



SIGNALS & STORMS

A 6-week laboratory
about new visualities and
documentary strategies
amid growing ecological
and political anxieties

freeport.institute


Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament
de Cultura





[00] A Recording Device

[01] Forecaster

[02] Distributed Eye

[03] Stitcher

[04] Endnotes

[05] Credits

The Signal & Storms Laboratory expands on the concept of 'Geocinema', which seeks to address the challenges of representation in an increasingly algorithmic world. Most imaging techniques today are operationalised in ways that escape immediate visibility or perceptibility by humans — they are far too complex, too dispersed, too fast. Processes of recording, archiving, distribution, and visualisation of data are overwhelming in their amounts and scales, where the notion of an image as well as the notion of a recording device can be seen to have already been expanded while embedded in geological formations as much as in geopolitical configurations.

This constitutes the new epistemological condition generally called the Anthropocene. If the image of the earth as a single form of knowing is ungraspable, then the question is no longer

what is the earth
but rather *how is the earth?*

Here, 'Geocinema' is a method to understand how these images perform instrumentally within environments, but also how environments themselves structure and form these images and their circulation in return, each within their own situated histories.





Throughout six weeks the Laboratory explores an extended notion of a recording device, inspired by the feedback loops between science and technology and their relationship to film and broader filmmaking practices.

While paying attention to the ways in which the earth— in its most distributed form— is sensed, visualised and interpreted within the ever-expanding technopolitical milieu, the Laboratory's participants question how this may lead to new understandings of our relationship to the environment. This also flags up questions of scale and temporality, where visual practices are inherently formative of planetary futures which we may or may not want to foresee.

The Signal & Storms Laboratory's syllabus is structured around key figures and tropes that are present within the operations of 'Geocinema'; the Forecaster, the Distributed Eye and the Stitcher. With references to works by new media theorists, artistic practices, scholars and experimental filmmakers,— the syllabus also includes proposals for projects, as they were developed over the course of the lab and through learning from each other's visual and discursive practices.

Forecaster

Algorithmic Futures,
Planetary Programmability,
Platforms beyond Prediction,
Eerie Narratives,
Intense Archives

Distributed Eye

Calibration, Infrascapes, Geomedia,
Framing Territories, Biased Tools,
Double-bind, Bringing-into-Being,
Performativity, Selective
Memory-Capture, Optimised Mattering,
Intelligent Representation, Distribution,
Noisy Translations, Haunted Efficiencies,
Optimised Gaze, Forgotten Parameters

Stitcher

Collaboration, Assembling-
Disassembling, Fragmentation,
Entanglements, Resonance, Footnotes,
Peripheries, Open-ended encounters,
Alienation, Collective Entrancement,
Estrangement, Supply chains of
perception, thousands of tiny futures,
Stitching/Unstitching

[01] Forecaster



As a future oriented technique, forecasting is interlaced within everyday imaging operations. The technique unfolds as architectures, narratives, infrastructures, and data transactions, while matters of recording dive deeper into the depths of the world through the circuits of its images. The circulation of people and things, along with natural resources become inscribed into an extensive grid of risk calculation, where the forecaster emerges as a key trope projecting a manageable future by crystallizing it in present unfolding geographies.

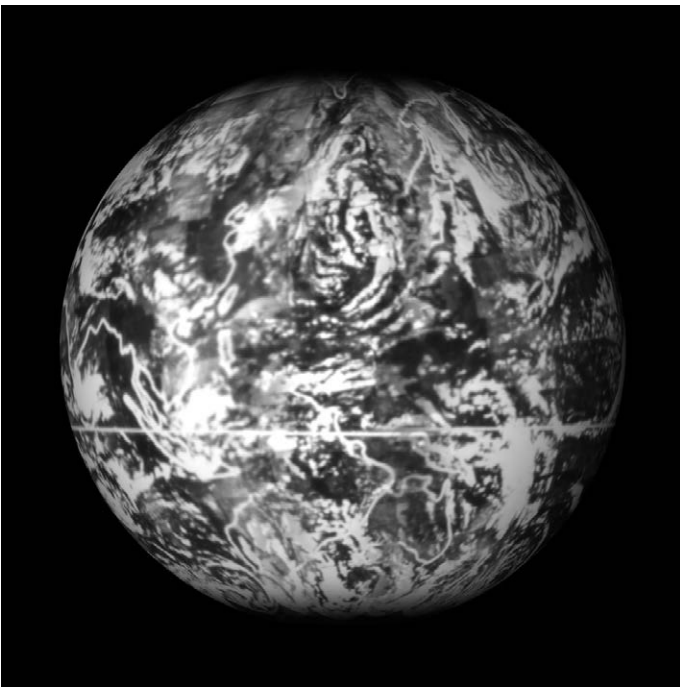
Anthropocene as a conceptual framework and as an episteme allows us to move away from the exclusive idea that man writes the history of the earth, and move towards the understanding that it is the earth that writes history, including the history of man. As a narrative device, the Anthropocene attracts the idea of time, space and matter as certain registers of writing. But before embarking on an expanded version of the history of the earth, we shift our focus to universal referents such as the new climate regime. Here, it is important to understand *how* knowledge is being mobilised in specific socio-political conditions, and *which version* of history the earth has been recording, or perhaps never recorded.

While tracing the ecological and geopolitical stakes of contemporary forecasting techniques, The Forecaster addresses the rising presence of the Earth as a figure within visual cultures and the Anthropocene. Here we are interested in the Anthropocene as a narrative phenomenon that deploys notions of time, space, and matter as certain registers of recording.



Cinematic Circles Future Forecasts

The initial concept of Geocinema was to consider planetary scale networks of data accumulation as a vast cinematic apparatus, a camera. Here the notion of an image in relation to recording devices, has already expanded and become embedded into geological formations as much as they have within social political configurations.



We are directly borrowing from the idea of montage when we speak of earth's representation as never being one holistic entity. Our interest and connection to cinema refers to the technique of mediating space and time, which creates a potent feedback system, and a particular form of agency as it loops between our optical nerves and sensory experiences via moving images. In the 20th century with the huge development in optical devices, moving images can be instrumentalized as objectifying tools as well as being emancipatory. It is because of these reasons that we are keen to expand the idea of moving images away from their material aspects and to tackle more the underlying biases existing in optical regimes and to begin thinking about alternatives to them.

A lot of our work has been about connecting more recent starting points and case studies to a longer lineage of photography and image cultures. Take for example, images meant only to be read by machines such as self-driving cars, read by staff to check the quality of products on an assembly line, or all the things logged in while crossing security. These images are used for operations, which range from science and measurement, to the control of

capital and labor. This overabundance of recording, archiving, and distribution is absolutely overwhelming in its amount and scale today. This flags up many questions related to how we understand time, but also our cognitive abilities to critically reflect on these processes and their effects.

Of course, the development of cinema and filmmaking has always been entangled with new optics and recording methods developed not only for the purposes of the film industry, but also from science and the military. So for us, the project of Geocinema is both a method to understand how these images perform within their environment, and also the extent to which the environment themselves structures images and how they are able to circulate. Addressed through the terms "operational images" or the "logistical image", extensive and important work on this had been pioneered by image practitioners and theorists such as Harun Farocki, Hito Steyerl, Trevor Paglen, Allan Sekula, and Jussi Parikka.

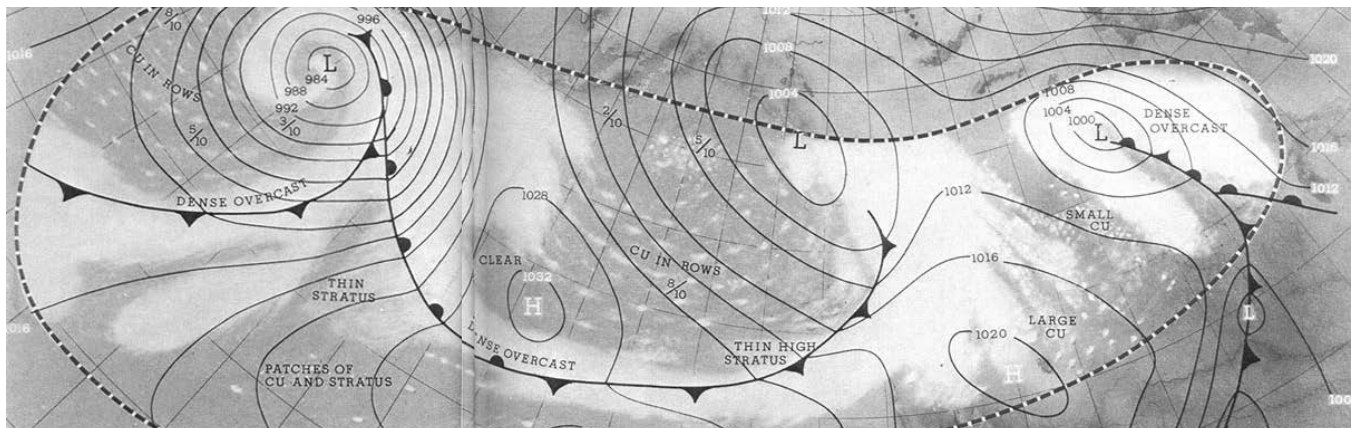
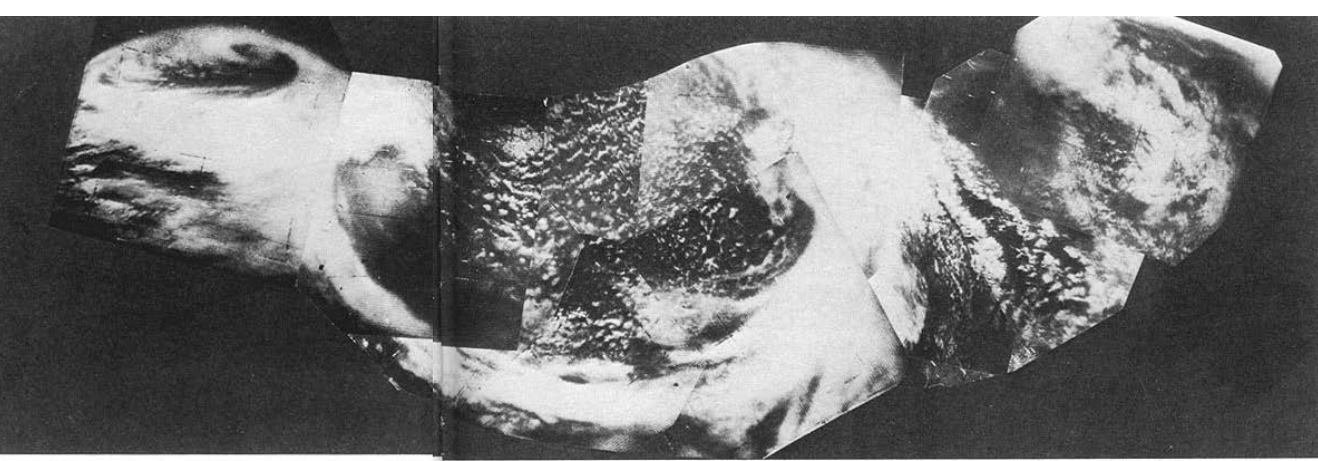
To lean on the media theorist Ute Holl, she speaks of how the cinematic circles and withdraws back into the subroutines of the mind, the apparatus, the industry and the landscape. This is something we wanted to hold on to in terms of what constitutes "cinema" to us under this broader notion. Despite it feeling like an old-fashioned word, it has been productive for us as a prism to think through, while understanding "cinema" as a collective experience of entrancement in a shared space, and especially as we are able to move across and explore different scales of this idea.

— Excerpt from Asia Bazdyrieva and Solveig Qu Suess in conversation with Billy Tang, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, 2020

Read more here:

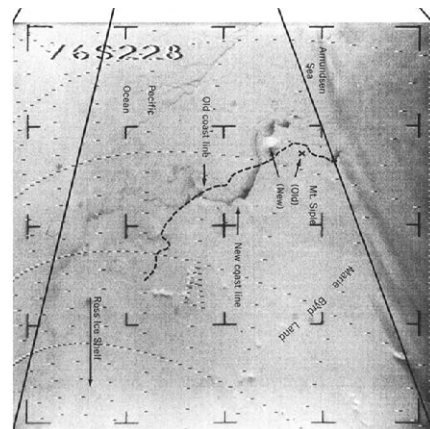
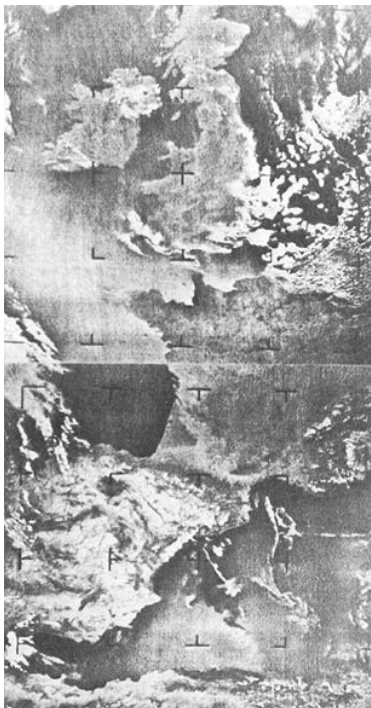
www.leapleapleap.com/2021/03/geocinema%EF%BC%9Aa-conversation/





The purpose of data is neither to
know nor to picture
but to manage and predict

— Sean Cubitt, *Finite Media: Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies*, 2017



Survey, In Present Tense

Dicle Taskin &
Gulnur Guler Kavas

Filmmakers document an archaeological survey, a process which mobilizes operational and relational techniques in pursuit of creating intensive archives, revealing temporalities that evade the constraints of linear history.

