



# ECOLOGIES OF PROTEST

Transcription of the recording of the panel discussion “Ecologies of Protest”

Uferstudios\_für zeitgenössischen Tanz. 14th of September 2019, 4.30pm-6pm

**ARTISTS INVITED TO THE PANEL:**

Gabriel Vallecillo Márquez (Honduras), Julia Mensch (Argentina), Michelle-Marie Letelier (Chile).

In conversation with moderator Paz Guevara (Chile), and curator Paz Ponce (Spain).

**LANGUAGE:**

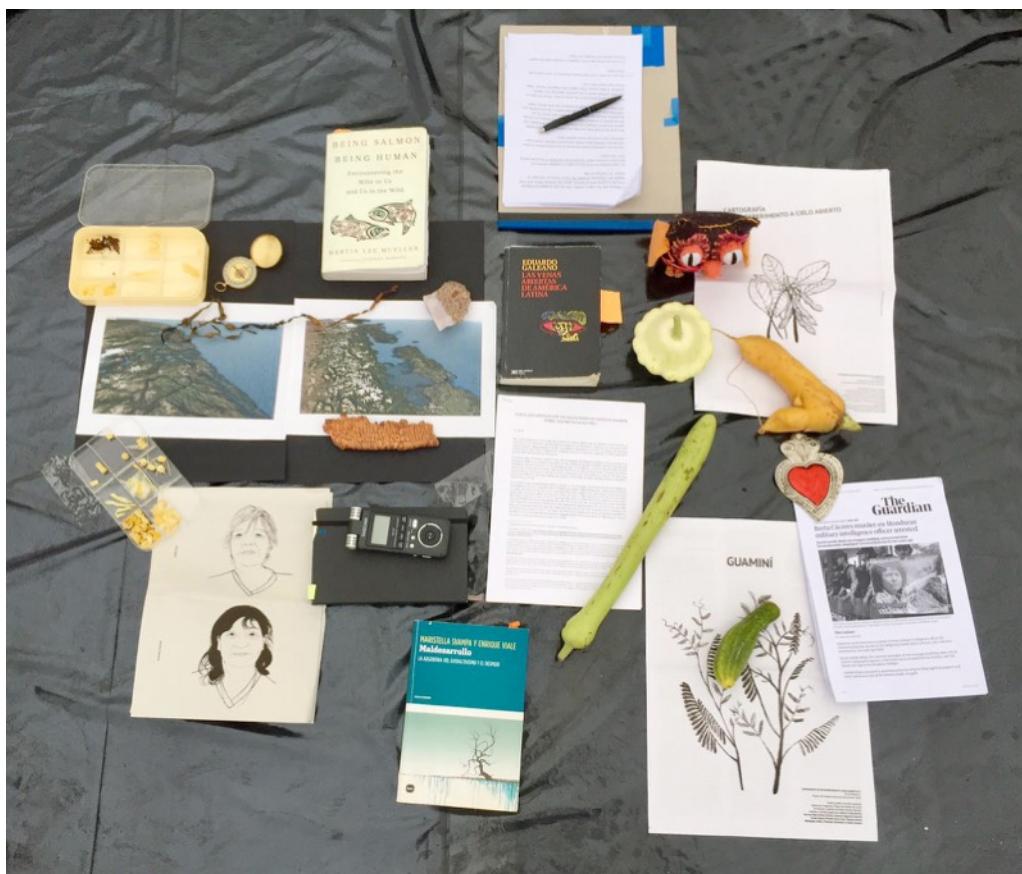
English

**TRANSCRIBED BY:**

Paz Ponce

**LENGTH:**

1 Hour, 55 minutes



PAZ GUEVARA

[MODERATOR] | Starts 1'32"

<...> Inside this futuristic spaceship, between history and new imaginaries, we thought to develop this object-oriented conversation thanks to the very inspiring invitation from Paz Ponce that is curating all the program "Ecologies of protest" between today and tomorrow. So we thought to do this talk in 4 chapters, like in a life-montage, crossing 4 concerns that are crucial for Gabriel Vallecillo, Julia Mensch and Michelle-Marie Letelier:

Extra(a)ctivism, Alternative Narratives, Artistic operations and The Battle of discourses.

We will see how these 4 entries let us go inside of their practice. And I have to share with you that I am here because of my deep appreciation of the work with some of the artists I have been in conversations and friendship maybe since 15 years, like with Michelle-Marie. With Julia also we have been exchanging recently thanks to *;n[s]urgênc!as*, where we met in a studio visit. With Gabriel you will see how important is his work, that participated yesterday and that we have to stay together.

So today we would like to hear from you, for example: *how do you address the colonial battles against extractivism through your artworks? What are the alternatives that you are recuperating from other voices, other communities or that you are attempting to construct? What are the alternatives that you see through your work? And what artistic forms conversely to journalism, scientific practice are you unfolding, occupying, appropriating, put into action or into circulation? And also very fascinating is with whom do you collaborate, and with whom do you conspire? Then how do you participate in the battles? And what does it mean? Do you think to transform the situation, to destroy certain assumptions, practices in dominant circumstances?*

So as my dear Paz Ponce already pointed out, we will not do the traditional power point. We are adjusting to this archaic-futuristic pavilion and the three artists will practice what they are very good for but many times in the exhibitions you don't see: that is, the storytelling. Many times in the exhibitions you have the object, but without this very rich contextualization. So this discursive program is the very rich occasion to do it. And we will depart from all objects to hear what are their work, their methods, their research, their questions. These objects are precious objects, they have

triggered, impelled, shaped and many of them had led them to dream on the works. So we hope that we enter in this hallucinatory dimension in which all this objects speak.

As Paz Ponce was introducing, we thought of at the end of our conversation that this is a non human-centered but object-centered panel. So to introduce the first windy <laughs> section:

**"Extra(a)ctivism"**. So "extractivismo", just to define a certain departing point so we understand the economic and political foundation that Gabriel, Michelle-Marie and Julia are researching and confronting: Extractivism is defined as the appropriation of natural resources fundamental por economies that export the raw material at very low cost, and it's based on the over exploitation not only in the resources but of the community. In short: it is a massive exportation of nature to the first world. Although extractivism has its roots of course in the colonial times – so 16th Century, with the mining of gold, silver and wood, today the practice that some historians call "neo-extractivism" had expanded their appropriation techniques also to the extractivism of agriculture: Julia Mensch will tell; oil, is very known, and natural gas. In the framework of today's neoliberalism, Neo-extractivism is not only an imperial mechanism but it is in alliance in many local governments. If the colonial strategy was to take out the natural resources to the empire, today governments also participate in extractivism, and much of the capital stays in the land to build hospitals, highways, everything that perhaps is needed but nevertheless with negative consequences for the environment. We will see how Gabriel, Julia and Michelle' works cross the fundamental problems of extractivism. Gabriel in the work that he is presenting in the situation of the river and the assassination of the activist Berta Cáceres. Julia in the use of transgenic, for example the Soja, in Argentina. And Michelle-Marie Letelier in the farms of salmon that where brought from Norway to Chile as a very artificial way of cultivating fish, that for example for Sami indigenous community in Norway is sacred, and they do rituals in a very different way than an object for consume and luxury. So I invite you to start with this chapter.

<participant's discuss, laughs>: <¿quién quiere empezar? (who wants to start?). She wants to start!, laughs>.

MICHELLE-MARIE LETELIER

[ARTIST, CHILE] | Starts 00:08:05

Do we take the objects? Can you hold it? <Julia: of course!>.

I think I want to first present you, just to have an idea of similar geographies that provoke extractivism. This is gonna be like the stage, but I don't know if it's going to work because of the wind.

<Paz Ponce: do you want me to take it?>

Oh that would be nice, thanks!

Okey, I don't know if you can see but this is a photography map, a photography area from google maps, google earth, from a Norwegian fjord and a chilean fjord.

<Paz Guevara: *;se pueden acercar!* (you can come close!)>

Yes, come closer.

