaries connected to disciplines, agendas, perspectives etc, there needs to be someone who is not identified with any position, who keeps their eyes on the larger purpose or the “good” of the entire system, beyond the value systems, ideologies or agendas of single elements.

**Tysk:** I believe this is a “leadership model” that can be explored

and developed in response to many of the social and political issues we’re facing today, where the question of how to live together in a democratic society, how to understand and respect each other across our different perspectives, how to find sustainable and holistic strategies to deal with hierarchies and oppression of all sorts, are growing more and more urgent...

**Jo:** Yes, and it’s a model that requires, or encourages, activation of all senses in both leader and participants. Like everyone is important in this, no one is “just another person” that gets squeezed into a normative system and is not allowed to leave their mark, or their unique contribution to whatever you create together.

**Hanna:** True, and it’s a model where you cannot “hide” behind an ideology that has provided all the answers beforehand, or that justifies a type of behavior that maybe goes against what you say you stand for because your ideology or theory is regarded more true or interesting than reality. I believe this is important to point out, that it’s a thought model or a working model, when combined with the kind of process that we have described in this interview, that requires constant attention to what your actions actually produce. That opens up for sustainable strategies, on-going dynamic conversations and action, rather than “final solutions”.

**Jo:** Yes. We are gonna have to learn to accept a certain degree of uncertainty in this... Also find the courage to share knowledge which is not “done”, “final”, “set”.



## What are your hopes for the future, in connection to your fields?

**Jo:** I wish for the unique qualities of the artistic process to be valued by society to a much larger extent... And given the space and resources to flourish in a way that helps us shift our thinking toward a more sensible, thoughtful approach to life and our material existence. I also wish for the cultural sphere to drop its own internal hierarchies, divisions and silos-mentality. I wish for more courage, more purpose, less prestige and attachment to things that don't matter... I wish for the inclusion of hiphop and other cultural expressions offering a rawness, a directness and a vivid energy, to "battle" with what is now considered "fine arts", in a way that evolves both sides, and eventually transmutes beyond these clear distinctions... I wish for art's active engagement with every-day life, with every-day people, with every-day issues, with the topics that unite us.

**Tysk:** I wish for non-judgmental public rooms where we can evolve together, on a community scale but also a political and democratic scale... Where we can learn from each other on equal and just grounds, where there is room for conflicts to be dealt with in sensible ways, where opposing ideas or perspectives are not treated as a threat, and defense mechanisms can be dropped... Rooms where the "burden" of heavy hierarchies and forced norms are dissolved, where we can see each other and feel ourselves,

where there is room to play, to be, to question or to learn.

**Hanna:** My hope is for more conversations between art, design and its wider social, ecological and political contexts... I'm talking specifically about the knowledge inherent in the design process, and its focus on gathering different actors, exploring common ground and prototyping, or "testing", your way towards sustainable "systems" or strategies of transformation... Designer Frank Spencer said "the new global citizen will be one that not only sees the perspectives held by other cultures, but is able to process and create "new worlds" from the convergence of those views." This very much relates to disciplinary perspectives as well. It is my hope that a new breed of designers – in the service of giving form to change – will play an important role in bridging the gap between art and the social challenges we are facing today.

**Thank you Jo, Hanna and Tysk for sharing your process and thoughts... We will now "zoom out" of your brain and invite a range of professionals from the spheres of art, design and social work to discuss the concept of "conflictual harmony" in relation to their specific disciplines and areas of interest. Are you ready Jo, Hanna and Tysk to merge into one :)?**

**Jo, Hanna & Tysk:** Yes, shoot :).

**We warmly welcome Ihsan Kellecioglu, 35, as our first guest! Could you tell us who you are what your agenda is?**

**Ihsan:** I work as national strategist for socio-economically marginalized areas, at nonprofit organization Rädga Barnen (“Save the Children”). My agenda is to reduce child poverty and social marginalization in primarily areas with a majority of citizens with foreign background, also raise the general level of awareness about these issues.

**Johanna Tysk:** Hi Ihsan :). I know you asked me at first how you could contribute to a publication about art and design... The text I’ve written has artistic processes as examples but is really about the need for new strategies, processes and “thought models” within all three spheres/disciplines that I’m concerned with. As I bring up in the text, there is a pattern in the art world where artists working within the social sphere often either impose their agenda on the people they work with, or let go of leadership or agency altogether. I see this happening in the social sphere as well, when the “ruling middle class” meet the “marginalized areas”, and display similar patterns of a leadership that is often either too authoritarian or too “lenient”, sometimes in a weird mix where you “give up your agency” as a leader yet keep those with “opposing loyalties” out from any kind of strategic influence... What are your experiences and thoughts around this, and what do you believe are the key factors that can bring about a “true meeting” between

these kind of “opposing forces/perspectives”, in a way that challenges current power structures?

**Ihsan:** Well, my experiences are much connected to representing “the system” through my affiliation with Rädga Barnen, meeting groups of young people in the suburban areas who do not accept the “victimization” that much charity or help organizations such as ours is based upon, at least in the eyes of the members and the leadership structures. Embracing a meeting like this can be very challenging for any organization of this kind, as it will surely put the self image to the test. I see this a lot for example, based on the different reactions from “middle class people” and “those we are trying to serve” when I say I work for Rädga Barnen. Where “middle class people” all express deep admiration for my “noble role”, people in marginalized communities tend to be much more suspicious of our agendas and claimed expertise on topics that they are affected by. The problem in terms of embracing this kind of criticism or suspicion, I see is much connected to an organizational sort of arrogance, an idea that “what we do is right” that is affirmed by the collective you identify with and hard to get past. The higher up in the hierarchies the stronger this “protectionism” or unwillingness for self-reflection usually gets. As a representative for an organization like this, it’s very important to be aware of and honest about your own power position, also trust in the people, share the power you possess through this role, and break down your own position in current power structures.

**Johanna Tysk:** What is it that needs to be broken down exactly? I also see many people from the middle class, regardless of ethnicity or background, who are aware of their privilege or power position in relation to what we call “marginalized areas”, and almost make excuses for their existence when approaching these areas... In a way just affirming a messed up system, where you try to raise others by “lowering yourself”, creating an uncomfortable situation for everyone involved, instead of just approaching people as equals, which to me is really what constitutes a true meeting.

**Ihsan:** Well, it’s not the person that should be broken down. You have to maintain your integrity in this. But you can break down your identification with a certain role, or with an organization and the collective that comes with this. Then you can use your role in a certain organization as a tool for serving the people, instead of the self-image of the organization you’re working for. This is when, I believe, you can create a sort of symbiosis with your “counter part”, that helps both of you grow, and in the end affects current power structures in a positive direction.

**Johanna Tysk:** Could you give an example of a symbiosis of this kind?

**Ihsan:** Yes. I think this appeared in relation to Megafonen for instance, a social movement led by young people in Husby, that we arranged a lecture series with. Megafonen challenged our organization in many ways through their sharp political analysis of cur-

rent power structures. Through their connection with the people, I could then “go back” to the organization, express their concerns in a language people on this side could understand, and grow our collective understanding of the complexities of our work. We’ve ended up hiring a number of people from these movements, and could also share our resources and lend more credibility to their pursuits through using our name to back them up when appropriate.

**Johanna Tysk:** This I would call a situation of “conflictual harmony”, where the conflict that necessarily comes with a meeting like this is embraced, used, and not seen as a threat... What would you say are your “leadership strategies” to enable this kind of situation?

**Ihsan:** I think it’s important to maintain a balance in the loyalties you uphold, where you don’t allow yourself to be “absorbed” by identification with either the larger organization you work for, or the people you involve, in this case Megafonen. At the same time as I relate to people on a “brother or sister”-level, I’ve seen it as my job to also uphold bit of a distance, and not try to force a “unity” with the organization that I represent. The risk if this happens is that the larger organization would no longer allow for any mistakes within the smaller organization, they would have their eyes on them so to speak, and the larger organization would necessarily “eat” the smaller one, which would break the “conflictual harmony” we’ve been talking about. In terms of leadership strategies, I also see it as very important to be very clear about what you can actually

achieve, what the limitations of the organization that you work for are, and not promise more than you can deliver within your role. At the same time it's important that you have a "flexibility range", where you can stretch the limits of your role as a representative of this organization. This can both mean personal choices, like how I've chosen to give people my personal number and say they can call me in the evening if needed, to show them I'm "with them" and not belonging to some other world where problems are only dealt with during office hours. But this "flexibility" also needs to be worked out internally, as a form of "flexible mechanisms" embraced by the larger organization, like a negotiation range that we can bring into our meeting with our counter part, that also allows us to give up some control and share some of our power.

**Johanna Tysk:** As a last and final question, I will bring this back into the field of art and design. What role do you think these fields can play in the social engagement you have been a part of?

**Ihsan:** To speak for myself, art via hiphop has always been where I land, where I feel seen and confirmed, where I'm allowed to dream, and imagine things... In the starting phases of any type of social engagements, I think it's important for this "mind-opening" space to be present and play a role. Then bring it back to an analytical phase, where you draw out your understanding of societal issues and your strategies. In the end you can again employ creative expressions to communicate what you see, or where you want to go, and use it as a tool to engage others.

**Johanna Tysk:** Thank you Ihsan for sharing your thoughts!



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**It's time to invite in our next guest, Gunilla Lundahl, 80, art/design journalist and author! Where are you from and what is your agenda?**

**Gunilla:** I'm a cultural worker, mostly freelance. I write. Been the editor of Arkitekttidningen, Form, contributed to numerous publications and catalogues, written about ten books of my own. Worked with exhibitions at Moderna museet, Arkitekturmuseet, Stadsmuseet, Riksställningar, Konsthall C etc., taught classes and lectured at art and design schools across Sweden. I have a daughter and two grand children. I live in Stockholm but I'm from Västerbotten, a province in Northern Sweden. The mountain village of Fjällheden confirms my existence.

**Johanna Tysk:** Welcome Gunilla :). Since I know you've had a special engagement in topics concerning children and their place in society, I figured I would start this conversation by addressing the "opposing poles" of children and adults... A space where I find that we usually don't explore a "healthy balance" between that which differentiates a children's perspective from an adult perspective, and how we can learn from each other in constructive ways... Similar to the topic I bring up in my text, about art in the social sphere, where you often get stuck in a dualistic thought model where you either violate your counter part or give up agency altogether, it is my impression in relation to children, that grown-ups often display similar patterns of behavior, which results in missed opportunities to actually learn from each other, or create

things together. What are your thoughts on this, and how can art and design play a role in exploring processes, knowledge, strategies and approaches that can help us grow as a society along with the children?

**Gunilla:** To start off, I would like to mention that I see your beautiful description of "conflictual harmony" as a description of the dialectics in a community and its possibilities to build new experiences. The first things I think of when it comes to the meeting with children is that the starting point needs to be acknowledging that we have different positions, or different entry points to our meeting place, that there is an "I" and a "you". In a space for creation and play, and for being together, this recognition of the "you" forms the very foundation for mutual trust, as well as the recognition that we are both curious. That's when we can leave our positioned world and wander into the world of imagination, and the unknown, go on a journey of discovery together. It is very rare that children are allowed to be "subjects" in a happening – whether it's planning, building, learning or creating – so that an exchange occurs and inequality and opposition can come to the surface, and new patterns of behavior appear.

**Johanna Tysk:** I find it very interesting that which you mention about the importance of acknowledging the "you" for any type of equal meeting to appear... And how this ties in with creation. Does not all creation happen in the meeting between an "I" and a "you", whether this "you" is the world, the dialectics within

yourself, a group, or another human being? A sociologist I know recently referred to someone a few days ago, who had said that relation appears in the “in-between-space” between you and I... He was emphasizing the importance of this space to be present, or else there is no relation, and it is my thought that also creation does not happen without this space... It also makes me think of the fear of the “in-between-space”, to not alone have the power to control what appears here, how wide spread this fear is especially among those at the top of the societal power hierarchies. Perhaps this fear, if we think specifically about children and adults from bit of a larger societal perspective, is also connected to the difficulties of “finding your role” in relation to children if we move away from those relations which we are used to. If children are acknowledged as subjects in the meeting with the adult sphere, then what would happen to the adult “structures”? What “weirdnesses” would the adult world have to acknowledge, and face? What would be left, what would be worth “keeping”, what would have to go, and what new “patterns of behavior” would appear?