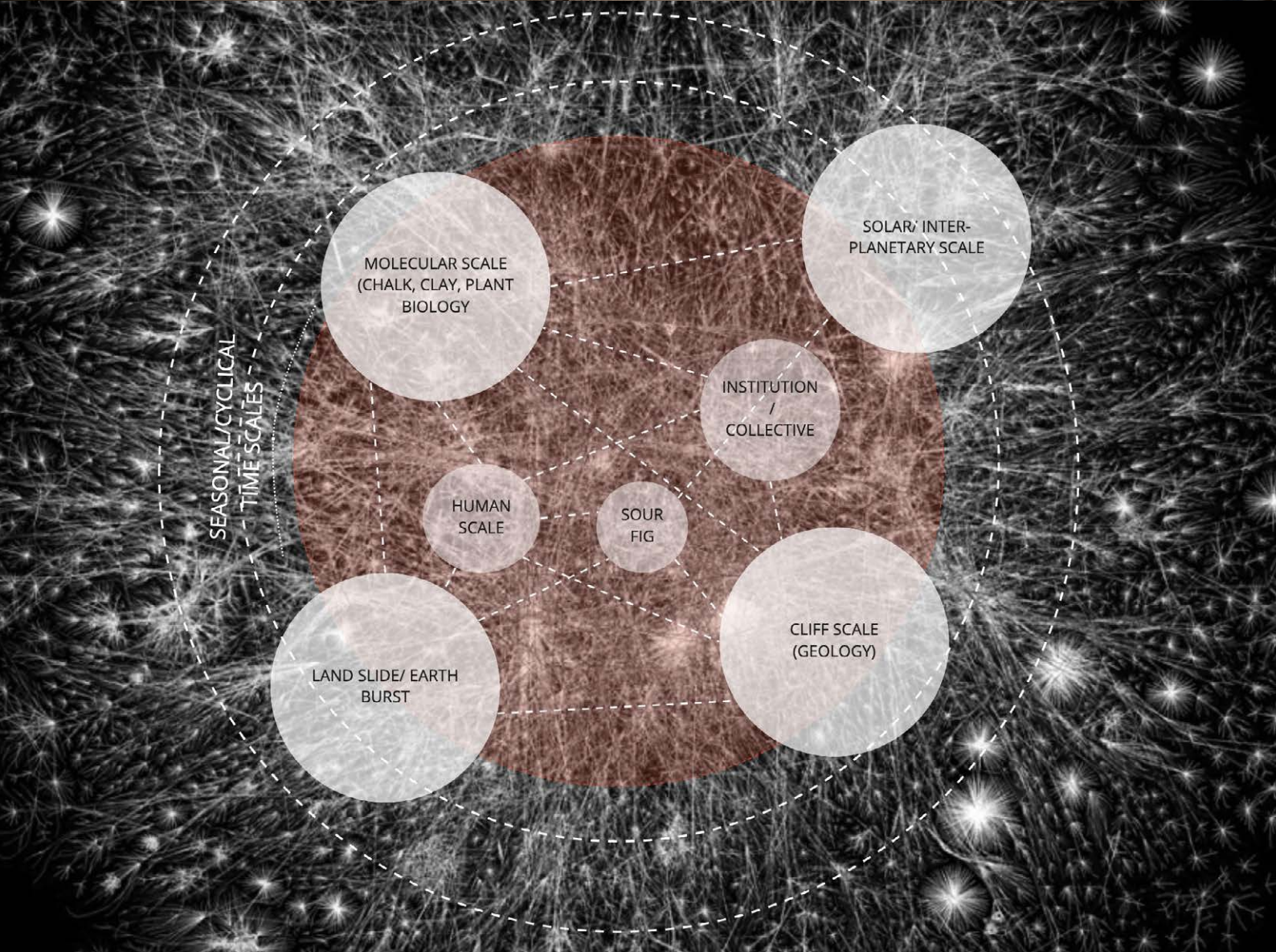
An archaeological project, like many other projects about the built environment, starts with a lengthy survey. The end goal is to create a roadmap that is thorough enough for the archaeologists to decide how to act on the site, where to dig the first trench, and what they expect to find. This process involves different kinds of looking and interacting with the site, through different bodies and different eyes. Through foot survey, or “fieldwalking”, the team creates a grid map of the site. Vegetation is cleared to allow for a controlled collection of surface finds. To be deemed relevant, these finds need to indicate a deep temporal fold. Large and fixed pieces are marked on the map; smaller ceramic fragments are collected, thoroughly washed, photographed and catalogued for diagnostic purposes. During this process, imaging and remote sensing technologies function as prosthetic devices. Geophysical studies, by measuring magnetic gradients, reveal what lies beneath the surface, while aerial images captured by drones following programmed flight paths help archaeologists create thermal maps to indicate solid surfaces. These ways of seeing often overlap with other ways of

knowing, which entail short excursions to nearby villages and interactions with residents to inquire about other possible archaeological remains and sites in the surrounding area. These interactions may lead the archaeologists to villages where column bases are appropriated to be used as foundations, or to funerary structures now used as public bathrooms for agricultural workers. They also provide glimpses of different temporalities, meanings and histories that are enmeshed with the site--histories which evade the archaeological project's inherently modern understanding of linear chronology and clear time cuts.

This film project, in collaboration with a team of archaeologists, will be a visual ethnography of archaeological surveying methods. We will position ourselves alongside the archaeological team, directing our attention to their particular way of looking, seeing, navigating and knowing a landscape. This strategy, to move alongside a team, employs Trinh T. Minh-ha's framework of “speaking by” instead of “speaking about”. This approach allows us to focus on the act of positioning oneself in relation to a place, a cultural landscape, a scientific procedure and a particular group of people who find themselves in that act of positioning itself. We are interested in how the techniques and tools of surveying lead to an operationalized view of a place. This also leads to the question of what is filtered out, whose memories are valued, and whose histories count. Our purpose, however, is not to develop a critical take on the idea of survey or to suggest a clear contrast between technical and social approaches briefly

described here. Instead, we would like to follow Donna Haraway's concept of “situated knowledge”, which reminds us that all ways of seeing and knowing are embodied. As Haraway writes, “the ‘eyes’ made available in modern technological sciences shatter any idea of passive vision; these prosthetic devices show us that all eyes, including our own organic ones, are active perceptual systems, building on translations and specific ways of seeing, that is, ways of life.”





Earth Burst

Speculative Landscapes
(Madeleine Collie, Marta Fernández Calvo, Rubiane Maia, Cherry Truluck)

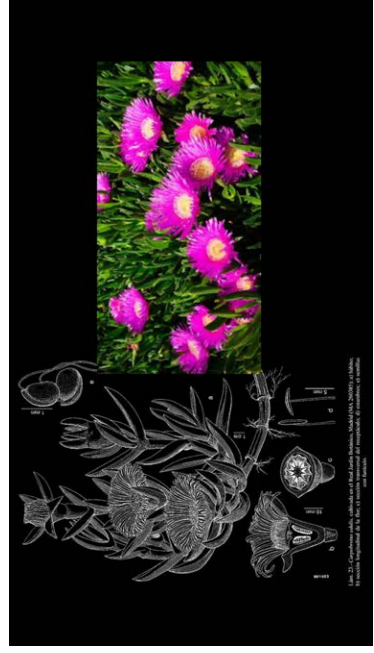
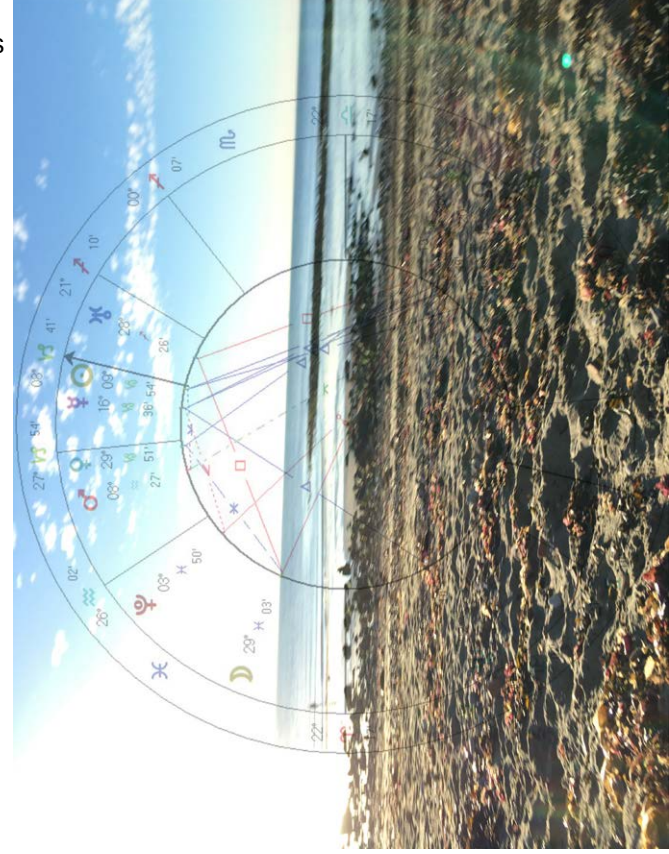
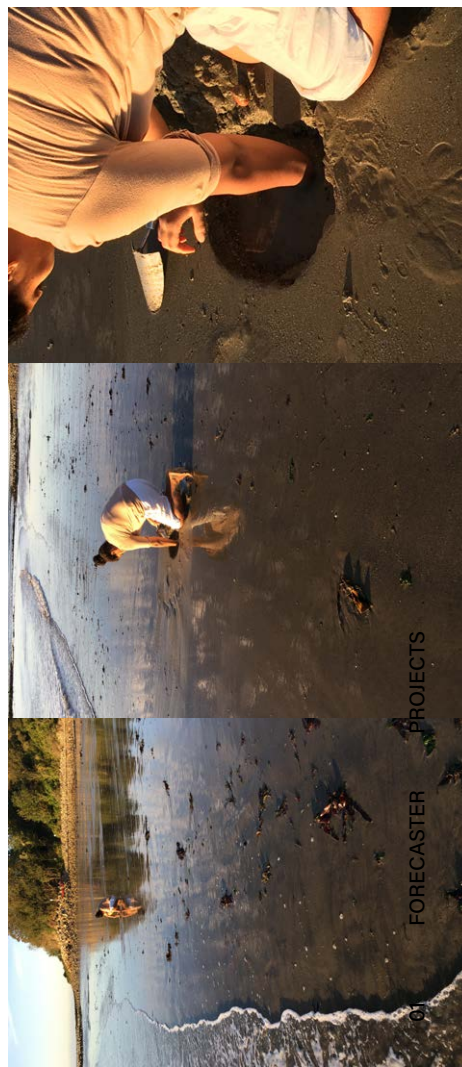
Through remote but interpersonal engagements with site and across kaleidoscopic scales, *Earth Burst* stitches together fragmented geologies, landslide methodologies, cosmologies and affective experience in close relation to the Folkestone Warren.

interest on the border between the UK and France which presents an opportunity for readings of potential institutions of the future. Subject to multiple complex relationships of dependence and invasion, the Warren is one of the most active landslides in Britain. It is also one of the most surveyed: monitored and observed for shifts in climate, erosion, geology and is said to have been one of the first geological explorations in Europe. The landslide originates 40 meters underground, an earthly reality that is controlled through vast terraforming projects and monitored on the surface. Here the Warren is explored as a hovering network of geological stories, vast underground reserves of disruption, knowledges, journeys, loves and memories, spread across and below like a blanket of tangled plants that inhabit the landscape – goosegrass, knotweed, sea beets, sour fig, brambles and ivy, exploring relationality on scales from the atomic to the interplanetary. Distance/proximity to the site operates as a cinematic tool, our focus (zoom) in constant motion, creating a disrupted/unsettled (unsettle-able) reading of the institution through the lens of landscape. Distance/proximity to the site operates as a cinematic tool, our focus (zoom) in constant motion, creating a disrupted/unsettled (unsettle-able) reading of the institution through the lens of landscape.

About Speculative Landscapes
<https://customfoodlab.org/speculative-landscapes-collective/>

Speculative Landscapes is a collective research project emerging from micro institution Custom Food Lab that explores the potential for being otherwise in landscapes. It is sited in the unique coastal landscapes of The Warren in Folkestone (UK) which we speculatively occupy as a place for collectively imagining a regenerative institution. Contact info: research@customfoodlab.org

An ongoing work by artists collective Speculative Landscapes, *Earth Burst* is a poetic tracing of the Folkestone Warren (UK). A landslide and site of rare geological



Ungrounded

Raul Nieves Pardo, Toni Navarro,
Manuel Latour Fernández,
Desirée Quevedo Nieto

Extractivist and detaching practices blur in the Sahara region — a land marked by historical colonialism and oblivion.



Desert sand is flowing out in cargo ships. Gunpowder is being sneaked in against international law. Infinite conveyor belts are feeding the world with the stolen phosphates. The footprints of labour interaction movements are crossing the energy extraction networks. Geoen지니어ing is deterritorializing the deep time. No land built out of territory wounds. Fossils are being reattached to a global market. Brands are setting down into a regulatory void. Crypto action mining is hidden in the region of the world's most populated but land mines. The Saharawi territory.