As you can see very similar <she points at the two printed A4 satellite views>. You can hold it here. So this is Norway, this is Chile. Okey. So in 2016 I was invited to an exhibition, group exhibition, related to the subject of "ocean". And by then I was working with 8 years of researching a chemical compound called salt peter, or sodium nitrate, <noise, paper unwrapping>, which was extracted naturally from Atacama Desert in Chile. <Michelle holds a piece of rock smaller than a fist, half lilac color, half brown.> This is one of the most natural growth forms of saltpeter, so the nitrate is located naturally in the Atacama Desert, is the only place in the planet where you can find natural sodium nitrate. I am not going to talk about this because this is a lot, a lot of history. But I was researching on this, and this has a lot of history also related with wind, with wind currents, with ocean currents. So by then I was invited to do something with the ocean, in Norway, but then I was like "*no, this saltpeter doesn't really have to do much with Norway*". So I started to research, and then I found that Chile and Norway are the two main producers in the world

of salmon. <Noise, car horns>. But nevertheless, salmon never was a species that belonged to the southern hemisphere. Only in the northern hemisphere, Norway, Canada... The whole northern hemisphere. And it was brought beginning of the 20th Century to the southern hemisphere, first as a catch and release export species; and then from the 70's-80's it started to be as a cultivated animal, of course genetically modified. But it has since then caused a struggle to the native population, the native ecosystem in the chilean fiords. Now they want to go to Argentina. So there is a lot of history related with this species in terms of a dialogue between the north and the south, hemispheres, which I found really necessary in terms of extractivism. <Michelle places a box with small compartments in the floor. The lid is transparent>. These are all bones from cultivated salmon, captive salmons, which are genetically modified <sounds of surprise, the public>. And this was the first thing I wanted to do in this exhibition, because since I have been working with minerals all my life, the thing I wanted to do is to work with bones, which is the least piece of this biological construction that are we: bodies, that is present in the geological strata, in the earth. So this is why I wanted to show you this collection of the bones, that I have preserved and together with scientists, paleontologists, biologists, trying to understand salmon. Trying to understand salmon as a species that belong to this specific part of the planet, and how is embedded in the case of Norway, how is embedded in society, in the Norwegian society, which has nothing to do with the extract of species that is happening in the southern hemisphere, which is nowadays a Neo-colonial tool. <Michelle looks at Julia Mensch> Do you want to continue?

<Paz Ponce: thank you>

## JULIA MENSCH

[ARTIST, ARGENTINA] | Starts 00:13:06

Okey, thanks for coming. I brought for this chapter a book, <she takes it from a bag and holds it high, showing the audience> which is a really important book in the history of Latin America: "Las venas abiertas de América Latina". Most of you I guess you know it, "The Open Veins of Latin America". And as Paz already told you, I am working with agriculture.

Argentina was the first country that approved a transgenic crop for commercialization. It was in '96, without public discussion. I mean, only 81 days, in an express process based on the inform by the

company itself. At that time "Monsanto", today "Bayer-Monsanto", which were in english. They were even not translated into Spanish. And from this day the whole country started to transform in a green homogeneous surface. And this surface was growing and growing and extending to the region, first to Brazil and later to other countries.

What we see now is after more than 20 years, a lot of health problems in human beings and not of human beings. A lot of lost of diversity, bio-diversity. And actually a quite complicated scenario because, like, in a way, I brought this book <she places it on the floor> because Galeano was writing about, from the Conquest to the 70's what our colonial history was about, and how our role in the world, in the economical world, was defined by these powerful countries – the ones that were involved in the Conquest and afterwards for the United States as well. The situation is now we are writing in Latin America a new chapter of this book, without having Galeano to do it any more, and this chapter is showing that if we don't stop what we are doing now, in 50 years the Amazonas is going to be gone, is not going to exist any more, and Argentina, for example, is going to be a dessert in 20. In a way this is an open laboratory, in which we are all involved without being part of the decision to be part of it, actually. And the region even was called by the company, Syngenta, the chemical and seed company Syngenta, as "United Republic of Soil". For the transgenic model the commodity is not only the crop itself, its nature and human and non human beings. And gens, because the problem of transgenic agriculture is not only the chemicals, like the first effect that we have seen are these chemicals which are in our planet, in the air, in the water we drink, in the water that is coming from the rain, and even in German via <???. Even if here it is not allowed to use these technologies like this, let's say in the so-called developing countries are used these technologies; these genetically modified seeds to produce commodities. But they are not allowed to produce here, but they are exported to these countries to feed animals, to produce really cheap meat, or to produce oil. But this is not then the environmental consequences, which like you see are super extreme in countries like Argentina, or Brazil, Paraguay, etc. but they are also here. All the cotton you buy in the supermarket has glyphosate. This first event, which I was pointing of this first crop which was approved for commercialization in Argentina in '96 was the glyphosate-tolerant beans, soy-beans by Monsanto, which are the stars of the... like the potatoes we saw before <she refers to the video of the agrotheater musical piece "PAPAKUNA", by YAMA Colectivo, Ecuador>, they are the stars of the monoculture model.

In a way I think we are part of a like neo-extractivist model but also neo-colonial, because these technologies are developed in these countries where they are not allowed to be used. And they are used in sacrificed zones, where we are all from, actually. <Approving sounds, in the panel>. And they are used without respecting the precautionary principle, without taking it into consideration, which says that "you can not use a technology until you know that is not going to have negative consequences".

And my starting point to work with it, was because I am from Buenos Aires. I was eating soy in the '90s, I was listening to the radio and listening how good was going to be for our economy, with this promise of progress. And with this promise of progress is that we are living since the Conquest, I will say, and this progress is showing that actually there is no more progress anymore, that we can't follow this path, because we are going just to disappear. <laughs, in the panel and among the public>.

<Paz Ponce: thank you...>

Sorry!

## GABRIEL VALLECILLO MÁRQUEZ

[ARTIST, HONDURAS] | Starts 00:19:25

Okay, hi everybody! Today more than an object is a voice. Is the voice of Berta Cáceres in her speech when she received the Goldman prize for defending the rivers. The Goldman Prize is the equivalent to a Nobel prize, Nobel Peace prize. Is the hugest prize for the people who defend the Earth. And when Berta Cáceres gave this speech, I was completely... <he takes an A4 flyer and turns it around, leaves it on the floor. Center of the Screen Air Pavilion>. Is a beautiful speech, I really urge you to read it, you have it in the "Ecologies of protest" paper, at the back. And it's a very short speech, but it's so powerful! When she gets killed, assassinated, shot in the back, by military personnel associated with a corporation that was doing a dam in the river of her people, of her indigenous land, it really shocked me a lot, it moved me, and I went to their family and interviewed them. I was there for more than a week, in her house, with her mother. I remember going into her studio, and see all her research. Her notes about the river, how she was defending all this. Her boots still with mud laying in there <low, shudder sounds>. And this was very moving to me, because I

realize even though I am from Honduras, I realized how sometimes we don't know really our culture, or how far we are, and it's right in front of you. And when I spoke to her three daughters and her mother, it was incredible to see the spirituality that was living, that is living in her culture. For them the rivers have spirits. Female child spirits that defend it. And that automatically grabbed me even more <he closes his fist in the air>, and moved me to do the artwork that I presented yesterday, as a work in progress, and it has to do with that combination of spirituality, of the ancestors that live within us and that are defending mother earth. Because the child spirits of the water, of the rivers, are the ones that defend it. And when Berta was killed, it is very interesting that in Honduras, they say that "*she wasn't killed, she was sown into the earth, or planted into the earth*". And the saying is that she is a seed, she has become millions. And her daughter, Olivia, told me: "*yeah, she is right now in this house, she lives with us, she moves things around. And she does it on purpose just to scare us sometimes*". <He laughs>. And it was really incredible because those spirits, they say, even the Lenca people' spiritual guide, Berta's spiritual guide, said: "No, she is now a child of the river. And she is defending it". And part of the speech, is a really beautiful speech, starts with: "*In our cosmovisions we are beings that have surged from the earth, the water and the corn*". And automatically it draws our feet back into the ground, where we come from. And in another part of the speech it says: "The militarized mother earth, imprisoned, poisoned, where basic rights are systematically violated, require us to act now". And I believe "now" is very urgent.

<Paz Guevara: Thank you>.

