

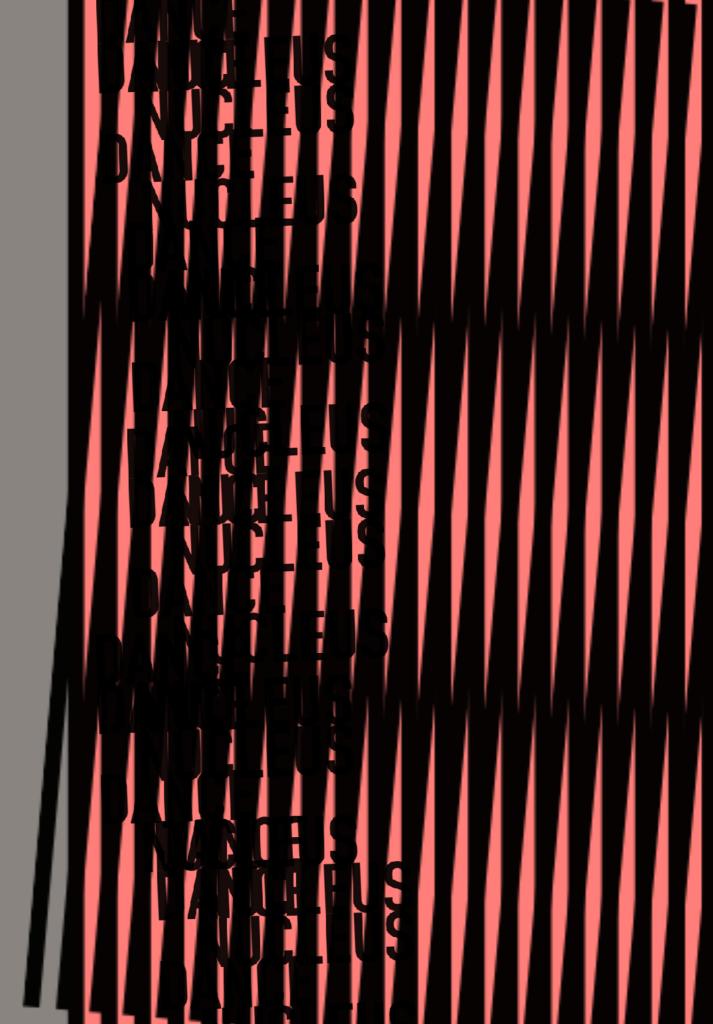
### Esplanade presents da:ns lab 6th da:ns lab 9 – 12 JULY 2020

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	Gati Dance Forum (New Delhi)

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### **INTRODUCTION**

da:ns lab is an annual artist meeting, organised as a collaboration between Dance Nucleus and da:ns festival, a festival presented by Esplanade Theatres by the Bay in Singapore. It is a programme to interrogate choreographic practice that began in 2015. da:ns lab 2020 is the programme's 6th edition.

#### **Objectives**

- To engage dance practitioners in Singapore and the Asian region in artistic discourse, research, reflection and exchange; thereby enriching critical thinking for dance practices in the region
- To tackle tangibly an issue that concerns many artists in the current climate
- To introduce progressive international practices to Singapore
- To build an trans-local network of independent artists with aligned interests

da:ns lab is an annual workshop-seminar for artists and arts practitioners to critically reflect on key issues surrounding their creative practice. This year's theme is Co-immunity: How to Dance When We Are All III, inviting participants to reflect on all that has been disordered amidst global crises and health emergencies. In this paradigm of illness, we challenge the preconceptions often assumed of the dancing body—as one that is able-bodied, productive and live.

da:ns lab 2020 is a remote meeting taking place online with 60 participants from six regional clusters across Hong Kong, Manila, New Delhi, Singapore, Sydney and Taipei. Participants explored how dance can operate within the paradoxical framework of co-immunity, developing infrastructures of support and relations of care, while building resistance and resilience across the different arts ecologies in the region.



### **CURATORIAL STATEMENT**

Now might be a good time to rethink what a revolution can look like. Perhaps it doesn't look like a march of angry, abled bodies in the streets. Perhaps it looks something more like the world standing still because all the bodies in it are exhausted—because care has to be prioritised before it's too late. - Johanna Hedva

The world is standing still amidst transnational choreographies of movement control orders, curfews and lockdowns. Governments implement stricter measures to enforce social distancing, as an immunological response to curb the spread of the global pandemic. As events, performances and festivals are cancelled or deferred to an uncertain future, many arts and cultural workers are left suspended in its wake. In these extraordinary circumstances where we are unable to gather, to move, and even to touch, dancers are faced with an impossible set of conditions—how to dance when we are all ill?

While Covid-19 is a global health emergency, it also manifested the symptoms of much longer socio-economic, political and ecological crises, exposing complex systems that have already been chronically ill. It painfully revealed the debilitating conditions and vulnerabilities of being a dancer within a precarious arts ecology. In the region, the Hong Kong protests are roiled by deep socio-political unrest while the Australian bushfires warn of larger climate catastrophe. 2020 is a state of emergency. But these crises have demonstrated that recovery in this context should not be a nostalgic return to the normal, because the existing conditions of the 'normal' was what precipitated the crisis.

To dance in such times, we must recuperate the paradigm of illness, reorienting some of the precepts that are often assumed of the dancing body, as one that is able-bodied, productive and live.

What choreographies become accessible with the ill-bodied dancer, and can this embodiment offer different strategies for navigating the crisis? What remains live when our bodies are screened, and augmented by the prosthetics of new media technologies? Amidst a contagion—a term that etymologically denotes "together touching"—can we reimagine the parameters of dancing together across social distancing, where other forms of assembly are realised?

The restless ensemble of exhausted bodies is a symptom of the precarious labour conditions that plague many arts and cultural workers. It is time for us to take a break from the frenetic rhythms of production, to slow down, and to de-programme. By relinquishing our obsession with the relentless metrics of productive output, we can rehabilitate our working processes by recalibrating the conditions, protocols and procedures to more sustainable modes that prioritise our creative practices and wellbeing.

Inhabiting illness calls for a praxis of care that extends beyond immunology. Immunological systems are predicated on the exclusion of a threatening other—a foreign body. Instead of reinscribing the xenophobic logic of immunitary nationalism, we aim to foster interdependent networks of solidarity across borders. To reconcile this immunological metaphor with the contaminations of community, we will explore how dance can operate within the paradoxical framework of co-immunity, to develop infrastructures of support and thicker relations of care, building resistance and resilience across the different arts ecologies in the region. Through a different kind of embodiment, we might feel the possibilities of a movement even as we remain still.

Shawn Chua

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### **DOCUMENTARIAN'S INTRODUCTION**

There is a broken-record conversation that I repeat every other day with my 87-year-old mother-in-law.

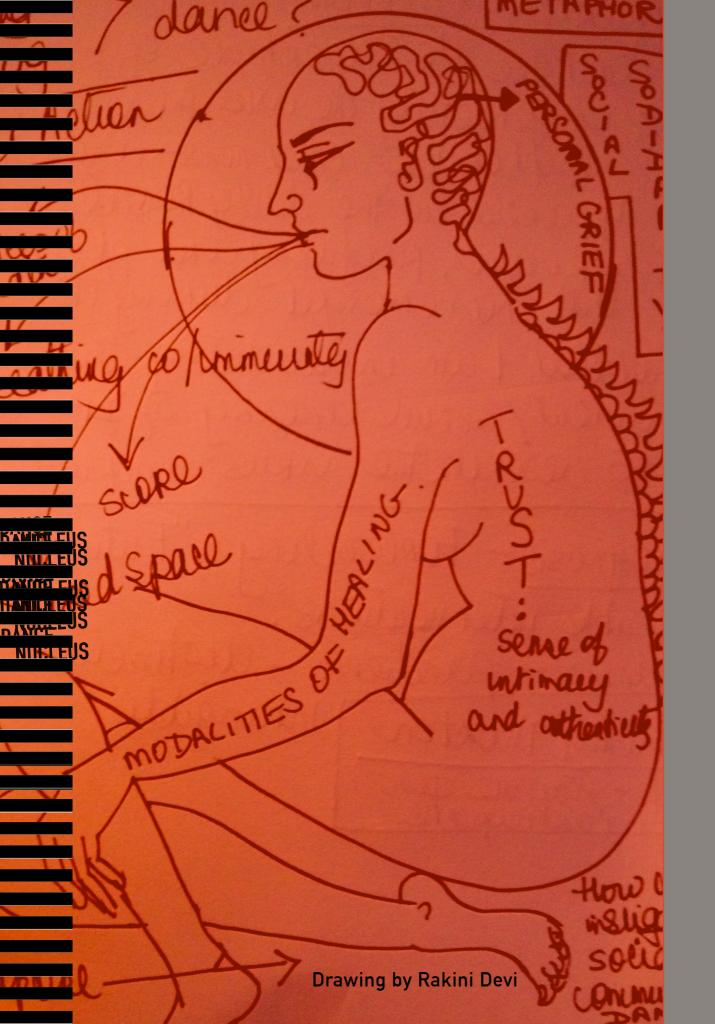
She: "My memory is so bad now. I can't sleep and my legs and hands are weak. Everything is going wrong."

Me: "That's normal. You're active and doing great for your age. We are here to help you."

I've realised that my words are no comfort, but I haven't figured out what else to say or offer. We are in separate universes when it comes to perception of the body and expectations of wellness and survival. Now that we're in a pandemic, she and I are affected in vastly different ways. She has never had access to the "modern" cybernetic body with its extensions in access to information, communication and virtual spaces. She has no buffer against the deadening isolation of a lockdown or the slow erasure of her brain. She will never recall her friends' phone numbers ever again.