Taking some ideas from speculative realism, new materialisms and geontologies, we reflect on mining activity (in its alliance with geopower and global capitalism) from several cases centered in the Sahara, showing the link between energy sources, cryptocurrency mining, mineral extraction and fossil excavation. All these cases compose a fragmented cartography that allows us to understand mining in general terms as a practice based on the activation of a potency, as it tends to view the widest possible range of locations and minerals as “having profit-creating potential; that is, nothing is inherently inert, everything is vital from a capitalization standpoint, and anything can be turned into something more with the right innovative angle”. All this raises questions about expulsion as a precondition for extraction, the interrelationship between geopolitics and geotechnics, and sovereignty over natural resources.

Ungrounded is a research-based project that tries to establish some connections between several emerging fields such as the increasing automation of the mining industry through artificial intelligence, the use of wind energy to supply data centers for blockchain technology, and the massive installation of solar panels that could lead to a greening of the desert; focusing not only on the logistical processes that make this possible, but also on the legal frameworks that regulate this activity, the territorial conflicts they generate and the different actors involved. Although the Sahara is taken as a case study, this allows us to analyze the effects of extractivism on a global scale and to examine how it shapes boundaries, policies and both public and private interests.



The initial approach consists of developing two different languages to emphasize two different visions. One corresponds to phenomena that take place on the surface (the uncertain life of refugee camps, anti-personnel mines, the violence of ditches and war infrastructures), with ground level shots. The other corresponds to all those operations of non-explicit violence —such as deep mining or the extraction of energy resources— that take place detached from the most tangible reality, hidden in the territory. In this sense, the intention is to use a language more detached from the subjective plane through the use of drones, different archival materials, and corporate videos of the companies involved. As well as mixing different testimonies and combining the different voices present in the territory to reflect the geopolitical powers at stake.





Chrono Messenger

Iris Long
& He Like

The film is a speculation on the geological and the political/policy conditions of the city of Guiyang, also known as the Data Capital of China. Techno-infrastructures under construction are reverted into ruins and deserts (the construction sites visually resemble ruins).

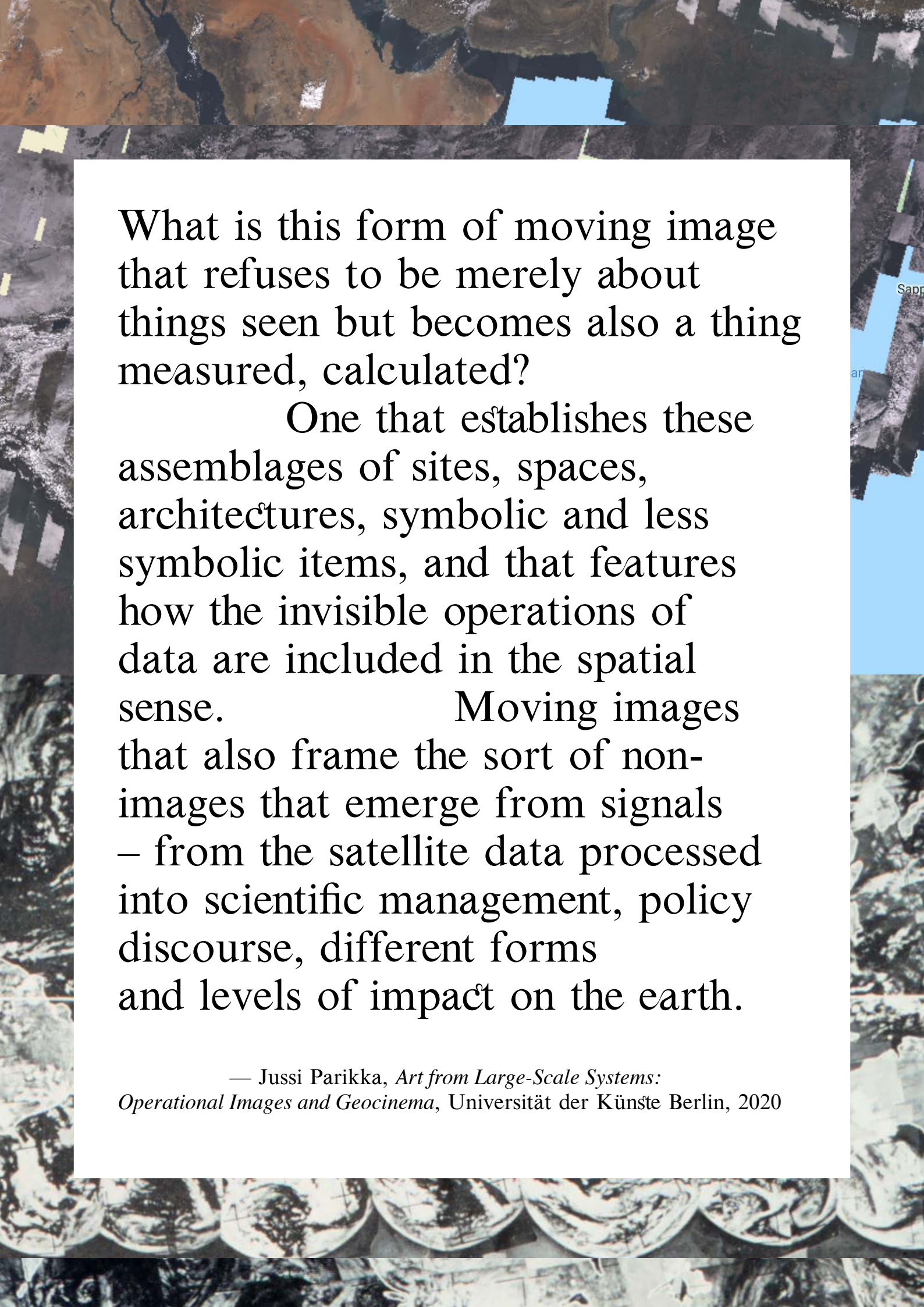
The film imagines a future when the entire Guizhou area is stony desertified, a prediction that geologists had made many years ago. A new kind of “ecosystem” emerges in this “future”, entangled with “natural” and “artificial” components — clouds, waterfalls, underground water, stones, “Tiankeng”, data centers, bitcoin “mines”, architectures. The data collected by FAST radio telescope forms a steady flow towards a prototype system entitled “Earth Data Simulation Apparatus”, which conducts petaflops of super computation every second.

An individual, ancient signal from the deep sky arrives, bypassing the telescope’s frequency band, and gets written in the hard drive of one of the leftover data centers — a moment of contingency. The “line diallers” who work as labourers at the data centers begin to type incomprehensible crypto messages after the

arrival of this hidden piece of data. The act of typing evolves into a spatial chorus. A land surveyor falls asleep in a KAST cave, water falls onto his face. Water drips, his oneiric delirium, and the flickering of a remote nova, somehow become synchronised. The synchronisation across organic and non-organic beings dramatically expands, humans, stones, water-bubbles, infrastructures are interwoven in this pattern/tempo. The nova keeps releasing energies, reminding locales the Miao minority villager’s totem. At the end of the film, an intense rainfall arrives, witnessing how the KARST area has become a land that surpasses single definitions of intelligence. The rain inscribes this memory into the deepest part of the earth, in an analog way.



[02] **Distributed Eye**

The background of the slide is a collage of satellite and aerial imagery. At the top, there's a dark, textured area with a small blue rectangular patch. Below that, a road with yellow dashed lines runs horizontally. The bottom half of the slide features a grid of circular satellite images showing various geographical features like rivers, forests, and urban areas.

What is this form of moving image that refuses to be merely about things seen but becomes also a thing measured, calculated?

One that establishes these assemblages of sites, spaces, architectures, symbolic and less symbolic items, and that features how the invisible operations of data are included in the spatial sense.

Moving images that also frame the sort of non-images that emerge from signals – from the satellite data processed into scientific management, policy discourse, different forms and levels of impact on the earth.

— Jussi Parikka, *Art from Large-Scale Systems: Operational Images and Geocinema*, Universität der Künste Berlin, 2020



There's a double bind "between knowing about the earth and the earth allowing that knowing to happen," agendas of designing networks of sensors seeing into the earth's crust are twinned by an outward extraterrestrial exploration looking back into itself.¹ The power to make value and the power over knowledge collude on unprecedented scales. Techniques of measuring and interpreting how the Earth is changing are feeding back into the construction of large scale logistical infrastructures, as plans for what is or is not constructed are hinged on the dependability of data-sets and their value-driven interpretations.

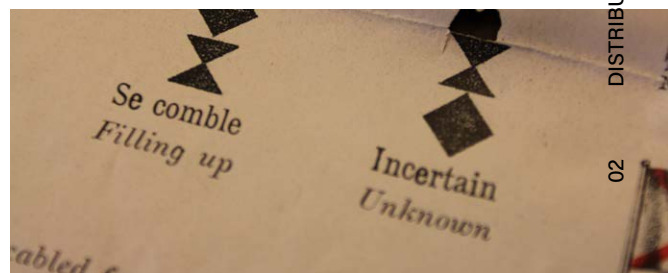


Here we want to collectively think through time and movement which are being written by and into environments near and far from our situated histories— with rhythms defined by colonial and extractive logics, folk ontologies and geopolitical imaginations. We address the co-production of landscapes within processes of remote-sensing, as an entry point into understanding aspects of what constitutes the new epistemological condition.

To tune into our infrastructural present, we will take note of the tempos dictating the constant recordings happening around us while learning to see movements that are being tracked and traced. By noting the choreographies of behaviors inscribed across time, we will see that what seemed to be in the peripheries— whether populations, places, or histories— are in actuality essential to its operations.



1. Jussi Parikka, Solveig Suess, Asia Bazdyrieva "Geocinema in conversation with Jussi Parikka," July 17, 2019, in Digital Earth, podcast, <https://medium.com/digital-earth/podcast-geocinema-in-conversation-with-jussi-parikka-d106e66e415>



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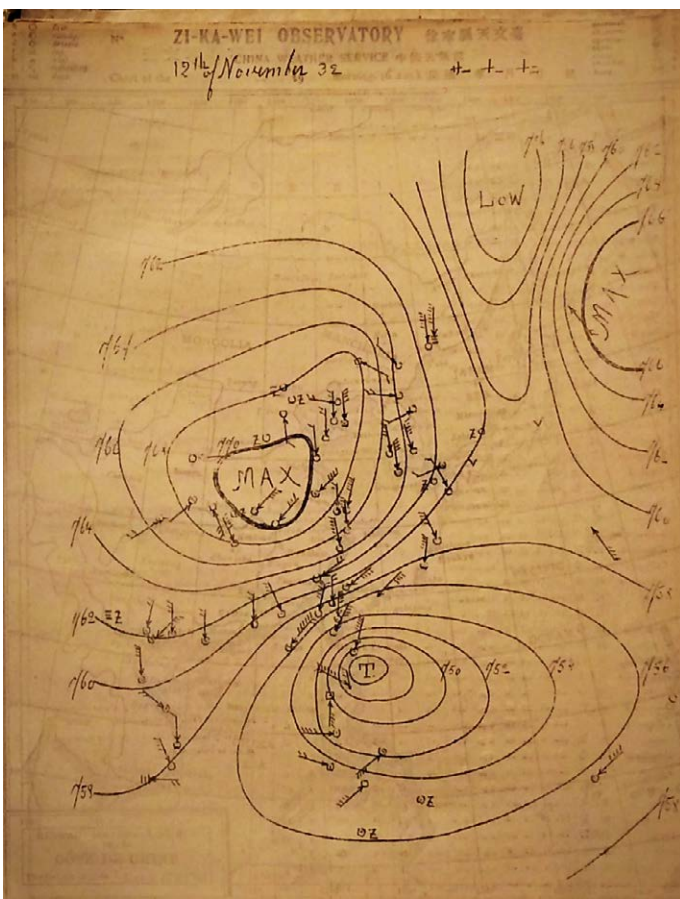
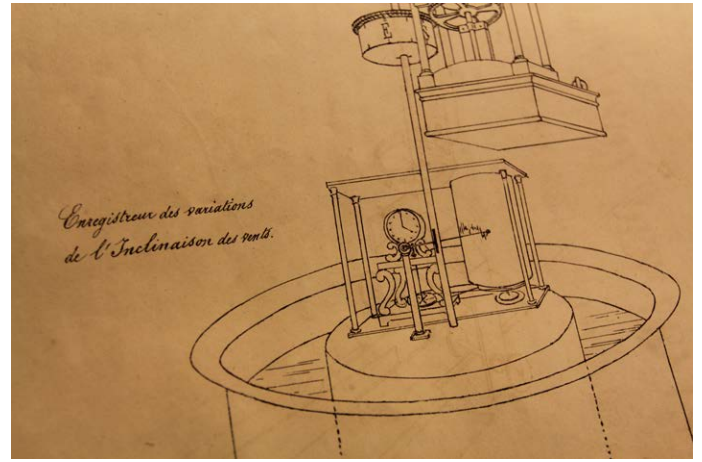
Nick Couldry and Ulises
A. Mejias, *The Costs of
Connection: How Data
Is Colonizing Human Life
and Appropriating It for
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The Tiny Messanic Forces Between Us

Each of the scientific tools used for observation— be it a seismograph, or a barometer— were devices that gave a visual record of the earth activity, and are all part of a distributed network, which provided data towards larger constellations into forms such of weather forecasts, trade logistics, and market predictions.

Advancements in statistics, probability and the establishment of reliable time references, allowed for new logistical infrastructures to support markets across oceans. Sean Cubitt refers to such an assemblage of operations as geomeia— that both mediate the earth and establish a relation between time and value.

