

Choosing which culture to feed

An Open letter about friendships and a call to desert Agir Pour Le Vivant

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“[i]t’s time to recognize that nature is the largest company on Earth working for the benefit of 100 percent of humankind – and it’s doing it for free”

Deputy Head of the Species Programme¹

IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature)

“Kinship exclude as well as include, and they should do that.
Alliance must be attentive to that matter.”²

Donna J Harraway. *Staying with the Trouble*.

Dear Jean-Paul Capitani, Laurent Joffrin, Julien Vidal, Francis Hallé, Anne-Sophie Novel, Pierre Rabhi, Béatrice Kremer-Cochet, Marc André Selosse, Nastassja Martin, Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux, Mohamed Mbougar Sarr, Dénétem Touam Bona, Didier Gascuel, Romain Troublé, François Sarano, Lisa Garnier, Alexandre Jost, Grégoire Lois, Tiphaine Calmettes, Stéphane Durand, Vinciane Despret, Julien Grain, Tarik Chekchak, Estelle Rouquette, François Sarano, Eric de Kermel, Joanna Rzezak, Thierry Thevenin, Marion Cotillard, Jean-Michel Jarre, Isabelle Stengers, Didier Sicard, Marc Henry, William Suerinck, Bruno Dal Gobbo, Pierre Champy, Joel Labbé, Jean François Masson, Jacques Echard, Dr Sankaran, Abdelaziz Yaacoubi, Stéphane Mequignon, Grégoire Lois, Alain Toledano, Patrick Madelenat, Aline Gelman, Véronique Le Normand, Guibert del Marmol, Jean-Philippe Pierron, Aline Mercan, Pierre Lieutaghi, Julien Desprès, Ernst Zürcher, Pauline De Boever, Alain Caillé, Stéphane de Freitas, Emmanuel Druon, Philippe Durance, Guibert del Marmol, Gilles Boeuf, Isabelle Delannoy, Karim Lapp, Aurélie Piet, Bernard Stiegler, Dominique Bourg, Valérie Cabanes, Marie Toussaint, Olivier Darné, Corinne Lepage, Emilie Rousselou, Rodrigo Arenas, Sophie Swaton, Céline Loozen, Gilles Clément, Valérie Chansigaud, Christophe Robert, Jean Rakovitch, Ramin Farhangi, Edgar Morin, Cyril Dion, Xavier Mathias, Mathilde Imer, Lionel Astruc, Marc Dufumier, Vandana Shiva, Baptiste Morizot, Gilbert Cochet, Sébastien Blache, Lan Anh Vu Hong, Roland Feuillas, Ananda Guillet, Xavier Poux, Emilie Rousselou, Jean Jalbert, Erik Orsenna, Frédéric de Pitaval, Laure Adler, Nancy Huston, Sophie Marinopoulos, Estelle Zhong-Mengual, François Hers, Pierre Vinclair, Nicolas Bourriaud, Jean Blaise, Pierre Ducrozet, Julieta Canepa, Laetitia Dosch, Rob Hopkins, Jeanne Benameur, Céline Curjol, Coline Serreau, Sonia Wieder Atherton

We³ are writing to you as friends, not as enemies.

¹ Quoted in Sullivan, Sian, *The environmentality of ‘Earth Incorporated’*

<https://siansullivan.net/2010/06/16/the-environmentality-of-earth-incorporated/>

² Harraway J Donna, *Staying With the Trouble, Making Kin in the Chthulecene*, Duke University Press, 2016 – page 207

³ We are authors, art activists and deserters of the academy (Birkbeck College and Sheffield Hallam University) - co-founders of The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination, which since 2004 has brought artists and activists together to create new forms of civil disobedience and radical education. The labofii takes form in different habitats from the International Theatre festivals to squatted social centres, from museum commissions to co-organising

Many of your words and ideas have been irresistible anchors of inspiration which we often hold onto in the storms that blow through our trembling times. We have met some of you and shared our passion for protecting life together. Several of you visited our home on the zad⁴ (zone to defend) of Notre-dame-de-Landes where you came to support the victorious struggle against a climate wrecking airport. Others of you we crossed at festivals and forums where we were presenting our work together. Some of you share the same publishers as us and many of you we have yet to meet in person, and we look forward to that day. But sadly it will not be this August, in the summer heat of the southern French city of Arles at the *Agir pour le vivant* forum, because we will not be going, and this open letter, *Choosing which culture to feed*, asks you to embody a similar refusal, a collective desertion, because friendship always involves choices and consequences.