## PAZ GUEVARA | Starts 00:24:02

We see how in Gabriel, Michelle-Marie and Julia's practice the confrontation between the model of modernity: this extractivism, Neo-colonialism, and the ancestral life and cosmovision. Many of us, perhaps you as well, have received an euro-centric and western education despite that we are not from the empire zones, but in the Third World that has been also culturally colonized until today. Many of us, specially the artists that are here today, have been doing a self-education. So the research has been fundamental for them to build up this new stones to cross into these other zones that were not taught to us. So where do you find ancestral knowledge?

I remember in the university I studied Humanities and Literature, the languages that were the most popular was the German, because then you have access, is the password for German philosophy, that is the western-dominant cannon, so to say. And of course French will lead you to know the French literature, the poets. Or English. One day a professor put a paper on the door, says: "Mapudungu classes". But this class had no credit, so there was almost no student in the class. So we see how in this next chapter, from the critique how artists have also been looking for alternatives. Today we are with artists that are not satisfied only with the position of critique, they are not developing aesthetics of victimization or "porno-miseria", that is very common in some practices in South America, that you expose poverty, drama in a very sensationalistic way. But their critique is also interesting to find alternative narratives, like in the case of Gabriel showing the narratives of the Lenca community, of Berta, that still is a seed. Or even to construct alternatives we will see how Julia, for example, has been developing many newspapers <Julia laughs> with the story of extractivism in Argentina, as a cartography that is quite instructive, at the same time as artistic.

*And how to construct real and imaginary alternatives?* It should not be always so efficient, but the imaginaries that art can unfold also could have real consequences in a long term. So we will ask them how are they ideas in construction in their minds, in their notes, in their research, and also in the resulting work, and how they are confronting these dominant knowledges.

And it is very interesting for me to see how the research, artistic research also lead us to a deep historical consciousness that also allows us to enter in the complexity of situations that many times is simplified by the media, and we have to remember that media is also the 4th Power, and in many countries is in alliance with extractivism, with Neo-liberalism, so they would not transmit Berta's assassination but it would be transmitted as an indigenous, as terrorist, as criminals in many of the right-hand media.

So alternative narratives not only lead us to consciousness of what is going on, the complexity, but I think also that all these works lead us to a certain, and for sure, a transformation. Also in a more punk way they disrupt, but the destruction also of the assumptions, ideologies and finally something that is very tabu, that is to say something marxist, but also they destroy the modern alienation.

So I invite you to continue with this chapter on **alternative narratives**.

**MICHELLE-MARIE LETELIER | Starts 00:28:34**

I think talking about philosophy, this is a very important book in my research, I am trying to understand salmon. This book "Being salmon, being human" <laughs>, wrote by Martin Lee Muller, a German philosopher, very young, that is based in Oslo; this was the doctorate thesis that he wrote. I encountered this book by accident, doing my research. I still haven't finished this book because every time I read one page is like one month of inspiration, this is amazing. Because, I mean, it begins talking about how western society sees Descartes, is embedded into this cartesian split, dissecting the frog. And Decartes telling to his students: "don't listen to the screaming, don't listen to the screaming because that's the feeling. You don't have to listen to the feeling, you are dissecting this construction, this biological construction". And from that moment, the science started to separate all these feelings, and this began - as the way I understand, this was the seed that began the capitalism. The separation of spirit and the search for this natural resources without any interference, emotional interference. <Approval sounds among the audience>. So then it continues talking about the different between a farm and wild salmon, and how wild salmon is a secret species in the Sami culture. An then, of course for me, trying to understand this approach of this indigenous cosmovision, which is also connected with the cosmovision of every indigenous communities in the whole planet; this sense of connectedness and the understanding of our own split within this western split, has led me to, of course, directly this alternative that we are looking for, is for me, at this moment, in this moment of my research is embedded in the indigenous thought. And that's why for me this project is kind of like an excuse, but it is not an excuse, because I don't like this word. But it's a way for me to put into dialogue the North and the South in terms of alternative knowledge; and that is putting in dialogue northern and southern indigenous cosmovisions. *Samis* and *Yagans* communities which

are right now fighting against the installment of more and more salmon farms in the South of the continent, which is also a joint alliance. First time ever that two countries are joined, Argentina and Chile against the salmon installment in Cape Horn, which is something very significant.

So for me this alternative is the indigenous knowledge, is understanding forces of nature, is trying to locate ourselves again, orientate ourselves again within this sense that we have, that we come from this split and we have to acknowledge this split, this myth that we are separated from nature, which is not true. And this has to do with the beginning of the cut. I mean, understand this philosophical direction, and then for me understanding it as the seed that provoked this capitalist thought and the subsequent way that we think as a society. I think this is extremely necessary and interesting to understand and make ourselves more conscious about our consuming and everything we do nowadays.

## JULIA MENSCH | Starts 00:33:26

Okey, I will start to... <laughs, Julia presents several vegetables on the floor. A cucumber, a really long yellow zucchini, a deformed carrot, a kohlrabi>. I just went to the Markthalle 9 today. I am a consumer of "*solidarisches Landwirtschaft*" (solidary agriculture), which means that you pay per month an amount of money and once per week in summer, twice a month in winter you get vegetables. You don't know what you are going to get, but you get, and you have to learn how to cook with it <laughs>.

The transgenical agriculture model says that "we need to feed the world". This is the statement they are saying since ... for the first time about soy. "*This is the only way to produce food*". To produce food with poison. So how can we believe that is good to cook with poison? We don't have poison in our kitchens, first at all, and then second, they say that "you aren't only going to get sick if you deal with these glyphosate, and all other chemicals, dressing as an astronaut". Really, like an astronaut. But actually, even dressing like this, with these huge clothes and without having any contact with the earth, people are getting sick anyway. [min 34] And this project in a way changed not only my practice I would say, but mainly my life, my normal life. Because I am an urban citizen, so I didn't live before in the countryside, or only for short periods, for projects. To start to see that, if from one side you

have this statement that "the only way to produce food, and the only destiny of Latin America is to work with this agriculture", and with extractivism in general, but then you have all this propaganda. But when you start to research and visit territories of farmers, familiar farmers you see that actually there are other possibilities which is the familiar agriculture, which is there since always, is nothing new. And, actually... I am forgetting something <Julia checks information on a paper>, 60% of the food we eat is produced by indigenous and familiar farmers, it is not produced by these corporartions. And what they produce are commodities, which they export and make a lot of money. But actually for a small producer this is not sustainable. Not only because they get sick, but also because they don't make money, because they are part of one huge system of credits, because you have to buy the whole package, like the seeds and afterwards the chemicals, and afterwards you get sick. And now Bayer can send you the seeds and the agrochemicals and the medicine to get better in case you get sick (of them).

If the system and this green surface was extending in the continent, or in Latin America, and growing, and growing, and occupying the most of the territory, these alternatives were also growing. They are still today growing, and they are showing that agro-ecology has the tools to change the disaster we are living in. It is really possible, because you can recover the soil. You just have to stop doing what we are doing. Of course companies do not want to do it, but yeah, this. <laughs>

<Paz Ponce: ¡Gracias!> (thank you!)

## GABRIEL VALLECILLO MÁRQUEZ | Starts 00:37:53

Okey, my object, what I brought, is called "*El alebrije*". <Gabriel holds a handmade and colorful felt doll: brown, orange, pink. It has big eyes and looks like a small owl>. It's actually from... You can pass it around and see it. *El alebrije* comes from, it's from Mexico actually and they are fantastic beings. They derive from animals, they are fantastic beings and they are set to protect you from bad spirits. So this *alebrije* I bought it in a trip to Mexico, and I actually brought it with me. I had it in Honduras. I brought him, or whatever. I brought it with me, to protect me, in some way or another. And while doing the artwork for Berta Cáceres in real life, I think all this spirituality elements that's not the western

concept of spirituality as we know it, I learnt about a process in which the indigenous culture of the "Lenca" people, it's called "*compostura*". And a *compostura* is a method or a ritual they make to the earth, to give thanks to the earth, for what it has provided to the people. So a *compostura* is a circle, where they put food, corn, they put some flowers. It's a ritual where they are going to say thanks to the earth for giving us all of this. Within the project I was making, "The River told me so", making the river speak, or the earth speak. And doing this circular project, projected into a dome I thought of the artwork in a sense of a *compostura*, giving thanks to the earth and reviving those spirits. <Noise of browsing through papers>. But how to do it using the technology that I am using now, projectors, video, all these softwares. How can I trespass this? Create a new narrative or an alternative narrative that can actually communicate what ancestral cultures were saying? But how can I communicate it to you, to us, in a way that is understandable but conserves those elements? And is not in the sense that Habermas says: *modernizing traditions*. Not that idea, the idea is just, for me, that communication of that respect to spirituality and to earth, as a whole.