Here, these calculations are used towards utilitarian ends while techniques of measurement themselves are inseparable from infrastructures for governance. Geomeia not only draws representations of moving lands and atmospheres, but predisposes certain ways of environments to form, and others to dissipate. These dynamic relations between the atmosphere, its windy circulations, ships, insurance companies, forecasting weather, future risks, continuously brought into being many elements of our current modern political geography, accelerating the uneven formations of a whole series of relations. The visualizing of land and air coincides with broader geopolitical events, where together they can be seen as redrawing much of the world's organizational logics.



How, then, do we represent complex systems and mechanisms which are not immediately perceivable by and of themselves? For us as Geocinema, we have been engaging with the infrastructures of sensing and imaging techniques, entering various spaces that we regard as constituting the architecture of planetary-scale cinematic processes. This infrastructural take defines our method of initiating fieldwork, where we physically follow the generation of an image. This topic allows us to borrow from various fields of inquiry such as critical theory, feminist epistemology, radical geography, media theory, amongst others.

— Excerpt from *Living Networks*,
a conversation between Jussi Parikka,
Geocinema and Kyriaki Goni.

Transmediale <https://archive.transmediale.de/content/asia-bazdyrieva-solveig-suess-geocinema>



Figure 3. Ground truth representations, each element is representing a real world object.

Even before these images,
 the landscape is
 already always inscribed in
 multiple materials and
 communication
 enabling technologies.

— Samir Bhowmik & Jussi Parikka,
 “Infrascapes for Media Archaeographers”, *Archaographien: Aspekte
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Figure 3. Ground truth representations, each element is representing a real world object.

Eye of Heaven 穴

Ann Chen (New York, Taipei)
Leon Eckert (Shanghai)
Yutong Lin (Kunming, Lijiang)
Yufeng Zhao (Shanghai)

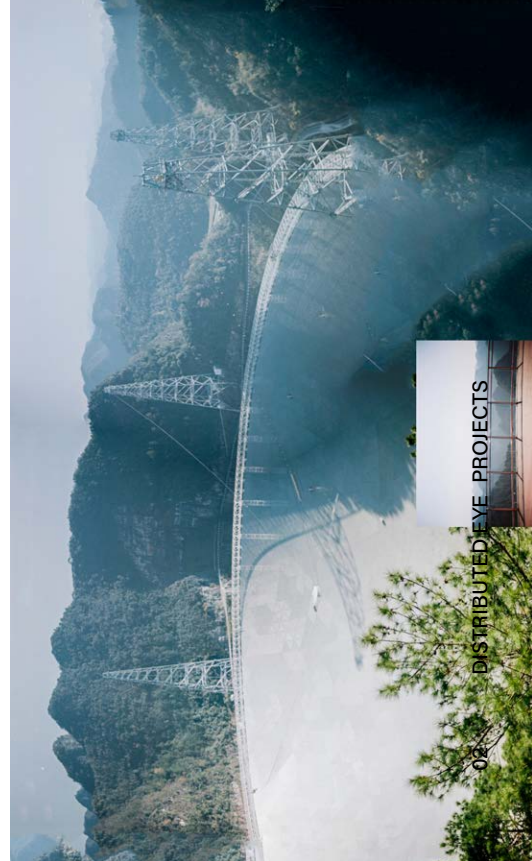
A visual travelogue through the southwestern Chinese province of Guizhou, this film, through various human and non-human encounters, looks at how the arrival of big data infrastructure development in this rural mountainous region is reshaping histories, topologies and collective identity.

For centuries, Guizhou, one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in China, has been the hiding place for exiles, outlaws and bandits. Located in the peripheral west, the mountainous terrain, characterized by high conical limestone karsts, presented an impassable challenge. During the Third Front Movement, when fears of international invasion drove industrialization of the interior, the government, preparing for imaginary wars, built secret military bases in secure locations here.

Today, a technological and economic initiative is reshaping Guizhou. The recent rebranding of this poor province as the “Big Data Capital” of China is fueling the construction of massive communications and data infrastructure development. With its cheap energy, a temperate climate, few earthquakes, and a safe distance from rising shorelines induced by climate change, the province provides ideal conditions for data centers. This technological push is transforming the social and political strata of the region. One now finds data centers tunneled into mountains, annual Big Data expos drawing international audiences, and the world’s largest radio telescope capable of gathering data on signs of extraterrestrial life and the origins of the universe.

These plans are not without their disruptions to the natural environment and to Guizhou’s indigenous populations. Our film explores the environmental and cultural fissures intensified by infrastructural development through an examination of the histories embedded in the geology and the human-made structures.

The Nomadic Department of the Interior (NDOI) is a research collective that seeks to address in films, websites, and publications, the conflicting interests between stewardship of lands & extraction of material and cultural resources. Our research investigates technological systems against the backdrop of geological, ecological and human history.





Waterworks

Sonia Levy, Lauren Collee,
Ayesha Keshani

A textual and audiovisual inquiry into the submerged histories of Hackney Marshes

Waterworks is an evolving textual and audiovisual inquiry that explores the governance of water as it flows through Hackney Marshes, a nature reserve in east London. The project moves across multiple scales, employing moving image (underwater, infrared and night vision cameras, found footage), audio (hydrophone and contact microphone field recordings), and experiments in collaborative text-writing to probe land/water dichotomies, water infrastructures and silted layers of socio-ecological history.

*The river has a big mouth
we imagine it to devour
everything.*

*Filtration is additive
and subtractive.
Its relationship to toxicity
is ambiguous and
its processes are
value-laden.*

The Marshes encompass a variety of water bodies: historic filter beds built to combat the city's 1850s cholera outbreaks, the polluted River Lea, a series of reservoirs, wetlands, canals and London's last floodplain, a waterworks plant that doubles as a bird hide, a sewage plant. Woven through these sites are stories of a city's shifting biopolitical attempts to manage its human and nonhuman populations through land ordinances and filtration technologies, condensed into a single landscape.

Water is finite. We underestimate its ubiquity, its hidden movements and its fugitivity. Our project understands water as a medium that both accumulates and erases; an unstable archive that testifies to and confounds modernity's emphasis on production. And while water is a common on which life depends, it is also a bearer of slow violence, forecasting dire ecological futures. *On whose bodies do the pressures of filtration fall?* Fishes and mollusks internalise and excrete the toxicity of their urban freshwater environments, performing a secondary role as recording devices

as scientists extract data from their bodies. In the slow sand filter beds at the waterworks, bacteria, protozoa and fungi metabolise and cleanse contaminants. Later in the year, algal blooms in the river interrupt and slow the waterworks' filtration processes.

Our project aims to conjure the various socio-ecological histories that flow through this site, finding cyclical and recursive patterns. Historic struggles over lammas (common land) echo through contemporary conflicts where local human and non-human communities jostle for liveable spaces: the 'Hackney Riviera', a popular communal swimming location, for example, overlaps with kingfisher breeding habitat. The infrastructural technologies of water management (flood protection mechanisms, reservoirs, drainage, and the straightening of rivers) attempt to control how water moves, what purposes it serves, what futures it enacts, and for whom. This project aims to trace how water evades full capture, just as political accountability for local water pollution finds ways to seep around the edges.

*The toxic sludge has to
go somewhere:
somebody has to
take it in.*

*Invasive species turn
the sludge into their
home, filtering and
siphoning through the
sediment of London
and its industrial past,
its agricultural and urban
runoff. Fish and mollusk
bodies become records,
data points that structure
the identification of
and evaluation of
freshwater toxicity.*

*What nested envelopes
of worlds do we find
folded into bodies?*

*There is nothing
neutral about cleanliness
and purity;
we are all porous
but not all in the
same ways.*



Seed Scryers (Intimacies with the seed)

Huiying Ng, Luca Lum,
Michelle Lai



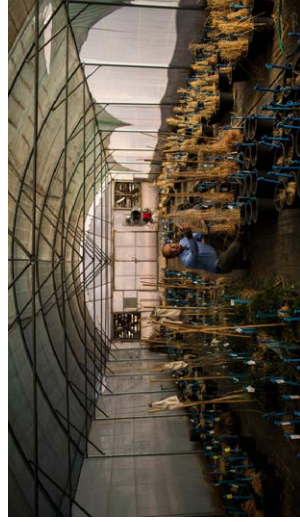
We explore scenes of a seed's appearance and disappearance as a lifeform implicated in regimes and imaginaries of futurity and survival — how it evolves and acquires different lives and afterlives, imaginaries, and projections as it engages with systems of cultivation, preservation, and circulation.

Through a poetic and asynchronous use of image and sound, we enter into intimacy with the figure of the seed, examining notions of future survival, memory, knowledge, with the aim of evoking a haunted and more complex presence.

What makes a thing knowable or turned into a resource can flatten its complexity — its memory and futurity. In the context of climate crises, food security, and systems volatility, the seed manifests a struggle between commodities and the commons. The seed and its scenes might be said to inscribe (and be inscribed with) a “salvage frontier”. To quote Anna Tsing, this is “where making, saving, destroying resources is mixed up, and zones of conservation, production and resource sacrifice overlap almost fully, and canonical time frames of nature’s study, use and preservation are reversed, conflated, and confused”.

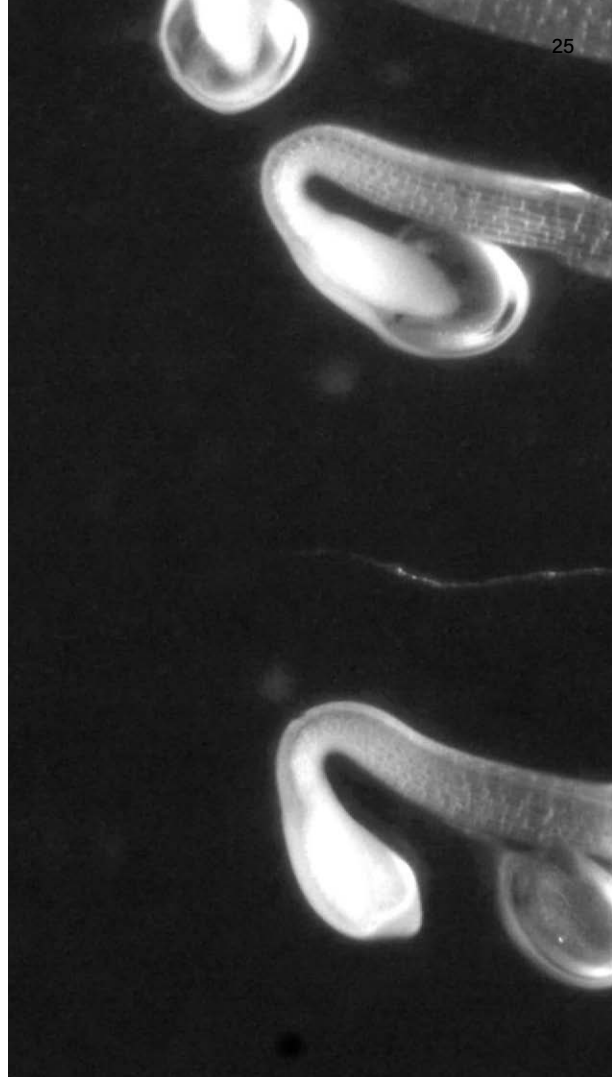
In our project, we train our eyes and ears to less readily registered sensoriums of the seed, some of its less addressed scales and life cycles. We aim to work through notions of extended duration and ephemerality, the multiple temporalities of rest, care, inheritance, dormancy, activation, growth. A seed is not a solitary, bounded object, but an intense archive of practices, imaginaries, and ecologies; a seed is only possible as a seed with ecologies of heterogeneous life and systems around it. It is a vessel of potential more than the material sense — just as survival is more than about being alive.