**Gunilla:** Yes, children are expected to grow into society, and adults claim themselves to be experts on how this should happen. We often fail to trust in the childrens’ own power. Make ourselves superior. Don’t listen. For grown-ups it is often unimaginable to leave their power position and dare the unknown. Our grown-up responsibility is to at least try to create opportunities for equal meetings where we can learn something for the future. Seek new models. Dare to also fail. Create a space for this exchange to oc-

cur. It’s so hard! Can we? The apparent emptiness of this space gives us anxiety. When it can be freely activated, it lightens up.

**Johanna Tysk:** I know you were involved in the exhibition “The Model: a Model for a Qualitative Society” at Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 1968, where the Danish artist Palle Nielsen turned the museum space into an adventure playground for children. As far as I understand it, this was part pedagogical research project, based on a dissatisfaction with an educational system disregarding a child’s artistic creative potential. Part an activist critique of everyday-life, perceived as alienated and boring, and part a way of presenting an inclusive, process-oriented concept of art. I guess it could also be seen as one step in the direction of “staging” this space that we’ve talked about, where children are allowed to take full ownership of their positions as subjects. Could you tell us a bit more about this project?

**Gunilla:** “The Model” was a reaction against the materially and mentally limiting structures of our capitalist society. The playing children were to be models for the human being in the future qualitative society where we offered space and tools for play without our governing or steering participation. The Model as a positive form of societal criticism. Valid then. Followed by discussions. Left their marks. Faded out.

**Johanna Tysk:** If I were to look at this example from the perspective of “conflictual harmony”, then I would say perhaps it falls



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more towards the category of “giving up agency” than exploring what a fruitful dynamic between children and adults as subjects could possibly look like or, or be, in the co-creation of a “healthier” society than what we live in today, where that which has been marginalized is integrated into the very fabrics of our societies, and ourselves. I can see how “The Model” makes sense in relation to the very authoritarian and rigid structures that I’m sure many of the 70’s movements were a reaction against. But I also believe, as times are changing and we have the opportunity to learn from previous trials, that it’s important that we develop new models or strategies for social change, with the concept of “conflictual harmony” as one example of such a model. In developing this concept, I’m sure there’s plenty of knowledge that we can draw from a project like “The Model” also today. What knowledge would you like to highlight, in the creation of this space of “conflictual harmony”?

**Gunilla:** Fifty years later it is perhaps the play which becomes a model to explore further. The play as a practice in liberating ourselves from the straightjacket that modern capitalism has put us in. The play as a state of consciousness. An exercise for all ages, a meeting that appears when everyone is granted equal value. The play is the childrens’ method of exploring, and attaching. In the play there are no results, no set direction, the movement is not determined by calculation. The play has no set start, no determined ending point. The play is created, like life itself, for its own sake. It’s a flow. “Without interest” in a Kantian sense. The play is a creative act. A place of growth. A resistance against the neolib-

eralism that turns the world into surface, deprives people of their intrinsic value and makes our doing lose its meaning. Wears down our humanity. Perhaps it is in the play that we liberate ourselves. Set formulas don't exist. Only practice.

**Johanna Tysk:** Thank you Gunilla for sharing your thoughts and insights! The way you describe the play reminds me of the “thought models” I present in the text for a fruitful meeting between the “I” and “the collective”, drawing from a hiphop tradition of breakdancing, freestyling, or DJing, who just like the way you describe the play, has the potential of connecting the being to the doing through the meeting with a counter part of some sort... I also enjoy how you help us envision where this “conflictual harmony” could take us, beyond current power hierarchies and structures, whether it's related to children or other oppressive structures. It's easy sometimes to “forget” this dimension of what kind of society it is we're trying to create for the benefit of everyone. It makes me think of a question I asked Gudrun Schyman (Swedish feminist politician) once during a lecture. I said “What do you think men would benefit from gender equality?”. She thought about it for a moment, and then said, “love”...

**Our next guest, Maria Bergström, comes from the field of psychology. Who are you, where are you from and what is your agenda?**

**Maria:** I am a recently graduated psychologist who grew up in a small town outside of Stockholm. I am now working with occupational psychology in Malmö, Southern Sweden. In regards to this essay, I enjoy exploring in what ways psychological theories might apply to the kind of artistic process that has been discussed, as well as their possible connection points to the broader concept of “conflictual harmony”.

**Johanna Tysk:** Welcome Maria! So, considering that you're a psychologist it would be interesting to explore your thoughts on the psychological dimensions of achieving the kind of “conflictual harmony” that the whole interview is a sort of “staging of” through the characters Jo, Hanna and Tysk. What are your initial thoughts around this concept?

**Maria:** Well, to start with I would interpret the concept of “conflictual harmony”, and how it can be reached from an individual psychological standpoint, as the ability to integrate conflictual and contradictory elements, and see a “unity” in these in spite of the apparent conflicts. It also makes me associate to the concept of “cognitive dissonance”, which could be described as the mental stress or discomfort that appears when having for example several contradictory beliefs or ideas at the same time, which entails



that we always strive for internal consistency. We respond to this cognitive dissonance in ways that decrease the dissonance, such as simplifying or overseeing things so that the experienced contradiction goes away, which then “releases us” from the discomfort. To overcome this built in tendency to simplify things and endure staying in this discomfort, it usually requires a conscious effort, energy and psychological maturity, as well as conditions that don’t contain too much threat or pressure. This is obviously an ability that might be difficult to exert, for some even impossible.

**Johanna Tysk:** That’s interesting and highlights one of the “foundations” of the working concept of “conflictual harmony” I think. That there needs to be some sort of non-judgmental space available for this to appear, a place that is free from the threats that always seem to pop up as soon as you identify too strongly with a certain position or standpoint... I’m curious also how you would interpret the characters Jo, Hanna and Tysk, and how their relationships could be described from a psychological standpoint?

**Maria:** When I read your description of the artistic process and the collaboration between the three characters, it makes me think of theories related to parenting and attachment theories, for example of how a child uses the parent as a “safe base” to explore from and return to when in need of reassurance and security. In the examples that you give, it seems like you have started developing these relationships within yourself in a way that allows for you to explore the world quite freely, and then return to your inner

“parent” when things get scary or feel threatening. Without this inner parent however providing “too much structure” in a way that hinders the “freedom” or the creativity of the exploring child. The tension you mention between “freedom” and “structure” in the working process I believe is central also for this inner dynamic to stay balanced and healthy. I see “Hanna” as the safe “grown up” that “Jo” turns to when she becomes distressed or needs to see the “bigger picture”, and whom she needs to return to repeatedly to maintain her sense of direction and security. “Jo” could in this sense be described as the “Id” according to Freudian theory, which constitutes the subconscious urges or instincts within a human being. She is the creative force but also the fear and the performance anxiety that is ready to “throw in the towel” when things go wrong. “Hanna” then is the “Ego”, the organizing and realistic player in this who manages the Id in relation to the outer world. “Tysk” I see as the “Super-ego,” who has the moralizing and critical role in terms of reminding Hanna of “ideals” she finds important in relation to a larger societal perspective. It’s a challenge for Hanna to adjust and mediate between the urges of the “Id” and the demands of the “Super-ego”, but that is her role really, to play this part. If I were to be a bit self-reflective in this, I would also think about what you pointed out in terms of how creative “chaos” is feared in our culture, and seen as the opposite of “security”. Perhaps this affects the way I interpret Hanna as the “safe base”. Maybe if I had other “glasses” to see with then creative chaos could be considered just as “safe”, and I would see Jo as the safe space that for example Hanna turns to? And in that case,

of course, this analogy of Freud's structural model of the psyche wouldn't apply as directly.

**Johanna Tysk:** My thought is that perhaps the security lies in KOKO, not in Hanna :). Hanna represents structure indeed, and a type of mediation that prevents the conflicting dynamic of Jo and Tysk from resulting in "inner conflict" and drama. Perhaps the presence of a space, in this case created by the KOKO character, that "holds" all these roles and their differing functions, makes sure everyone feels seen and valuable, and is responsible for moving the process forward, is what provides the overall sense of security, which would make security a dynamic space of both "freedom" and "structure"? I would somehow connect this "space" to a sort of "spiritual awareness", an unidentified "watching" that also is the goal of mediation, mindfulness or similar practices. I'm wondering how this "space" is seen or worked with in psychological contexts? Or, generally speaking, what kind of strategies are used in psychology to help clients deal with their inner contradictions and the "battles" that take place in between these (how much destructive power tripping does not take place within every single human being on a daily basis?)?

**Maria:** In relation to this "space" that is created, and also in relation to KOKO's role that you mention, I associate strongly to the concept of a clear frame and clear boundaries of the therapeutic setting, which is supposed to enable a space for the client to feel safe and supported. This also applies to group activities, such as

supervision or conflict management in groups, where the external leader provides and upholds a strict frame and structure for the activity, but allows for the freedom of the group members within that frame. When this space is successfully created it allows for a sort of play in which the client or the group members can explore aspects of themselves and experience confirmation, contradiction and continuity. Maybe this analogy can be applied to the artistic process you describe, where you provide the structure but allows for freedom and creativity within that structure. As far as strategies used to help clients with their inner contradictions, I think the important thing is to foster the ability to cope with the distress and discomfort that these conflicts bring about. One way of coping with these sensations is to learn to relate to them in an different way. Here I think there is a lot to learn from the third wave of cognitive behavior therapy with its Eastern influences, such as non-judgmental mindfulness and acceptance. For the therapist, strategies that help clients deal with inner conflicts include creating a comforting environment where that distress is allowed and normalized, and contradictions can be explored without trying to minimize the conflict. Also encourage the client to dare to embrace the nuances instead of escaping to a black or white view of the matter. All in all, these strategies could be said to increase tolerance of the distress and anxiety that contradictions evoke, and therefore be used in the "tool box" of achieving a space of "conflictual harmony" within an individual psyche.

**Johanna Tysk:** Thank you Maria :)!

**We now welcome our next guest, Pomme van Hoof, 30, designer, curator and educator! Where are you from and what is your agenda?**

**Pomme:** I was born in Geldrop, a suburb of Eindhoven, the Netherlands, and raised by my father, a specialist in building construction technology, and my mother, a textile designer. I design experiences and interactions that make people look with different eyes at their daily reality. You could say my agenda is to reframe the way we think, about our world, our future and ourselves. I like to question the “normal” and the “norm”, reconsider whether it could be different, better, and articulate different possibilities of moving forward.

**Johanna Tysk:** Welcome Pomme! I know you teach a class at Konstfack in “Trendspotting and Future Thinking”, where you provide tools and facilitate a setting for master students from the fields of economics, social studies, technology, art and science, to work together on the creation of future scenarios. When practitioners from different fields meet to discuss “reality”, there must be ample opportunity for misunderstandings, ideological opposition, generally a situation that requires specific tools or circumstances for a fruitful conversation to take place. Just like “Jo” and “Tysk” in the case studies included in this text need “Hanna” with her designer perspective to overcome the barriers that separate their viewpoints and agencies, I’m sure you have a number of “tricks up your sleeve” that helps facilitate the kind of “magic”

Hanna speaks of, that allows for co-creation across disciplinary or social boundaries. I’m very curious what these tricks or strategies are!