<Paz Ponce: thank you>

<Paz Guevara: thank you>

## PAZ GUEVARA | Starts 00:41:18

So we see how ancestral knowledge is one of the main alternatives, but not only just as Julia was pointing, the agro-ecology. Agro-ecology is also an ancient practice, not limited to indigenous community but an alternative to the transgenic agriculture. And Gabriel pointed out to modernization, like I work in HKW <Haus der Kulturen der Welt> and in the wall, something I didn't notice before says: "*The building was modernized...*" at certain date, and the message, the assumption is that modernization is positive, <laughs in the panel> is a message that is proud that the building was modernized. And dealing with this alternative knowledges, also with "*Candomblé*" and spirituality, that is not part of these practices but to expand the possibilities of this other discourses and knowledges, I thought it would be interesting for me now if they would say "*The building was candomblecized or indigenized...*" at certain date. <Panel and audience laughs at unison>. I would be proud! And not that was modernized... And because many of us come from

art history, or are connected to art history, also we have to make the link at certain point with Modernism, and how other traditions were set aside as a folkloric or propagandistic militant and modernism with this claim of autonomy of art, very formalistic. For example in the case of cubism we refer to African Art but only in the form, and not name the author, neither the context. They were ritualistic objects but for cubism would be just the shapes that allowed to unfolding in two dimensions, of three dimensions. You know this very fascinating formalist story? But there is not, but also one has to... as we were telling, retell your own interest in art history and start looking in this other chapters, and this leads us to the section **artistic operations**.

So we are not only talking about a topic, extractivism, but we are interested to know how artist shape this topic into their practice, how are making forms into content, thinking and rethinking knowledges. And one of the strategies that I already anticipated is self-education, the research that becomes a decolonial tool, is the only way to do it: to do it yourself. So artist conduct interview, they rely more in oral stories than in the hegemonic traditional history, they rate alternative narratives. But also they are not working as the western individual genius artist, they make collaborations, they have accomplices, they go to other fields, other communities; like Gabriel with the Lenca community to reconnect knowledges and this complexity that is so hard to reach today in the normal media. Artist also are working with different formats besides the classical genres of exhibition. I will now show the newspaper that Julia has been publishing and, of course, <the newspaper is passed around>, the format is radically different than a painting or a drawing that you can exhibit in a classic exhibition that is there to be seen. The newspaper becomes a social agent, <Yes - echoes the panel> so it circulates socially (min 44) and it hosts different experts. Julia will tell us more, but also the strategy of Mapping that you are developing, Gabriel, Public Art that Michelle-Marie is doing recently, archives, and you have also now even a manifesto.

In this section: the translation. In this section we will also try to push them to tell how is their practice also loosing the border with activism.

**MICHELLE-MARIE LETELIER | Starts 00:45:33**

Something I forgot when I started the first question is the fact that there is many salmon farms in Chile with Norwegian capital. So this is a very important fact to consider in this investigation. I started to research as I said, in Norway. And imagine: a chilean artist doing a research about salmon in Norway.

Norway has a very very deep and long fishing history, so everybody has a story with salmon. So for me was a very easy door. This project was a door that opened to many, many points in the Norwegian society. Fishermen, scientists, artists, poets... Many aspects, but the bottom line was: this chilean artist in Norway researching about, basically the struggle that has been done in Chile.

So first thing I went to talk with the scientists. I have been working with scientists many years before, but, and then I found out that there were many crises in the chilean industry, salmon industry in Chile. One of them was caused by these lays, these parasites that get into the salmon and kills the salmon. And there was a scientist, a Norwegian scientist that discovered that this animal was brought in the eggs, somehow was brought from Norway, which if this study would have been published and spread out, it would have been a disaster. They blacklisted this scientist, and of course in the scientific community in Norway is known. So it was kind of... like a little bit embarrassed to, for the scientist, to speak to me about this issue. They tried to hide it in a way.

So then, this situation really made me think <she stutters> of my role as an artist. Okey, so who I am, actually? <laughs in the panel>. Am I someone that is kind of like a journalist, researching on this? Am I a spy because they are kind of like very distant, and trying to receive me in the offices and talk about this? And then some of them didn't even reply, and so on. So then I thought: okey, so I am not a journalist, I am not a spy, but I could be all at them. <laughs> As an artist I could be all of them. So i really

started to acknowledge the fact that if I want to continue this, I have to really know how to play the game. And the game for me was to play naive, to go, to be honest but to play naive. <noise, water bottle> To go because at the end I ended up filming the slaughtering houses, going to salmon farms, and really to play naive, to ask all of these stupid questions that you know already but you want to ask, because you want to be nice. It's a very tricky situation but it has allowed me to prepare, to prepare to go to the second part of this project which is going to Chile, and this is not going to be easy. Even though I am chilean, this is not going to be easy for me because I will be kind of seen as a traitor, beginning in Norway, coming back to Chile after being in Norway. So anyway I think an artist like that, researching in these kind of dangerous topics, we need to get some things acknowledge, and the way we approach different people, the way we want to get some knowledge and of course documentation. Because most of us go there and work with our cameras, and videos, and voice recorders, and etc.

So it's a very delicate process, research process. And there is a lot to learn. How to relate with people and how to relate with different kinds of people. You know scientist is very different from fishermen and very different from poets, and yet, I mean talking about this way of translating all this knowledge it's kind of like, complicated. Because at the beginning I didn't want to call myself – I still don't want to call myself, "activist", or I don't want to go say: "*No! Salmon farms are not the way!*", because I really wanted to have like an objective position within this research. But the more I research, the more on my face the fact that salmon farms are negative in every sense. So I am in a point right now that I am beginning to accept this activist element within the practice. And one of them is a translation I did to the Yagan community. <A copy of the text is laid in the floor>. They sent me an email and said: "Hey, we want to, we together with many other associations, non-governmental associations, together with Argentina..." they did a public letter of rejection of the salmon farming, from Norwegian capital, and they wanted to spread it out. So they send me an email and said: "hey, would you help me?" And of course I could post in facebook, but I thought it wasn't enough. So I had decided to translate this, with the help of the Norwegian contacts to spread this rejection letter to Norway, and this could be a little bit more helpful. So I see myself more and more involved into this practices, which are completely against the salmon farming.

So this is something that we are kind of navigating, I am navigating with a lot of caution. I mean I am really careful about this, because I mean, yeah, it's very easy also to have an extreme stand point against something, but we also need to listen to all the points and the perspectives, and we also need to think about the future. How are we going to get fed? And because of that we need to think about alternatives, how do we get our proteins in the future? It is not so simple. <loud noise, ambulance sirens>

<Paz Ponce: is this the text?>

## JULIA MENSCH | Starts 00:53:03

Okey, to respond to the chapter I brought what I always have when I am doing research, which is my notebook, and my recorder, to make interviews. So normally I have it always with me and I almost don't take photographs, I just listen a lot and in a way I was saying already, Paz was talking about it as well, was a learning process.

Every time I get to know one of this people I am just learning a lot. And this need to learn came from when I was talking against the transgenic agriculture model, many people, all scientists tell me: "you don't know, because, I mean, you are an artist". And they have a lot of information which I didn't have, so I couldn't discuss with them. And they were always winning the conversations.

But after so many years of research, also like starting the research from the point of view of part of the society with which the system is experimenting, I think I have the right to talk against the system. And during these years, I was getting to know a lot of people and it was a similar process. First because I started the research in 2010, but I didn't know what to do with it. So i was visiting territories, getting to know farmers – a lot with Aurelio, who is my partner and is also an artist, and when the people were asking me: "what will you do?" I didn't know what to say, because I didn't know, actually. <laughs in the public>.

So they were expecting a documentary film, of course, but as a visual artist first we have other... like, we are not eh... activists, so we are not so fast as they are, because if they have a problem they react, the next day the manifest is finished, is online, everybody got and we take three years until we publish, we do a show, and whatever <laughs in the panel>. But we have the possibility to bring this discussion to another context.