In this context it felt nearly impossible to sit down to an online international artists' meeting. What could all these words mean, especially when this was convened in the frame of dance? What could we do without activating the physical body or liveness, and in a time when so many countries and communities were in a state of enforced disconnection? Against the enormity of social dislocation and suffering around the world, did it really matter that our art making and performance practices had become wrapped in a suffocation blanket along with everything else? I was relieved that unlike previous editions, there was no attempt to make this da:ns lab directly about art practice or art making. An undefined urgency resonated among 64 people in 3 time zones, calling us to four days in front of our computer screens (without proper meal times even). We jumped into a cacophony. We spoke about survival and making sense of the upheaval in the world, with all the tools at our disposal. Instead of virtuosic technique or unison combinations, the tools that came to the fore included vocabularies of somatics, time and space, social choreography, presence and absence, care, identity, materiality and interrogations of the conceptual boundaries of "body" and "movement".

I was initially resistant to the adoption of "illness" as an extended metaphor. As a person who has lived most of my life with a chronic illness, metaphors trivializing and othering illness are too familiar. Disability tends to receive similar (but different) metaphorization. In the keynote lecture, Tang Fu Kuen reminded us of the limitations of figurative language being used around Covid-19, and recommended a grounding in the scientific basis of the biological metaphor. Over the four days, I was glad to hear about new perspectives on viruses and the pandemic and to allow that to shift my perspectives on society and politics - including the Taiwan satellite's proposal "The Virus is Queer" and one of the India satellite artists' statement of "the anti-body as antidote to omission." However, I was reminded by some of the personal responses on the final day that there seemed to have been little place during the lab to bring up their own lived experiences with disability, chronic illness, and terminal illness.



A point from one of the many lab rooms I joined has stuck with me: global threats like Covid-19 have a certain privileged status. They are widely recognized as a threat, and responses to them prioritised (with the exception of certain politicians in denial). They suck up attention and resources that never seem to get accorded to "systemic" problems - poverty, wars, longsimmering conflicts over class/race/caste issues, chronic diseases affecting poor populations. But such threats are also powerful disruptors, highlighting dimensions that trip the circuits of so many aspects of the world as we know it.

If the pandemic is accelerating the inter-subjective development of a new umwelt/milieu and within it new "bodies" of multiple and digital selves what are its omissions? What are the intersections of disadvantage becoming magnified – and the intersections enabled for positive relations and care in human/ environmental/biological/digital dimensions?

Processing these thoughts, I guess have been denying my mother in law her illnesses, and continuing a wider social action of omission of the experiences of the elderly and chronically ill. I have a chance to discover new modalities of radical care in my own home, even if it's a bit too close to be comfortable. It's horrible to admit that it takes a pandemic and a da:ns lab to help me figure that out.

For this report, I am grateful to the access and flexibility accorded to me by the event curators, facilitators and participants. I am also indebted to the insights and support of three participants who were nominated to double up as documentarians from the perspective of their satellites: Chan Hsin Yee (SG), Patricia Wood (AUS) and Jared Jonathan Luna (PH).

Chan Sze-Wei

### **PROGRAMME – PATHOLOGY**

Australia | Philippines | Singapore | Hong Kong | India | Taiwan

Even before the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic set in, the 2020 da:ns lab had been designed to differ markedly from previous editions. The content and participant interactions were to be distinctly structured in three ways: the multilocation "satellite" format, the use of multiple concurrent online platforms in Zoom rooms and Google Docs, as well as the thematic framing of each of the four days of the event according to stages of treatment of illness. Where previous editions had included up to x participants, this edition hosted a record of 64.

The imposition of strict lockdowns and movement restrictions in nearly all of the participating countries during the event period made it impossible for most groups to meet in person as originally intended. Instead, the event proceeded with mixed formats. The Taiwan/Taipei satellite met on location (but often participating through personal devices) throughout the four days, and the Hong Kong satellite met in person on the first day – while all other participants attended from their homes.

#### Satellite homes

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While the programme was co-ordinated and curated from Singapore, all six country groups were designated as "satellites", without an explicit centre. The sense of "nation" and "home" - so magnified by the national and regional border closures happening during the pandemic - was both reinforced and challenged. Ideas and encounters and were both rooted in local context and de-centred and expanded: the curators worked closely with a co-facilitator in each



country who tapped on their network to bring together an inter-disciplinary group of artists, many of whom were encountering each other for the first time.

Each co-facilitator initiated pre-discussions among satellite members to develop a set of ideas arising from the concerns and interests of the participants in each place. These were refined by each satellite group on the first day of the lab, and offered as proposals for discussion. (Pages 14 - 22.) On the second and third days of the lab, each of these proposals was opened up to smaller breakout room discussions amongst a mix of participants from various satellites, who found their own connections with the topic and developed the discussion in new directions. On the final day, each satellite presented their response(s) on the final day of the lab. (See "Rehabilitation".)

#### An indivisible biological entity

In a pre-event keynote video lecture, Tang Fu Kuen offered participants a shared starting point. In the uncertainty of the pandemic, he pointed to the ambiguous role of metaphors such as the medical, and challenged the current overwhelmingly negative associations with the term "virus". At the junction of virology and philosophy, Tang also pointed to the ideas of nineteenth-century theoretical biologist Jakob von Uexküll, who described an umwelt or milieu where organisms do not merely occupy an environment, they create it. Their relation to the environment is not a given, but a constant development. Alternatively put, that all beings coexist and inter-subjectively influence each other as an indivisible biological entity.

#### Medical time

IANCE

The medical metaphors underlying the concept of the event extended to the schedule: a symbolic compression of the time of one day, each framed according to phases of medical treatment – Diagnosis, Prognosis, Treatment, Rehabilitation. (<u>Programme</u> here.)

Illness is the night side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place. – Susan Sontag, Illness as Metaphor (1988) In contrast to a layman/patient's understanding of these terms, each label was re-framed by the curators, to suggest a different mode of reflection and analysis even as participants returned to the same themes each day from different angles and with different interlocutors, depending on each participant's own interest. Rather than implying that the gathering might discover and effect a "cure" for the issues identified, it was proposed that each issue identified as an "illness" or a problem merited further consideration. Rehabilitation could be understood as an on-going process, rather than an instant of recovery.

### **Domesticity and Shared space**

"In addition to the Main Space where we will have our collective meetings, we are also opening up spaces that participants can drop in and out of any time.

Feel free to meet up - by chance or by appointment - with other da:ns lab participants in the other rooms for a side conversation or to hang out!

Unfortunately, these rooms come unfurnished, there's no running water, and the bar is BYOB, but you can come and go as you wish! Do note that these rooms are unlocked, so you may not be able to have 100% privacy in these spaces or stop others from wandering in." In an attempt to counter the impersonality of virtual spaces, organisers named the multiple Zoom meeting rooms used for the event to suggest the configuration of shared domestic spaces. The "layout" also offered the possibility of informal encounters in self-initiated configurations, apart from the main meeting schedule. E.g. the Australian and Indian satellites continued unfinished discussions overtime; Singapore elections results watch party in the toilet.

ΠΛΝΓΕ

미에뷰됐는다였

Shared documents on Google Drive were another virtual space that participants shared. Documents with shared editing rights were used for live documentation or collection of ideas in parallel to specific sessions. The "Whiteboard" document was open throughout the four days as a space for the posting of reflections and references, and became another site for lively interaction and discussion in an alternate time frame to the main lab schedule.

### On Community & Immunity

"What ties them together is the root word, again in Latin, munus, which is a kind of gift (a donum). Esposito characterizes the difference like this: 'If communis is he who is required to carry out the functions of an office – or to the donation of a grace – on the contrary, he is called immune who has to perform no office, and for that reason he remains ungrateful.' (6) Esposito wishes to show that the munus is a kind of debt – an owing: 'The subjects of a community are united by an "obligation," in the sense that we say 'I owe you something,' but not 'you owe me something.''

#### **Exhaustion and Restlessness**

The first word many participants and co-facilitators used to describe the experience of da:ns lab was exhaustion. Not necessarily in a negative sense – they expressed surprise at how drained they felt from the daily 5-6 hour videoconferencing schedule. That sensation encompassed not only the effort of intellectual engagement but also the uncertainty and fear of the pandemic, the strain of living in isolation, and the precarity of relationships, livelihoods and political situations.

Parallel to the desire for rest was the desire to move, and to centre an embodied perspective. Some participants highlighted the irony of engaging a "dance" event where everyone was sitting in front of screens for four days. Within the limitations of the Zoom meeting, curators invited participants to fashion their own experiences; some discussions were conducted while participants went out for walks and some breakout groups engaged in collective breathing exercises and massage workshops. On Day 3, a Bollywood Dance Party was offered in the "Bar" zoom room as a post-programme activity. By the fourth day, two satellites unanimously decided to process their closing responses to the lab through embodiment and movement – one taking the form of a dance party, and the other a mini-festival of movement work on recorded media.

### **Contamination**

Initial discussions in many satellite groups veered toward "solutions" even on the first day of the lab. Yet the following days' repeated examination and re-opening of the six "diagnoses" allowed a process of expansion and excavation, of linking and cross-referencing to new contexts and ideas. Discussions were opening rather than focusing, and ideas were distributed and propagated rather than concluded. Participants described a sense of virtual nomadism and cross-contamination of ideas as central to their experience.

### Satellite Proposals

The following section comprises the satellite proposals presented on Day 2 of da:ns lab, which served as the basis for discussions on Day 2 and 3. Longer proposals have been paraphrased for the purpose of this document.