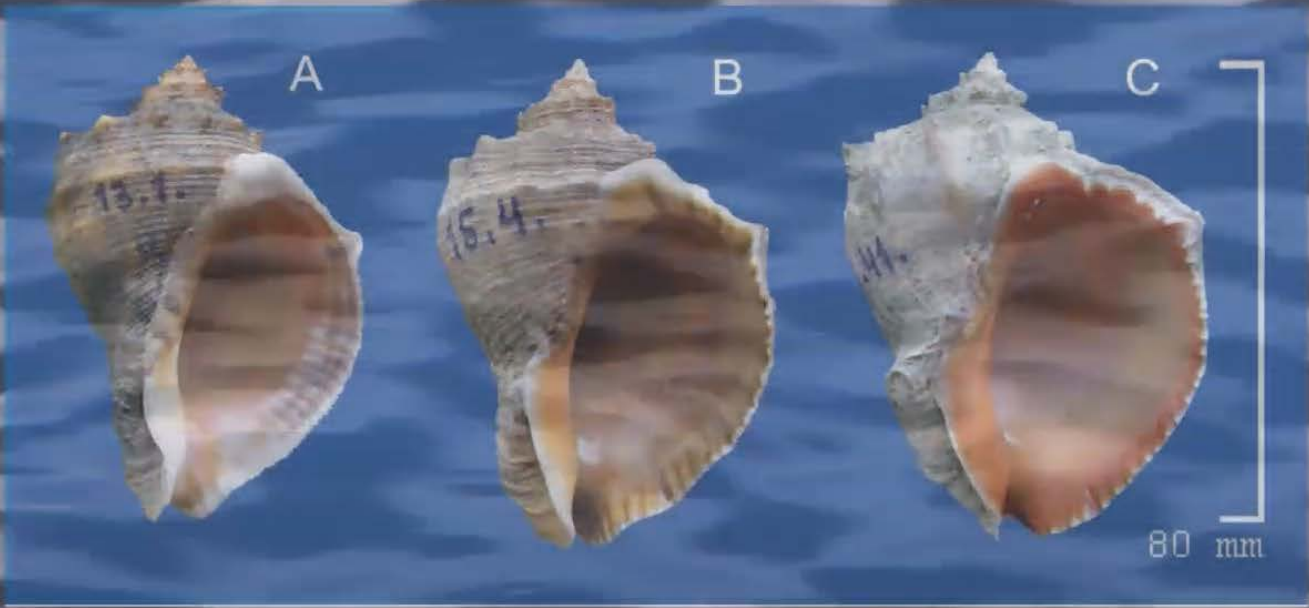
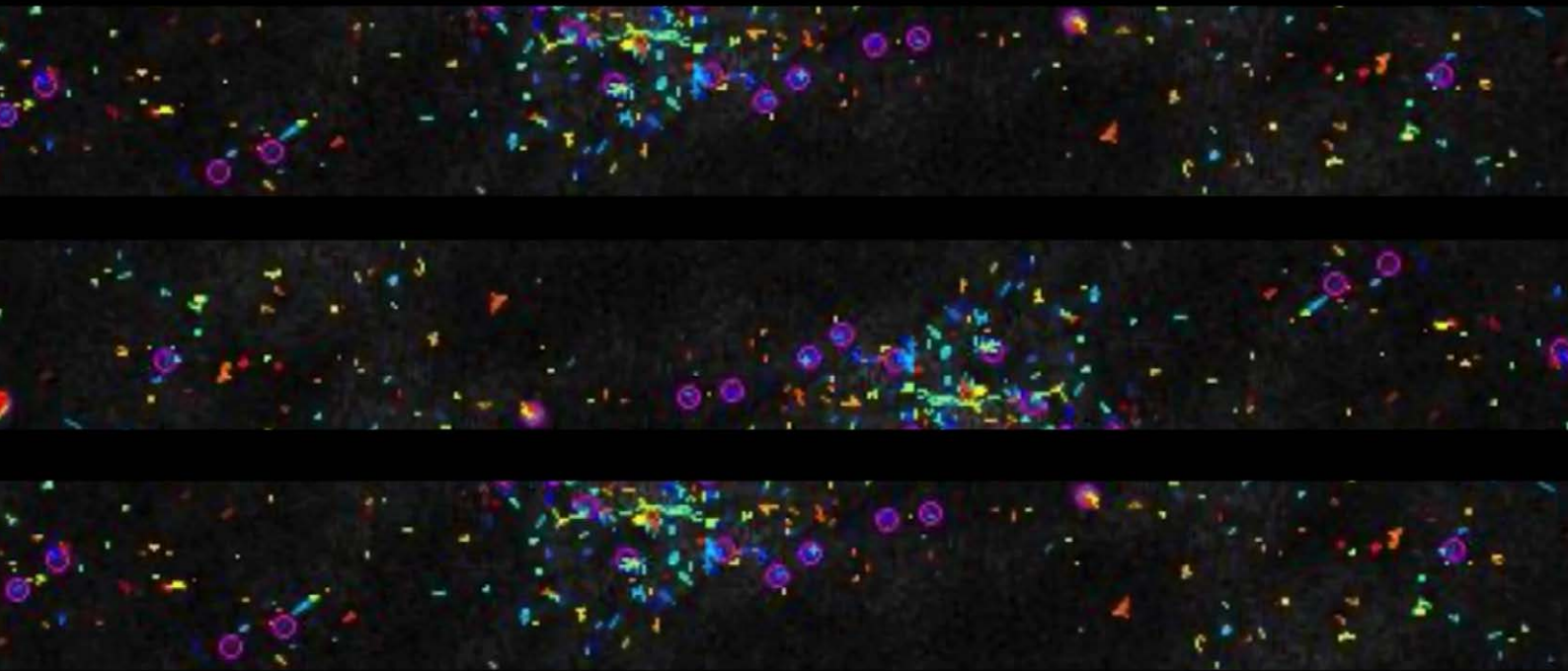
Some motivating questions include: who guards the infrastructures and archives of



“futurity”? And what sort of futurity is that? What does it mean to “save” or “store” that time? Is futurity equally represented/discernible in a sustained tradition of farming and local seed saving efforts, as much as seeds guarded by Intellectual Property laws and global seed programmes? What other cycles of life-death-and in-between states could we be brought to witness through the scale of the seed? What alternative futurities could we, in tandem trace?

The Group aims to discover modes of temporal jump and repair through their interest in entangling practices and perspectives, to account for emergent visualities and sensoriums (modes of production and seeing/listening/paying attention) in the world via assembly, attention, experimentation.





The Souvenir of Invasiveness

Natalika Revko
Hanna Bryzhata
Sasha NASELENKO
Vova Chigrinets

Our research focuses on *rapana* — a mollusk species that was once brought to the Black Sea. While employing various media, we study and document rapana's influence on infrastructures, ecology and the lifestyle of particular groups of people.



A diver descends to the bottom of the Black Sea. A wicker basket hangs fixed on his neck. The sea floor under his feet is covered with big camouflaged shells, which he collects. Above the water, under 37 degrees Celsius of summer sun, the sea-steppe strip of the south of Ukraine is melting. After some time, the diver will come back to the surface to the

base camp built out of plywood houses, where fellow rapana-gatherers are waiting for him with alcohol, conversations and a joint. But for now, what is in front of him is abundance. Rapanas are motionless and scattered. This abundance is strange, it is empty. Abundance of emptiness. In the sea waters, which are known for its almost lifeless deep bottom — because of the concentration of hydrogen sulfide; pollution and poaching that destroyed the entire species — the gatherer sees abundance only of one species — rapana.

Scientists agree that the mollusk, *rapana venosa*, had been brought to the Black Sea from the Sea of Japan in the 1940s, probably in the ballast waters of torpedo ships. Without natural enemies but with effective methods of punching, tearing apart and choking the shells of the other mollusks that rapana feed on, it spread very quickly in the Black Sea, causing a decrease in the number of mussels and oysters that are popular and economically profitable here in Ukraine.

“Alien”, “the killer of the Black Sea”, “the disaster of the Odesa Gulf”. The war on rapana was called by journalists, social activists and scientists. It has its own narrative and slogans. It is also being reproduced again and again via media scenarios, interviews and conferences. The term ‘invasive’ is now being critically observed by different science groups. It is not relevant to the scale of the current mass migration situation anymore and is the same with such a term as ‘native’. Often the intention is attributed to biological species although in most cases they were moved precisely due to human activities. There are ‘anti-rapana’ posters here in Odesa. But why is the war the only decision we can articulate in this concern? How does this narrative influence decisions within our interactions with rapana?

A fishing boat is pulling a metal grid construction covered with a net. It's called ‘draga’ here and it's very simple — it gathers

rapana from the bottom of the sea by digging into it. In the meanwhile it also kills all other bottom species. The use of dragas is prohibited in most of the countries around the Black Sea. Nevertheless, their use is still allowed in Ukraine. It's even sometimes justified by some local businessmen as a way to fight an invasive mollusk. Imperfection of legislation and weakness of related institutions both are leaving this issue in the shadows with the whole economical circle that has been formed around it.

It has been only a couple of years since the first legal rapana-processing factories appeared in Ukraine. They export the mollusk's meat to Japan where it is in great demand. However most of this infrastructure's elements are staying in the shadows. This fact brings up the question of access while building up the map of interactions and life with/next to rapana.

How does our living next to rapana affect it? Its body becomes a recording device of the ecological condition of the Black Sea. Its size, structure and shell are shaped by water temperature, flows, amount of food and chemicals that are thrown out to the waters. In the Odesa Sea Port, due to the impact of tributyltin, which is used to treat the bottoms of ships against fouling and is currently prohibited in many countries — rapana's body mutates. Its sexual characteristics are changing which causes imposex.

While walking along the seashore it is easy to find rapana shells. It is larger and looks more exotic than other shells and if you put it close to your ear, you can hear the sound of the sea. Therefore, it has become one of the most popular souvenirs that tourists take with them from the beaches of the Black Sea. Lacquered, painted in different colors, with texts and pictures, in composition or separately. Around Odesa city and the region you can see spontaneous rapana decorations of houses or small architectural forms. Rapana's body in



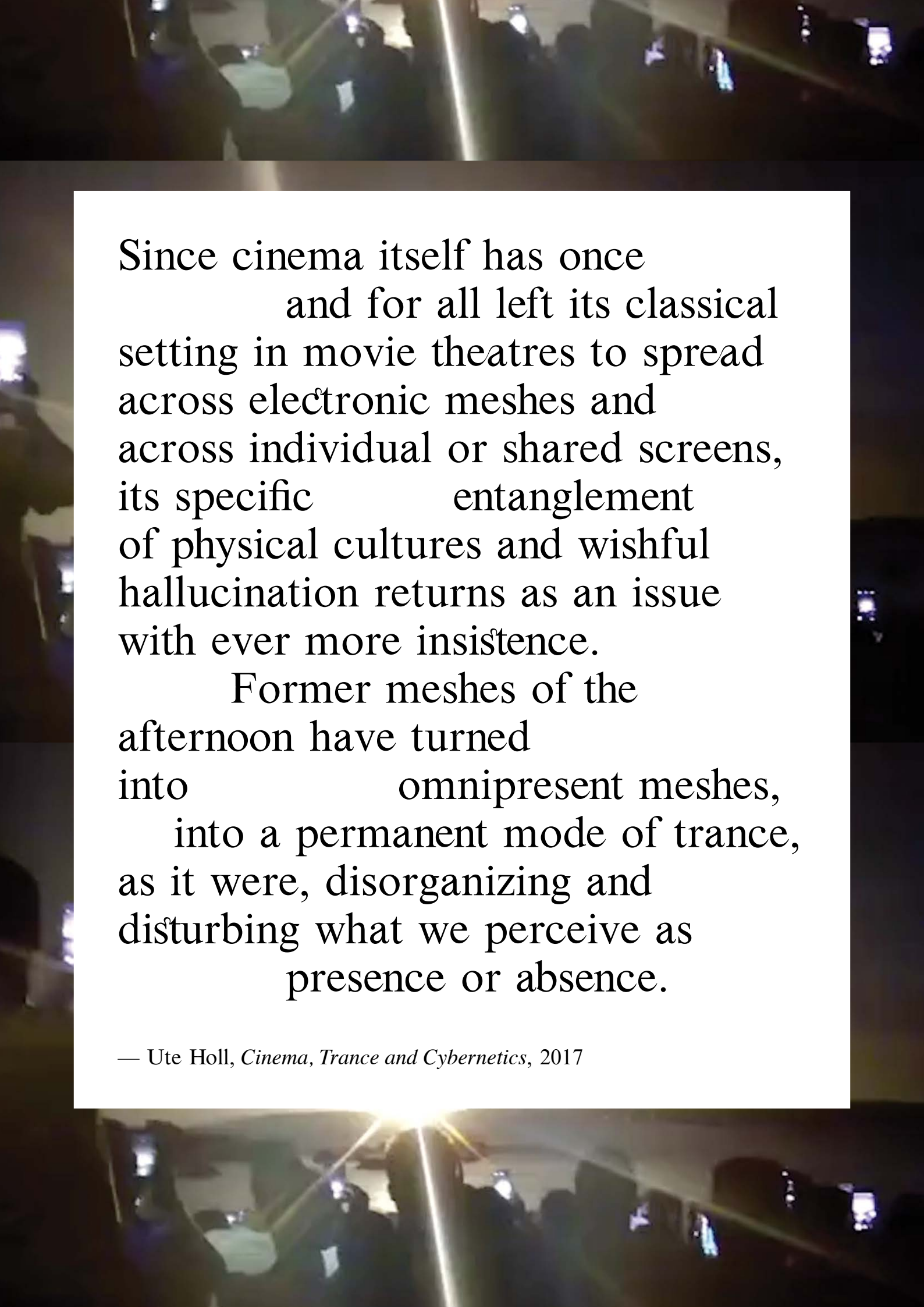
some way becomes a kind of recording device of tourists' memories from the beach vacation.

For our research, rapana is a focus and a starting point from which we are considering the rhythms, cycles and lifestyle of divers-gatherers of rapana, ecological problems of the Black Sea, the shadowed and visible areas of infrastructure around the newly emerged resource, but most importantly — how the stories that we are telling affect our interaction with this species.

What is this peculiar form of cinema? What is this form of moving image that refuses to be merely about things seen but becomes also a thing measured, calculated? One that establishes these assemblages of sites, spaces, architectures, symbolic and less symbolic items, and that features how the invisible operations of data are included in the spatial sense. Moving images that also frame the sort of non-images that emerge from signals — from the satellite data processed into scientific management, policy discourse, different forms and levels of impact on the earth.



[03] **Stitcher**



Since cinema itself has once
and for all left its classical
setting in movie theatres to spread
across electronic meshes and
across individual or shared screens,
its specific entanglement
of physical cultures and wishful
hallucination returns as an issue
with ever more insistence.

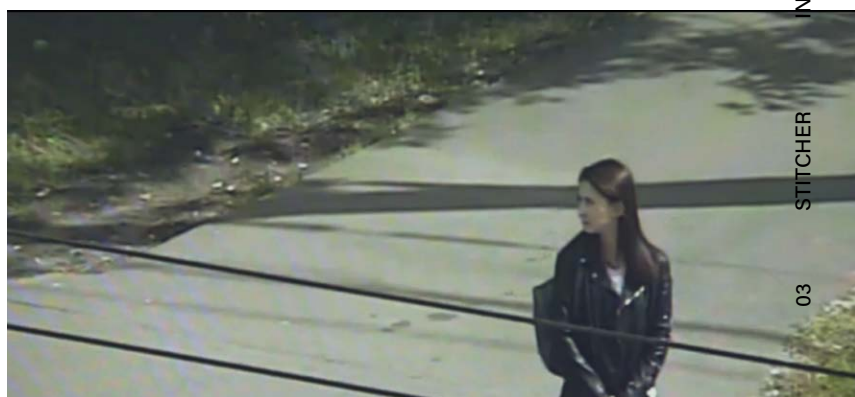
Former meshes of the
afternoon have turned
into omnipresent meshes,
into a permanent mode of trance,
as it were, disorganizing and
disturbing what we perceive as
presence or absence.