So when I started to exhibit the project I am working on, in Argentina first, it was really interesting to create crosses in between the artist scene and all this people I was listening for so many years, and all the situations I was getting to know, that nobody, any of my friends knew about it, or cared about it. Because I think it happens in many countries, and I may say here also maybe, because we live so far from the countryside we really don't care what is going on there. We really don't care. And they are paying the immediately consequences of the system. So getting to know farmers, or getting to know scientists who really changed their way of working because of the situation we are living in, was really inspiring but it was really hard at the beginning to share with the people I was in contact with.

<Julia unfolds one of her newspapers, opens in one page full of small illustrations with faces>. But like the project I am now developing is called "*Cartography of an experiment in the open sky*", and are these publications that Paz was showing, but also portraits of these people. I am not trying to create like an homage of like, environmental activists, farmers, lawyers, doctors who are fighting against the system, but I am trying to portray the situation itself. That's why I am talking also about the responsible of the application of this ecocide, from the... like the people who are involve from taking decisions in the government, in Latin America but also in Germany, and the companies of course, in the private field. As an artist, I consider myself also a researcher, an artistic researcher, but I have a huge and amazing opportunity as an artist to decide which rules I want to follow. Like if you are a historian, or scientist, there are rules, academic rules, that you have to follow. We can decide which rules we apply in our own research. <Approving sounds, in the panel>. So for me it's not only about theoretical knowledge, is also about seeing a field full of agro-ecology, with the association of crops, and comparing these, what in my view – previous to see this, and to feel this atmosphere, in comparison as if I visit a monoculture model, or if I eat these carrots and I know the farmer, <Julia points at her vegetables from Markthalle 9>, or if I go to Aldi and I just buy a huge pack of carrots – which half of the package is going to be bad in some point because you don't make it to eat it, maybe, and they don't have any taste. They are cheaper, but always, always, somebody is paying the cost. If I, as consumer, I am not paying the cost, the illegal workers of this production are paying the costs, or the sick children in Argentina because they are poisoned by glyphosate to produce this soya are paying the costs for us, so we can pay little

money for pork meat, for example here, in the first world, in Germany. And what was really funny, when finally they saw what I was doing, these people, these scientists, farmers, etc, etc, started to trust in what I do. But they also started to change the name of my profession, so they started to say: "I just said, I didn't know what to say, I say you are a writer", for example. <Everybody laughs>. And in some point I was also before working with a lot of research, but since this project it started to be much more, and more, and more, and it's growing so much that yeah, also my practice is changing. Which is in a way, not bad, and I am mainly learning a lot. And also what I just said at the beginning, like coming from the huge city of Buenos Aires without living in the countryside to really think: *what am I eating?* And if I don't have this, because it's not the season, it's fine, and I can eat another thing, and this was also an amazing learning process which maybe doesn't have to do with the artistic practice, or yes, but it was something really important to learn.

<Paz Ponce: thank you>

## GABRIEL VALLECILLO MÁRQUEZ | Starts 01:01:02

I am bringing this object. <Gabriel places in the middle of the floor a silver shaped-heart, red in the middle>. For me it's like the heart of the earth, reminder of traditions, and also a reminder of the diaspora that I am in, right now.

When I do my artistic projects, sometimes I ask myself: *what am I allowed.. what do I allow myself to start believing, or to start grasping, or assuming, or making it my own and reinterpret it, or reshape it into something else?* And these questions that I make to myself are important in the sense that before it was like a meta-narrative: everything was only one way, history was told and that was the only way. Now we live in a world of micro-narratives, million of narratives. They are all true, they are all right, and now we have fake news, or in that concept of: *what is real? What is not real? When does it become real in our world?* And when I started doing the Berta Cáceres project, and I interviewed her family and was with them a lot, in their house, in the forest with them, and so forth, near the river... I allowed myself to believe, and start seeing within their eyes. How they saw the world, how they saw their mother, how they saw their culture, and the connections of their

culture, and the spirituality with other cultures. And for me, for example being... I consider myself an artist of the diaspora, because being out of my country makes me, or reinforces me certain views of the world, and changes my convictions. That sometimes they might have been probably superficial, or small convictions, now they have become really important. And actually diaspora, at a certain point, makes your roots stronger, I believe. They connect you even more to your mother land, in some sense. And maybe this connection to the mother land has also to do with how, or with the thinking of the future, how being away from nature, or not having all the benefits that nature has given us. *Are we going to connect to that Mother Earth again, in the same sense?*

<Paz Guevara: Gracias. thank you>.

## PAZ GUEVARA | Starts 01:04:08

So we have been hearing how for Gabriel, Julia and Michelle-Marie, oral histories, new experiences of learning, are crucial to change the perceptions, that is so like a break in your own biography, and as every micro-story, it has also the potential to be a break in the macro-story. I re-confirmed how transformative is the work that you are doing when I met Elicura Chihuailaf, that is a Mapuche mapudungun poet in the South of Chile, he lives in the region called Temuco. But when you read what is the history of Temuco, is the history of colonization in the period of the Republic of Chile. Not when they were the Spanish rules, but the very chilean republican rules that organized a military expedition, made a fort in what is called Temuco. A German cartographer designed the city, and when you visit Elicura Chihuailaf his very address, is a reservation. A remain of the colonial republican power. And then you see how Julia was telling, how we are in a colonial still world, in a Neo-colonial design. Elicura could say, answering my question, "*I know that in your poetry, is not a metaphor when you say that you can speak and converse, have a conversation with the stones and with the trees. I know is not a literary metaphor, that this is your experience, but could you tell me how? Because I want to learn, I want to be sure how is the conversation with the stones, and with the trees?*". And he replied: "*;Paz! Is very simple, every tree that you see here outside -we were in his blue house, - receives the same wind, but they are all dancing differently*". <Big amazed exclamation, public and panelists>.

"*They are all receiving the wind in the same way, so all the time I*

*see a tree in the wind, I see how they are conversing."*

"And the stones?" He said, "It's so simple. When you go into the mountain, and you find a stone under the snow, this stone has grasped this porosity because of the erosion of the stone. So this stone can tell you the story that has been there, in a hard environment, in dialogue with the snow. But when you go to the river, you find a stone that is totally polished, because it has been in conversation with the water. So it's telling you that has been there for this amount of long time".

So you are always conversing with the nature. And in this way you understand this change of perception, that is not a metaphor, but it's like an every-day experience.

And our last chapter, in this life-montage, is this **battle of discourses**. So we are in Paz Ponce's curatorial project, with the title "Ecologies of protest". So we see that the protest is always against other discourse, other position, other privileges. And although power is very difficult, this abstract meaning, it's an abstract structure that is underlying many secret operations, decisions and even our behaviors, how we dress, how we express, how we understand space, and time, and delineates conditions of possibilities that, sometimes, only in very extreme situations we can understand and see very clear the power structure. When is segregation, discrimination, for example, its most graphic.

But also they design what is known and what is unknown, like the history of Berta. *What is valuable and what stories are preserved, and for whom?* And here we arrive to the practice of museums, *how museums and their questions of preservation, collection and transmission are also part of these networks of power?* And I think artists as Michelle-Marie was telling, are very good detectives. They infiltrate <all panelists agree>, in the power structures and in the media, and in their work they can many times identify this concrete examples or agents of channels also, of powers. And for example in the newspaper, one could say that Julia is doing a counter-newspaper, and they can also contest, try to destroy assumptions, miss-interpretations and gaps. What is not seen, what is concealed, what is not said.

So in this sense this counter-narratives, that we are hearing with you, that are not only yours but many times also in relation with communities, are in a position of a struggle. Of disrupting established narratives and power structures. So we will hear now how this discussions and battles are fought in your every day and long term projects.

**MICHELLE-MARIE LETELIER Starts 01:09:41**

This is super abstract! I could continue with the Yagan. Yeah, the Yagan community is... well, what is left of the Yagan community is a culture based on the recollection of sea food, which isn't salmon. And in those times the women used to go diving under the ocean and collect the seafood naked. We are talking about Cape Horn, <noise, loud sirens> the really, the south of the south of the South American cone. These communities were semi-nomads, now they are concentrated in a very small area in Puerto Williams, in Isla Navarino. And from there they have been resisting together with... It's a very interesting situation what is happening over there, because Puerto Williams is a small town which is a military settlement, so it has military population, civil population, indigenous population, and scientists. Because is like the gateway for the scientists to study the Antarctica.