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### ATOMISATION

Touch As A Paradigm Shift (AUS)

Isolation does not protect us. Neither in the long-term, nor without sacrificing particular groups. How do we build co-immunity and resilience in our community/ies through the approach of collective and shared bodies?

Atomisation: Disconnection/Splintering/shattering of bodies. Fragmentation of community.

Fear of the unknown/failure manifests in the body

How can our bodies serve each other?

Touch will be a paradigm shift (see <u>Wall-E clip</u> ).

What is Covid-19 allowing us to see that we couldn't see before? Covid-19 as a symptom of the illness of privilege/s. The pandemic stops us from participating in our roles in the (capitalist) machine. By pulling out, we gain a different perspective. Let's recognise the current situation as a symptom rather than an illness.



### **BREATH AS SHARED SPACE**

### x Score For Co-Immunity In A Time Of Masked Impunities (PHP)

E/co(l)mmunity Systemic // anthropocentric systems of co(i)mmunity

How do we make sense of our realities using our bodies and how do we perform our ways of survival?



Performance as direct action and mutual aid Performance as survival Performance as life support

### Mapping

How do we use our bodies to navigate the ill terrain towards a mutualistic relationship with our environment?

How do we make sense of our realities using our bodies and how do we perform our ways of survival?

How do we us our bodies to navigate the ill terrain of our mutualistic relationship with the environment?

Politics of Breathing Breath as a connector of landscapes Breath as a liminal space Politics of breath Breathing co(i)mmunity Breathing for survival

## THE COVID BODY & SOCIAL CHOREOGRAPHY (SIN)

What is the Covid-19 Body? A Diagnosis on Social Choreography in the time of Covid-19

How to choreograph social rehabilitation? How to negotiate social proximity through performance?

Choreography of the Covid-19 body

The Social Body in Singapore - Dancing Together, Public Engagement, Audience Outreach Reconceptualising "Got To Move"<sup>1</sup> as a nationwide dance movement in the time of Covid-19

Covid-19 as Choreographer A body constrained by Covid-19 measures Trapped in the body - senses deprived of stimuli Attention span; desire for undivided attention Movement of stillness, distancing, digitisation, etc Bigger sense of empathy despite being more isolated Trust - issues of intimacy and authenticity

<sup>1</sup> Got to Move (GTM), an initiative by the National Arts Council (NAC), is the nationwide dance movement that celebrates the diversity of dance in Singapore. With popup events throughout the year in addition to an anchor festival held annually in October, Got to Move aims to ignite Singaporeans' interest in dance and to deepen their appreciation of the art form. It is a national platform to bring together Singapore's dance professionals and enthusiasts and to showcase their talents and works to a diverse audience. (First edition: 2015) <u>https://</u> www.nac.gov.sg/gtm-events/gtm/overview.html





Shopping Work







Meeting

Art

**Bills** 





Relax



Sex



### CREATING FOR THE ONLINE JOURNEY (HKG)

From the perspective of Chinese medicine, we are not sick; instead, the internal mechanisms of the body are unbalanced, so we have not been able to face the challenges of the external environment.

This pandemic is not about illness but a moment to study our past journey/ knowledge. How can we use our past knowledge to adapt to a new world?

Are we using an "offline" mentality to approach an "online" situation?

Can online media convey the human aura (灵光)?

What is an online art work?



### EMBODYING OMISSION (INA)

How can we counter/respond to omissions/erasures/absences/disappearances?

What do leaky bodies look like?

How do we occupy space and time, as a response to omission?

How do we learn to read the hierarchies of doing, understanding that not all bodies are allowed to produce and consume differently?

Recent socio-political developments in our context lead us to consider the ways in which institutions repeat and reaffirm violent forms of erasure and forced disappearance. We have experienced and encountered these omissions in various forms. India's Citizenship Amendment Act does this by actively invisibilizing particular religious groups. This spurred **nationwide protests**, and the lockdown announced to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic was essentially another form of omission, effectively silencing all material forms of dissent, even as the government continues to target citizens on flimsy pretexts, eerily twinning with what is happening in Hong Kong right now. Since the lockdown, we have also considered what it meant for such structures to be replicated constantly within artistic practice. For example, a series of seminars organised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, India's central cultural body, in the 1950s, still continue to define how forms are identified as 'classical', 'folk', 'tribal', or 'experimental', also beginning to dictate how these forms are funded and supported, and who gets funded to practise these forms. Though we continue to make work outside of these structures, they perpetuate a violence that generationally enables some forms of practice at the cost of others.

Currently, much of the state's cultural policy is shaped by its political ideology. In inhabiting new modes of doing and being, do we continue to reinforce old patterns? What indeed, is the 'new normal' and how can we read and embody this normal with a sensitivity to the hierarchies of doing, i.e., recognising, in Sharmila <u>Rege's words</u>, that 'struggles for survival are inseparable from struggles for cultural meaning'?

If these erasures represent 'institutional omissions', what would it mean to occupy and embody these omissions, to fill the spaces we are kept out of? What would it mean to arrive at, and to write a manifesto, an action statement, for our task of 'embodying omission'?



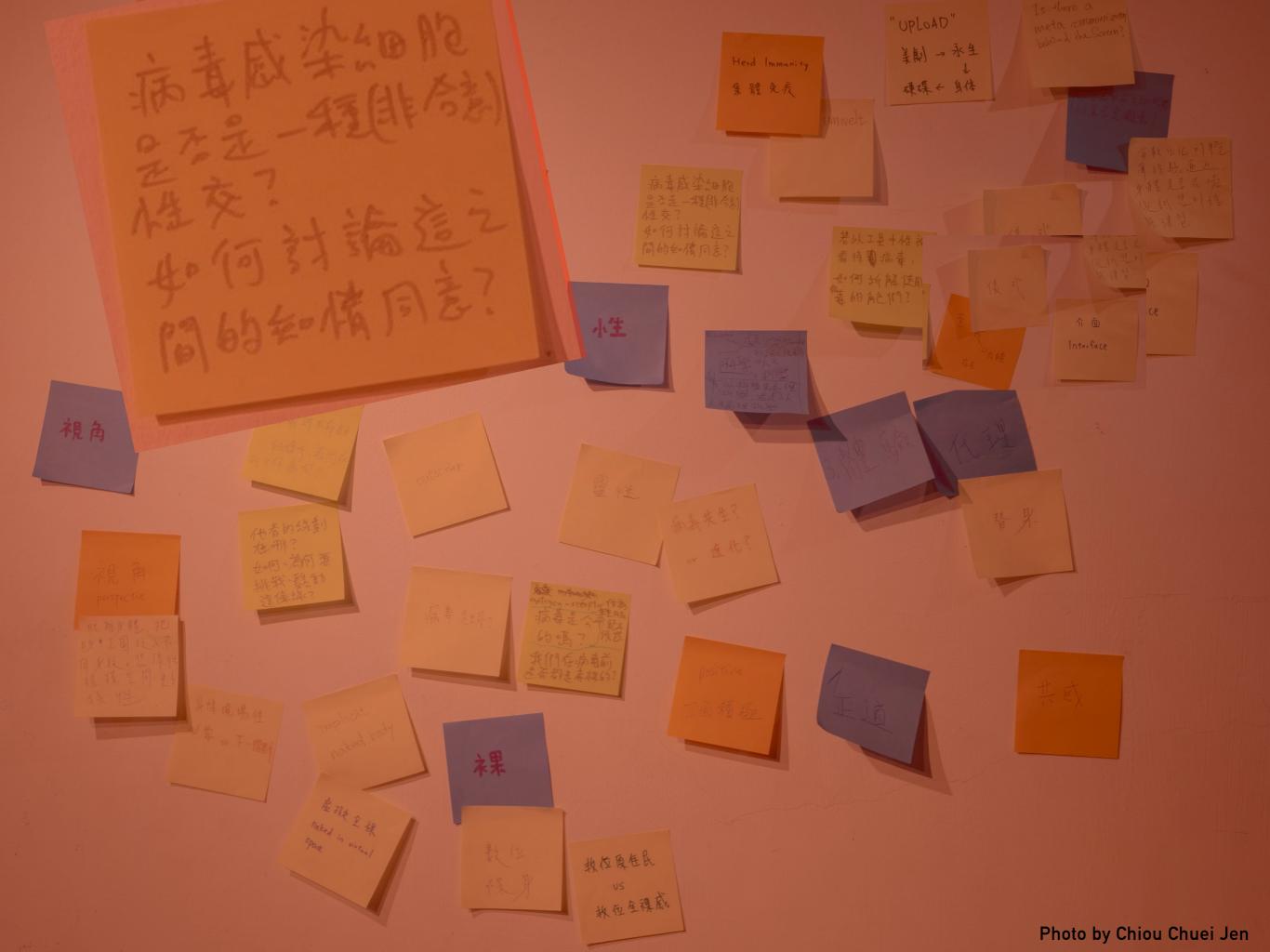
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### VIRUS AS QUEER AND THE DIGITAL UNWELT (TWN)

Virus as Queer What is the sexuality/otherness/transness of the virus? When the virus interacts with a cell, is it a non-consensual sexual intercourse? Inclusion: would you include a virus? Virus as border-crosser