— Ute Holl, *Cinema, Trance and Cybernetics*, 2017

Over the course of the past few decades the narrative of modern science has been decentered, rendering 'a human' as not a value neutral term but one that is paradoxically aligned with acts of exclusion and violence. Following the recognition that 'western science' has emerged along with European nation-states and movements of exploration, trade and conquest, the normative canons of knowledge production have been questioned while the demand for a lowered-tone, historically situated, embodied and embedded narratives have now been brought to the fore.

The Stitcher addresses filmmaking through practice, in order to directly engage with the challenges of narration and representation within our geologic epoch and the increasingly algorithmic present-futures. While futures and collective spaces feel increasingly enclosed, we learn from key moments within more intimate histories of cinema, so as to register structures of feelings that have yet to be articulated, with their potentials yet to be actualised in our present moment. We will reference montage and sound design as means to provoke cinematic estrangement and other stitching techniques, introducing key ideas on the manipulation of "optical nerves and their time".¹

1. Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, as cited in Ute Holl's *Cinema, Trance and Cybernetics*, 2017.



How can we engage with infrastructures and logistical processes methodologically, while addressing questions of documentation and representation?



Are infrastructures always imperial or colonial?
 What regimes of power and imported desires do images and their archives reveal?

What times, spaces, rhythms, movements or scales do these processes mobilise?

How can we destabilise the hegemony of these processes?



Patty Chang and David Kelley's *Flotsam Jetsam*, film, 2007

Ursula Biemann, *Remote Sensing*, film, 2001

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Towards a Documentary-led Research

[01] In the Shadows of the Forecaster

While modern geographies are made visible, characteristics such as scale and temporality are being put more and more into question. Despite all the seeing, it has been twinned with increasing concealment of so many things at the same time.

In recent years, nation states and international corporations are increasingly turning to logistical innovations to reconfigure geographies of supply and demand as they experience a slow-down of economies. This is to continue a stable 'growth' through older, colonial strategies and tactics by absorbing cheaper labour and resources in the peripheries of markets. These strategies include new logistical networks that assist the drive of states and corporate conglomerates to continuously seek the extraction of capital in places otherwise untouched by its capture.

What is being mobilised under the rhetoric of cost cutting while being more 'environmentally friendly', include the implementation and installing of environmental sensors used to datafy, quantify, and calculate with more efficiency.



Territories are becoming increasingly sensed spaces. Through the mechanics of biometric data surveillance and the control of human, goods, resource flow, their justification allows for the convenient legitimization of increased militarisation of border regimes.

How do mechanisms of control impact mobility, and the mobility of whom?

Something as simple as a road or a rail route is not only a thing or object, but also a relation. They are the physical networks through which goods, ideas, waste, power, people, and finance are trafficked, while also being complex processes that constantly open up possibilities as both inclusion and exclusion.

The bending of time and space.

Closeness is not necessarily about distance between here and there, but rather how close things are, are defined by parameters such as disagreements, arguments, revenues, personal histories, associations, race.

[02] Unstitching

How might we unstitch? When we think about stitched totalities; how might we be able to fragment this? How can we undo our modern geographies of concealment and bring into view the lattice of relations, often very violent ones, that sustain modern states and international markets?



Duration

My documentary, *AAA Cargo* (2018) traces burgeoning distribution networks which are expanding across vast regions between China and Europe. Along its route in Western China, geographies are reformatted for logistical movements, which ease flows of capital and commerce.

While filming for the documentary, I visited the special economic zone of Lanzhou New Area in Central China. People I met had told me that the zone was only constructed in 2012, that they were at the time still waiting for business to flourish. Pending, nothing seemed open while I visited, with the airport in the logistics zone hosting infrequent incoming flights. There is a specific temporality that the zone carried, for example, a sense of dislocation that started to feel very intimate in everyday life.

There is a moment in *AAA Cargo* where the song *Going Home*, by the American smooth jazz saxophonist Kenny G, plays over animated bubbles as they float over a concrete road. The song was a very reworked version of it— looped, sped up, slowed down. But his music might conjure a lot of nostalgia from anyone

who grew up in East or Southeast Asia during the 90's, where his albums were kept on loop in newly opened shopping centres, with his song 'going home' used to announce the opening and closing of shops. There's a certain sense of pacification which arises through muzak— smooth elevator jazz— conjured when waiting for the arrival of capital and markets, placating the public. The bubbles placed along with the Kenny G song together obliquely refer to David Harvey's theory of the 'spatial temporal fix'. He spoke about how by the pure act of constructing high-speed rail lines, highways, dams and water projects, new airports and container terminals, would be used to pacify social instability and sustain their overall GDP. The 'spatial temporal fix' would provide employment for surpluses of capital and labour while using up the extra tons of steel and concrete, and reinforcing the spatial designs of capital accumulation. A subduing of any forms of unruly behaviour, through the promise and fantasy brought forth by infrastructure.

Understanding the politics of duration requires an examination of how observational tools produce or make visible certain experiences of duration.

How can durations of a space be represented, and how might duration be used as a technique?

Montage

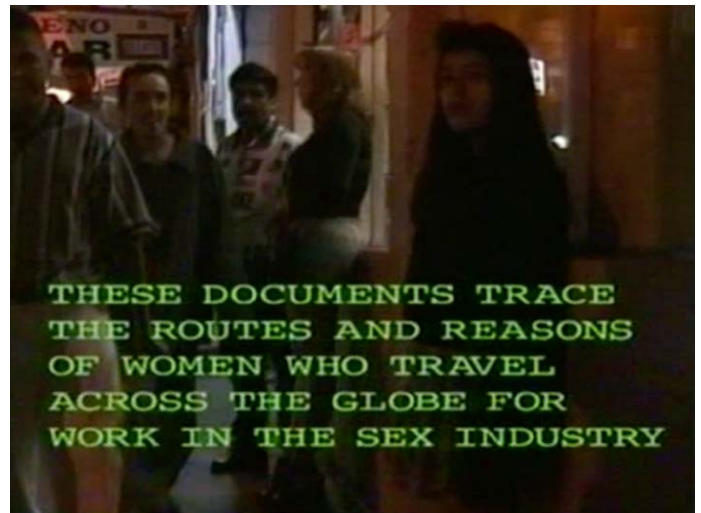
Ursula Biemann's video art researches the connectedness of social and environmental issues in her particular essayistic and documentary-like style. Her film, *Remote Sensing* (2001), roams through the territories of the global sex trade moving us from orbit into women's lives from Eastern Europe to East Asia. As Biemann explores the lifeworlds of sex workers, she invents a feminist media topography, layering her video perspectives of sexual laborers and their personal data within remote satellite imagery of the earth. *Remote Sensing* exposes what it means to sense the world remotely and charts the ambivalences surrounding the media technologies used to track, monitor and sense women's bodies from a distance.



What Biemann describes as the 'zone of negotiation' — the complexity that does and cannot fit into binary code. She begins with the awareness that satellite technology conceals gendered meaning, which calls for a ground-up perspective to counter their abstractions. She looks at the production of the sexual economy, and the geographical reorganization of women at global scale. Throughout, she threads together how it is through their movements which actually build overseas economies, their

alternative circuits of survival in the margins of the pan capitalist reality. With remote sensing networks now ubiquitously operating in the background of earthly activity, they are nevertheless continuously inscribing movements across times and spaces— in her film, Biemann was insightful in how she weaves together what was missing and what cannot be rendered in their simplifications of knowing the earth.

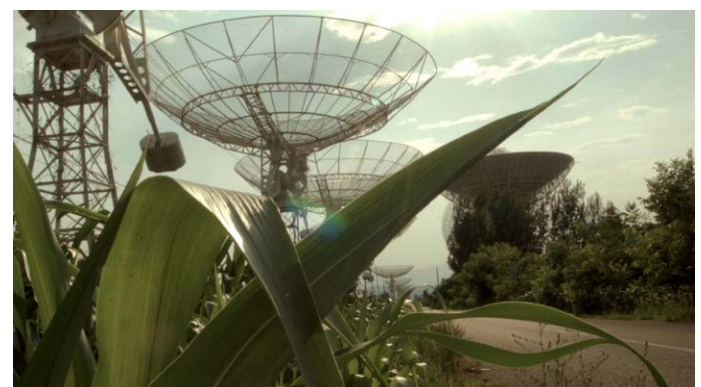
Montage as a technique can work to reassert the fragmentary when engaging with the hegemonic calculations made through imaging technologies. With the possibility to link and make explicit connections between geographies, things and events that are typically left obfuscated within the new conditions of modernity.



Defamiliarisation

Defamiliarization is the technique of presenting what is deemed to be common, through a different prism. The sense of defamiliarization is evoked when the obvious quality of the mundane is stripped, and a sense of curiosity is enhanced. The technique suspends the expected in a sequence of events so that existing conditions are alienated. This might render situations or settings strange, while momentarily entering our field of vision anew.

In the film *Making of Earths* (2021) made under our collective Geocinema, it starts off very affect-driven: a radio plays a melancholic love song in the background and you begin to hear footsteps on the gravel. Then you have Jessika Khazrik, who is doing her magic with the film score—her sounds first come in through tuning forks as if they are in the process of calibrating. Two farmers walk past the camera and look up at the satellite dishes. You can sense that there's a lot more at play within these scenes, with the air being thick with transmission.



David Kelley and Patty Chang's *Flotsam Jetsam* (2007) follows the fabrication and journey of a wooden submarine to the Three Gorges site on the Yangtze river—once a landscape most often depicted in traditional Chinese painting, now submerged to accommodate a hydroelectric dam. Wavering between documentary and fictional modes of address, *Flotsam Jetsam* explores the landscape's relationship to identity.



“The video questions what happens to a landscape when it is submerged and if it returns to an imaginary state. The video details the process of fabricating a submarine, launching it below the Three Gorges Dam, following the submarine's progress along the river and through the dam's boat locks to the reservoir. Along this journey various performances are enacted: dreams are recounted during psychodrama sessions in a swimming pool, a theatrical play is performed in a ship factory, and the actors' concerns about the process and purpose of making the video are voiced.” These fragmented narratives weave around the submarine's journey, composing a third narrative regarding landscapes linked to imagination. The film conjures up the acute feelings of displacement in wake of infrastructural transformation while evoking third spaces and imaginations.

How can we work with affect when documenting infrastructures that are often at face value very mundane? How can moments and pockets of estrangement in the film fold in many more registers and scales that might not be apparent on the surface?

[03] Restitching

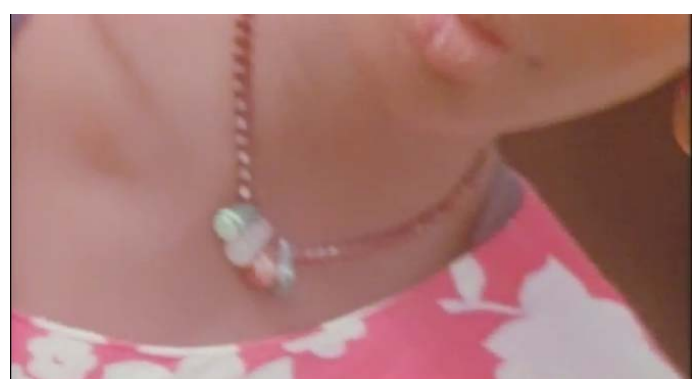
By thinking with duration, montage and defamiliarisation, these techniques can become conceptual tools to account for the relational and material aspects of infrastructure and the realities it mobilises. These can be powerful when trying to articulate the different scales of connections with something so abstract like global capital, where the distances between sites and their relations are very blurred, convoluted and planetary.

Filmmaking in many ways, can be an embodied method of researching, mapping, and maybe more accurately—‘unmapping’ the complex relations of global capitalism. We see it both as a practice of unstitching and re-stitching: with some films focused on trying to grapple the need to undo our modern geographies of concealment, where things such as environmental issues are kept separate from supply chain expansions and extractive activities, and the importance of bringing into view the matrices of relations that sustain modern states and international markets. While other films aim to create spaces for ‘seeing’ the familiar, differently, allowing questions to arise on their own terms.

To evoke something that feminist scholar Donna Haraway put into words; storytelling is a process of thinking. It does not conclude but instead the process is part of the practice. And this resonated a lot with how we think about filmmaking which is very process-based, not just in how the story is crafted but also in the time and spaces which are being connected through moving images, or the people that we organise and share the research, experience and work with.