**Pomme:** Yes, and it also connects to what “Hanna” mentioned in the text, about the designer as the facilitator of the “creation of new worlds out of the convergence of different views”. For this to happen, it helps to have tools that can broaden our viewpoints and with which we can start to externalize our visions. You also need tools that help create a common ground, in which people coming from very different schools-of-thought can start discussing something together. I find it very useful to work with the concepts of ‘time’ and ‘space’. As Brian Eno has described and conceptualized in his essay titled “The Big Here and Long Now” I strive for making peoples “sense of now” longer and their “sense of here” bigger. If you live in a big here, you have realized that your spot is intertwined with a larger place. You are able to zoom out and see things in a broader context. As Eno describes it beautifully, “the Long Now is the recognition that the precise moment you’re in grows out of the past and is a seed for the future. The longer your sense of Now, the more past and future it includes.” This awareness, and the mental activity of switching scales and traveling in time, facilitates new ways for us to understand and rethink the here and now.

**Johanna Tysk:** Very interesting! What is it precisely about this “widening” of the perception of time and space that facilitates fruitful conversation or co-creation?

**Pomme:** Well, when widening your perception of time and getting into the field of working with ‘futures’, one important thing to keep in mind is the understanding that we are not trying to predict ‘the future’ but that this work is about exploring and testing multiple possible futures. This plural approach is very useful to avoid one-sided views and fixed truths as it embraces failure and doubt as part of the process. You can see how the creation of futures then is not so much interesting as a tool for prediction or articulating ones pre-decided value systems, but rather functions as a critical tool to explore a wide range of possibilities (that might be desirable, undesirable, very probable, or merely possible). This ‘leap in time’ brings us to a mental space which is per definition uncertain, one where no one can know anything for sure. Let’s say you are working on the future of education. Because the topic can be

approached from so many different angles (economics, politics, social factors, cultural elements, technological innovations etc.) no one single discipline or person would know what that future would look like. In a space that is uncommon for all, and where there is a high level of uncertainty, we realize that we need each other’s perspective if we want to get anywhere. Having different voices around the table is important in identifying all the elements that could be worth looking into. Future scenarios can be used as a testing ground for thoughts and a dynamic space for experimentation and imagination. My experience is that the open-ended approach I introduce in the Future Thinking course, one where there is no one right answer, is very much appreciated by the students and a real eye opener for the ones more used to a linear approach.



*pommevanhoof.com*

**Johanna Tysk:** Do you have examples of specific future thinking exercises that could help us create a situation better suited to deal with the present, without falling into disrespectful arguments? I’m thinking about our political systems for instance, who are much defined by the kind of “fixed ideas” and one-sided views that the future thinking that you’re explaining manages to “bypass”. What I see in politics is a general tendency to avoid the discussion of what kind of society certain decisions actually produce, which is a kind of speculation, like you mention, where there needs to be multiple view points and perspectives present for us to get an informed idea about what direction we could potentially go in when adopting certain ideologies, or making certain political decisions. It’s like the political format, the way it’s been designed, creates

short-term thinking, and like political scientist Chantal Mouffe points out, is so badly fit to deal with “conflict” that the ideological differences are starting to blur out altogether. In Europe, and I’m sure elsewhere, this tendency according to Mouffe has created opportunities for right-wing populist parties to gain influence at the expense of a tolerant society, where people have faith in the political institution there to serve them. Her solution is to create a kind of “agonistic space” within politics, where opposing perspectives can meet based on a common ground of mutual respect. According to Mouffe, allowing passions and battle to have a central integrative function in politics will reduce the need for extremism. The task for democracy then is not to exclude or deny conflict but rather to domesticate it, by establishing an us/them relationship in which opponents are not treated as “enemies” but “adversaries” who share a common symbolic space, somewhat related to the concept of “conflictual harmony”. What kind of tools, connected to the future thinking you’ve talked about, do you think could be worth looking further into, in creating a kind of political space of “conflictual harmony”?

**Pomme:** One thing I could start with, connected to the political context you bring up, is a tool that allows us to constructively think through consequences. This can be done in a process of co-creation using a tool called the ‘future wheel’. In this exercise, a group of people starts by writing down a major change or trend (lets say, mass immigration) in the middle of a large piece of paper. They then expand this by mapping the consequences, and the

consequences of the consequences. Besides stretching the “now” into understanding effects over time it also broadens the sense of “here”, as one is asked to think in different directions (technology, politics, culture, social consequences for example) when formulating the consequences and coming up with opportunities. Of course there is no clear outcome, but it can enrich our understanding of a topic, and it highlights the interconnectedness of things and the uncertainties involved. This mapping and the ‘thinking out loud’ of possible consequences, disasters, risks and opportunities, helps us to be better prepared to deal with changing futures, plus it gives us a way to formulate a preferred future. In relation to the concept of “conflictual harmony”, an exercise like this also becomes an opportunity for multiple viewpoints to come together to explore a topic, in a way which helps create a space of learning and exploring rather than a space of fighting for ones ideas.

**Johanna Tysk:** This all sounds like tools that could be successfully applied to the political sphere, by allowing a space for insight also into people’s wishes, fears and thoughts around certain topics, which I’m sure are bound to come up when doing the kind of “consequence mapping” you describe. I’m thinking it could be especially helpful in relation to very sensitive topics like immigration, integration etc., that very easily trigger fears, anger and other emotions, across the political spectrum, that in current formats of “ideological combat”, easily lock people in static positions. These are also the kind of topics that could be hard to grasp through “dry” political discussions, or discussions based on high ideals

and beautiful words that don't quite illustrate what people actually mean, or what the society they're talking about would actually look like. Do you have more tools that could help facilitate constructive conversations on these type of political topics?

**Pomme:** Another tool that design can offer is visualization, which not only offers the ability to illustrate something after the fact, but that can be used as part of analyzing a topic. As human beings we relate much easier to stories than to statistics or graphs and therefore this idea of narrative and scenario becomes important when working with futures. A visualization of a possible future scenario (which could take the shape of written text, film, performance, an object, installation, a game environment or virtual reality) is not meant as an end point however, but functions as a tool to re-evaluate the topic and research our attitudes of today in order to figure out how to move forward. To relate it to politics, when someone talks about the importance of better integration, what does that mean, what does that look like? Can we paint a picture of what that would look like for me, in my street, for the city I live in, for Europe or for the planet? When we start coloring in those visions we may find out that even when using the same terminology, we might mean something completely different, and that there are several ways of getting somewhere. A more clearly outlined future scenario can help to avoid misunderstandings within a discussion because it ensures that everyone is talking about the same thing. Generally, it helps to have options on the table, to have something tangible to discuss. It's also a way of overcoming the "imagination

challenge", where it is hard for most people to imagine alternatives to what is, and rethink the systems many of us take for granted. We have to remember that these were once designed as well, and what we see as normal and unchangeable today, can change if we make conscious effort towards it.

**Johanna Tysk:** Thank you Pomme for sharing your experiences and thoughts!

# DANIELLE DEADWYLER

**Time for our next guest, Danny (Danielle) Deadwyler, 33, artist, actor and performance artist based in Atlanta, Georgia, US! Where are you from and what is your agenda?**

**Danny:** I'm an Atlanta native, with my artistry rooted in theatre, dance, and creative writing. I carry a Master's of Arts in American Studies from Columbia University, where I deepened my analysis of issues facing women and African Americans. I call myself an artist, innovator and sanctifier of female sexuality. As a published poet, writer, and performance artist, I'm an observer of all things pop culture and gender-centric.

**Johanna Tysk:** Welcome Danny! We spoke for the first time over Google Hangouts a couple of months back, on the topic of the intersection of art, hip-hop and social innovation. I have come to learn that your work marries film/video, performance art, and themes of motherhood, sexuality, and hip-hop. With all this interdisciplinarity going on, I'm sure there's plenty of "opposing elements" that you come across through your own practice. What aspect of your artistry would you say that you would most closely connect to the concept of "conflictual harmony"?

**Danny:** I would say that I find conflicting harmony occurring in the act of the artistic process for the kind of work I choose to perform in public spaces. My latest project, Muhfuckahnevaluvduhs: Real Live Girl, had its conception in video form, then elevated to

a performance intention and location. I danced live, as a sexual performer-dressed in a bathing suit- on three corners of my city, juxtaposed with a video representative of motherhood, to a mix-tape, largely hip-hop influenced, surprising drivers and pedestrians. There is an awkward, yet wonderful tension that occurs. 'Should I engage; Am I being pranked; Is this appropriate; I love it; I hate it; Get outta the street' are all potential and real responses/queries that happen. However, aberrations in anyone's day to day are direct triggers to the mind, the body, the mundane. And I think that everyone will react in myriad ways along the spectrum. And I welcome them all, without cause for violence. Mostly, I find people just stare...if they stop to entertain it. Those that whisk verbal commentary showing disdain tend to instantly react and fly by in their cars. In this case of disdain, a reaction is had about the image they see, a deeply rooted stereotypical reaction to the literal performance or the idea that art is being performed on the street, and they hurl their ideas immediately. Others, the silent, observant ones, take in all of the work...breathing in it with me, occasionally relinquishing some of the awkward feeling the longer they stay... and I feel welcomed, though maybe not wholly understood. And that is okay by me - the lack of full understanding. The engagement they provided is 100% enough and valued. How does one practice surprise/improvised performances like this for the public? How do you determine what will happen or how it will look (weather, sun's influence, etc.)? You do not. I did not. Therefore, the conflictual harmony arises in the surprise of the interaction of the performance. A surprise in the same manner of the students' work



*danielledeadwyler.com*

being vandalized not by another youth but by a presumptive janitor. Saying yes to whatever may occur, whatever makes itself known the day I choose to perform and where and for whomever comes forth that day...herein is where the harmony lies. The conflict is the unknown. The unknown is to be embraced. Dealing with or going with conflictual harmony in other mediums or social structures is a constant 'yes and'...in order to yield results, positive or leading in that direction. Saying yes to the negative, if that is what comes about, is a potential positive direction too, I presume. I constantly go back to the example of the surprise of the janitor doing the insolent act on the work of the youths, and the collaborative deciding to upend the act to grow towards what they would actually want, an artistic product, from that negative.

**Johanna Tysk:** I think this beautifully describes how an individual act or approach/mindset can sort of “impose” a space of conflictual harmony in a public setting, by presenting the public with the “conflict” of this sudden, ambiguous, out-of-the-norm situation, and then choosing, like you do, to embrace the reactions in whatever shape or form they may come... Where it’s the choice of the passers-by in a way, whether to “engage” in this conflictually harmonious situation or not, by entering a “meeting” with you and the work you present... How important do you think this context of the public sphere is for this opportunity of a “conflictually harmonious situation” to appear between an art work and its audience?

**Danny:** Well, first off art in the public realm is accessible. The



thing about museums and galleries...all people do not feel welcomed there. Therefore they don't make the choice to attend. The work and themes of projects that I do are not always given public art value...in the same way a sculpture or dance from a traditional organization or visual art piece would receive. And hip-hop lives in such a commercialized space...voices that counter the traditional dominant narrative are often undermined, further marginalized, and discredited. Putting the kind of work that I do in the public realm is a direct counter to the narratives that have most visibility, as well, it creates the opportunity, in the public realm, to have a moment of wonderment, a conflict when least expected...our values and beliefs are capable of being shifted highly when we least expect it. We are not with our guards up. We are not ready to rebut or fight in the same way if it happens upon us outside of where we think things are supposed to belong.

**Johanna Tysk:** I'm also curious to know more about the "conflicting images" that you're presenting the audience with, of the strip club dancer and images of motherhood, two ideas of womanhood or female sexuality that are usually "kept apart", with their own separate logic tied to them... What do you think "happens" when the audience is confronted with this "conflict"? What does this "mind fuck" do, or open up for? It makes me think of the "gangster monkeys" juxtaposed with Buddhism and the KOKO bird in the second painting I describe... How something happens when you combine things that normally don't go together, without saying "this is good and this is bad", how it opens up to some

sort of "space" of possibility to transform what is to something else, "juggle" with what is served to you, maybe even play with it, embrace it, but on your own terms... What does it do for you, to somehow embrace both these "conflicting ideas" of womanhood and female sexuality? A thought that hits me also, is that both these "ideas" of womanhood and the logic tied to them seem to have been created to cater to male needs, would you agree? Does juxtaposing them and somehow embracing them both through your own performances, somehow change this dynamic of a womanhood defined by male, or simply outside, eyes?

