

personal lives of our collective which inevitably enter into it while participants enter our houses.

Besides being a moment to learn from the landscape, the *Academy* also instigated doings – small, minimal, collective actions of care, shared among the participants. Mornings of weeding the public paths while someone was reading selected texts by Tim Ingold aloud. Tactile explorations and small maintenance gestures of old forgotten stone walls. What is the specificity of curating in the outdoors, in fragile and abandoned ecologies if not in the potential impact that such curatorial approaches can have toward the environments which are hosting them. Our *Academy of Margins*, interlacing theory and practice, works as a space of fostering relations between those invited to take part in it and the village hosting them, assembling a multitude of participants, human and non-human.

The two editions of the Summer School of the *Academy of Margins* in 2022 and 2023 explored two different formats, the second being

an answer and a development of suggestions that came out of the first.

The summer school in 2022 was organised in a traditional way, keeping the distinction between those invited to share their knowledges and those who applied as participants. In the days of the summer school this border vanished almost immediately: the “teachers” were only the co-producers of knowledge and the participants in many cases co-created the workshop together with those invited to guide it. Some participants shared their practices in empty moments while still following the proposed calendar of events. Reading poetry aloud while laying on the street, exercising writing, guided by a gentle voice, napping while someone was reading for us, movement exercises that were considered missing from the program – all of these additional moments were proposed by the participants. At the end of the week, one of the desired changes expressed by the participants for the following year was a program that would be

co-created, even spontaneously by leaving some blank spots in the calendar, by participants.

And so, for the second edition we decided to eliminate the figure of the invited practitioner and instead ask those willing to participate to co-shape the program with us, trying to engage with certain topics we proposed, which were all connected with the main topic village as house. The only thing we did was to give the various activities a time in the calendar so that everyone would have the right amount of time needed for their activity. We got to know each other through the proposed workshops and tested pedagogical formats in an environment where everyone had the same supportive position.^[5] And on the edges of all the programmed activities we filled time with napping, making each other braids, chatting and gossiping, doing laundry at the river and swimming, observing scorpions climbing walls, preparing gnocchi and hosting a dinner for a hundred people.

GLOSSARY
OF THE MARGINS

[5] Except actually for us, the people of Robida: we actually agreed upon each of us proposing an activity but at the end because the schedule was too packed and because of many organisational burdens, we desisted.

During the symposium *Care of Margins* in 2021 and after it a need to define, re-define, invent, ground or re-place some meaningful terms appeared. There were words which needed a shared definition, a quote taken from texts and authors meaningful for us. Other terms demanded a new description, as the word residency itself: instead of replacing them with new terms, we re-placed them by finding a meaning which would fit the specific place of Topolove and ourselves. The glossary also contains neologisms, as the word very dear to us, with-ness and coupled words which specifically define our posture, our relation to our own practice, to the place and the future we envision for it. Lastly, we have also defined some meaningful Slovene words, bearers of the identity of Topolove, which we use without translating them. The *Glossary of the Margins* is constantly enriched by temporary and permanent dwellers of Topolove, expanding in a wide assemblage of words for a possible way of dwelling-yet-to-come in post-rural places. Find the Glossary with new words born in the frame of the Academy in the coloured pages of this publication.

Aljaž Škrlep

From learning-from to learning-with

When we, the members of the Robida Collective, had thought of opening the *Academy of Margins* and its associated Summer School in 2022, our main intention was to offer an alternative model for theoretical and practical learning and study, which would be based on the action of situating knowledges and the principle of collective inter-learning. Organising the first edition of the Summer School meant preparing a space that would encourage learning from the different actors present in Topolò at that particular moment in time. We brought in mentors who could stimulate these encounters by focusing them on particular subjects of study by giving lectures and hosting talks and conversations. We brought in the participants who would actively *do* the learning that was supposed to be done.

At the final collective meeting with the participants of the first edition of the Summer School, one thing stood out: We *were* in fact learning together, they said. But as it turned out in the group feedback session, this learning was a solitary endeavour. A multitude of solitudes were put together, which did not intermingle and intertwine as we imagined them to. The time of study, lectures and presentations was intensely pushing the participants into the constricted frames of their own interiorities, their own spaces of thought. There was a lack of moments of collective interiorisation and sedimentation of knowledge. They were, however, made alone together, collectively. They did indeed share a common space and time, but *they were not put into a shared process of learning*. The place where the Summer School is held, the village of Topolò/Topolove, is in itself a playground where the *pedagogical clinamen* — the collision of individuals, their sudden swerves, deviations and declinations — happens naturally, during group meals, spontaneous debates, moments of conviviality, during the waiting for the thing itself: the pedagogical process. The learning process, on the one hand, and everything else, on the other. Alas, the binary opposition between *the process of learning* and that of *life, dwelling, staying-with* was alive and well, also in the Summer School of the *Academy of Margins*.

So we reconsidered, we learned. We decided to try to develop and put into action the concept of *learning-with*, the concept first proposed to us by our friend and colleague Michael Marder.

This *with* has multiple interpretations. Firstly, it is the antonym of the proposition *without*, which is so characteristic of the standard pedagogical process. The sterile classroom is only one of its *withouts*: it puts the one who learns out of the context of everyday life, in which — so it seems — learning does not and cannot take place. As if learning is one of the multiple modes of our being in which a human subject can put itself into, modes which are strictly separated from one another. But learning-with is not a predominantly mental function, but a ‘movement’ of life, involving the human subject as a whole and in relation to the various environments that constitute the ecological world,” wrote authors Carvalho, Steil and Gonçaga in their article *Learning from a more-than-human perspective. Plants as Teachers* (2020).

