

ART & /IN ECOLOGY

Human-Non Human Interconnections in Art, Visual Culture & Everyday Life.
Site specific theory in practice in Vuosaari two-period module Jan-April 2021

Wk 6. 16 Feb 2022
Thinking Ecologies
Group Formation

Source: Google Maps

Wed 16 Feb

9.30-10 Situating, settling

10-11 Edouardo Kohn discussion

11-12.30 Outdoors-Thinking like an urban forest/beach/coastline/park

12.30-13.30 lunch

13.30-14 Practice Assignment description (exhibition?)

14.00-16.00 Group formation/brainstorming



HOW FORESTS THINK

Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human

Eduardo Kohn

A gentle introduction to Eduardo Kohn, Ecuadorian Anthropologist
in the excellent Cultures of Energy podcast series (actual interview starts 15.9)
<https://podcasts.apple.com/sg/podcast/164-eduardo-kohn/id1073817284?i=1000429895379>

Supplementary: If you want more another good presentation by Kohn is here:

Eduardo Kohn on “sylvan” thinking and talking to forests

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ynl9XwwKUZ8>

Anthropology as Cosmic Diplomacy: Toward an Ecological Ethics for the Anthropocene

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87yJKnVSd0k>

Supplementary (if you feel up to it:

Introduction section to *How Forests Think*

By Eduardo Kohn

Native American Botanist/Writer Robin Wall Kimmerer
THE SERVICEBERRY An Economy of Abundance

<https://emergencemagazine.org/essay/the-serviceberry/>

(also as a podcast)



Outdoors-Thinking like an urban forest/beach/coastline/park -

If you have already “found” your place and if it is not too far, go to that place and check in with it for 15-20 minutes before joining your group and thinking/exploring the following questions

If one were to extrapolate “thinking like a forest” to the contested ecologies of Vuosaari, what might these look, sound, sense like?

What do seas know, what do soil microbes know what do lichens know, what do fungi know, what does moss know, what do deer, birds, trees know and how do/might these interspecies knowledges interact or combine in knowledge-assemblages including the knowledges of absent beings (absent presences)?

How might urban human and non-human actors mimic or interweave with these knowledge assemblages?

Respond to these questions in any way you like and with any media you like

Are there examples of what Kohn would regard as indexical or iconic signs to be found?

What relationships of interdependence are there to be found?

Questions for Robin Wall Kimmerer

How do you feel about Robin Wall Kimmerer's juxtaposition of abundance and scarcity?

Why/how do you suppose an argument about abundance seem so difficult to erm swallow 🍒🐼🐼?

If there is (for now) "no outside" to capitalist systems, is it plausible to imagine practicing reciprocity and gift-economical practices within/alongside monetary ones?

Other thoughts about RWK?

How do you understand forest or sylvan thinking and what examples does Kohn give?

How does Edouardo Kohn see art and science as similar to each other, regarding to poesis?

"I use sylvan thinking to talk about kinds of thinking that are not necessarily symbolic"

When we represent through images, when we draw when we dream when we read gestures or emotions, or our metabolism, all those kinds of being are representational but they are not necessarily symbolic"

Indices and icons make up the thinking proper to forests. Humans erroneously assume that language (the symbolic) is the only type of sign use, the only type of thinking.

We measure the world by this symbolic linguistic standard and we find that it falls short.

Some Edouardo Kohn Quotes

The following 2-3 pages are notes I have made from the Edouardo Kohn podcasts I have flagged for you as well as the book itself.

‘A thinking forest is not a metaphor (Donna Haraway on Kohn)

A jaguar thinks, a plant thinks, But maybe assemblages of entities which we might call a forest thinks’

‘Mind here refers to that process wherever in the universe it is found of learning by experience—evolutionary dynamics=mental dynamics; wings learn about currents of air and evolve accordingly.

This is an example of thought, it is a kind of intelligence... scientific intelligence’.