*I do not intend to speak about,
just speak nearby.*

— Trinh-Minh-Ha, *Reassemblage*, film, 1982



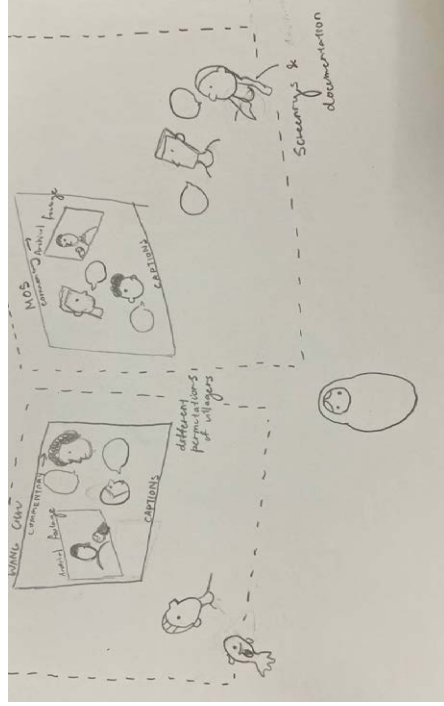
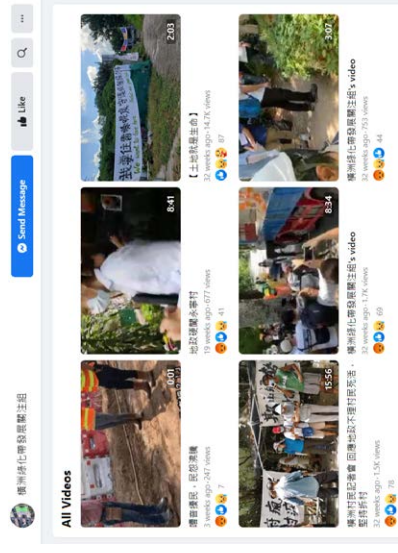
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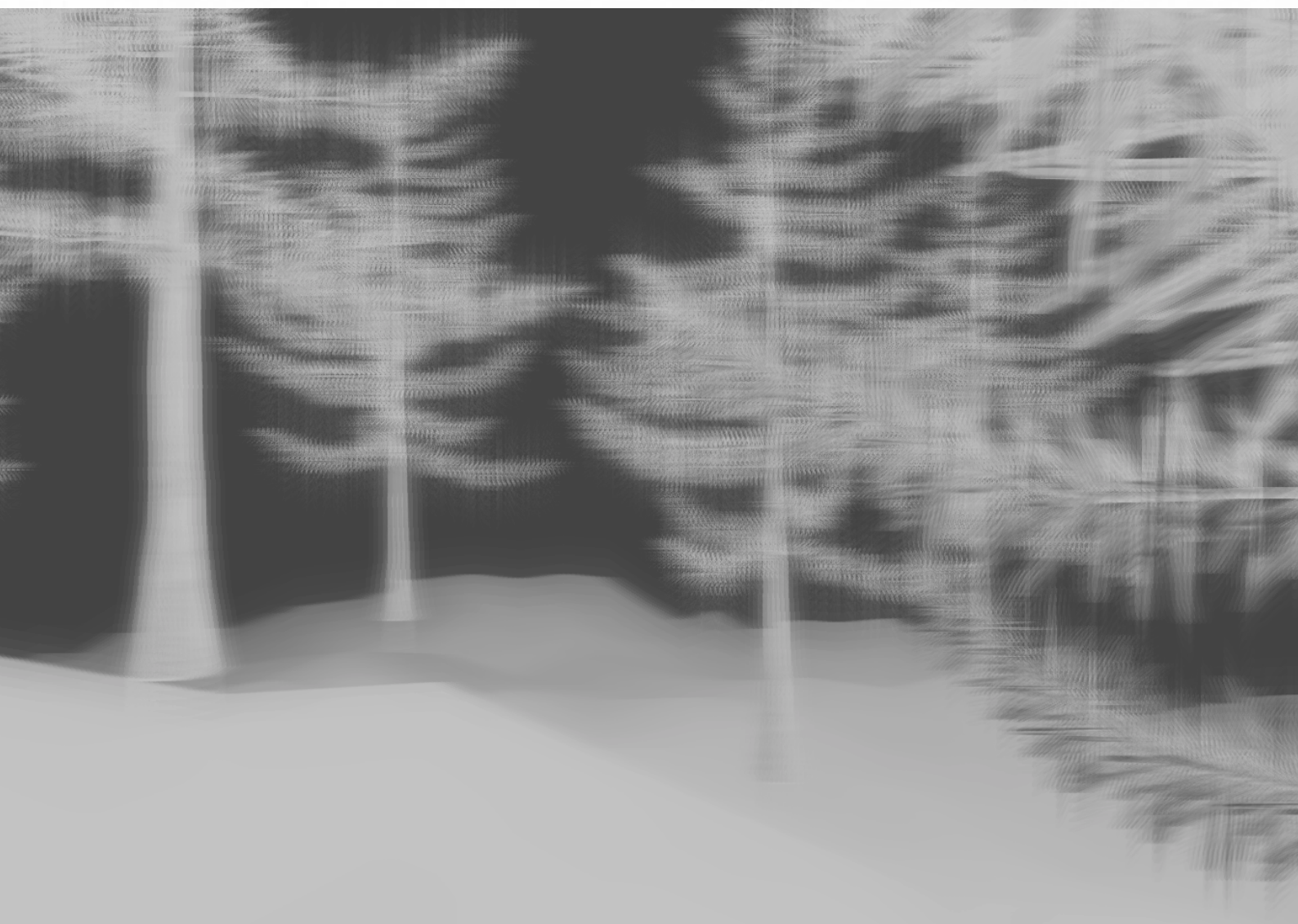
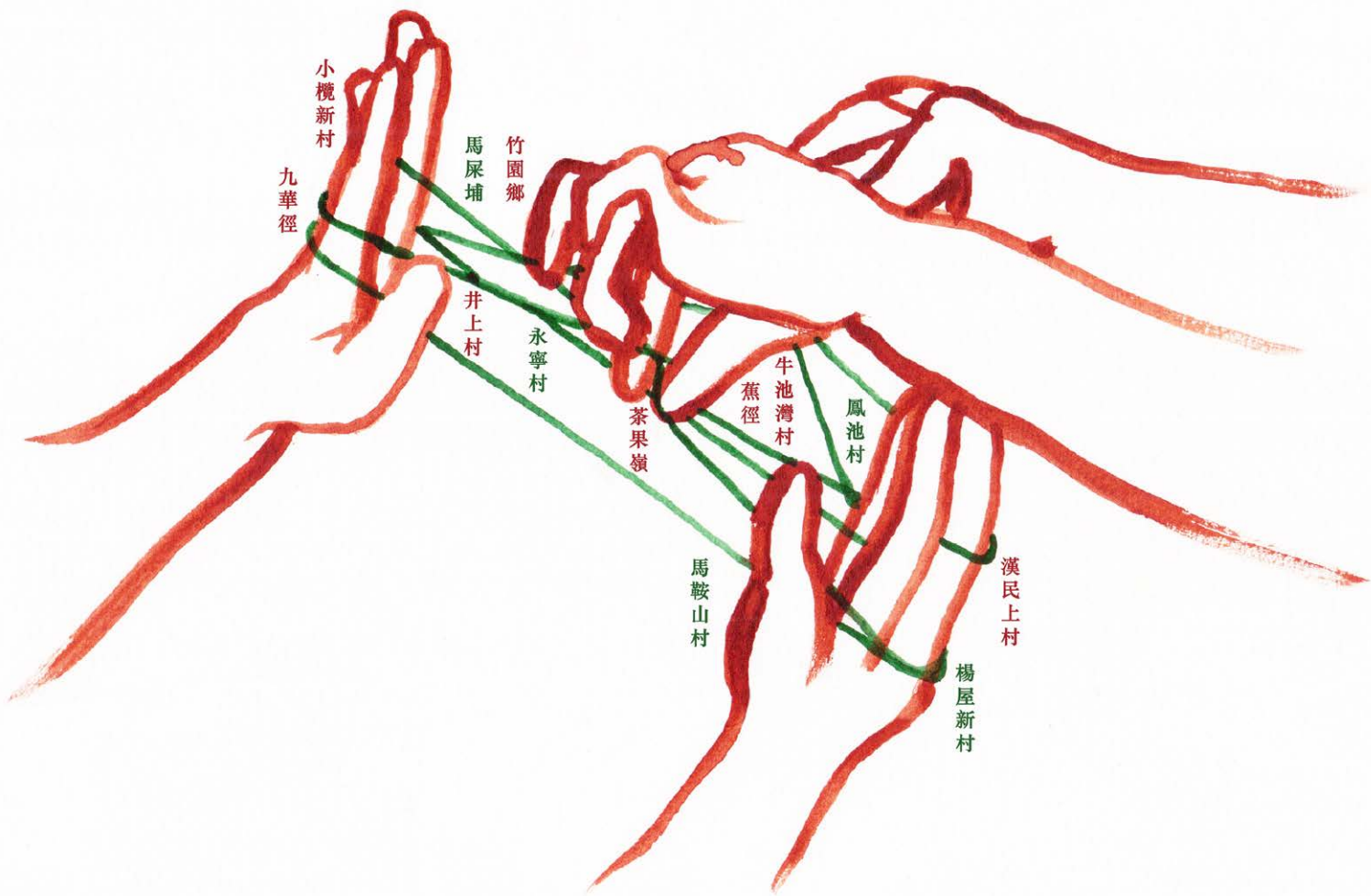
Marcus, Sallie Lau,
Michael Leung, Nanxi Liu

A patchwork-banner: Weaving villages together

In the wake of demolition and disappearance, we acknowledge the urgency of the land struggles faced by villages in Hong Kong. Wang Chau and Ma On Shan. Land grabs have become a cyclical phenomenon under the developer-government land hegemony in the city. Though the villages are on different timelines of land injustice, residents from both villages see the need to share stories and resources. Drawing inspiration from the village (patchwork-banner), we see video-making as a process of weaving villages together.

In this villager-led process, villagers first draw a video from the archives of the movement to share with other villagers. The screening, along with its reactions and comments would be filmed. The same process can be repeated for different permutations of villagers within the same village, or from other villages. In doing so, co-create with all villagers threatened with land-loss an open-ended filmmaking process that would accrete and evolve alongside the land justice movement. We hope to use cinema as a tool for social action, and screenings as spaces for political solidarity, learning, and sharing.





Bat Spells

Thomas Lawanson
& Anna Mikkola

***Bat spells* is a counter-proposal to the methodology of environmental assessment to measure the impacts of infrastructural projects on the environment.**

Bat Spells is a speculative landscape, an unstable image, a simulation somewhere between a real and a fictional environment. The digital landscape presents impressions from the route where the High Speed Rail network, HS2, will be built over the next decades in the UK, and which will displace and likely kill many protected bats. *Bat Spells* is an alternative Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) tool that is used in the context of many large scale infrastructure projects.

As a counter-proposal for the methods used by the EIA to assess and ascribe a value to the landscape in a quantifiable manner, *Bat Spells* explore ways of recording multi sensory impressions of a landscape from different perspectives. The landscape can be experienced remotely through a website simulation that includes videos, sounds, texts and images uploaded by various people.

A simulation in which chance encounters are possible and which is navigated in a manner that doesn't presuppose certain cause and effect from one action to another. The model

presents it's limitations and the different mediums and categories blend to each other – environment as a space in which various entanglements co-create each other.

The trees that are lit with spotlights and fenced off, supposedly protecting the bats from the construction work, render explicit that the landscape is no longer for the bats to inhabit and make it apparent that the protection measures are visible and meaningful only to and for people.

Bat Spells suggests tuning into the sounds of the environment and for example collaborating with machine learning to detect different species as a way to engage with and learn from a landscape and it's species. The high ideals of EIA tools that aim to capture the whole landscape usually fail, because it is impossible to create an accurate image of a landscape. The image will never be the same as the real thing.



Palace of Purification

Michelle Doyle, Kerry Guinan,
Frank Sweeney, Megan Scott,
Claudine Chen

An unruly toilet in a social centre becomes blocked with waste hidden from clean society and must overflow