**Danny:** I will say this mindfuck (HAAA), again, is a supercharge from the mundane. The funny thing is, that it's happening directly under their neighborhood's noses...they just don't see it presented on their street corner, or next to their package store, or at the streetlight they pass through day after day. Sometimes you have to be pushed to think outside of what is normalized. That is the fun in what I do. I'm always elated and completely horrified internally to do work like this...you know, they say do what scares you. The valuation guidelines are screwed as hell. I'm disinterested in continuing to sweep identities under the rug along with the institutions who have been controlling notions of woman's work, the value of the woman's body, the value of her labor, the value of her domestic contributions, the value of black women's bodies...the value of the black woman's body and labor within the hip-hop cultural context. This work is to mindfuck on all those levels. To value and salute black women in these spheres. These spheres of women's work,

home and sexual, have surely been largely influenced by patriarchal, misogynist notions on what is womanhood. Rebellion, however, comes in everyday occurrences. Micro-rebellions. This might be a little bit of micro-rebellion...

**Johanna Tysk:** Going back to the “conflict” of an artist engaging in a public or social/community setting, I’m curious to know what your experience and thoughts are in relation to this. It seems like this “meeting”, with an audience outside of those who already feel welcomed in the museums or galleries, is most often influenced by barriers in terms of what is considered “high culture”, associations oftentimes connected to ideas of class, race, gender to a certain extent. Artists like yourself, who are influenced by hip-hop in the sense of nourishing a certain “raw ass energy” (I think those are your words from our Google hangouts session ;)) in your work, I believe has the potential of adding new layers and dimensions to this whole idea of what is high/low culture etc. and the hierarchies and “locked identities” that come with them, in a way opening up for new ways of relating to art, ourselves as social constructs or beings, social hierarchies etc... I would say this type of artistry, playing with influences stemming from different kinds of experiences and expressions (be it cultural, class-related, gender etc.), merging into something that cannot clearly be defined as this, that or the other, also has the potential of “mind-fucking” both those identifying with the “traditional hip-hop realm” and those identifying with the traditional notion of “contemporary fine arts”, which is always a first step to engagement, and connection I would say,

across social borders of different kinds... And I’m curious, how do you envision a “fruitful meeting” between an artist like yourself and a community, in terms of more long-term relations or impact, beyond the experience of a specific art work like the one that you’ve discussed?

**Danny:** I’m not sure... I know it looks like openness, as you describe it. It looks like those that are underrepresented coming into the sphere or space and having their say alongside those who’ve had their say predominantly. It also looks like direct connection to the community/communities that are wished to be engaged by a single individual or organization. It also looks like time. I’ve been engaging in an artist pilot program at the non-profit organization C4 Atlanta; it has been integral in my thinking about my work, its social engagement, civic engagement and the like. It has influenced my thinking on community engagement, community connection and the ability to influence change. That work has to be done slowly, authentically, and with the community/groups that one seeks to impact. It isn’t a superhero coming in to save the day. The secret weapon is day to day engagement with the issues and concerns. I’ll also say that the conditions for learning, educating ourselves is eliminating hierarchy and everyone being students learning together. The artist is not valued over the community nor vice versa. There is no gender hierarchy, racial, class, etc. etc. There has to be a collection of the voices and experiences of the community to bring the concerns to light and to be able to shift them, to give value to the history of the issues, to envision the

wants of those impacted by the issues, and to come to common ground. I see that for women's issues, gentrification issues, hip-hop cultural issues (gender, class, et.al.). A whole community practice together, whether it be in the literal streets or in the buildings and homes of those impacted. You gotta go where the site of concern is taking place, live there, and grow from there...

**Johanna Tysk:** Thank you Danny for sharing your experiences and thoughts!

**Time to invite in Oscar Lara, artist, researcher and teacher, 38, based in Stockholm and Lima! Who are you, where are you from and what is your agenda?**

**Oscar:** I was born and raised in Lima, Peru, where I started my career as a visual artist. I continued my studies in Australia, and later on in Sweden, where my wife is from. I have collaborated with institutions in Sweden, Spain, Argentina, Denmark, Holland and Peru, creating sculpture installations, video documentaries, performances and social development projects. I am currently in the process of setting up a platform for discourse around socially engaged arts, questioning my own methods but also the methods of the global contemporary art community. I have come to find that in most cases when an artist is working with a human group in need, the field of arts, as well as the career of the individual artist, is the part that gains from the meeting, while the human group in misery most likely will remain the same. I see this as very problematic.

**Johanna Tysk:** Welcome Oscar :). I find your area of investigation very interesting, as the meeting between art and the social sphere is one that is filled with "conflictually disharmonious situations" from different angles. For me, with a background in design "entering" the art sphere, it's been interesting to see the strong defence mechanisms or emotions that many who identify with the art sphere often display when talking about art and the "need" for social impact. Almost like people are wounded by the political or societal attempt at instrumentalizing art and making it "useful" in

a way that might violate its integrity and unique qualities or processes. But like you're pointing out in your investigations, there are also many examples of the art sphere instrumentalizing the social sphere and the people or contexts they involve in art projects. Could you tell us a little more about the dynamics that you see in play?

**Oscar:** I will start by saying that I am convinced that social practice within contemporary art, which is the field I am more familiar with, is full of very problematic strategies when proposing conversations with the human groups they target. I think that it is important to acknowledge that in order to give a fair analysis we would need to understand that social practitioners within arts, are culture workers by choice and that makes them part of a system by default. During the development of my practice I have met many emerging artists who, I truly believe, want to give a contribution to the sphere that is in misery or facing a problem that the art is making reference to. Most of the time this kind of projects are initiatives that independent artists start by their own and even budgeting them with their own money, doing a lot of research and fieldwork. No harm has been done until here. It is only an artist trying to do his work taking on an investigation about a specific problem that affects a human group. Most of the time the problem doesn't lay on the idea nor the intention nor the strategy but on the display. The question and main challenge has been always the same: Where do I exhibit all this research? Or: Who would be interested in this? It is in this step where, in my opinion, most of the

mistakes take place. An emerging artist, who is fighting for getting established in order to live out of his/her art, needs to get visibility and in many cases an invitation to a show at a interesting gallery is too much to resist. It is when the ART WORLD does its work that things get moving, and I think that it is here that the instrumentalization phenomenon starts. If this show is a success and the amount of visibility ends up with an outcome such as the acquisition of the work by a private collector who makes his fortune out of extracting oil from the amazon, then I see that as a problem. The collector owes now a great quality video work that will display at the lobby of one of his many building and the artist has realized that there are people that consider his work worthy. So, in most cases for emerging artists, this motivates the consolidation of a wrong strategy. The artist thinks that that is the way and by doing it over and over again creates a method that follow similar guidelines like the ones used during colonial times. This institutionalization of a methodology of producing socially engaged art is something I have seem many times and it is something very problematic nowadays. It creates a type of "hype" of "let's go social" in individual practitioners, which becomes a sort of greed, and a wish to do "interesting projects" for the art world rather than social good.

**Johanna Tysk:** So I hear that you've identified "the art world", I suppose as an economic, social, value based system, as a major factor in why a conflictually *disharmonious* situation between an artist and a human group oftentimes appears... When describing this "system" of the art world you mention its commercial as

well as its colonial aspects. From my perspective, the common denominator between the two factors in this case lies in the “objectification” of a counter part, which is seen as a means of getting something for yourself, whether this something is money, prestige, a certain self image, a certain position within your social system etc. And I guess this “system” of the institutionalized art world is then transferred over as a methodology, or as a value system, to many practitioners within the art world. From an individual artist’s point of view, working within the system of the art world, what are your strategies to avoid participating in re-creating this situation of the art world instrumentalizing its social counter part?

**Oscar:** I would start by an internal questioning of your role and your agenda as an artist, establishing some sort of ethics or boundaries for the conversation with the human group that you target. I am convinced that artists should show a bigger level of responsibility towards the real structural change that their projects seems to be aiming for but are so often not achieving. You should know, as an artist, why you are using people in your art, and also think through if there really is a need for your work. This involves considering what the outcome potentially could be for the people you involve: are there possibilities for them to be empowered in any way by your work, who you are as an artist, or your networks? If I judge that the people in misery will most likely stay the same and I will make a career out of showcasing their misery, which there is a whole industry around, then I will avoid getting involved in the project, or change my strategy. This is a learning process for

many artists who are used to not needing to consider these things within the discourse of contemporary art.

**Johanna Tysk:** I find this interesting and very relevant in regards to the topic of “art” and “social impact”... For an individual artist who wants to engage with social issues there seem to be all types of forces, agencies and value systems, to govern the way you “meet” your social counterpart... Ranging from the “contemporary art sphere” approach of encouraging you to not bother about considering the needs of your counter part, or applauding you for giving up agency all together, which are both ways of not taking responsibility which is what I hear you describing. Or a pedagogical or community art discourse, steering you towards only considering the immediate desires as expressed by your counter part and not the potential of your own creative power or agency... Or the political “demand” of popularizing art, which easily creates a “forced” situation where the social sphere turns into a threat against the “freedom” of art... All values based in dualistic ideas the way I see it, where the “individual freedom” and the “solidarity with the collective” are set up against one another, seen as mutually exclusive and not quite able to feed each other in a mutually beneficial way, a mind frame that I would like to mention defines not only current discourse within the art sphere, but also our political discourse... I see your description of this internal questioning in the individual artist as one step towards “disidentifying” from these dualistic ideas that we’ve been taught, thus opening up to an interest in the relation between yourself and the dynamics and needs of the

context you involve yourself with, developing your own strategies and approaches instead of merely adopting a mind frame or a value system taught to you by a dysfunctional system. I'm also thinking there needs to be new structures built where practitioners from the social sphere, non profits, activists etc., "meet" practitioners from the art sphere, and somehow negotiate strategies, processes and methodologies from both... Then an individual artist can enter this platform, and work with specific groups from there. What possibilities do you see for this type of work?

**Oscar:** Yes, building these kind of discursive platforms I think are absolutely necessary. In my latest art piece, Mining Life, I investigate illegal gold mining in Peru and elsewhere, the reasons behind their current or future existence as well as the institutionalized and



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global post-colonial structures that have been architected around them. The piece has as a main element a simultaneous discursive platform organized as a sort of round table among various professionals, practitioners and activists from Peru and Greece, coming from the fields of visual arts, anthropology and activism. Through a PhD position at the Royal College of Art in Stockholm, I'm expanding this investigation through research groups in Sweden and Peru, involving students as well as professionals with direct knowledge of the social disasters connected to gold mining, including human trafficking, prostitution of young girls, pollution and slavery. Our overall goal is to use the investigation of the power dynamics and links between Sweden and Peru, to develop communal knowledge that re-think, re-invent, re-design and improve our strategies and tactics as artists. An important aspect of this work is then the transfer of this knowledge, and the institutionalization of it in the form of new alternatives for educational models within the arts.

**Johanna Tysk:** Could you tell us about any specific tactics or strategies that you are exploring?

**Oscar:** We are currently working on a project based on an idea expressed by one of my students, to create a theatre play set in a situation in the Amazons affected by the issues we are concerned with. Her initial idea was to write the script herself, then have an audience in an exhibition setting perform it. Since this student did not have sufficient lived experience to account for this experience herself, we developed this idea to be executed by the people actually

affected by these structures. This way, we learn to question our own proposals as well as our own position in relation to the context we are interested in. Power relationships are always established from the beginning, there's a political structure to everything you do, you can't escape this. Also, not everything you are interested in is worth creating art about. In this context, it made more sense to give people the tools to create their own material. I have been in contact with doctors, owners of brothels, prostituted girls, miners. Also professionals that can coach us in understanding the complexity of this situation and the "normalcy" that is always created even under what in privileged eyes could be seen as horrifying circumstances. We will then engage script writers/directors with local knowledge and experience of group dynamics to help people produce their work.

**Johanna Tysk:** How do you see your role in this? And how does the role of the artist in this context differ from let's say a sort of art pedagogue or producer?