So what is going on there is like a micro-society. So when, and then I went there I learned that the school, for example, the school is very important because, of course, all the children from everyone go there and so all the parents have to meet there. So the director knows this, she gathers them and she organizes meetings, where they can discuss about the social problems. And the director works together with this museum director. There is a very interesting museum called "The Martin Gusinde Museum". The director is a sociologist and he is very aware of this situation, so he has been working together organizing the Yagan community and try to put them into dialogue, mostly with the military settlement there, and civil settlement. There is an important point, and is that the Yagan community is a "*canoas, canoero*", how do you say that? <Canoe, says someone>. A canoe community, and they have a very old ancestral knowledge. And *how to navigate this dangerous waters?* But they are not allowed to navigate because of Chilean government rules. They are not allowed to navigate their own water, so they cut, they have cut, they have a cut in their culture. So they are resisting now not

only against that, but also against installment of these salmon farms. And why the capitalists want to go there? Because they already caused a struggle, and contaminated all the area of the Chiloé Island and in the North of Chile.

And this is happening right now. March this year the royal couple of Norway they went strategically of course, they went to have a visit to Chile. And they went to Puerto Williams, and they didn't expect that the whole community, or like students, civil community, activists, Yagan, they went and protest against this visit and said: "We don't want to have Salmon farms here". And there was something very symbolic happening, in one point, they stopped the car of the royal couple of Norway and they told the princess, the Royal Princess, got out of the car and said: "Okey let's listen, let's listen to what want to say". <Amazed exclamations in the panel>. She got out, they got out of the car, and the president of the Yagan community extended this letter of rejection directly to the princess, the Royal Princess, and the ethnographical museum, the Museum Martin Gusinde, the director was translating this act. And there was of course a lot of documentation. And this photograph of the president of the Yagan community extending a letter to the Royal Princess of Norway was so symbolic. Was kind of like going backwards, like 400 years ago. What is going on?! <Michelle-Marie laughs>.

Well, I don't know why I am talking about this but the power and the narrative that you were saying. This micro-narrative for example, says so much, tells so much about what is going on today, in this extreme area. Who knows where is this going on? Nobody knows because is so far away, but it is so symbolic! Is so symbolic, so, yes.

<Paz Ponce: thank you>

## JULIA MENSCH Starts 01:15:46

Yeah and also is like, you are talking about transgenic salmon and I am talking about transgenic soil and is exactly the same. Is the same extractivism operating in different parts of the world in a similar way. And talking about narratives, <Julia takes a blue book from her bag>, I thought of this other book. Because another problem we have is that content from Latin America is not being translated into other languages. So theorists in Latin America have to discuss with the europeans, or theorists from the States. They have to read them but they are not being translated so that these other theorists

can read them and discuss them as well. This book is called "Bad development", and is written by Maristella Svampa, an amazing theorist from Argentina, and Enrique Viale. <coughing in the panel>. And I point this because like here in Wedding, not so far away, Bayer is announcing "Science for a better life". The question is: *what kind of science? For who? And for what?* And everybody knows that the Amazon was burning like quite a lot in the last month. And the governments here in Europe were really surprised. "How crazy Bolsonaro is, wow!". But actually this is what is happening for a very long time. Is not only Bolsonaro, are these technologies developed by these European countries and China, and the States, to apply in our continent and other parts of the world like India. Enrique Viale, actually he is not a theorist, he is a lawyer, environmental lawyer and activist, and last year he said something that I find quite interesting and connected with this other book: "Open Veins of Latin America". "It is certain that our destiny is to be exporters of nature". And he said this speaking as a member of the tribunal of "Derechos de la naturaleza", so Nature Rights in La Paz, in Bolivia.

1hora 18min

Parallel to this model, there are a lot of people fighting against the system, against the model but also creating alternatives. And what is really interesting to see is that to them, is happening the same that is happening to us, as artists. Because they are scientists, they were built, they studied in universities to be inside of a laboratory, researching genes. But then in one point you get a population where everybody has cancer, and this is not normal, no? Like if you know, you have a lot of people with cancer, or you have a lot of friends as I have in Argentina, more than here in Europe, for example. So they have to change their practice because of the emergency we are living in. And they started to collaborate with other people. So it happened like, for example, to this eh... wait, <Julia browses through her belongings>, no it's not in this bag, or yes? I have to find it.

Just so you can see his face, because is really nice when Gabriel was talking about Berta, that she was transformed into seed <Gabriel nods in approval>, he was also transformed into seed. <Children voices, loud, in the background>. He is a scientist who died of cancer but he was the first one to prove that glyphosate was noxious for health. And he did this like doing research of glyphosate with amphibians. And what is interesting to see about the carrier of Carrasco, Doctor Carrasco, he has a really long scientific career. He was not a young activist playing around, as sometimes the companies say: "*an ancient crazy activist*". He was like a really

important scientist in Argentina who was even president of the Scientific Institute before, and he did his research and he said: "No, I cannot wait to publish this information, I have to publish this now. I cannot wait three years". Like in art, it takes really long in the scientific field to publish a study, for example. So he called a journalist, and say: "I have this information, I need to give an interview". And he did, and he got an amazing contra-propaganda, we could say, a delegitimization of his career as scientist, and he transformed his career from scientist to scientist and activist. And when he died, it was formed in Argentina a network of doctors and scientists which is called "Dignify science", which is growing in opposition and moving in opposition to these other science that Bayer is building, and sustaining.

And what I find the most interesting, is this interdisciplinary network which the situation is creating. Because normally scientists meet only with scientists, but in this situation scientists are meeting with teachers, of rural schools in the middle of the countryside, which get in contact with them because their students are all sick, because the plains are spreading agro-chemicals, for example. <Bells ringing in the background>.

And he did this research, Doctor Carrasco <crumpled paper sounds, Julia spreads the newspaper showing a full portrait of the doctor>, because of a group of women in Córdoba, in the countryside of Argentina, "Madres de Ituzaingó": mothers of Ituzaingó. Ituzaingó is a small part of Córdoba where they are from, and they started to see that something was not normal: "Everybody has cancer, from what is all this coming from?". And this were Córdoba, this part of the province, there is a lot of monoculture. In the 90's nobody knew what was a transgenic crop, it was really an abstract concept then. Nobody was talking about. And they started to, yeah, to try to see what it was, because before they were drinking mate <laughs>, showing the beautiful field of green soya and being sprayed with plains and agro-chemical. And Doctor Carrasco was doing this research because of them.

And they were just mothers and housewives, how is in our history in Argentina always, like we have "Mothers of Plaza de Mayo", so May Square, who were also fighting during the dictatorship, and still they still do. <Somebody laughs in the audience>.

Or another example, and I don't have a big portrait of her but I show her small, and she is ... <Julia brows through the pages of her newspaper>, Mechi Méndez, this woman here. Mechi Méndez is a nurse, working in a hospital in Buenos Aires. In a children hospital where

all the sick children of the whole country with the most difficult cases come because they don't know what they have. And she was seeing the same: "why are there so many children with malformations, so sick..." I mean when you live in the countryside is supposed to be really healthy, no? But actually not.

So what she started to do is to visit the territories. Paying the ticket herself, because she was just really curious, what was going on, and then getting to know doctors who were living there, and seeing what was going on. But they didn't have any contact with Buenos Aires. And she started to organize in the hospital, without the support from the hospital, by herself, talks with these doctors from the countryside. And she started to film all these lectures, and every time I went to one lecture, talk, discussion, she was the woman with a really small camera and a tripod filming to, afterwards, upload the video in a youtube channel, that she also made, to show this knowledge that she was learning just as a nurse, seeing sick children who shouldn't be sick. And this is why I really believe like if the model is growing like crazy, and is changing the whole continent, all these alternatives are also growing and are being what we call "el buen vivir": "the good living", which is taking like the ancestral ideas to first, see that we are part of nature, and we have to live in another way to get back to this beginning that we lost after the Conquest.

<Paz Guevara: yes>

#### GABRIEL VALLECILLO MÁRQUEZ Starts 01:25:53

When we talk about "Ecologies of protest", the word protest automatically involves the word ideology, if not people wouldn't be moving in certain angles, or in certain way, or towards certain objectives.