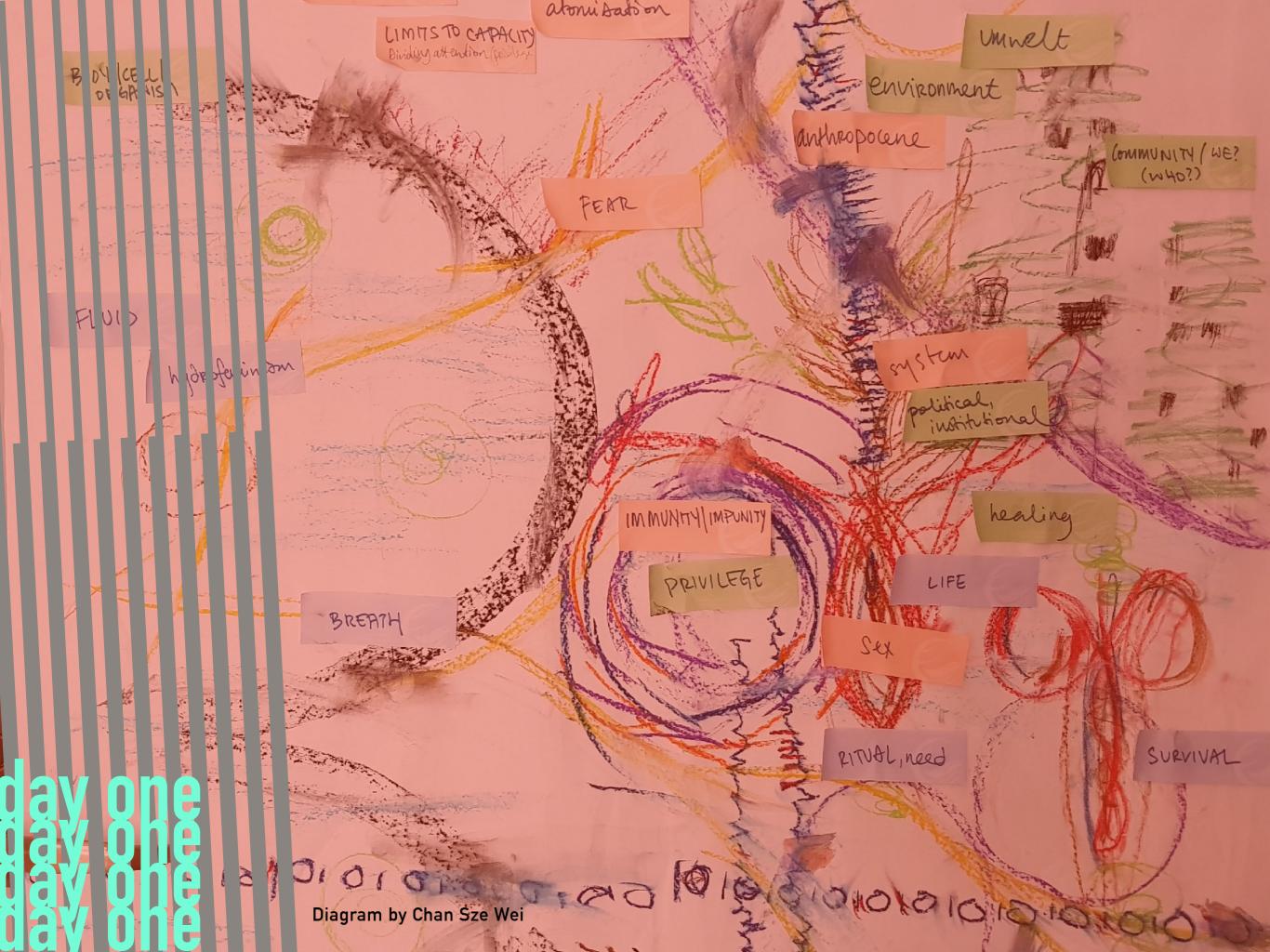
Digital Umwelt Merging of our physical reality with data streams, information to form a new digital umwelt. Can we communicate with other life forms and other umwelts via digital interfaces?

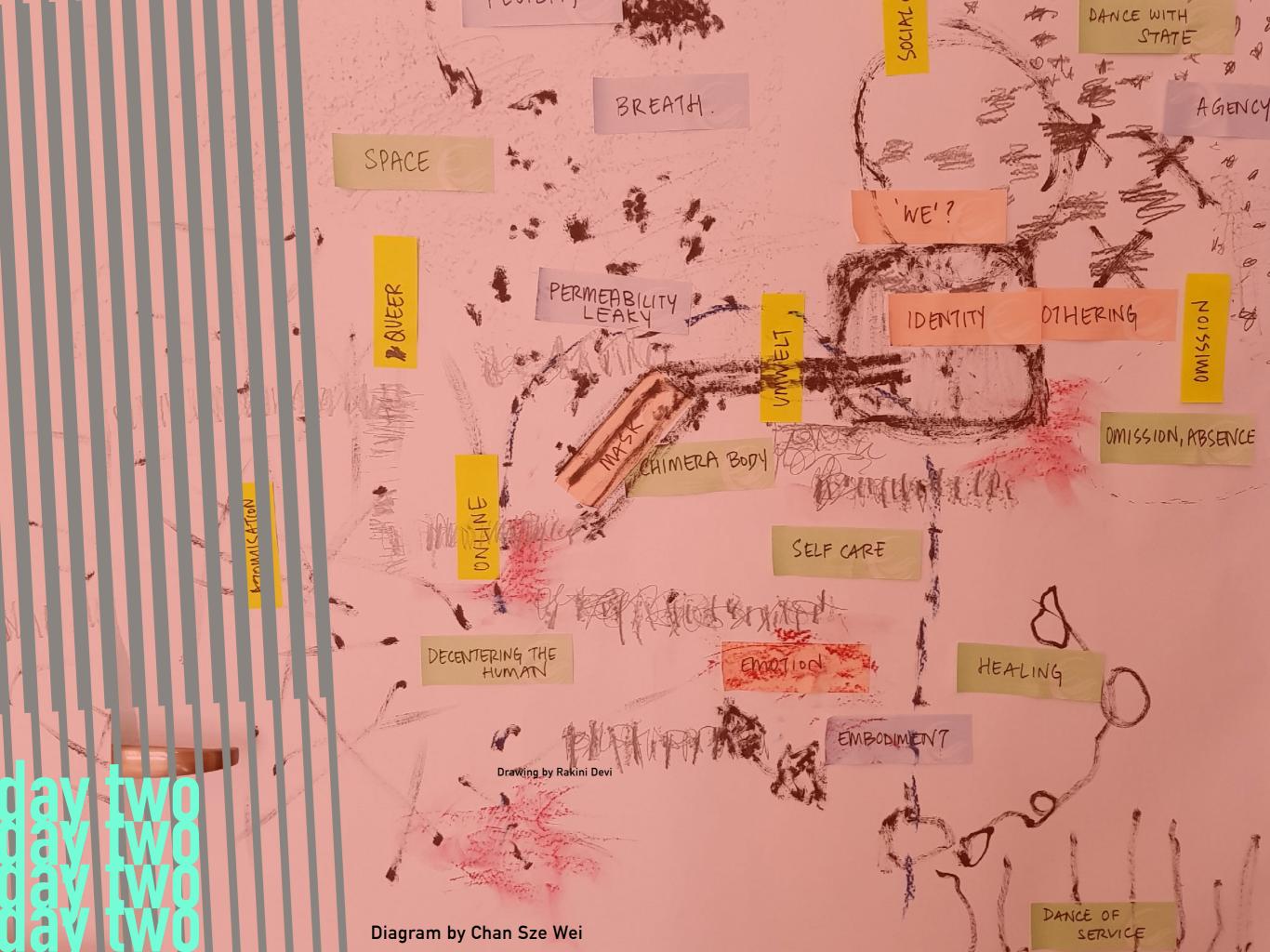
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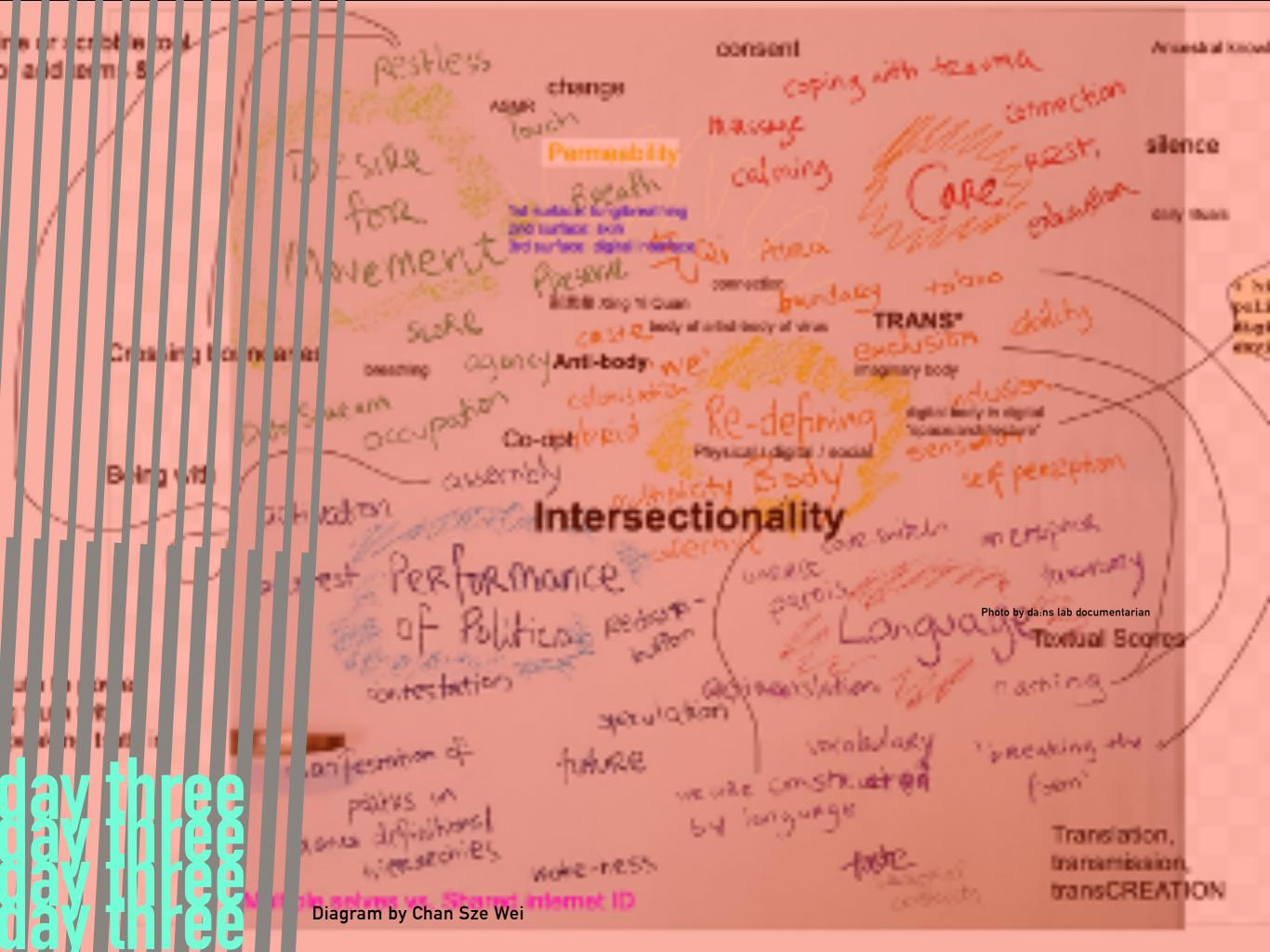


