

Knitting a Social Fabric

2021-2022 (work based on the workshops in process)

workshops

duration: 60-90min each

as a part of the project *After-Ripening & Corruption* at the Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University, Japan

For the study on diversity and inclusion at Kobe University, I conducted workshops for dialogue and cooperation that attempt to embody the social construction with diverse people. Objecting to the current trend to instrumentalise people with obvious differences (e.g. foreigners, the disabled), it assumes the minority-ness is quality inherent in anybody and everybody can be a game-changer.

SOCIAL FABRIC OF THE WORKSHOP

The term 'human fabric' depicts society as complicated relationships of diverse players, criss-crossing. Each workshop group consists of 5-6 general publics ('interlocutors') who had never met before and there to talk and knit together; 4 researchers ('passive participants') who assist 'interlocutors'; and I as a moderator. Everybody was in a room except the moderator, who worked remotely online to reduce its presence only to its voice and bring the focus on the interrelation among the participants.

Each interlocutor chose his/her nickname (e.g. Ki-ki-ki, Fruit-fry) to be identified, and made self-introduction telling one's internal aspect without common categorising factors (e.g. age, occupation, address, etc.).

REMOVE FILTERS - YOU AS A MINORITY

What makes you (feel like) a minority? Tell me an anecdote about your experience - I initiated the dialogues by asking this question. Neither the theme and intent of the study nor this question was informed to the participants before the workshop, to keep their mind open. I rephrased the question and the word 'minority' in various ways to avoid their meanings limited to the negative and the stereotype, to suggest personal threshold to the minority-ness for each interlocutor. They reflected on their identity positively, and many started with the word 'actually' to unfold their story.

Generally, the natural flow of conversation by the interlocutors was respected, and I moderated mostly when the conversation stopped and/or no actions made, through picking up the interlocutors' anecdotes and actions previously appeared and indicating the direction of a new flow.

KNIT TO EMPATHISE, RELATE, OPPOSE

Each interlocutor held their respective string, of which colour, breadth, and elasticity reflected their self-defined identity (faithful-flexible, introvert-extrovert). They stepped into the workshop field that was marked by 'frame of society', a loop of black string held by four researchers at each corner. After connecting their respective strings to 'frame of society', the dialogue began.

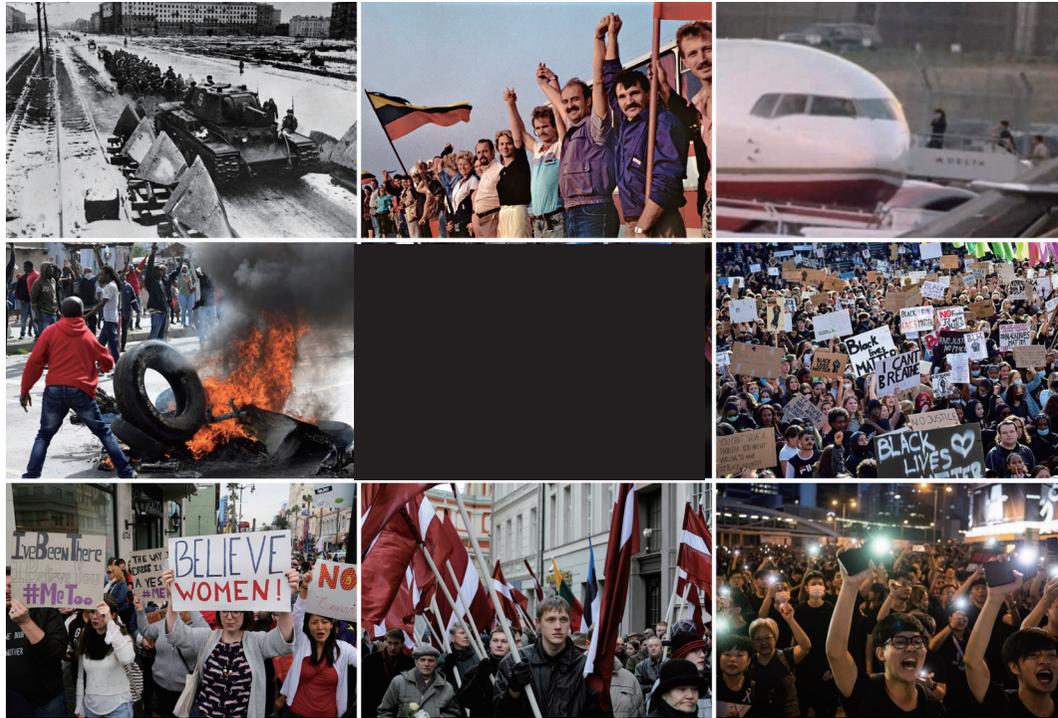
The interlocutors used strings to reflect the dialogue, presenting their opinion/feeling (e.g. make knots for empathy, cross for feeling relatable, pull the string away to oppose). All participants, including researchers, were being interconnected with strings, therefore they could physically feel the exchange and relationship through their vibrations and tensions.