2020 has pushed us into an imagination battle⁵ of proportions that history rarely sees: Life or the economy first? Back to normal or not? It is a battle where not only are the ways we perceive and coexist with life more at stake than ever, but large proportions of life itself could face extreme poverty, evictions from their land bases and mass extinction in the next decades. In every battle one is forced to choose one's friends, *Agir Pour le Vivant* seems to us to be a perfect parable for such choices. The program sounds irresistible, all the right questions are asked, the right words and imaginary used. But the event is propped up by some deeply problematic associates for anyone who is concerned with the living: most of the “partners” (a term used for both our lovers and our business affiliates, and so much more “friendly” than “sponsors”) are part of the toxic logic that continues to treat life as having value only if it can be calculated as a commodity or a service within the market, the logic of enclosure and extraction, externalisation and extraterritoriality. In short the very logic of capitalism, the inverse logic of commoning, the form of life we strive for and we probably share with most of you.

As Donna Haraway taught us, one of the keys to this moment in the system's undoing, is learning to “make kin”. We must remember that this is not just about rebuilding relationships with the “more-than-human” worlds, but also about making conscious choices about who to befriend in the struggle to keep life living and flourishing despite the war being waged against it by the economy.

Some of you might think that we are falling into an old binary moralist activist logic, enemies on one side and friends on the other, far from the complex assembled and entangled symbiotic erotico-eco-logical composting and queering that we all love so much. But life always chooses. No organism can live without making choices, even at the most basic level. “Every cell” writes marine biologist become philosopher Andreas Weber “organizes the way it makes connections to neighboring cells, how it puts together its internal structure and outer membrane... It does so as a way of meeting its needs, producing the actions necessary to remain itself, to keep itself alive and to flourish.”⁶ At the heart of the process of life is the question: does this relationship bring more life, or less? It should be the same question we ask when attending events such as *Agir pour le vivant*. Baptiste Morizot, you reminded us so beautifully that this struggle is about “acting from the point of view of interdependences”, “to create alliances against the enemies of constitutive interdependences.”⁷ This letter is about the art choosing good relationships, and why the friends of our friends are not necessarily our friends.

climate camps, from running workshops in a conservatoire to co-ordinating trainings to defend the zad. Infamous for launching the successful campaign to free London's Tate Gallery from British Petroleum sponsorship, we are co-authors of the book/film *Les Sentiers de L'utopie*, La Decouverte, 2011 and live on the zad of Notre-dame-de-Landes.

4 www.zadforever.blog english

5 Brown, Adrienne maree, *Emergent Strategy. Shaping change, changing worlds*. AK Press, 2017

6 Weber, Andreas, *The Biology of Wonder : aliveness, feeling, and the metamorphosis of science*, New Society, 2016. P157

7 Morizot, Baptiste, *Manières d'être vivant. Zinquêtes sur la vie à travers nous*. Actes Sud, 2020. P 264



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"We are more than ever confronted by the sensitivity and fragility of the Earth" ("Nous sommes plus que jamais confrontés à la sensibilité et à la fragilité de la Terre") claims the stylish eco-pop web site for *Agir pour le Vivant*, (www.agirpourlevivant.fr), a forum which "intends to present solutions, dares to experiment and contribute to the writing of new narratives..." ("entend présenter des solutions, oser des expérimentations et contribuer à l'écriture de nouveaux récits...") towards "a new awareness for biodiversity" ("une nouvelle conscience en faveur de la biodiversité"). The week long event is organised by Actes Sud, one of French language's largest and most interesting publishing houses, whose director Françoise Nyssen is infamous for being given the post of Minister of Culture by investment banker become President Macron in 2018, and having to resign soon after, following the "mezzanine-gate"

If you scroll down the website, past the list of illustrious thinkers and artists, you will come upon a wall of the 26 "partners" logos. There are logos for public funded institutions (Arles tourist office or Natural Regional Parks of France); for liberal media outlets (Liberation newspaper or Kombini online news); for private-public corporations (Banques des Territoires or Compagnie National du Rhône); the rest are private multinational companies such as BNP Paribas bank or Mirova financial management corporation. The logo for the forum is of an interspecies humantree running, we think given the toxic corporate partners, he is probably running away from the event as fast as he can.

Perhaps the best way to look at such partnerships is not that these companies are supporting the forum, but rather that the forum is supporting their lie that they care about anything other than making profits and being prepared to destroy human and more-than-human lives to get it. It is not about clean or dirty money, it is about the currency of trust, and how highly it is valued.



This approach is what corporate business and governments circles call *The Social License to operate*. It is a public relations strategy invented in the mid-1990s, especially in oil, fossil fuel and extractive industries, but now widely used by all sectors. The basic idea is that corporations need public approval and support for potentially harmful activities. In order to gain such acceptability, they have to build “positive image in the eyes of politicians, diplomats, civil servants, journalists, academics, NGOs and cultural commentators.” writes artist, activist and naturalist, James Marriott, “these groups are known as the ‘special publics’ ... in the public relations industry... (sponsorship) is not provided as a form of philanthropy, but as an integral part of engineering the social and political circumstances that will best ensure the long-term security of... investments” in their contested destructive projects.⁸ In short, they must create the illusion of being benevolent, absorbing a positive image by associating themselves with the right partners, so as to correct their otherwise unfavorable reputation *and thus* be able to carry on business as usual.