**Oscar:** My role is linking this back to the artistic processes of my students, considering outcomes, where to display this art, who the audience is, what their own position and responsibility is as the instigators of whatever happens. You cannot rely on curators to assist in this analysis. You have to take on the responsibility of framing the entire context and recognize what the art project is generating throughout the whole process. This analysis is where the work is at. This involves authorship also, which is an on-going

conversation I need to have also in relation to my own role. Would it make more sense to have a list of contributors? Or is my name as the author necessary within a contemporary art setting? Also, maybe the outcome that makes sense is not an exhibition, perhaps it is a book, or an article? My wish is to put more focus on what the work actually does, and strategies and tactics of getting there, rather than exactly what it is.

**Johanna Tysk:** Much thank you Oscar for sharing your analysis and on-going work!

# HANNA LUNDBORG

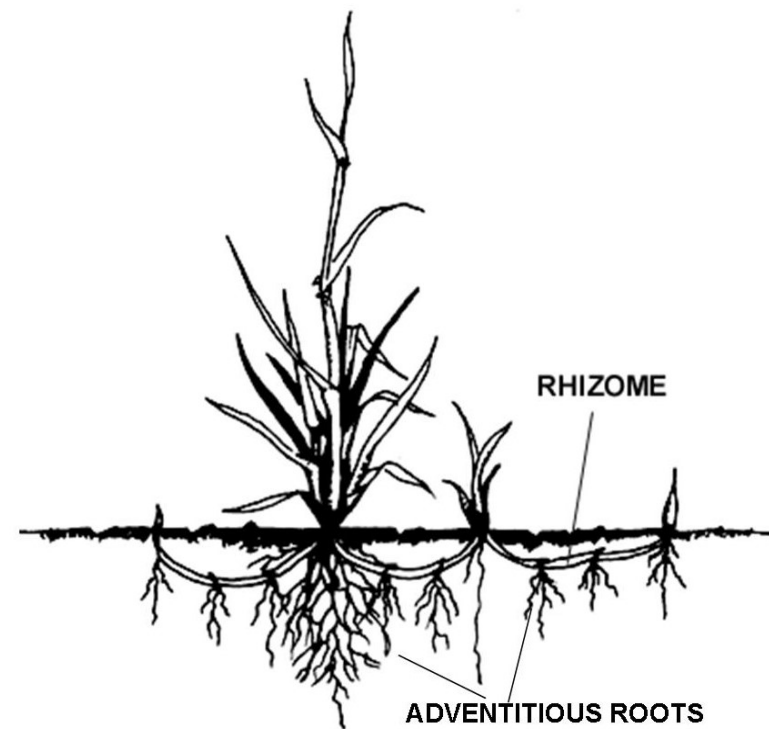
**Next in line we welcome in Hanna Lundborg, 33, artist, silversmith and curator, raised on the Swedish countryside near Borås and now living and working in Stockholm! Could you tell us a little bit about your professional path and your agenda?**

**Hanna:** My professional path has shifted a lot over the years, without a clear agenda other than following my own curiosity and interests. You could call it a process-oriented approach, where I question set ideas and norms and create new frames for things in response to new situations. This means I apply a creative or artistic approach to whatever context I'm a part of, whether it be directly related to the cultural sphere or something completely different, like working as a buyer for an interior design store.

**Johanna Tysk:** I know you've investigated self-organization within the art world, which is an area you have a lot of experience of yourself, and which could also be defined by a process-oriented approach. I find your mapping of the processes employed by self-organized initiatives within the arts very interesting, as it pin-points many of the qualities that are marginalized in a society where a goal-oriented approach is the norm, with the linear process that often comes with it. How would you describe this self-organized approach, in opposition to other, more institutionalized organizational forms?

**Hanna:** When reading and talking around self-organisation the

comparison to natural science often comes up, and in particular through the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In the 70s they wrote the two-volume theoretical work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* where they discuss the structure of the rhizome. They compare the root system of a tree and a rhizome where the tree has a direction growing from the bottom to the top and the rhizome has a more complex root system where the growth happens spontaneously through several different parts of the system



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at the same time, making connections wherever they appear, without trying to reach one specific goal. The Rhizome is a temporal structure without orders from the outside, not governed by a central body. You can also view the rhizomatic structure as a method of working. It is a method that entails another way of evolving through the work that you do where the process leads you forward. My first own revelation of what it meant to work for a self-organised initiative was the one that the method was very similar to the artistic process. You start up with many questions that you want to examine through your organisational work. You start working to reach the answers to these questions, but along the way you find new questions, which then direct your thoughts and organisational work along another course. And this goes on. Through different projects new questions arise and new connections are made, in a spontaneous fashion just like the links within a rhizome. The development of the organisation becomes organic. The rhizome can be regarded as a system with a non-hierarchical order. The tree in Deleuze and Guattari's writing symbolises the dominant structure of one central governing body that sets the goal for the organisation and the work. Where the rhizome functions in a much more fluid way, decisions are made not for the purpose of reaching one objective but made spontaneously through the links found and connections made throughout the process. The decisions made will influence the path of the organisation both in the specific project or process but might through this also influence the objective. Through the collaborative nature of self-organisation decision-making processes also tend to look

different than the one with a single director or one governing body that has the responsibility for the fulfillment of the mission stated. The collaboration in itself entail a constant negotiation but could also entail that decisions are made parallel through process which means that the direction of the organisation can be several at the same time. Self-organisation can be looked upon as a rhizome in both large and small scale. All the self-organised initiatives together could be viewed as a body of a rhizome, one root system through the art world. It's also, seen as a structure, a part of society that is constantly struggling for economic survival, operating under conditions that not easily lends itself to any kind of sustainability or stability.

**Johanna Tysk:** What I found very interesting when you described the rhizomatic structures within self-organization in the art world, was how similar they seem to function compared to what I've seen of small-scale self-organization within the multiethnic and socially marginalized suburbs where I've been active for the past seven years. These initiatives often respond to immediate social challenges through a trial-and-error-approach, collaborative methods, spontaneous responses and much freedom to allow the process to reveal the changing or parallel objectives along the way. It's easy to see how valuable this "method" of working could be as part of a larger societal eco system, where employing a kind of flexibility and sensibility to the process – as well as understanding how to "feed" people's enthusiasm and passion for what they do beyond the monetary gain – is going to be absolutely necessary for our

understanding of how to achieve any kind of socially sustainable situation. I also see similarities in terms of the marginalized position that these self-initiated organizations, and the processes used, hold in relation to the ways of the “established sphere”, our welfare system or whatever governing body is in control of our shared resources, whose goal-oriented and rigid approach often-times fails to achieve what they say they want to achieve in terms of for example diversity, citizen engagement and effective ways of responding to social challenges. Simply put; that which could be described as goal-oriented, planned, rigid, predictable, stable and orderly, clearly dominating or undermining that which could be described, or perceived as, chaotic, unpredictable, flexible, and process-oriented. This becomes apparent for instance in the funding procedures, like you’ve mentioned in your essay also, where self-organized initiatives in general are “forced” to adhere to very rigid structures and goal-oriented approaches to receive any kind of financial resources. How do you see these structures play out within the art world?

**Hanna:** To start with, it’s impossible to separate the initiatives of self-organisation with the rest of the art world. Sarah Thelwall talks about the art world as an eco system where small art centers, with a more rhizomatic way of operating, feed the large institutions and the art market. Working long-term together with un-established artist, giving space and time for production and peer discussion, these arenas give artists a chance to both go deeper into their own practice but also to realize projects that without their support

maybe never would be realized. Thelwall gives examples on a lot of projects that have begun forming within the comfort of a small art centre and then has evolved to become large projects at institutions or biennales, with someone else cashing in on the work performed by these smaller scale organizations, who struggle to survive on project budgets that don’t support administration, staff or any kind of sustainable practices. Thelwall points out that the value that the small art organisations give to the eco system of the art world doesn’t get recognized enough and especially doesn’t get converted into money or economical subsidy. Viewing the art world as one eco system and the self-organized initiatives as a rhizome within it, it is easy to point out the importance of self-organisation for the development of the eco system as a whole.

**Johanna Tysk:** What strategies do you think are most efficient when dealing with these kind of structures? How make the processes and methods of the self-organized sphere function in conflictual harmony with the “established sector” in control of the resources?

**Hanna:** In the discussion surrounding institutional critique, Andrea Fraser points out that we are trapped within our own field and that we can’t escape it. We are always a result of the environment we came from at the same time as being the constitution of the environment we are in. We can question and try to escape the boundaries of the institution or the boundaries of the art world but through every attempt made we expand our frame and bring more

of the world into it. Through this you can state the importance of self-organisation within the system. The development of the system itself becomes dependent on producers that question the dominant order and the power structure to be able to evolve and not stagnate within its own structures. This also means having an impact on the system, being able to shape and reshape it from the inside. Maybe the task for self-organisation is not creating a brand new context but a different context that stretches the boundaries within a system, the system in this case being the art world.

**Johanna Tysk:** ...which in Sweden is intimately connected to the welfare state like you mention in your essay, where the funding bodies for projects executed by self-organized initiatives are most often the state, the region and the municipality. I would see your idea about the “nomadic administrator” as one step in this direction. Could you tell us about this project?

**Hanna:** In this project I take the position of the nomadic administrator, assisting one artist at a time with administrative tasks based on their specific needs to ease their administrative burden. In one way it entails a questioning of current structures where most artists, and many other vocational categories supported by the state, for instance teachers and doctors, are expected to administrate beyond what is reasonable. How can we allow ourselves to administrate this much? What is it for? It's like we're flipping papers to make society go round, and within the current system, artists have to spend more time sending in applications, updating their port-

folios, building their networks, than actually doing what they are educated to do: produce art. But I would not regard this as a protest action, or an action with a political agenda. I'm driven by a genuine curiosity and interest in how administrative work could be developed, as well as an almost naive belief in the importance of art, and the competence of artists in society. We are taught to see things differently, employ other methods or processes. What happens if the current frames for how administration is done are blurred? Could administration – today seen as the opposite of creativity – become creative?

**Johanna Tysk:** I see your approach as a very interesting example of how to work towards a situation of conflictual harmony between the needs for order – a need apparent in any kind of societal organisation – and the equally strong need for “chaos”, or a more process-oriented self-organized approach, when forming a healthy and sustainable democracy. In the process redefining what order, or administration in this example, is, or what it could be, allowing this “tension” to spark order in new and healthier ways. So thank you Hanna for sharing your thoughts and research!

# ANETTE GÖTHLUND & ULLA LIND

**As our last guests, we now invite in Konstfack professors Anette Göthlund & Ulla Lind from the Department of Visual Arts Education at Konstfack in Stockholm, Sweden!**

**This last conversation will be staged in a manner that is bit different from the previous ones, is that so, Johanna? Is it also that case that we have suddenly jumped one year ahead in time, where we find you not at Konstfack in Stockholm anymore, but at Parsons School of Design in New York, in the midst of a very transformative period of knowledge acquisition and personal growth?**



**Johanna Tysk:** Yes and yes :). This last conversation – just like the previous ones – took place between September 2015 and January of 2016 – and was the only one I did not have time to synthesize within the time frames of the course Organizing Discourse. It was also the conversation that introduced the most new concepts (from the academic realm), and that was the most difficult to “de-code” into laymans terms, or link to a practical context. It was also the conversation that sparked the most philosophical thoughts in me, thoughts that have evolved and grown since I came to this new academic context in New York. Trying to force a premature synthesis into a format that might not be fully relevant for my present situation, therefore feels like a futile task, which is why I have chosen to present the conversation as is. “Unfinished”, un-synthesized, and maybe opening up more questions than answers at this point.

**Johanna Tysk:** This also gives some insight into the process I went through with all of the previous conversations, where developing the “common ground” between my own transdisciplinary platform and the discourse/s of the people I engaged in conversation, is truly a craft – a labor some and enjoyable effort of creating a new narrative out of different reference points, experiences and ways of seeing, that can be understood by a broader audience from various disciplinary backgrounds. So – I proudly present to you an example of an un-synthesized narrative or meeting (merely translated into English), a glimpse of a process very likely to bare more fruit with time.