I remember quite vividly, when I saw a newscast in Honduras, the speaker for the private business organization. An organization that defends private business interest, went on TV, and questioned why this woman called Berta Cáceres, was receiving so much support from NGO's, from Europe and another parts of the world. And she was saying: "*This woman is lying to you. This woman, I don't know why are you believing her, about this river*". And the discourse or the narrative she was heading to, was one that I heard many times, and it is in this case for Berta Cáceres, they were building a river dam that would obviously affect the whole ecosystem around the

indigenous, not only the river but the whole ecosystem of their land. And the idea, the normal idea is that "you are stopping progress". You, as a defender of nature and ancestral culture, you are a person that is stopping progress for coming, to come to your country. You are preventing all these to come to you. So you are actually bad development. You are creating a bad development, because you are making jobs not to come, you are affecting your own people with your discourse.

And this woman was actually saying this, at the end. But my argument, or my way of seeing this is that this dam, or this new technology, or this new investments are like "quick grab&go", the money doesn't stay in the country, it is not distributed, it only goes to 10 people of these corporation and after they have extracted everything, they leave it, it's destroyed, completely destroyed, many lives, hundreds of thousands of lives are destroyed or sickened, like for mineral, like for example when they are doing mining companies, and so forth. And they just extract, destroy, go, they get rich, and what happens with the natural resources for the next hundred years? Everything is done, is contaminated, the ecosystem is completely destroyed.

So this is part of these narratives or these "battles of the discourses", that I have seen, I am hearing, that you are bad because you are preventing the development of a country that is, in my case, very poor. And people need jobs. Yeah, but that job... Actually I am remembering this question because in the university, in the ethics class, was precisely that: "do you build ... A company is going to produce a lot of jobs. Coca-Cola is going to make, is going to put a company here and they are going to start fabricating a lot but they are going to take a lot of their resource from the water. So what, the ethical question is: are you going to make this people have a better life, having a job, having a house, a ceiling, or are you going to destroy and use up one of the resources from which they live on?". So let's be clear, ethical, the question of ethics is not about good and bad, it is about practical thinking, of what is the better way, ethics doesn't concern of what is good or right, bad or wrong. It is about an ethical process of proceeding towards an objective, or towards an action.

<An audience member: can you share the newspaper?>

I forgot, yes. This part of the newspaper is an excerpt from The Guardian, and "*how the military was involved, directly involved in the murder of Berta Cáceres*". How the directors of the company were

directly involved and trained by the U.S., also, ex-military, and how they even lost all the paper work of a case, mysteriously, was stolen. So all of this is how this battle of actual power, between an indigenous leader that is getting power from other sources that actually believe in her, and the status-quo power of a small people in this case in Honduras, that have controlled the access to all the monetary or all the economic power in the country. So this is an example.

## PAZ GUEVARA Starts 01:32:03

So although the power structure seems to be difficult to identify, and this is the trick of ideology, that in the world that is around in which we function, it seems to be natural, it seems to be the way, and there you have the change of motivation, of challenges, so you go like in a very well-organized movie, that perhaps at a certain chapter you are proud that you won a grant, and also many grants have been associated with central intelligence. So it takes time and research to deconstruct these narratives, and to break ideology and see how artificial and violent, in fact, is.

So it's very striking to see how Michelle-Marie identified the moment, but through all your engagement, when the Yagan community is confronting the Norwegian Queen, or when the Doctor Carrasco and Menchi Méndez are confronting the transgenic in Argentina that are causing cancer in all the population around the cultivation. In one of the stories of the magazine there is an example of a farmer that was so close to the powder that is used in the soya, that he died of an asthma attack of this powder, like after one day. And nobody at the beginning could identify the cause, it was a strange case, but in the sequence of this researchers became a pattern: it was the transgenic. And how Berta Cáceres and the Lenca community defending the river, also confront the power of multinationals and the central intelligence.

So we would like to open the last minutes the floor for comments, maybe also your own stories or questions to all the panel.

-Paz Ponce: thank you.

-Gabriel: Feel free.

Starts 01:34:14

—Julia: Maybe I start <laughs>.- Just thinking about what you were saying, because in Argentina is always: "Yeah, is a lot of chaos, we need the money", but actually it is all a lie, because this kind of production doesn't need people.

—Gabriel: yeah.

—Julia: at all. Like before you have, I don't know, like there are farms, biodynamic farms, <children talking in the background, cutlery noises at the community lunch bar>, and they are only fifteen people, well only no, for a small farm, and they are producing food for thousands of people, and the monoculture model has one gay, like spreading the whole field, <laughs>, getting sick, like making sick the whole population around and the money is like, okey, to build schools for sure. Because in Argentina, or in Latin America with all these more or less left-wing countries, governments, during the last decade, monoculture was really promoted, but to have more social programs but with these costs. So I don't know if somebody...

—Paz Guevara: maybe Julia you can problematize also this progressive governments that despite these older utopia, practice extractivism and the monoculture.

—Julia Mensch: you mean only left...?

—Paz Guevara: in your country.

—Julia Mensch: In my... yeah, now the scenario is different because we have election, we have a really bad government for four years, Neo-liberal again, but before we had 10 years of "Kirchnerism". Maybe Kirchner you heard about. And also many in one side, in a really amazing government like gave many rights to gay communities, a lot of social programs, educational programs and so on, but all was based on this model. Like the taxes of mono-culture production, mainly soya. And for so many years I had to discuss, even with my best friends, like left-wing artists engaged in politics, about this. Because it was a government that was promising a lot. And I think this is also the problem of the left ideas, in a way, left tradition, let's say also communism or socialism, also believe in progress. And this is I think the main problem we have, this idea of progress because we already saw that this progress is not

sustainable, at all. And if we, as let's say left-wing citizens, artists, whatever we are <laughs>, don't start to see that the left should be something else, this is going to be difficult. Or the same arguments I see sometimes here. Many people tell me: "I cannot buy Bio because I don't have enough money". And I understand, of course, but somebody else is paying the cost. Many times this people saying this, that they decide to buy in Aldi because they don't have enough money, they are people who also have, they are, I don't know, intellectuals or whatever. I mean I prefer to not buy clothes and to buy in the cooperative, women cooperative, close to where I live. I don't know.

-Paz Ponce: can I say something?

-Julia: yeah, please

-Paz Ponce: no, just to contribute to this last section "The battle of discourses", in relationship to what you are saying. Recently in a project that I was doing in Cuba, it was a series of books, there was an interesting woman, Stefania Crobe. She works for the Urban Laboratory for Imagination, she lives in Rome. And then she wrote an essay in this book that I was publishing, that was counterposing - *{contraponiendo?}*; she was crashing two models of progress. And basically she was talking about this very old myth of Prometheus, you know *Prometeo*? <Noes, from the panel>, which made me think a lot, in connection to your practices, to this idea we are talking now about ethics, and about knowledge, and patches of knowledge, and I have this word that comes to me all the time which is "mythology", that we are based upon. That comes from Modernity, but modernity was not invented like from an alien person, it was invented by kingdoms <laughs>, that were, their power was laying supposedly, "under the grace of god". We have a religious system on the base of capitalism, so the idea of progress, which is Modernity, implies a sacrifice. The sacrifice aspect of Modernity is a purely catholic idea. <Approving sounds>. And is very embedded in, order, we, the man, the god Zero, Jesus Christ, who is going to die for humanity to be, you know, cleaned or washed or redeem from their original sinn. Original sinn being: "we primitives that we don't know the mysteries of the wisdoms of life".

So this idea is a very powerful one, because at the end of the day where do all these powers and mythologies of knowledge and ways of ordering society, lay on? There is a fanatic belief in capitalism as a system you are born into, as you are born in language, and as much

as Lacan wanted, we cannot escape language. And you cannot escape capitalism, and you cannot escape logics that are under as systems. So going back to this idea of Prometheus, and everything is recycled in catholic culture; Prometheus was a myth that was recycled from Greek tradition, he is basically a very big man that brings fire, no? To that state of men who didn't know fire, they didn't know technology. Technology is invented with the wheel and with the fire. So basically that allows for cooking, that allows for many things, and for this next evolution of men. And also in an anthropological sense, how do we categorize the evolutions state of men come from that use of technology. So is so embedded into that scientific discourse, that is very hard to get out of it, I don't know if we are in a new area. It was somehow uttered that we are the anthropocene, but for example I am participating in a project now called "The parliament of organisms", we are an anti-anthropocene vision-version collective. We represent different types of organisms, I am in the group of "neo-biota", I speak as a type of maple tree that is called "New in Berlin", meaning that the tree was introduced here in 1655.