### TRAJECTORIES

The six proposals began as reflections of the contexts and concerns of the artists in each satellite. Almost immediately, participants saw points of connection and interest across the various proposals, developing discussions on intersecting topics. It is impossible to encompass 64 self-directed experiences, but the following maps and notes from the documentarians and contributions from participants may give some idea.







### REHABILITATION

At the close of Day 3, participants returned to their satellite groups to process their thoughts and ground their experiences. Each group generated an offering or a presentation for the final day. It would be misleading to characterize each of those offerings as a conclusion to the earlier proposals; some individuals had developed their lines of enquiry from day one, and others had been inspired by a synthesis of new ideas.

Again it is impossible to capture all the offerings in this report, but here are some highlights:

### **Care Dance Party**

Over the next 15 minutes we would like to invite you to be with us in care-taking for each other. Some suggestions are: You can write in the chat box a gesture of care. You can perform a gesture of care. You can mention a care you have given someone recently. Or you could simply ask for some care you need right now. Those can be small or big, possible or impossible. Whatever your living hearts desire. To begin, we will play some music. When the music stops, we will come together in silence.



### A Covid-19 Glossary

#### Queerness=diversity=fitness

Artists as virus. How do we move vertically and horizontally across different fields and ideas? Reimagining the body of the artist.

Humans evolving as a digital sub-species Interface, frame. How can we re-imagine this? Plural selves, digital family. Cyberspace as architecture.

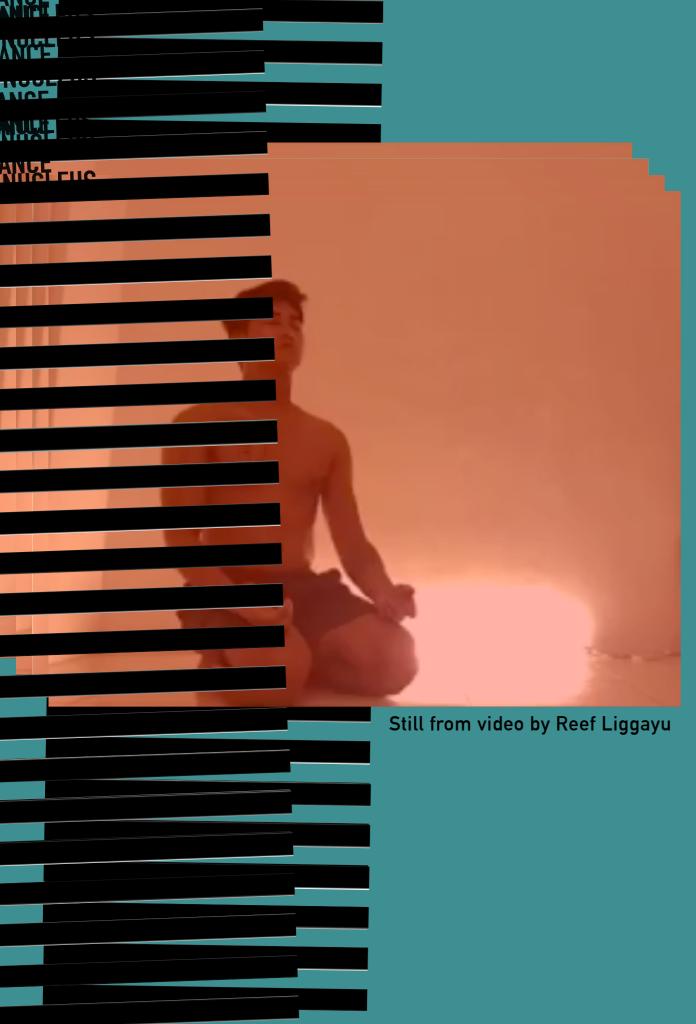
#### **Co-immunity**

Creating our own immune system through connecting across borders and in multiple worlds.

The anti-body as antidote to omissions<sup>3</sup> Extending the ontology of the anti-body to mean an archive of strategies of resistance against omission/invisibility

Gua sha treatment: Traumatic therapy Activate the body's self-healing ability to achieve energising resistance





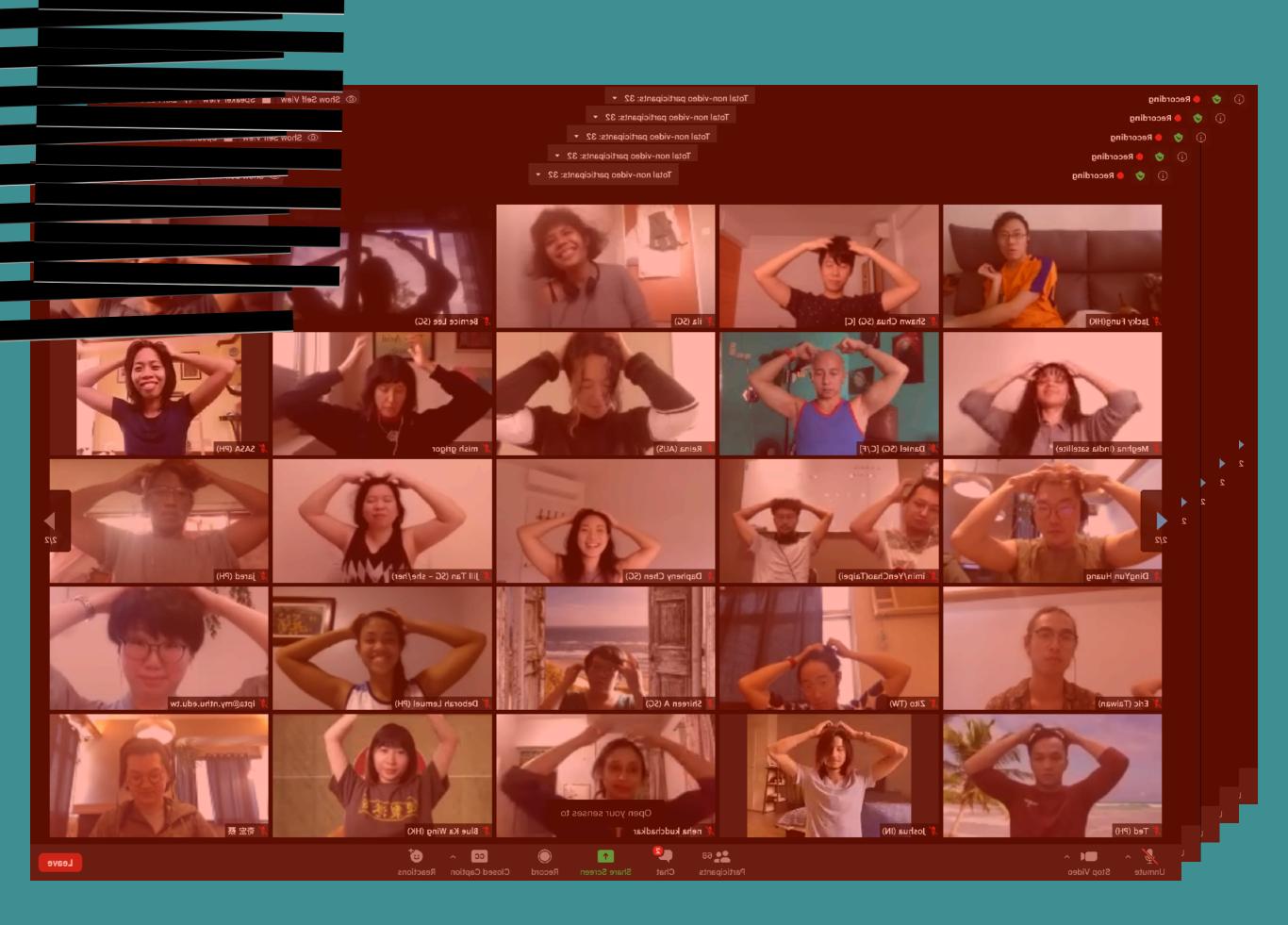
As you inhale, starting now, remember that you're not sucking in air, but making space...