Started as strangers and suddenly confronted with a profound question in an unusual setting, they slowly disclosed their interior frankly without being afraid of conflicts, which they would have avoided in their everyday relationships, to mutually negotiate the distance and make a tie in the end.



(left page) a sequence of bird's eye views of the morning workshop (right page, above) views of the afternoon workshop with the participants talking and knitting together (right page, below) close views of the afternoon workshop taken from different angles by 360 degree conference cameras; intertwined strings as the result of the afternoon workshop with dialogue and cooperation





Practising Humanity

2020-2022

'sketch' of audio-visual installation (projector, 2 sheets of cardboard, cardboard box, tubes, styrofoams)

duration: 2 min 30 sec

as a part of the project *After-Ripening & Corruption* at the Arts Maebashi museum, Gumma, Japan

It is composed of the slide show of global and historical conflicts, and a female voice telling the stories of personal experiences in the scene of these divisions/conflicts. The video was projected on two sheets of cardboard, in a small dusty storage room found in the stairs that connect two exhibition rooms.

WITNESS OF CONFLICTS & EXCHANGES

Practising Humanity is originally an essay I wrote on a Swedish remote island, and published online by a Japanese museum in 2020. It refers to the conflicts and divisions I faced at the locations of the project *After-Ripening & Corruption* (2018-), and the emotional expressions and interactions present in *Graphic Movements*, workshops I conducted as a response to the racial frictions and xenophobic riots in South Africa.

INSPIRED BY WEAKNESS & 'OTHER SIDE'

I developed my essay into a vocal performance, reading the text loud with a calm stable voice, and slight emotion infused towards the end. Along this audio, I placed a slide show of news photos of global and historical events and demonstrations with black slides in-between. The idea to make the video in this way came from my meditation on the divided societies and the perspectives of those 'on the other side', while having auditory process disorder and not being an enthusiastic online-video viewer.

The installation setup and the contrast of History with my story, present an attempt to overcome what I considered as weakness (my voice sounds 'round, not 'dynamic' or 'rough': History is 'monumental' and my story 'ephemeral') and also to reach out to those who perceive the world differently on 'the other side'.

SCRIPT of PRACTISING HUMANITY

The biggest spy exchange between the US and Russia since the Cold War took place at the airport in Vienna. 'Who is the most distant person for you?' I asked a Kurdish Iranian girl living there. After a pause, she answered me, 'The Israeli'.

I spent New Years in Moscow, and I got a mug and saucer as a present. Its decoration of cobalt net with gold accents describes sealed-up windows and searchlights illuminating the sky when the Nazis besieged Leningrad during the Second World War.

Freed from Soviet rule after its disintegration, Latvia let the languages halve the country. People seemed to attempt to consolidate their identity, by not being the other.

Celebrating 25 years after the end of Apartheid in South Africa, not only colour but also accent became the marker of divisions. The South African's discontent with their everyday surfaced as the violence towards other Africans moved from elsewhere.

While I was wondering about the number and disposition of chairs in such a society, on the other side of the ocean, people united regardless of their shades to voice an objection and stand up against the power.

To a great extent, the world moved. And it is moving, intertwined in a complex manner.

In the present day of the societies that once experienced democratisation and the people who gained freedom, are new gaps between people and life in conflict with something else.