## So let's start from the beginning!

**12/1/15**

**E-mail sent from Johanna Tysk to Ulla Lind and Anette Göthlund**

Hi Ulla and Anette!

Hope you're both well!

I'm in the process of putting together my very first publication ;). It's part of my class "Organising Discourse", where I'm establishing "KOKO Labs" which is a platform for me to share thoughts and reflections about the convergence point of art, design and the social sphere, but also invite in others to contribute to these conversation, based on their practice and disciplinary knowledge.

I've written a text that is based upon the case studies I presented in the lecture I held for you, and I'm now inviting in contributors from the fields my text touches upon, to share reflections on challenges, opportunities and needs that they see within their own fields. I don't want this to be too much of a labor some process for people, but rather pretty informal, free reflections in written "conversation format" via e-mail, where I start off with a question and may ask follow up questions until we feel like we're done. The text that the conversation is based upon is ca 13 pages long, in an interview format, where "KOKO" interviews Jo, the artist, Hanna,

the designer, and Tysk, the community organizer :).

Wondering if either of you would be interested in contributing to my publication? Adding a small "package" with the text plus images of the mural paintings I'm referring to. The publication is meant to be ready on January 14 (and be launched in a digital format once my website is ready). Need some time to synthesize things, so my intention is to get these conversations started within the next few weeks.

Hugs from me,  
J

**12/2/15**

**E-mail sent from Anette Göthlund to Ulla Lind and Johanna Tysk**

Hi Johanna!

Ulla and I are currently in Gothenburg. Tomorrow Ulla will hold a lecture in a seminar for doctoral students about posthumanism, aesthetic practices and education. I really like the idea of Jo, Hanna and Tysk in an interview format. I find the text you attached both enlightening and fun to read! Let me think through my schedule and me and/or Ulla will get back with you!

Greetings, Anette

**12/2/15**

**E-mail sent from Ulla Lind to Anette Göthlund and Johanna Tysk**

Hi.

I agree with Anette about your interview and not the least the concept of CONFLICTUAL HARMONY. I would be glad to contribute something in collaboration with Anette. Time is the big issue here, but as far as I understand it it's not the length of the text that is important.

We'll keep thinking and will get back with you, we'll be riding the train back which is a good place to think...

/U

**12/2/15**

**E-mail sent from Johanna Tysk to Ulla Lind and Anette Göthlund**

Sounds good, wishing you a nice trip ;). And glad to hear you like the format!

Will copy paste the "starting question" I pose to every contributor, and I'll let you decide whether you have time or not to contribute.

First off, I've asked people to share thoughts and associations to my "working concept" of "conflictual harmony"...

How does this concept and the thoughts and processes presented in the text relate to challenges/opportunities/needs within your practice, the topics you're concerned with, or larger social/societal issues that you see?

((It's a lot about examining the type of "dualistic thought systems" I bring up in the interview that are oftentimes taken for granted, "Of course" constructions like body/mind, I/collective, subjective/objective, chaos/order etc. are conflicting "opposites" that cannot be imagined to interplay according to a fruitful dynamic... Which of these or similar "pairs of opposites" operate within your fields? And what happens, or what possibilities open up, if we choose to see things differently?))

I can confirm Ulla that the length of the text is not important... It can be a brief reflection, it's also not necessary with an exhaustive response, but rather that you choose something that feels interesting/relevant/inspiring in the questions I ask and write freely based on this. I may then write follow-up questions or comments to this. I see the format of the contributions a little bit as an experiment also, and it's ok that they differ a bit depending on who I'm "speaking" with...

Love, J

**12/2/15**

**E-mail sent from Johanna Tysk to Ulla Lind and Anette Göthlund**

A last thought that hit me now that I'm writing you, is what relation "control" has to all of this... I remember that you talked about this during the Research Week at Konstfack, that with the research strategies that you are using (the co-creative, not sure if it was called performative ethnography or something like this?) it becomes a nightmare if you think you can control everything. To "dissolve" or challenge these dualities I've mentioned most definitely implies "a lack of control", without for that matter letting go of all control which is a sort of control mechanism/protective measure in itself... And in this scenario faith becomes very important, which one of your student I think mentioned during my presentation. Faith in what is a bigger philosophical question hehe, where I assume everyone needs to find their own answers. I would perhaps label it faith in the meeting with the world, the interplay between the world and myself in some way... So anyhow, had an impulse to share. These are all very important topics I think. spanning philosophy/spirituality/society/politics the way I see it, and art/the aesthetic realm I assume is still struggling to define their place in this mess we humans have gotten ourselves into ;).

**1/8/16**

**E-mail sent from Ulla Lind to Anette Göthlund and Johanna Tysk**

Hi Johanna!

Here's a draft from Anette and me that you are welcome to use in the way you think is appropriate... There is no list of references and furthermore a mixed system of references, sometimes parenthesis sometimes foot notes, but that we can fix later on...

We wish you a nice weekend and we'll be in touch soon...

Ulla & Anette

**Attached document:**

**Comment on the "working concept" conflictual harmony ...**

**Anette Göthlund & Ulla Lind**

It is interesting to investigate paired concepts or dichotomies which has been under deep suspicion during the last decades. Therefore it is important to ask what happens or how it works, if the concepts "make out" or become entangled instead of tearing them apart or just accept the separated meanings. In the case with "conflictual harmony" we think it can hardly work the other way around, "harmonic conflict".... So how is it possible to combine the conflictual with the harmonic and other dichotomies? Is it just a metaphorical operation or is it something more involved in-between this couple?

This question takes us into the realm of in-between-ness and the field of investigation that we have worked with some years and continue to develop. As a backdrop to the question above we reuse a text from a previous article, and after that we return to the conflictual harmony below:

This research concerns visual art teacher training at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm. It aims to improve educational science through “double perspectives” in which scientific and artistic research uses related forms of methods in learning and degree projects. The department of Visual Art Education has long experience of working in the intersection between scientific research and artistic practice. However, there is a lack of academic investigation into this “double perspective” in which students work with the same research question by combining scientific and artistic theories and methods. What can be explored is what happens between these different practices of enacting new performative knowledge. This is the case with the research project *Performing Knowledge - A project to improve knowledge in higher education through a double perspective: Theory and Performativity* (Göthlund & Lind, 2010). This three-year cooperative research project, lasting from 2008 to 2011, involved three sub projects and eight researchers from five universities.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The project was funded by the Swedish Research Council/Educational Science. The subprojects were: 1) *A Pedagogy of Difference and Performative Knowledge* by Prof. Anette Göthlund (PhD), Cecilia Andersson (PhD) and Ulla Lind (PhD) Department of Visual Arts Education, Konstfack/ University College of Arts, Craft and Design, Stockholm; 2) *Multimodal Representations and the Construction of Knowledge* by Prof. Ana Graviz (PhD) of Södertörn University, School of Culture and Communication, Birgitta Odelfors (PhD) of Örebro University, School of Humanities, Education and

The aim of the subproject *A pedagogy of difference and performing knowledge* which I report from here was to examine how different forms of knowledge in a “double perspective” appear in learning processes and student theses (Göthlund & Lind, 2007). In the research design we were strongly influenced by the concept of “performative social science” (Law & Urry, 2004; Denzin, 2003; Jones, Gergen, Guiney Yallop, Lopez de Vallejo, Roberts & Wright, 2008). Performative research methods do not simply describe the world, but they also enact it. They have specific effects, make differences, enact realities, and they can help to bring into being what they have discovered (Law & Urry, 2004, pp. 392–93; Latour, 2005). Post-structuralism in a broad sense constructs the theoretical context (Lather, 2005; Lind, 2010). Based on some examples from students’ work, theses and practical vocational training, we studied how the performative approach is visible, and how we can use the concept of performance and performativity when we touch upon three theoretical aspects; the making of the student (how higher education positions and makes space for the student), the making of the object of study, in the sense of whether the object of study really exists, along with the making of a double perspective in an ambulatory sense. These shifting approaches relate to the South African artist William Kentridge’s description of the “ambulatory relationship between activity and knowledge-making, between actively moving backwards and forwards to allow intellectual shifts” (Kentridge cited in Brenner & Adrew, 2006, p. 207). Such intellectual shifts are immensely important for knowledge about and understanding of social and cultural complexities, and underpins performative onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007, 2008), a term that relates to the co-dependent

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*Social Sciences and Helena Danielsson (PhD) Academy for Education and Humanities, Dalarna University; 3) Margareta Melin (PhD) and Professor Bo Reimer, School of Arts and Communication, Malmö University.*



and entwined links between theories of being (ontology) and theories of knowing (epistemology). The ontological question in what sense the object of study really exists is also the core question of performative social sciences. This question conceptualizes what Dewsbury says about Performative ontology, a bodily process that speaks of the variation of our embodiment within the lived world itself (2000, p. 477).<sup>2</sup>

When we speak about a double perspective it is about the importance of a changed mindset from “either-or” to “both-and”, which was one important contribution in post structuralism. It is not either theory or practice, either art or science, but both-and...

This can even so be really hard to deal with because the dichotomies are powerful and rule the practices and educational settings as hegemonic discourses and discourse practices. Some concepts from the so called Nomadic philosophy (Deleuze & Guattari) can also help to maintain these changes in mindsets; e.g. rhizome, becoming (performativity), the body-without-organs, assemblages, the fold.

As a further step in this research, we want to actualize and use the concept *a/r/tography*. As a methodology *A/r/tography* actualizes different areas of competencies and different subject positions as artist, teacher, and researcher. *A/r/tography* is about collaboration and a methodology of situations or events, and as such turn away

from who is the artist, teacher, researcher or what kind of art, education or research it is – instead a methodology of situations looks for when is an experience of art, research and education.<sup>3</sup>

*A/r/tographical* work is a specific category of arts-based research and practices within education research. *A/r/t* is a metaphor for artist–researcher–teacher. In *a/r/tography* these three roles are integrated and the *a/r/tography* creates a third space and merges “knowing, doing, and making” (Pinar, 2004). These practitioners occupy “in-between” spaces *A/r/tography* (Pinar, 2004, p. 9).

This also relates to the emergent theoretical field of post humanist performativity which gives access to a concept that incorporates the material and discursive, the natural and the cultural, the human and the nonhuman, while challenging the given-ness of these dichotomies and categories (Alaimo & Hekman 2008:11). Material objects and artifacts are here seen as performative agents being part of a performative production of force and change in a tangled, interwoven relationship of intra-activity with matter, nonhuman or human (Barad 2007, 2008; Latour 2005). In reaching learning with/ in/through arts and culture these concepts and methods help to renew the importance of materiality, multiple literacies (Masny & Cole 2012) and different modalities in knowledge and conversation practices.

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2 Lind U (2015) "Mo(ve)ments Beyond Representation – the student as visual ethnographer" In Göthlund, A., Illeris, H. & Thrane, K. W. (red.) (2015). *EDGE: 20 essays on contemporary art education*. København: Multivers Academic, pp 362-374.

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3 See Springgay, S., Irwin, R. L., Leggo, C. & Gouzouasis, P. (Eds.) (2008). *Being with a/r/tography*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

## *Post-humanist Performativity*

To reach beyond the dichotomy of human and nonhuman allows us to think the “working concept” “conflictual harmony” as a post-humanist performativity, a becoming according to situations and events. As such both the conflictual and the harmony changes and take on different aspects and intensities of the moment and movement. The conflictual is needed to be able to pin up structures and reveal the power imbalances within hegemonic discourses. The harmony is about synchronization and agreements which always follows by dissonance.