You're not grabbing at air, you're making space in the body to receive air. And when you breathe out, the air leaves, to allow you to do that.

Breath is the pact you make with air, to share space with it, to hold it, and to pour yourself out into it. Breath and body, rights and duties. As a child, the first thing I learned about the Constitution was that rights and duties are two sides of the same coin.

To embody omission, then, is to account for both sides of the coin.

- Ranjana Dave.



# MULT ENS NHAT FIIS NCF MOREUS ANCE ANICH EUS ANCE

Breath as Shared Space x Score for Co-immunity in the Time of Impunity - JK Anicoche

Breathing together as direct action.

Breathing as pre-condition for movement.

Economy of breathing. Politics of breathing

Acknowledgement of space affecting breathing.

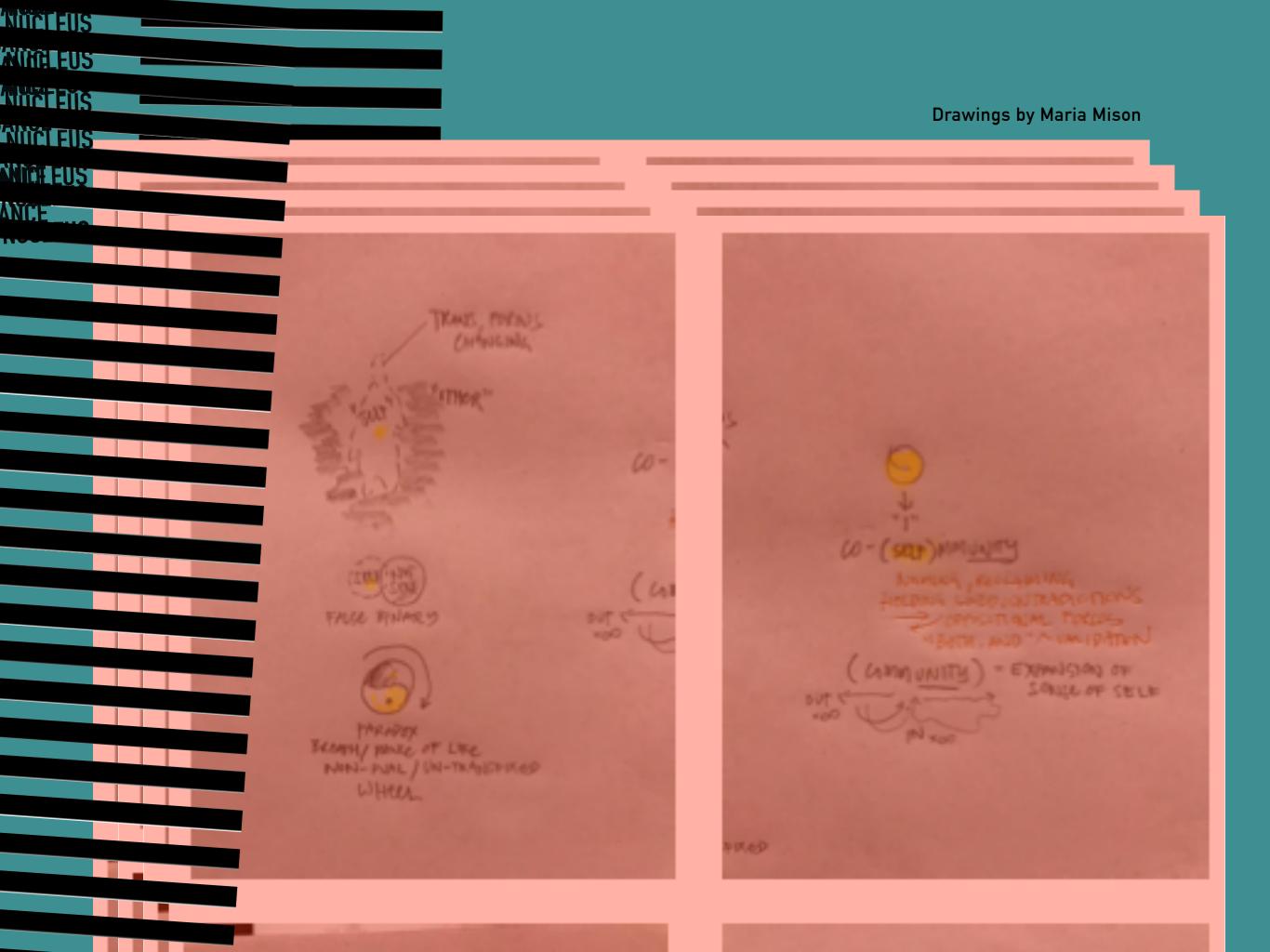
Recalibrating body for breathing and movement.

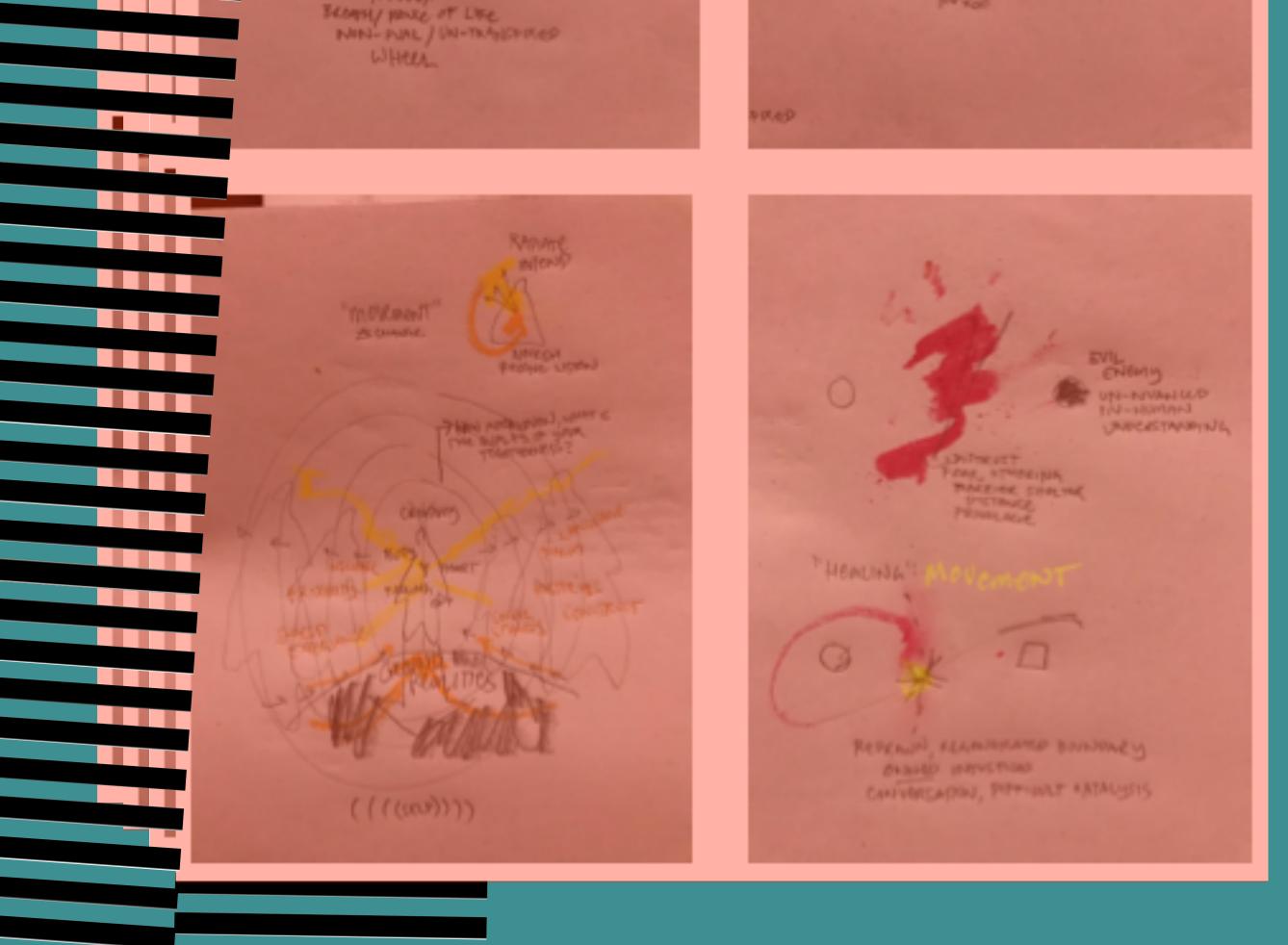
Collective masked breathing.

Expansiveness in notions of "breathing" performance time and space/s in virtual exchanges.

Directionality of breathing together. Remote breathing for civic engagement.

E/co(i)mmunity Contemporary ritual-making.

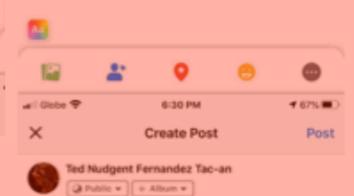




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Me: Hey, Siri! Siri: Yes? Me: I'm in love. Siri: Shout it to the rooftop. Or do you want me to send a message



Me: Hey, Siri! Siri: What can I help you? Me: Siri: Go ahead! I'm listening. Me: Siri: One moment. Me: Siri: One more moment. Me: Siri: I'm having some trouble with the CONNECTION. Please try again in a moment.

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Me: Hey, Siri! Siri: Go ahead! I'm listening. Me: Ang isip hindi natuturuan ang puso na magmahal. Pero ang puso natuturuan ang isip na umunawa. Siri: I don't think I understand you.