‘Biodiversity hotspots like rainforests are a density of such intelligences and thoughts’

‘Ayahuasca and dreaming==scientific processes; they are also about amplifying learning and disrupting other ways in which humans think’

‘Children forming strong sensuous relations with other kinds (rocks)’

How do you understand cosmic diplomacy according to Kohn

How does Kohn describe political implications of sylvan thinking?

Proposal for COP21, Shamans as dream activists,

Ayahuasca as method for political project of giving life to Sylvan thought? A way to become what Haraway might call **oddkin**

Active processes of knowledge production via non humans in forest via:

Images—Cryptic insects The Catydid insect that looks like a leaf (has iconic resemblance to a leaf)

When you lie face up you don't look like prey to a jaguar.

Both of these examples reveal important processes of iconicity and intersubjective thought; ie Thinking about what the other things:

“Imagistic words, tsupu. You feel what it means. The only way to grasp this imagistic logic is to feel it”

“Icons can only be known from the inside”

“If I tell a story with an image and everyone gets it—that is an iconic experience”

Absential Quality—Absence is a kind of non-existence that is real.

“Catydids represent an absent leafy environment.

They do this for an absent future generation.

And due to the absent dead that did not look enough like a leaf and were noticed and eaten”

Play and flourishing. Open processes. Not just means-end tight telos

Generality—moving across difference (Edouardo Kohn gives the example of a tick) creating a “kind” (kinds that bleed)

Formal generalisations being a different kind of context

Spirit Ecologies— How can one bring spirits back into concept work and conversation without relegating them to the world of belief/without being branded a believer

“Moving among worlds is not just an scholarly endeavour. It is a political act.”

How do you understand Kohn’s process of sketching as a research method?

How do you understand Kohn’s care of his grandmother’s archaeological collection and his grandmothers
decontextualized, haptic relationship to the objects

How do you understand Kohn’s use of the instruments to the forest.

‘allow sylvan sounds to think themselves through us’

Practice Assignment description & Proposed schedule (for discussion)

Objective: To conceive of an art design or media response to the complex and often contested urban ecologies of Vuosaari that opens space for more than human agencies.

Exam week: meet with groups

Read “A Transmaterial Approach to Walking Methodologies: Embodiment, Affect, and a Sonic Art Performance” Stephanie Springgay & Sarah E. Truman.

Optional: Catch Up Lucy extra lectures found here <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/o1gbhvlz4f23jqo/AACgcaFEKnKj8mVGzyOT1xZHa?dl=0>

Discuss your proposed topics and where possible begin to form groups

Formulate a series of questions you want to ask as guides to your creative research around the complex more than human interconnections in Vuosaari

These can be questions related to site, to particular species, or “How can the traces of sand ... “How might the edges of a landfill ...“How might the memories of water....

They can also be questions related to a particular media or method “How might photography, how might an audio tour..”“How does walking ..”

Talk about how you might want to develop responses to these questions in/ through creative, site specific practice. Come prepared to present these ideas informally to the group on **2 March** **More PTO**

2 MARCH Very Tentative Presentations

Research Question Come with one or a series of (research) questions about your project.

A field of research Come with some ideas examples of beings doing this work/already responding to your questions, be they writers, artists, activists, humans? non humans?

Methods of research Come with a proposed method or series of methods of creatively exploring your questions

Timeline Come with a proposed timeline

Decide whether we go for formal exhibition or no.

If we do, then decide upon roles re exhibition organising

9-16 MARCH

The Villa is booked by other parties 9 and 16 March

Instead I am scheduling independent project development work & consultations with Lucy. Venue? Vuotalo? TBD

23 MARCH

More formally, present developed ideas to group (including research question, critically evaluate other works/projects and inspirations, argue for chosen methods, and how project has evolved)

Discussion of presentation/ preparations, press etc

30 MARCH final developments exhibition preparations, press etc

6 APRIL Presentation or exhibition