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Entering the space of “in-between”, into the uncertainty of both – and (don’t we all prefer straight answers to our questions instead of the indecisive both and?) also calls for a certain amount of braveness. Entering an in-between-space means to step onto or into something which is not preestablished, where the rules for how to explore and understand this space (or place) might not be set and handed over to you like a pre-packed toolbox. To be the explorer of this space requires openness, and sensibility. To teach and do research from this perspective is grounded in theories which support the conception of knowledge as something being performed in situations and contexts, and always in relation to other subjects. Although a performance is always “new” in the sense an act can never repeat another or previous act(-ion), J. D

Dewsbury states the repetitive in the performative. The performance event occurs again and again, or it is not at all: it is irretrievable. It looks towards ‘never-before-occurring’ situations whilst encompassing risk and chance. To attach oneself to this performative approach, whether in research or teaching, requires a certain amount of “braveness”. As Ulla has said in an article: “[It] is about a process of learning that generates uncertainty and ambiguity that does not stick to safe positions but rather looks for access to multiplicity and the spaces of different trajectories.”<sup>4</sup> In order to fulfill our ambitions of using performance events as ‘tools’ for knowledge production, as we try to do for example in our teaching, an important premise is to plan for forms of sociality; to involve participants in an exploration of sensuous forms of knowledge through the enactment of situations where “anything can happen”.

What we think of as “explorative” or “performative” in our teaching context is a willingness to try the path that is not a hundred percent safe. If the traditional scholar aims at the clear answers, the unambiguous and exact science, we would like to promote the approach perhaps more common among artists: a lack of fear for failure, curiosity in front of the ambiguous, an in-exact science or even further towards an un-exact knowledge that is not seeking the essential, general or ideal but the experimental and marginal, invisible or excluded, that which remains in the event (e.g. the visual event), the intermezzo, in-between mo(ve)ments and explore

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4 Lind (2015), p 371.

it as a complex aggregation.<sup>5</sup>

Returning to the concept Conflictual Harmony, but still connecting it to “braveness”, we also think it touches upon the fact that most of us bear a deep fear of conflict. Harmony definitely has a more uplifting aura, and we are raised in a society and a culture (also as researchers and teachers) that tell us to strive towards harmony and to avoid conflict. But we must learn not to see every conflict as a threat, every contradictory voice or deviation as something against. We keep seeing the children’s version of the ... Mukribu.

**1/11/16**

**E-mail sent from Johanna Tysk to Ulla Lind and Anette Göthlund**

Thank you dear Ulla & Anette for your reflections!!!

Very interesting material indeed, many new concepts also (or concepts I have a vague idea of what they mean). I started “dissecting” your text and googled some concepts... An exciting process in itself to “meet” the differing frameworks of reference and world views that my contributors introduce me to, and find a “common ground”. Will try to avoid footnotes and references if I can and keep the conversations more within the realm of “popular sci-

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<sup>5</sup> Göthlund, A & Lind, U (2010) intermezzo – a Performative Research Project in Art Teacher Education. I International Journal of Education Through Art, vol.6 no.2, 2010, p. 209.

ence” by highlighting the themes that are most strongly connected to “conflictual harmony”. Perhaps go deeper into a few specific concepts that you introduce and along with my cross-cultural or cross-disciplinary readers try to understand these more in depth, also formulate some general tendencies within academic research through the direction you represent, in the borderland between research, education and artistic practice. Hopefully I’ll have time to bounce something back tomorrow (I will in that case include it in what I’m presenting as part of our course examination on Thursday), but as I mentioned I’ll continue working on the publication also in the months to come.

So more soon, cheers from me!!

**1/12/16**

**E-mail sent from Ulla Lind to Anette Göthlund and Johanna Tysk**

Hi Jo, thanks for your response. It sounds very exciting and I hope the text triggers many conversations along with your text.

Greetings /U

**1/14/16**

**E-mail sent from Johanna Tysk to Ulla Lind and Anette Göthlund**

Dear Ulla and Anette!

I have now marinated your response for a bit, sought common ground in relation to my own explorations, and tried to understand the reference points you've introduced me to in relation to "my world" and the logic I'm searching for... I don't think that my "working concept" can fit in all the way with a concept like "post human performativity" for instance, but I can definitely see how it has relation to this, and that a concept like this can help me better understand my own standpoints in contrast to but also similar to the conceptual frameworks you've introduced me to...

Very interesting these "meetings" with the worlds that my contributors are practicing within. The way things have developed as a process, the first round has been much about the person I'm in conversation with introducing their conceptual framework to me. I then respond by trying to stage a space of a meeting, where I attempt to understand my counter part as thoroughly as possible, but also use the meeting as a way to better understand myself and my own standpoints... My meeting with you feels special somehow, delves deeply into things I've had a hard time discussing with others, about the very foundations of what we see as human knowledge, which is a "quest" that's always been built into me somehow (when I was eleven years old I told my mom "Isn't it amazing that I was given MY OWN brain and MY OWN body?"). It might also give me an opportunity to share thoughts that were featured in the first version of my publication last semester, but that

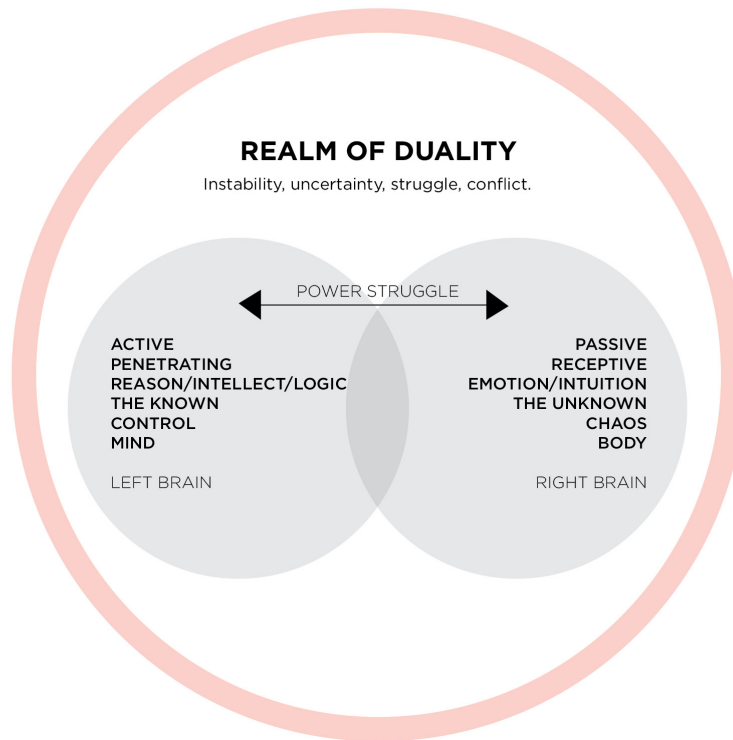
I took out because they felt "too out there", or difficult to find reference points to in the conceptual frameworks of others.

So let's start with the very "foundation" of the concept of "conflictul harmony", which is about finding a different, "more healthy" way of relating to the dichotomies that our current worldview is built around. As far as I understand it, "the sciences" has in the last few centuries started questioning these divisions of body/mind, subjective/objective, I/collective etc. etc. (which as far as I understand it could be labelled a "post modern" or "post structural" development?). Natural science (in its linear, deterministic form) has shaped much of our worldview over a long period of time, and if I understand it correctly, the questioning of this paradigm is fuelled also by developments within the social sciences and the up-and-coming artistic research, challenging existing dichotomies in the discussion of what knowledge is and how it is created?

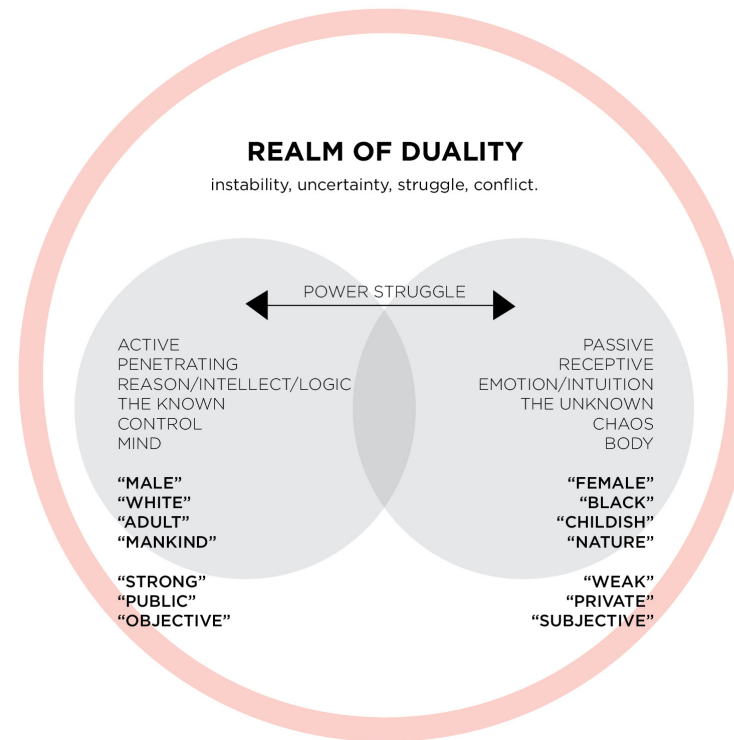
Before I go deeper into some of the concepts you have introduced me to, I would like to share a sort of "sketch" of a worldview (or a model of a worldview, a simplification made to be used in this world and understand things that happen, not an "absolute truth") that I've started developing after 32 years of "exploring" my own brain and my surroundings ;).

The foundation of this model, is that a "tension" between pairs of opposites is built into our human system, in this model expressed through the "opposite pairs" of active/penetrating/intellect/what

## INDIVIDUAL



## STRUCTURE



we know/control/mind versus passive/receptive/intuitive/chaos/body... The "division" between these are of course not razor-sharp and constitutes a sort of construction, but it can still be seen as a dynamic that plays out within all of us through for instance the interplay/collaboration between our left and right brain hemispheres, or our male and female hormones (which are within every human being regardless of biological gender...). It also has parallels to much knowledge from Eastern philosophies, where we can find many philosophical theories describing and exploring the inter-

play between the cold and the warm, "masculine" and "feminine" aspects of our existence, not to mention all the archetypes of sun/moon etc. in many mythologies from like every part of the world... The point here, is that these "opposing pairs" are able to interact or play out in "balance" (which constitutes some sort of "Conflictual Harmony"), but that this doesn't happen because we've lost touch with that which carries this play of dualities (which could perhaps be expressed as the 3rd space you are talking about, or the in-between-ness??) and instead started identifying with "this

or the other” which automatically makes the “counter part” a threat that must be oppressed or dominated...

The first circle represents a sort of model on an individual level whereas the other circle is my theory/model of the structural level showing how the fact that our human focus for a long time has not been on balance/interplay between these pair of opposites (rather, the focus has been on “war”) has manifested in human oppression and suffering of all kinds... Also this to be seen as a “model”/simplification based on my point of reference from the Western world, where we have created a hierarchy between for instance (in simplified terms) our left and right brain hemispheres, where “men”, “white”, “grown-ups”, “humanity” has been associated with one side of our humanity, and “women”, “black”, “children”, “nature” with the other. The consequence dominance and oppression of all kinds, which also involves a kind of “inner dominance” within the groups that have projected “the body”, “chaos” etc on others, a kind of “mutilated humanity” in a whole system of hierarchical relationships...

As far as I understand the post modern and post structural developments (including post colonialism, gender studies etc.), they have revealed many of these power relations, and like you put it, pointed to the marginal or the excluded... Also challenged the static division of pairs of opposites, added new nuances, “lifted” the significance of that which has been oppressed, both in the form of specific groups and their experiences, but also the more

abstract terms associated with these, like “the body”, “the unknown”, “the material” ... Pointed to the significance of relation, interplay etc... My own “explorations” I’m sure can be seen as a part of these currents, but I can also feel that the “post modern” to me seems like a big mess... And it is my sense that there are many parallel discourses that are not linked to each other, like we have the “spiritual ones” in one corner who speak about balance and the individual perspective (“I create my own world etc”), the artsy ones who speak about the importance of embracing the unknown, the marginal, the complex etc, the social activists who analyze the dynamics of structural oppression, and then we have me in the middle looking for links in all of this, trying to find some sort of “new order” out of this “mess”, a new type of logic that is not linear, deterministic, “either-or”, but that still offers some kind of structure, some kind of focus, some sort of direction out of the post modern chaos...