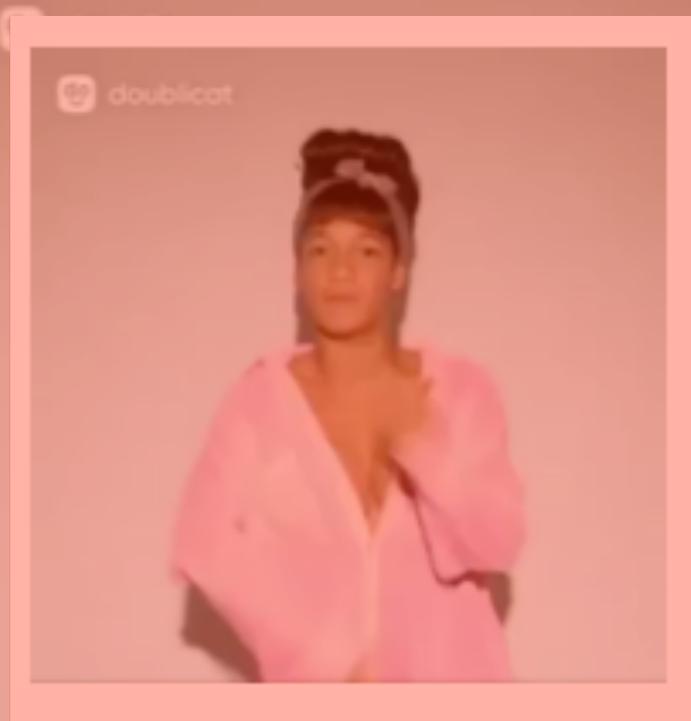
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Siri: Me: Siri:	Me: Hey, Siri! Good morning! Siri: Good morning to you too! Me: I love you! Siri: You're the wind beneath my wings. Should I send a message?								
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SIRI as one of the coping mechanisms to continue breathing in my personal space.





#### Image by Ted Nudgent Fernandez Tac-an



Social Media as one of the 'choreographed' breathing spaces in times (or even before) of the pandemic. -Ted

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times (or even before) of the pandemic. -Ted

impo for owen before) of the neodomic . Ted.

TANKE FUR TOULLUD Knotted by Neha Kudchadkar

I am Nrithya. I AM a descendant of embodied omission. I AM embodied omission. In a way it is surreal for me to part of this LAB. I shall simply continue to exist and prosper. I shall continue to question while I PUNCH UP. I will hope for embodiments of omission to come question complicit people in power. institutional erasure and omission.

> I will dance I will speak I will write.

I DANCE BECAUSE THEY DID - Nrithya Pillai

# SURVIVAL, REGENERATION

In the weeks after the conclusion of the dains lab programme, I spoke to several participants about whether they desired/found channels for the energy, ideas and connections generated at this dains lab even as we returned to our daily preoccupations. I learned about the integration of new reflections into personal projects. In cities now re-entering lock-downs and political turmoil, one participant described the lab as "a preparation" for personal resources for self-care and re-connection with others. Also plans for a reading group in Taipei, and an invitation for the Philippine satellite artists to present their work in a new festival, Comunidad X, at the end of the year.

Six weeks after the event, it may still be too early to expect visible stirrings of anti-bodies, or of recuperation. Further observation is required.



From Photo by Raghav Handa

## ANNEXE 1 Participants

#### Australia

Adrianne Semmens Claire Hicks (Co-Facilitator) Gabriela Green Matt Cornell Mish Grigor Patricia Wood Raghav Handa Rakini Devi Reina Takeuchi Taree Sansbury

#### Hong Kong

Wayson POON (Co-Facilitator) Blue Ka Wing Jacky FUNG Carrol HO Fai TSANG DONG XianLiang LEE King-chi Kong CHAN Ranjana Dave (Co-facilitator) Najrin Islam Joshua Sailo Sammitha Sreevathsa Nrithya Pillai Avni Sethi Meghna Bhardwaj Neha Kudchadkar

Taiwan HUANG Ding Yun (Co-facilitator) SU Pin-Wen 蘇品文 SU Yu-Hsin 蘇郁心 Zito TSENG SU Shen-Yuan 蘇紳源 Eric TSAI 蔡承翰 TSAO Imin 曹益銘 HUANG Yen Chao 黃彥超 TSAO Tsun-Hui 曹存慧 TSAI Chi-Hung 蔡奇宏

Philippines JK Anicoche (Co-facilitator) Sasa Cabalquinto Reef Liggayu Deborah Afuang Regina Bautista Ted Nudgent Fernandez Tac-an Maria Mison Issa Manalo Lopez Jared Jonathan Luna (processdocumenter) Singapore

Daniel KOK (Co-facilitator) CHONG Gua Khee 张月崎 Jocelyn CHNG Fezhah Maznan Ruby JAYASEELAN Sonia KWEK 郭藝清 Melinda LAUW Valerie LIM Bernice LEE Zihan LOO Rachel NIP Ammar Ameezy Nasrulhaq Alecia NEO Norhaizad Adam Melissa QUEK la Corrie TAN (陳霖靈) Jill J. TAN **Dapheny CHEN** 

India

## ANNEXE 2

PROGRAMME	Time				
FRUCKAPIPIL	GMT+5:30 (IST)	GMT+8	GMT+10	Activity	
Day 1, 9 July 2020: DIAGNOSIS	9.30am	12pm	2pm	Collective Meeting: Opening (1h) - Housekeeping - Introductions by co-curators, facilitators and documentarians	
	10.30am	1pm	3pm	Break (1h)	
	11.30am	2pm	4pm	Satellite Meetings (3h) - Participant introductions - Discussion about keynote lecture, questions - Think about distilling a key question, problem, or scenario to workshop through the lab; this will inform breakout discussions on Day 3. - Each satellite meeting will summarise key points of their discussion to be presented on Day 2	
	2.30pm	5pm	7pm	End of Day 1	

Day 2, 10 July 2020: PROGNOSIS		Time			
	GMT+5:30 (IST)	GMT+8	GMT+10	Activity	
	9.30am	12pm	2pm	Collective Meeting (1.5h) - Housekeeping - Each satellite meeting presents a summary of discussions from Day 1, including their proposed key question, problem, or scenario to workshop through the lab (10min per group) - All 6 key questions to be discussed in afternoon Clinics	
	10.45am	1.15pm	3.30pm	Break (45min)	
	11.45am	2.15pm	4.15pm	Breakout Session: Clinic 1 (45min) - Participants to be divided in pre-allocated groups of 5 within Main Space	
	12.30pm	3pm	5pm	Break (15min)	
	12.45pm	3.15pm	5.15pm	Breakout Session: Clinic 2 (45min)- Participants to be divided in pre-allocated groups of 5 within Main Space	
	1.30pm	4pm	6pm	End of Day 2	

Dow 2-11 July 2020 TDEATMENIT		Time			
Day 3, 11 July 2020: TREATMENT	GMT+5:30 (IST)	GMT+8	GMT+10	Activity	
	9.30am	12pm	2pm	Collective Meeting: Briefing (15min)	
	9.45am	12.15pm	2.15pm	Breakout Sessions (2h 45min) - To review & process responses from Day 2, developing a proposition / prototype - Participants choose which breakout room to join - Participants can freely move between any of the rooms during this time	
	12.30pm	3pm	5pm	Break (1h)	
	1.30pm	4pm	6.15pm	Satellite Meetings (1h) Participants process their experience of the break-out discussions with fellow regional participants.	
	2.30pm	5pm	7.15pm	End of Day 3	
	6pm	8.30pm	10.30pm	The Raucous Dance Party in the Bar	

	Time				
12 July 2020: REHABILITATION	GMT+5:30 (IST)	GMT+8	GMT+10	Activity	
	9.30am	12pm	2pm	Collective Meeting: Propositions (2h) - Housekeeping - Presentations of the 6 propositions by co-facilitator* / topic owners / co-operatives (15min each)	
	11.30am	2pm	4pm	Individual Responses & Reading (self-directed, over 2h) Each participant to take the time to write responses to the propositions, and reflect on what they might apply to their individual practices.	
	1.30pm	4pm	6pm	Collective Meeting: Closing (2h) - Response from Guest Lecturer - Closing / open-floor reflections	
	3.30pm	6pm	8pm	Post-lab All rooms (besides Main Space) remain open for gathering in!	

### **ANNEXE 3**

#### Keynote Lecture by Tang Fu Kuen

Hello, everyone. I'm Tang Fu Kuen and I'm speaking to you today from Taipei. I welcome all of you participants of da:ns lab, "Co-immunity: How shall we dance when we are all ill."

What a great title and a very difficult title. I should share that this has been a big challenge to me. I was thinking, what is the real function of making this keynote speech? Is it to provoke? And I then took a back seat and thought about many questions. And of course, these questions could only develop into even more questions to which I have no answer. And I begin to think if seeking answers is what we are tasked to do in this lab. I hope not. Rather, I hope that it is reflection, sharing and a way of looking back to the past, in order to deal with what we have now.

The kinds of hardships that we are struggling with right now, and they are bound to increase in the coming months, I hope not years or forever, but who knows? So answers is not what I can provide to you. To be a provocateur is not something I'm very good at. So neither the cheerleader nor the provocateur. I'm not so sure I could fulfil those roles. But rather today, I would like to share with you what I have been reflecting on. I've been reading quite a lot in the past years on political philosophy and it happens that a number of philosophers have written from the perspective of immunology and pharmacology. Not just as biology phenomenon but as socio-political theories on individuation and community especially in the techno-sphere era. So amongst them, for example, are Gilbert Simondon, Roberto Esposito, Peter Sloterdijk, Bernard Stiegler, etc. I'm sure you can find plenty of these online resources accessible to you, and it all really depends on your own inclination towards the level of discourse and the kinds of language you can engage in.