Is different temporalities, see?, *how can we measure?* I think temporalities is a very interesting notion of all of these problems with technology, improvement, progress; they are based on evaluation system, statistics, all of these mathematics, no?, that become a certain mythology later. But: *how long are we thinking?* And *when are we going to start thinking from the point of view of the ring age of a tree?* <approving sounds, in the panel>. Because that is where we should be thinking from.

—Michelle-Marie: or the rock, or the mountains ...

—Paz Guevara: and maybe we could do a last round to challenge the artists to think, to tell us, to share with us how they challenge the format of the exhibition, if it's not centered in the product, like in capitalism, in a fast exhibition making, in a fast research, as Paz Ponce was counterpointing, that is based in this based in this in-depth history connecting communities, connecting other collaborators from other areas, many Mechi Méndezs and many Carrascos. *So how do you challenge this format of the exhibition that is rooted, also in Modernity?* Form the cabinet of curiosities <approving sounds in the panel>, or the national, nationalistic museum with the history, not only of Europe but in other countries we have our copies of the European museum with the National Histories of Chile, or Argentina. In fact Chile copied in 1910, when was the 100 years of independency, the celebration, the governments

knew that Argentina was planning their version of the museum of fine arts, the European model. So the Chileans hurried up <Julia laughs at loud>, and copied and contraband the model of the "Musée Petit", in France, it's a small museum. And copied, and it looked like a small museum but it's a museum that it's not that old, but it has this aura of antiquity without being so so odd. So how do you challenge this research-based, activistic, artistic, work in the space.

—Michelle-Marie: I think challenge is very big word <she laughs>. We can propose, I don't know if I am challenging. But I am trying to propose something first, to think of this material accumulation, object. There is one work that I have been doing this year, which is a virtual reality piece, and this was born, this idea was born or thought as a proposal to this ecological thinking, in terms of: "I don't want to accumulate more material, I don't want to build up another pile of whatever". Because I have to be honest, this idea that I have been developing in the virtual reality it's about, is a huge salmon, wild salmon skull, kind of like this this <she spreads her arms, audience laughs>, that you are going to be inside this salmon skull, constructed as an architectural construction, and first I thought of doing it in a 3D print but then I was like: "oh my god, this is a terrible idea, I don't want to end up with this mountain of plastic". So then it came up into this thinking of a virtual reality experience, in terms of materiality as well, I really, I mean this is a very new form of doing art, I guess in the last five years and it is still in consideration, how do we approach? Why are we doing this? What is virtual reality? What is this personal experience? And I am aware there is a lot of criticism against virtual reality because is also very elitist, and very personal, but from the other side I tried, I wanted to think of it as an answer to this material accumulation, as an answer to this ecological thinking. This in one way, and also present it in a public space, it is a very important thing too. We need to open spaces, I mean we can't keep working in a white cube forever. <Approving sounds in the panel>. And this is also, is my other proposal I am working within this project: which is working with people. The ethics of this courses I wanted to work with people from different disciplines, and open up this dialogue and specially with students, science students, or economic students, to think out of the box. Think: "okey, if you want to build a company in the future, how are you going to think about it in terms of ethics with the workers, and together with scientists? And also with scientists: how are you going to develop new forms of, I don't know, protein

*development, without thinking of the environment?". So i think we need to transform this knowledge in terms of interdisciplinary dialogue, and this is my proposal.*

—Julia: Yeah I am, like for me art is the tool I have to work with all this information. So, to exhibit the work and just only to make an exhibition is not enough. I am trying to create other kind of forms to present the research, when I say present the research is not by me, only, but also from this people. <Approving sounds in the panel>. So one example is I did an exhibition, I mean this portraits are on plates, is really simple, they are all portraits of people, plants and genetically modified plants painted on plates. And then people can take the newspaper and for me the newspaper is a really important too, because is circulating first, outside of the exhibition space, but after, when the show is finished, like all these organizations or the cooperative where I buy in Argentina, or "The Hunger Museum", they are spreading the newspapers. And then this information is growing, is going in different directions, and I think, because I write from a position not like a scientist, or sociologist, in a way is easy for the people to connect with the content, because I am talking first in a really simple way, but also from this perspective, or from this learning process.

So what I did was to invite part of the people who were part of the portraits to give talks, and also just to bring them to the art field. Because as I said before, they were the people I was listening in congress, in talks about extractivism and so on, and any of my friends new about them. And of course it is not the same as if I try to tell them when we have dinner <laughs>, or if they listen directly to Muchi Méndez, what she was saying. And this is the tool we have.

I don't believe I am an activist. I think the name is to big for me. I can only just cooperate with activist. I think there are changes we can only do them on the street, as just normal people. Art is not going to change the world, but at least I can document something, and I can tell a story, and so that you can read it. And maybe you will take the chance of not buy in a supermarket but just be part of a cooperative. And when I change this in one person, I am super happy, is a lot.

—Gabriel: for me, initially this project of "The River told me so", was, I was challenging structures in the sense that the artwork was to be done in the river, projected into the water and on to the rock cannons of the river that Berta Cáceres defended. That was my

original idea. And as I was developing it, Olivia, Berta Cáceres' daughter said: "Gabriel if you go there, they are going to kill you. Period. They are going to kill you". <Loud sirens on the background>. She told me: "They are even shooting at people that are wearing the U.N. jacket, that are going to inspect, they are even shooting at them for going to that river. So you cannot do your artwork there", and then I automatically said: ok, this has to stop. And my way of using this commercial video mapping technique, and moving it into a more serious project. Because for me video mapping is a commercial technique, architectural video mapping, it is meant to entertain. And one of my main challenges was: *how do I use this incredible technique to create other discourses that are more meaningful or can create not a conscious, but open eyes, of what is happening?* And I wanted to move this big projects and the artwork was originally going to be made in the middle of the woods, where nobody actually was seeing it. It's like if you bring down a tree in the middle of the woods without anybody listen to it or hear the fall. And part of that utopian ways of thinking and seeing was part of my process, and I knew that if I were to do this artwork in the middle of the woods, in the river, very few people were going to see it. And part of my question is: *is this worth it?* All these utopia, or utopia spaces created by an artwork, that is outside of the gallery, of the white cube: *Is it going to communicate? Or is it going to have that magic that can actually communicate? Just by the fact of being done somewhere that is remote, without, with very little access to many people?*

So this project also came, or is coming to, it has come to be realized in this utopian architecture. And something that I would always tell myself, and that I sometimes forget, is that: many of the things are always in front of your eyes, you just don't realize you have them in front. example: in my case, the technique I use is called video mapping. And the complete name is called "architectural video mapping", it was there all the time, and now I am doing it on an architecture. <Amazed exclamations on the panel>, in a utopian architecture, not on a building. So it is always there, sometimes is also a reminder to you, is in front of you, that idea, you just haven't seen it. You have to open your eyes, read again through that.

—Paz Guevara: So today we have also seen, or understand exhibitions that never occurred, these projection on the stone, on the river, in the Lenca community, that you have transmitted to us in the spaceship archaic or organic architecture of the "Ecologies of

protest", and when I was watching a documentary on the indigenous community that was done by the German TV, they are entering the forest and the camera man said: "Oh! There is only nature here!". And at the same time I could recognize all the plants, that for them the forest is like the University, is all the medicines, all the stories, the spaces of the ritual, but you have to be prepared and have the will to see it. To attend this shift of perception, that is our own challenge to self-taught ourselves, in this decolonial process that we decided to start, or to continue other members that have even left.

So we thank you, specially to Paz Ponce, for the curating this amazing project and inviting us. This would be recorded, so some more listeners will join us. And we invite you to Manuela's fermentation drink and to continue talking with us.

—Paz Ponce: and there are more potatoes. <laughs>  
Thank you so much, it was amazing.

<Audience clapping. End of recording.>