Which brings me to your thoughts on the concept of “conflictual harmony”, and why it might not work the other way around, as in “harmonic conflict” ... I thought about why, and it must be because “the harmony” is what carries the conflict and not the other way around. “The harmony” could perhaps be described with references to what you call the 3rd space, the “in-between-ness”. I interpret this as the “circle” in the sketches I sent you, that “carries” the duality of this world in its varying forms, allowing it to play out in the way that you describe, where they are constantly changing, sometimes as more defined form, sometimes dissolved into some-

thing where you cannot really tell what is what, in a sort of play that definitely includes an (unavoidable, “built-in”) tension, a conflict that like you describe it so nicely shows up to “pin up structures and reveal power imbalances”... The harmony I see as this “space” that allows this play or battle between opposing pairs of different kinds, but also as a sort of process with a direction, where it according to my “explorations” is some sort of consistency in “how”, or under what conditions, this “conflictual harmony” can appear, according to me oftentimes tied to some sort of “balance” between chaos and order in a working process for instance... I feel like I’m “spacing out” a bit when I speak about these things, and I try to use these conversations also to anchor, understand, find specific strategies to explore/reach this, I think some of your concepts and research focus can be helpful...

In my conversations I’ve been trying to identify both which opposing pairs that are the most obvious or relevant ones in the world my contributors are active within, as well as specific strategies, “thought models”, tools, concepts, insights etc that can point in a direction of “conflictual harmony” between these opposing pairs... With this as a starting point, would you say your “opposing pairs” are primarily science and artistic practice, and the built in or perceived conflict between these? How would you briefly describe this opposition?

You have mentioned a number of concepts in your text that could be seen as strategies to create a situation of “conflictual harmony”

between “science” and “art”, and moving on I would like to test whether I understand these in a more “popular scientific language” ;)?

We can start with “performativity”, which as far as I understand it is about acknowledging the subject and its unavoidable participatory influence on the world it is trying to describe or pin down. This in contrast to a worldview where there’s an “objective world” out there to be described by “an objective observer” who is not seen as co-creative in the reality that is described, is this correct? And through “blurring” this traditional scientific division of “subjective” and “objective”, it opens up a “3rd space” where knowing, doing and making is given status as a place of knowledge production? (I’m here thinking about the impression I’ve had from the little research I’ve done on the social sciences, where I’ve noticed that the active subject has been acknowledged somehow, but the way I’ve perceived it, mostly in a “negative way”, where the focus seems to be more on “trying to remove the subject” from the research instead of acknowledging it as a creative force to be used for positive change. This to me feels more like an artistic approach to the insight that the one who is exploring the world also affects the world you are exploring...)

The way I’ve understood “performativity”, it’s also about seeing things “in relation”, right? If we ponder the classic philosophical question of free will, this discussion for instance is based on an “either-or”-logic, where you in accordance with the performative

way of seeing would dismiss that entire question of whether there is a free will or not and instead ask: What can I create in relation to my surrounding world? Point being that this is what is interesting, not if I have free will or not, which we can never find a satisfying “objective” answer to anyway... Same thing with the idea of “becoming”, that this is about what I can become, express, create, in relation to my surrounding, which is ever changing? A situation which is really about “disidentifying” from absolute positions as I see it, and act more in accordance with what you want to create, and what is possible in any given moment (which the Hanna character would describe as “working with the materials of the situation”)?

I googled post humanism and interpreted this in a similar way as what I just described, you can let me know if I’m on the right track in my interpretation :). In relation to myself as a post human hehe with an overdose of different perspectives within, I would like to see that which is constant in me as a sort of “free will”, an agency beyond my “ego will”, directed towards achieving a state of “conflictual harmony” within and in relation to my surrounding. I would describe this as an agency that is constantly ingrained in my body even, and that can never be satisfied more than in the moment, according to expressions that are ever-changing... But that still provides some sort of “stability”, a structure that I like I wrote before find missing in post humanism, a “Being” where everything is not relative, where there is a core, an agency, a space that carries all this change, all this division, all the dualistic dynamics, some-

thing that is still and unchanging in all of this, “the unity behind all form”...

I find your definition of a/r/tography very interesting also... It reminds me of my methodology based on “different subject positions” expressed by Jo (the artist), Hanna (the designer, who could also be described as a sort of researcher) and Tysk (the community organizer, who through her focus on understanding the needs of her counterpart could be seen as performing a sort of “teacher role”). You call this a “methodology of situations or events” which I interpret according to what I wrote above, that it’s about what these different subject positions can create in any given moment? Didn’t quite understand the focus on “when is an experience of art, research and education”, could you explain this a little more? What would you say can be created with this method (what type of knowledge, relations etc.)?

As far as what you call the “3rd space” of knowing, doing and making, I have to ask the question what is 1st and 2nd space :)? I would interpret it as 1st and 2nd space being the “dualities” and that this 3rd space is what holds this in a sort of state where we can build knowledge “beyond” the dualities of for instance “theory” and practice”, does that sound like a reasonable interpretation? And that these “in-between-spaces” appear in this 3rd space where “the dualities” can freely play ;)??

I find in your response also some very straight-forward “strategies”



necessary to create a sort of “conflictual harmony” between art and science, theory and practice... Courage. Openness. Sensibility (to context, counterparts etc.). Willingness to accept failure, test, experiment, “search” in your explorations of the world also for that which is complex, the ambiguous, the in-exact. Lift the material, the doing as part of the knowing, all those things that the artistic realm specializes in, and that the way I see it have been “locked into” separate rooms and (sometimes or often) hierarchical institutions rather than being allowed to enter the “societal body”... Perhaps “the artistic realm”, in its meeting with “science” will get the opportunity to formulate and claim its position in society, “become stronger” through this meeting, if the conditions are “conflictually harmonious” ;)? Until it merges into something else, where “art” and “science” might no longer be seen as opposing poles like today, but evolve into new forms of human understanding and expressions...

Think I got everything down that’s on my mind today hehe, will now return to “the material world” and brush my teeth... Hope my response is not overwhelmingly long. Just like last time, you can select whatever in my response that feels relevant/interesting to expand upon/comment/respond to (some questions are bit rhetorical also), also feel no pressure to be exhaustive in your responses...

Love from Tensta!

**1/20/16**

**E-mail sent from Ulla Lind to Anette Göthlund and Johanna Tysk**

Hi Johanna!

Realized I never responded to this beautiful draft and response. It’s so interesting everything that you write, unfortunately we are in the midst of the most intense working period with research applications and course starts. Hope all is well with you and that we may contribute with feedback bit later on...

Greetings /U

**1/21/16**

**E-mail sent from Johanna Tysk to Ulla Lind and Anette Göthlund**

Hi Ulla!

Absolutely, no problem! If you feel like it would be more convenient to meet up for a moment and do a “finishing round” in person that works also. Wish you the best of luck with applications and everything for now!

Love,  
J

## **Meeting notes from Johanna's meeting with Ulla:**

### **On post structuralism, the social sciences and artistic research**

Post structuralism is a theoretical/scientific discourse that challenges the dualisms that form the basis for our societal organization and different hierarchies of knowledge tied to gender, race etc. Artistic research has emerged as a need in this context and always has to claim its position in relation to the natural sciences that has considerably more resources. Important questions include: What do artistic processes make visible? What type of knowledge is created? With this approach artistic research does not need to be fixed or defined. It's more about making visible, clarifying and identifying what artistic education can bring. Social sciences have moved closer to artistic practice (through for instance performative ethnography). It's about transcending ideas of subject and object – instead of doing research on or about something, you create together. It's a becoming together.

### **On post humanism**

Post-humanism breaks down hierarchies between the material and the human. Acknowledges that something happens in that meeting. It's not about speaking of what influences what (which remains within the dualism of object and subject), but the meeting is what is interesting, the interactiveness of it. What emerges in this

meeting? That's where we're created as subjects, in a relational play. The "I" is created in a meeting. Also, there is not a meeting or a situation that can be repeated. We need to stop ascribing humans and objects things beforehand. Instead use experiences as an openness to what is possible.

### **On pedagogy**

The pedagogue is a facilitator that can arrange for a meeting with the help of certain elements or approaches, making something accessible to the participants without deciding exactly what is to be done. It's important that the participants are allowed to have agency, contribute with something. We need to be prepared for the contradictory! Also resist the tendency of participants to surrender their agency. This agency needs to be stimulated, and we need to make sure that everyone can make a difference in the relational play. Each participants unique participation should matter. As a pedagogue it's part of my task to make sure I'm not creating copies of myself, which is a responsibility to allow space for our own resources but also those of the participants. With this approach even a very young child can contribute with knowledge. This difference needs to be given space to emerge, and cause ruptures.

### **On performativity**

Performativity is about things not being fixed, they are not ascribed qualities beforehand. The child is not explained by their

background before you've seen what the child can become in this space, in this context, with the resources they carry with them.

### **On a/r/tography**

A/r/tography is about not ascribing what is what in a particular situation, but embracing and facilitating what emerges in the situation and the course of events. A movement occurs, the relational. In it, we explore events that emerge not in accordance with explanations, but as learnings. What did we notice, what was made visible, what ideas did we get? We explore limitations and dilemmas, make connections. How things connect is unpredictable. It's like a rhizomatic system, where every moment or step depends on the steps that were taken before. Important to see the possibilities for connections, the unpredictable. It's not interesting when this is art, design or knowledge, or who is an artist. It's all entangled, vibrant, intensive, everything moves but at different pace. In a shared learning process you can encounter resistance and challenges that bring forth a more intense course of events.

### **On the "3rd space"**

The "3rd space" appears in the meeting between two discourses (that are both manifested as practice). It's important to not miss out on what appears there. It's a space that is not defined until the meeting occurs. It's important to talk about, what did we do now? What happened? Because there is no discourse yet that

encompasses this!

What is created in this space? New knowledge, unexpected solutions, new images and imaginations, new subject positions and understandings for what I have reproduced or created in this meeting. Each subject position changes together.

This is very linked to an artistic process, where we don't know the final result from the start. We work with methods and processes that challenge what we think we know.

### **So, Johanna Tysk, now in New York City, what would you like to do to wrap up this publication?**

**Johanna Tysk:** I would like to invite back in Jo, Hanna and Tysk from a year and a half back as we speak... There's a particular section of the first draft for the publication that I finalized in the spring of 2015, that I think somehow captures the spirit of the publication and the state of mind that gave birth to it. Just like in the passage above, my response to Anette and Ulla, it feels very familiar, yet distant at the same time, as new knowledge and understanding has entered my system.

### **So how did the particular section you are referring to come about?**

**Johanna Tysk:** In this draft, you KOKO thanked Jo, Hanna and



Tysk for sharing their thoughts and passions... Then you asked “How do you feel now?”.

### **Space is yours Jo, Hanna and Tysk.**

**Jo:** I feel confident in a way. Also very scared, as I have slowly started to release those ideas that gave me false comfort... I have to be very kind to myself as I take small steps ahead towards something I am not quite sure of what it is... Something I cannot control. Maybe this is the worst part, letting go of a certain control.

**Tysk:** I believe this is a state that defines also society as a whole, or our collective humanity... There is some peace in this. The pain or the confusion we carry is not only ours, just like the joy is not only ours, or the belief that things are going in some sort of right direction.

**Hanna:** I think there is comfort also in the almost scientific approach we have taken towards these questions. It’s not a complete chaos, there is an order, a form. This we will never understand fully, but we can reveal it in little pieces along the way, adjust, rethink, question, share...

**Jo:** Yes, I think there is some comfort in sharing... Without being “done”, “final”, “set”. Hilma af Klint said “I describe the path as I walk it” and I believe in this. Then others can join the conversation also. There is some relief in not knowing everything. To enter a true meeting, there needs to be this space available, that which you do not yet know. Then you are free to play, and create things anew.