But the *with* also opposes the proposition *from*, as in *learning-from*, the method which clearly assumes that there is an essential opposition between *the student* and *the teacher*, the opposition which perpetuates the power relations imposed on subjects by the standard pedagogical process. *Learning-with*, on the other hand, means — as Fred Moten and Stefano Harney write in their *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* — to be “committed to the idea that study is what you do with other people. It’s talking and walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice. [...] The point of calling it ‘study’ is to mark that the incessant and irreversible intellectuality of these activities is already present.” There is no call to order in learning-with, no interpellation into teachers and students, activity and passivity, spaces of study and spaces of mere being. At the second edition of Robida’s Summer School, we made the participants into students and teachers at the same time. But learning-with is not only a simple gesture of dismantling this binary opposition, but a context, that provides a way of forming a new possible subjectivity, which is open to contaminations from outside — other participants, the environment, the landscape and its human and non-human inhabitants; it is a context, as famously wrote Moten and Harney, “where people sort of take turns doing things for each other or for the others, and where you allow yourself to be possessed by others as they do something.” Being possessed by others, their otherness and particular personalities, everyday practices, eating habits, choice of words, ticks, even — this is what we call *learning-with*.

Academy of Margins

Experiences and Memories

Words about waking up with the mountain staring at you, about observing watery infrastructures and listening to waterfalls, about the belly of the mountain and card games, yeasts on fruits and finding space within the landscape. Velvety soft weather, cobblestones, cleaning routines – a collection on the experiences of dwelling for one week in Topolò/Topolove while sharing knowledges and learning from each other.

Sophie Mak-Schram

I awake to the creaking of the floorboards above

I awake to the creaking of the floorboards above.

Locality is in. We position ourselves now, with a mind towards impact, ecology, histories. But this ‘we’ remains abstract when I can trade in the coded language of art speak, trust that you too have read *The Mushroom at the End of the World* and associate practice with modes of art production rather than with rehearsal or sports training. I carried a double question to Topolò/Topolove this summer: what can a commitment to locality look like when I don’t feel rooted in a specific place, and what does the convening of a ‘we’ enable or enact for the locality ‘we’ arrive into?

Walking up the steep cobblestones towards the Izba, I time my pace.

This condensed bundle of questions emerges in part from my ongoing research, held formally through the frame of a PhD, on radical pedagogies in and through the arts. It emerges from an ethical friction I feel when navigating and entering intentional communities, collectives and alternative art schools. What is my role here, I wonder. What do I bring and what do I disrupt by arriving?

I whisper the following into my phone to the background sound of the rushing river and a piano practice -

This is not an act of transposing

And later,

Maybe there are too many wheres and hows to hold

“I am not the same here and there” says Aimee Carillo Rowe.

Jeanne van Heeswijk’s practice focuses on radicalising the local. Jeanne references a text by Aimee Carillo Rowe. Aimee thinks about belonging as a possible proposition for relations beyond reductive identity politics: that belonging can contain or convey a being-long, a being-in-longing. I am drawn to this future-oriented way of thinking about belonging and, by implication or association, community. Not who is here now, but who we can care-fullly desire into joining us in a locality that doesn’t come to function as retroactive or parochial.

Jean and I share a drink in their car-come-home, at the end of its week parked up on the hill by the church.

One of the texts cited by Aimee is a book I haven’t read, called *Possessive Investments*. I find myself glancing at the list of citations now; handed to me during Irene’s *Lecture par arpentage*. It nudges me into wondering about how to think belonging without possession, whilst also sustaining the ways in which proclaiming one’s stakes, positions and associations can be generative and generous towards others.

I cast my mind back to the dappled light near the border, with the river rushing down.

How could I approach the land without intruding?

Hannah Segerkrantz

On relating to landscape

1

Church bells from all the surrounding villages fill the air with their melody, echoing and blending into one another for a long while. But as they slow down and fade out, subtle sounds of the village emerge again - an old lady (I imagine), listening to the radio; two men conversing around the corner; the shuffling of leaves, scissor snips and grapes falling into the bucket, as a man next to Carla’s house is picking them on a ladder leaning against the shed – these are the sounds that remind me of the parallel lives being lived in Topolò, those with which us visitors barely make contact with.

I am sitting in my favourite reading spot, a stone bench merged into the wall, nestled in grape plants as I am trying to hide below the disappearing shadow. It’s a warm late-August Sunday.

One morning we had a discussion about what it means to be a *temporary resident > passer-by*. Vida said that already by finding a favourite corner in Topolò, one is interacting with their surroundings, and hence showing care. I wonder if I can justify my spending time in Topolò by having found my corner? Multiple actually, there are a few that constitute my current routine here – in the mornings, without saying more than a “good morning!” to my sleepy housemates, I’d quickly skip to the beginning of the hiking path, where I am greeted by the rising sun. I’d sit down on the ground still wet from the dew, notice the silhouette of mountains facing me, the glittering drops of water on the grasses growing on the terraces below, and close my eyes to arrive into my body and make contact with myself so to be able to flow through yet another day of beautiful collective togetherness. Or this corner of