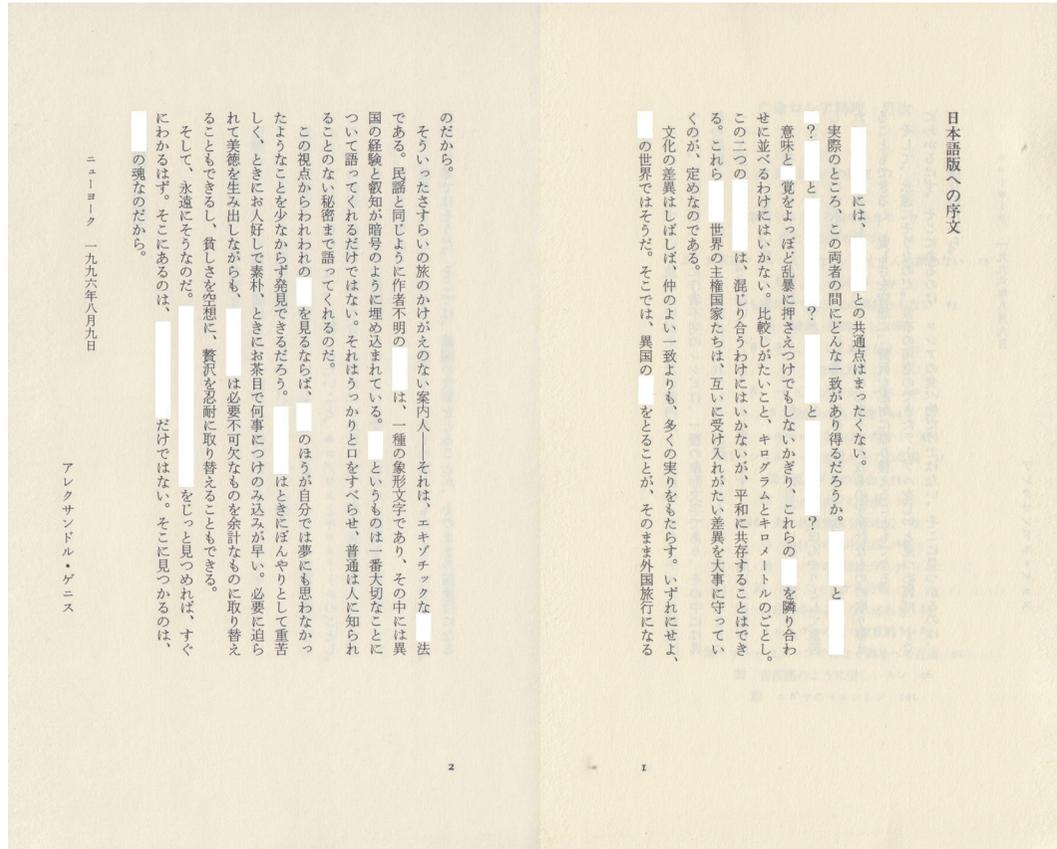
These anti-movements manifest various forms of human nature.

The act of resisting and counteracting root in one's profound emotions, and the frictions energise the actor. It appears to me as the intense moment of outburst, where one actively reflects and realises own being in the world.



(left page) some images of global divisions and historical events that are used for slide show in the video (right page, above) a closer view of installation (right page, below) set-up of the installation with two sheets of cardboard as projection surface; the installation view with the door of storage room and stair cases between the floors for exhibition





Russian Cuisine in Exile

2022
 installation
 297 x 420 mm (white-out text), 250 x 353 mm (underlined texts)
 as a part of the project *After-Ripening & Corruption* at the Arts Maebashi museum, Gumma, Japan

Using the approachable subject of cooking as an innocent façade and the printed texts as a platform to show the process of translation, I attempted to share the general structure (and mistakes and findings) strategy in the conflicts, which I extracted from the essays on Russian cuisine written by two men from then-Soviet (current Latvia) and published in the US in the mid 1980s.

Projecting the current situation in Ukraine, I interpreted the essays on food with strong presence of ideology, as the text of reflection on the different and how they could coexist.

THE STATES & FATES OF 'FORMER-SOVIET'

Having visited Latvia and Russia just before the COVID pandemic broke out and preparing to visit Lithuania where the Russo-Ukrainean war is close at hand, I reopened the book 'Russian Cuisine in Exile', essays with some recipes, which I read in the very beginning of the pandemic. The essays on 'Russian Cuisine' present the authors' strong ideology here and there, which can be read also as a text of juxtaposition of the different and how they could coexist, creating and hiding the meanings.

My interest in this book arose during my stay in Riga, Latvia where I was taking part in the International Literature Festival. Along with my practice, I had great culinary experiences there, which I had not expected. Sharing my culinary experiences and amazement talking with a Latvian cultural officer, I came to get acquainted with the life around food during the Soviet time, to assume how the ideology and structure in society might have effected to the taste and culinary process of current Latvia.

PARATEXT OF RECIPES

In order to make it applicable to any situations with conflicts, I hollowed-out the concrete parts (e.g. proper nouns) in the preface text written by one of the authors for the Japanese translation of the book in 1996.

To highlight the antiestablishment perspective in the culinary writings that can be adoptable to any socio-political conflicts in the world, I underlined some critical and ideological parts with a marker.



(left page) 'white-out' text of the preface text (right page, above) the facsimile of the book cover with the original belly band; the installation view of the excerpts from the book on a stainless-covered kitchen island (right page, below) installation view of slide show of food snapshots taken in Moscow, projected into a biscuit can from Morozoff, a famous patisserie founded by a Russian exile