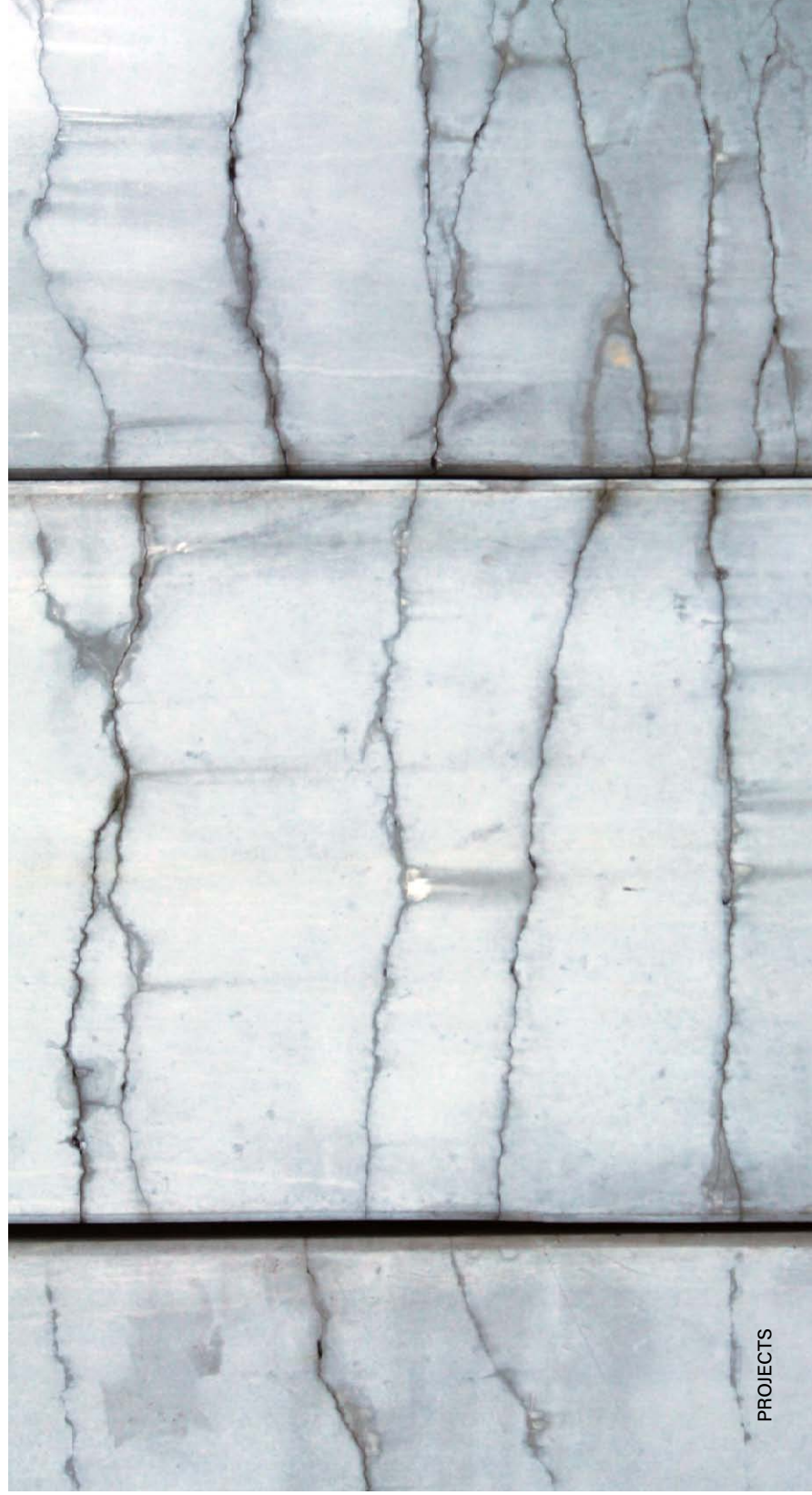
Palace of Purification is a video piece about the cycle of water in a city, told by a toilet in a social centre. The design of the pristine modern toilet flushes away waste and eliminates our interaction with it. However, the unruly toilet in the social centre is continuously blocked and overflowing, putting all those around it in direct contact with their waste. The toilet does not comply with standards of purity and cleanliness, and refuses to hide filth.

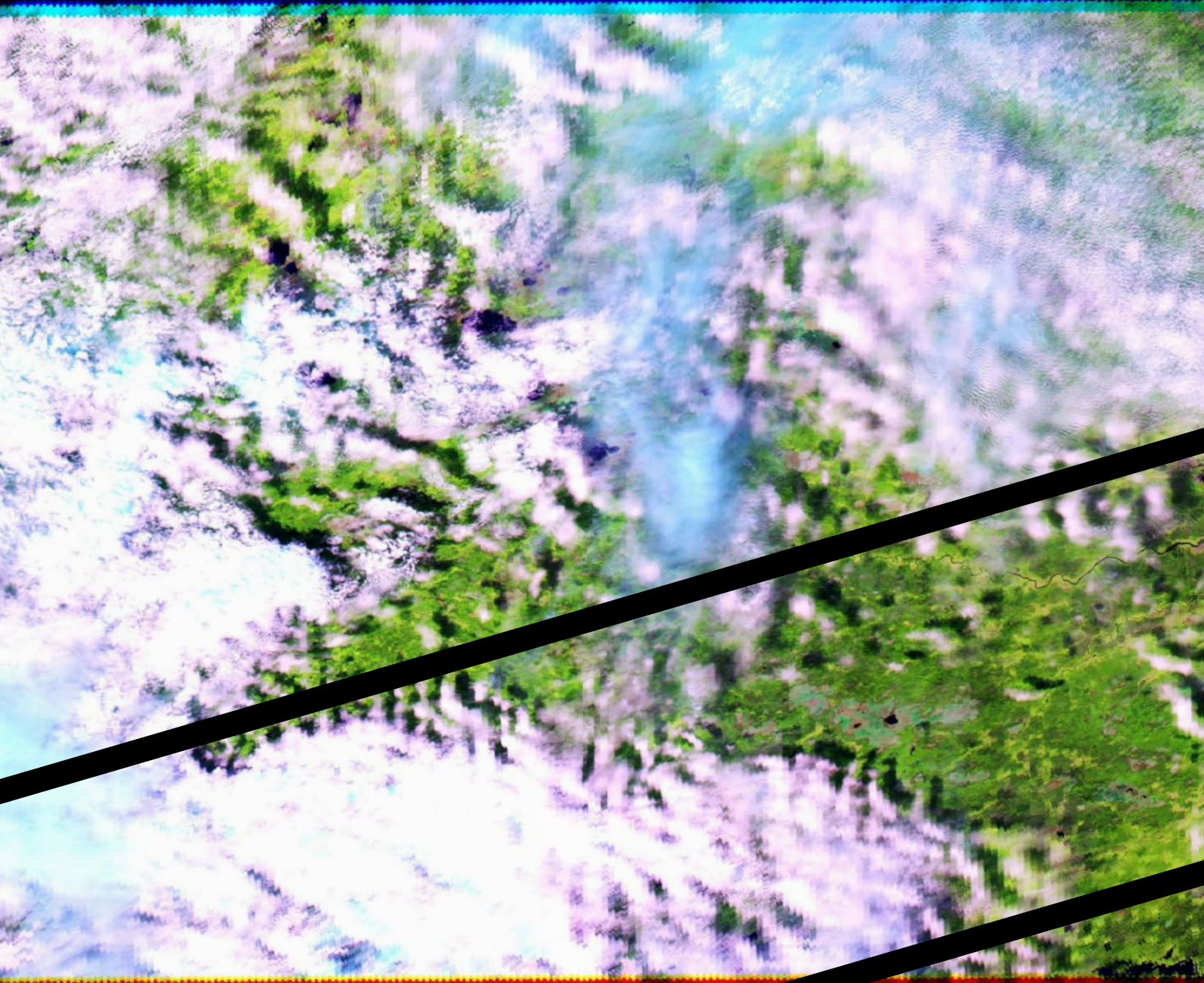
Using puppetry and Kathy Acker's narrative methodologies, the toilet becomes a living, breathing agent - one who coughs, splutters and screams. An oracle of filth, a confidant and a friend to activists and degenerates. The toilet refuses to be fixed, instead returning to

a state of lost natural order, transforming of its own accord. The toilet advocates for its followers to also overflow and leave behind harmonious urban order.

We are a group of professional artists, makers, musicians and coders from Ireland who are excited to come together for this laboratory. We have backgrounds in film, performance, creative coding and installation.

There is a strand of curiosity about the digital world and imperial observation in each of our practices. We share an ethos in relation to ecological and political anxieties at present and feel that this workshop would be valuable to our individual research and could generate interesting new avenues for collaboration.





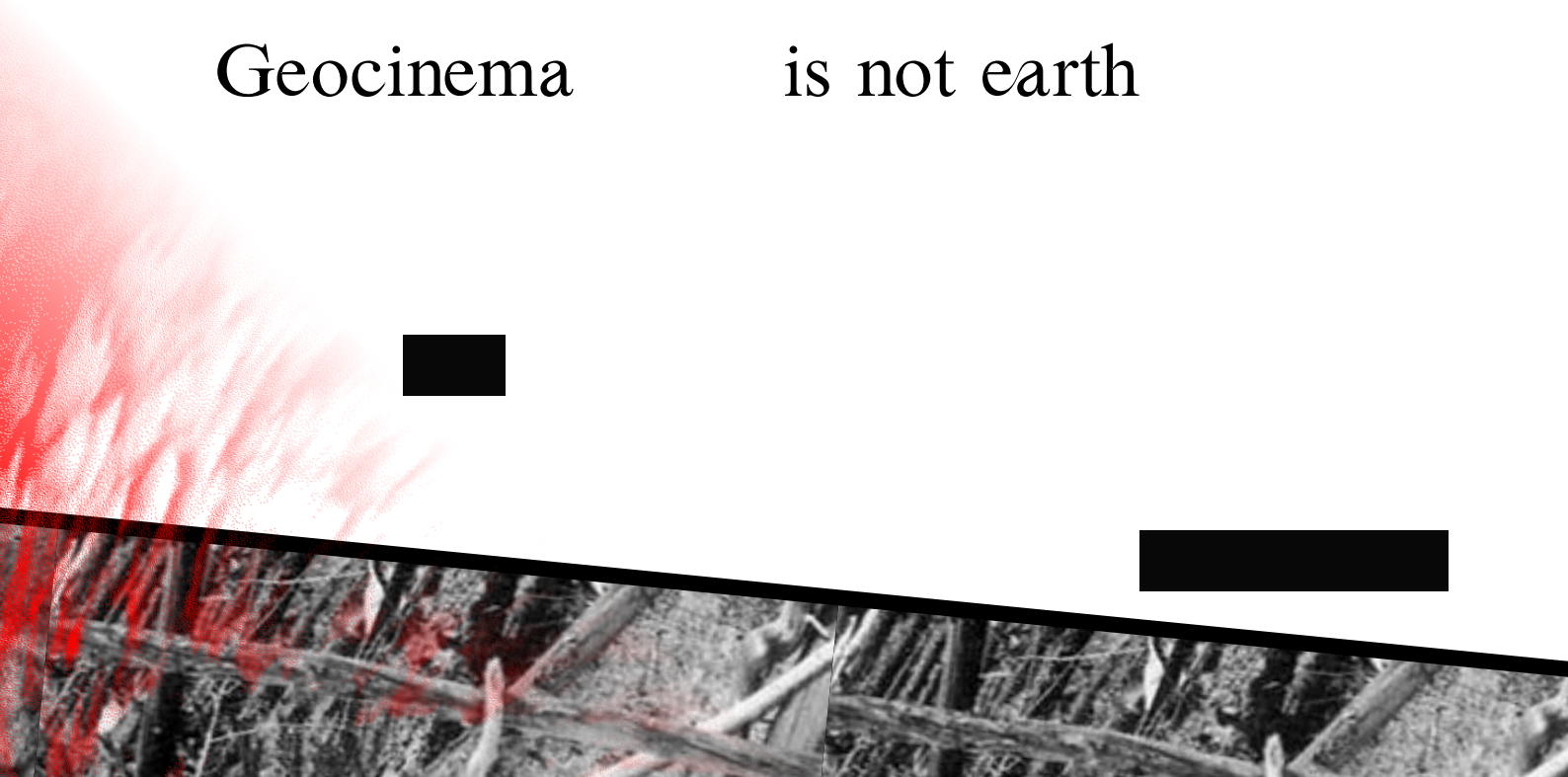


This is not a cinema about earth,
because there is no earth

The earth is the result of a
decentralized editing process
Directed by its metadata

It is composite and patchy,
manufactured and stitched together into a
montage of the globe

Geocinema is not earth



The Signals & Storms Laboratory is a collaboration between Freeport and Geocinema.

Freeport is a creative research program for a world of humans, non humans, and machines. It is an independent study and production program led by artists, combining art methodologies with radical design, critical technologies, new visualities, and the cultural ferments and even fervour of Internet communities. Our goal is to test new ways of exploring the networked planet, developing creative strategies that can seize new aesthetic opportunities and exposing the ambiguities and technopolitical blind spots.

As an independent program, FREEPORT is about unconventional learning, rather than traditional education. The current academic structures often fail to catch up with the challenges that a data-driven, politically confusing, but aesthetically lively society pose to education and creative production. FREEPORT responds to such challenges by putting unconventional creative practices at the forefront of a new type of non-corporate innovation. Using art as a methodology, we encourage both recognized and young experts to share their skills and discover new paths in the entangled, ever-changing patchwork of forces that aesthetically, materially, and politically shape our networked planet.
<https://freeport.institute/>

Geocinema (Asia Bazdyrieva and Solveig Qu Sues is a collective that explores the possibilities of a “planetary” notion of cinema. Based in Berlin and Kyiv, their practice has been concerned with the understanding and sensing of the earth while being on the ground, enmeshed within vastly distributed processes of image and meaning making. Their work has been shown internationally, including their first solo show *Making of Earths* at Kunsthall Trondheim Norway (2020) and group shows such as *Critical Zones* at ZKM Karlsruhe (2020-21); *Re-thinking Collectivity* at Guangzhou Image Triennale (2021); and *Sensing Scale* at Kunsthalle Münster (2021). They have given lecture-performances at the Ashkal Alwan Beirut, ICA London, HKW Berlin, NYU Shanghai, Matadero Madrid and have taught at the Berlin University of the Arts, FAMU Prague, Central Saint Martins London among others. They were 2018–19 Digital Earth Fellows and have been nominated for the Schering Stiftung Award for Artistic Research (2020).
<https://geocinema.network/>

Bani Brusadin is a curator, educator and researcher. He is the author of *The Fog of Systems. Art as Reorientation and Resistance in a Planetary-Scale System Disposed Towards Invisibility*, Aksioma Institute for Contemporary Art Ljubljana (2021) and co-curator and founder of The Influencers (<https://theinfluencers.org/>), a festival about experimental art, design and activist practices in the networked society, co-produced by CCCB Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (2004 - 2019). Since 2018 he is one of the curators of Matadero Madrid’s Tentacular festival (<https://tentacular.es/>) and director of Freeport (<https://freeport.institute/>), an independent study program about creative / critical strategies for a world of humans, non-humans and machines. He holds a PhD in Advanced Artistic Practices from the University of Barcelona, where he also teaches.