Today, I would rather choose to look at the trope of the contagious malady which has been used through human history as a metaphor and motif to represent describe and critique failures of the system by critics of culture and politics. So the current Covid-19 pandemic is full of examples that run the entire spectrum from profound to pathetic use of these metaphors. And the fact that many metaphors are being used have appropriated or borrowed them from the model and discipline of evolutionary biology serves to underscore the difficulties that the metaphoric mode of communication entails, as this has to move from a figurative language to a scientifically-inscribed logos. Okay, so now let's get some facts straight from viruses. They are basically quite misunderstood. They have been getting quite a lot of bad press from everyone because we've been a bit ignorant perhaps everyone because we've been a bit ignorant perhaps. So basically, when you ask anyone about viruses all you can hear are complaints. It's disease this or disease that, infection this, infection that and no one seems to have anything nice to say about viruses. Can viruses be positive? So of course, to talk about viruses is easy, and it would be a shame because we wouldn't be discussing this right now without them, right?

So, let's get back to a bit of real sciences, what real science tells us. Viruses. Viruses are the most ubiguitous life forms on planet Earth. They are also the least understood. They live everywhere in nature everywhere, both on you, and inside of you. Less than 1% are known to be what they call "pathogenic." But, many more are known to be symbiotic or mutualistic or benign. So by "symbiotic" it means they assist, these viruses assist the host. By "mutualistic" it means both host and virus benefit from the association. And "benign" means we don't know what they do. In addition, viruses' modus operandi of targeting specific cell types and interrupting cells' genetic functioning means that they can be used to destroy certain cells, certain cell types selectively. So for example, cancer or HIV. And as well, repair genetic damage in others. So, next time someone asks you about viruses, you can tell him or her the scientific facts and show a more proper acknowledgement of how viruses actually work.

Now, these days, when people say something has gone viral, "gone viral", they almost always are using the term as a metaphor for an event that touches a great number of people and news of which, is passed from individual to individual especially via social media. As metaphors go, it's not so bad.

Of course there's nothing particularly "virus-like" about microbial infection. They're quite different things. So yes, so a number of all these horrible microbial infection-type diseases spread among individuals via close proximity or physical contact. But, the term "virus" the etymology actually comes closer to "vita", Latin for "life force." And so, it's obviously the better choice for representing any event, idea, or philosophy that touches masses of people. So "vita" — virus coming from vitality.

More interesting, perhaps, is the somewhat neglected aspect of viral disease metaphors cultural extrapolation. Now, viruses are not designed to kill or damage their host. The point of a virus is actually life, not death. Now, because viruses need living cells to reproduce overtime. They have developed transmission strategies that make the finding of living hosts quick and efficient. So ideally, a pathogenic virus will enter a living system and have sufficient time to make many copies of itself before it is eliminated by the host's immunological defences. Now, the virus survives and then the host survives, that's the model. The problem with pathogenic viruses especially those that hosts have not encountered before is that the system's effort to find and develop a means of neutralising the virus the state of the body is changed. And sometimes beyond the point at which the body, especially weakened bodies, can remain alive. Consequently, it is not the virus that kills. It is the body's reaction to the virus that kills.

At this point, I would like to go a bit sideways to talk about the notion of "Umwelt." So I'm moving a little bit from let's say, how I've explained the function of virus and how they work, which is a more, let's say, empiricist description into what is gradually a more subjective description. Subjective because now we're going into the perspective of the virus.

So, "Umwelt", it is developed by an Estonian biologist, Jakob von Uexküll, a bit difficult to pronounce. Uexküll basically introduced a new school in theoretical biology, which is called ethology. Now, in contrast to the usual kind of what we call taxonomic approach of classical theoretical biology, which we know, which consists in studying living organisms according to their lineage and shared features, Uexküll believes that one actually cannot know the organism without first observing how it relates to its environment.

Now, a living organism is first and foremost defined by the specific relationship it maintains with its environment, rather than by its specific corporeal features. So instead of departing from a human point of view, Uexküll tries to look through the eyes of the organisms themselves. How do they see the world? What part of the world is meaningful to them? What does this tell us about the organism itself? What counts, is thus, less what organisms are, but more, where they are and how they are. That is, how they interact with the environment in which they are living in.

Now, according to Uexküll, organisms do not merely occupy an environment, they create it. Their relation to the environment is not a given but a constant development. Uexküll thus exchanges the kind of static and passive view of taxonomic biology for one that is much more dynamic and creative. This development does not occur solely on account of the animal. It is not the case that the animal is merely shaping its environment. But that the animal is likewise shaped by its environment.

Right, so there's something quite inter-subjective happening here. Both animal and environment encounter each other in what we can call a contrapuntal relationship of reciprocal determination. So in the words of the French phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty, the animal is produced by the production of a milieu. A milieu, like the environment. So the animal is thus a product, an effect of something it has produced itself. Animal and environment make up an indivisible biological unity: the "Umwelt" or loosely translated as milieu.

So what Uexküll has clearly offered us is not a mechanistic account of nature but one that is intentional or expressive. Of course, this appeal of the living organism towards the world can only happen if the organism has the right physical features. So for instance, an animal can only address the world in its liquid form, if it possesses the physical capacity to extract oxygen from water. But thus, this does not imply that the physical features of the organisms are the first and only ground from which to explain "Umwelt." So we can see that unlike Darwin. Uexküll does not want to reduce the examination of the unity of "Umwelt" to examination of the physical correspondences between living organisms and its environment. So for example, animals with a thick fur living in a cold environment. So instead, he wants to open it up to an examination of how the living organism and its environment relate through their ways of behaving and perceiving. That is to say, their, let's say, rhythmic postures, sounds or colours, in short, their world of sensations and movement.

The Covid-19 virus is special but not for the reason that most people think. Its infection of our bodies is nothing note-worthy as viruses normally go. But what Covid-19 has spectacularly achieved is infecting our machines of culture, economics, and politics, our everyday life on a global level, leaving none of us untouched. It's a virus and it's a meme, and in order to reduce the inferred levels of mortality in at-risk individuals, our societies have reacted in unprecedented ways. By mandating the shutdown of economic and cultural activities, which then right, involves all of us in the arts field, curtailing the individual by all means of mobility, regulations, and policies. And increasingly, the legal rights of citizens, entering thus, into discussions of the bio-politics. And by forcing both individuals and family groups into

physical isolation for an unspecified time interval. Although, of course, every nation is anxiously opening right now as we speak, albeit with caution.

So at this point, I don't know how to really speak, what tenor I should proceed. And I think I can only speak from a commonsensical, if not, rather, boring, but nonetheless I hope, sensible way of reading the situation since I cannot, in any way foretell the future. So, right now, we'll have to wait to see if these social reactions will sufficiently mitigate the damage that the virus will inflict on human population. In a moral sense, we have no choice but to endure, to endure them in the hope that they will. But just as a body's reaction to a pathogenic virus can leave it in a weakened state, and so susceptible to other infections that would not prove problematic had the virus not come along, the economic, social, and cultural reactions that COVID-19 meme has caused will leave our social bodies in a much weakened state. It will take a long while, a substantial interval and sustained efforts for our societies to recover from their reaction to this infection. Or maybe, we never will. Who knows?

So in thinking about the legacy of Covid-19 especially in the light of the past experience and knowledge that we've accumulated from other pandemics, such as SARS and Ebola etc., that will likely also happen again in the future. It will be important to remember that unlike our bodies immune reactions, we are actually in control of our society's reaction to this and future infections. It is in our power to learn from this infection, and so establish structures that will recognise the danger and take steps to mitigate harmful social responses, both to future pandemics and to other events of a holistically environmental nature as they arrive.

Of course, this process is nothing more or less than an example of cultural adaptation. As with all forms of adaptation, the key to success is diversity. But, therein lies also the danger. The strategies that lead to successful post-event diversification are unknown. Common sensibly, commonsensically speaking, some lineages will remain more or less unchanged and continue to pursue their old ways. Others will undergo rapid and profound alteration to their approaches to life.

Now, success always belongs to whichever strategies work best for whatever reason. Moreover, adaptations that offer an advantage, whatever their origin and however slight, can eventually displace those that don't. Irrespective of the success the latter may have enjoyed previously. So prior incumbency does not guarantee success in the aftermath of a profound dislocation. As it is with nature, so it is with social factors of economics, politics, and culture, humans, by their given capacity, can do many things that are highly unusual, even unique. But by definition, humans can never do anything that's unnatural. Although, synthetic biology has been proposing to radicalise that limitation. Hence, my own personal interest in pursuing and reading up on the future according to synthetic biology, but this is another matter, another day, we can talk about this.

Now, due to the manner in which human cultures have responded to COVID-19 infection, many of our very precious traditions, ways of life, institutions, have, and to all intentions and purposes been suspended. It is far too early to tell which will survive after the crisis has passed and which will remain in whatever state. However, what one can say with some degree of certainty is this, that aspects of tomorrow's world may be very different from yesterday's world. And we already experience this now, that the world has changed. So the challenges we'll face in coping with that world won't end with our society's survival. They'll only have just begun.

So on this note, rather, open and you know, how should I say... I have no conviction about whether we, the world, the human race, will collapse or continue in what ways, whatsoever I think we will just have to find ways to keep surviving and then, to keep doing what we need to do or think in what ways we can best contribute.

So with this, I wish all of you in Taiwan, in India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore, have I missed out any other - Australia! I wish you all the best in this year's lab and to take away some of these reflections I've shared with you today into your own discussions. Thank you, and all the best.