The corporations desperately need *Agir Pour le Vivant* and its “special publics”, much more than the event needs the multinational's funding. These partnerships are a fundamental aspect of the companies’ business operations, more valuable than the money they might give, which is normally a tiny amount for them, given their multi billion budgets. In their logic, such a forum is a valuable asset worth investing in, because the returns are great. Whether we like it or not, our participation in such events means that we end up working *for* the very corporations we despise. The conference hall, brimming with fashionable trendsetting thinkers, becomes a wing of the companies’ Public Relations (PR) departments, whose job it is to detoxify the brand by weaving stories that make it desirable and trustworthy. This kind of PR operation is key at a historical tipping point like now, where trust in the system is collapsing. Basically, by offering our ideas and everything that we stand for in these settings, we end up working as image cleaners and imagination influencers for the toxic machines, and we do it for a fraction of the costs of a real PR company.

The mission statement of MHP (i.e. the PR company working for BNP Paribas, one of the event’s partners) is in that sense illuminating and summarised in their slogan “driving growth, earning trust”. “What a company stands for – its values, purpose and culture – is just as important as what it does” explains MPH on their state of the art hyper designed website: “Masterbrands play a growing role, audiences are increasingly interconnected, trust is fragile, society is more activist, (...) a single Tweet can wipe billions off a company’s valuation (...) Brands that advocate a cause or commit to tackling a problem gain recognition, retain and attract talent, and deliver on the bottom line.”⁹ The bottom line being maximising profit at any cost.

8 Marriott James, "A Social Licence to Operate" *Not If But When: Culture Beyond Oil*, Platform/Liberate Tate, London, 2011.

9 <https://www.mhpc.com>

Faced with this, one might feel that a possibility is to radically denounce the sponsors during the event to demonstrate our “freedom to say what we like”, make a scandal. But this is embodying the role of the fool in the corporate green palace. It feels good, therapeutic and cathartic and the audience loves it. But the drivers of the toxic machines embrace being confronted with radical words and ideas, it only goes to further proving their open mindedness. All the fool does is to open a relatively safe stage for the upper echelons of the corporate staff attending, where they can test the confidence in their ideas, and incoherent discourses, far from the dangerous glare of the news channels.

Some of you may argue that the most important thing is that your ideas get out there, in the public sphere, that the context does not matter, ideas change worlds and there is a public thirsty for that. We need your words and your ideas, but when they feed a culture that turns away from life, they lose their power of resistance. *Corporations at the service of life* (L'entreprise au service du Vivant) is the title of one of the forum's highlighted workshops. It seems to us that *Life at the service of corporations* would be a greater reflection of the actual beat of the forum, which you will have no choice but to dance to if you attend.

We don't have the space for a complete cartography of the partners and their behaviors towards life but let's look at a few examples to understand the story of toxic friendships. Such a cartography could be useful for a journey through the fantasy landscape of contemporary green capitalism and its profound incoherences, which might well be the most important battle field of imaginations in today's struggle for ecological justice. As we write, a World Economic Forum, virtual summit with the world's largest oil, food, energy and tech companies just finished. Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman summed up the meeting saying: “In short, we need a ‘Great Reset’ of capitalism”. We are at a turning point. The old culture is dying, and many of its old logics are fighting to survive, these are always the most intense and dangerous moment to make choices in.



The Amassada Commune Libre, against RTE's Transformer. Saint-Victor-et-Melieu (Aveyron)

We are writing this from our caravan entangled with a thick hedgerow in the shadow of two century old oak trees, on the zad (the zone to defend), exactly where they wanted to put the duty free shops of their international airport, and so it makes sense to start with the partners who have a relationship to zones that defended themselves against destructive infrastructures. The most obvious is RTE (Réseaux de Transport d'Électricité), Europe's largest electricity transmission company, builders of pylons, managers of the electricity grid and a key player in the new booming "smart grids" and renewable energy markets. They are planning to build a mega-transformer on 7 hectares of agricultural land at Saint-Victor-et-Melvieu (Aveyron) to service 1000 industrial wind-turbines planned in the region, with high tension power-lines to export electricity to the Spanish and Moroccan markets. But in 2014 on land that a peasant farmer had refused to sell to RTE, local residents and rebels built the *Free Commune of l'Amassada*, with cabins and straw-bail houses in the way of the bulldozers. To compensate the farmer and disrupt RTE, the 2000 square meters was turned into a common property with thousands of people buying shares, thus creating a bureaucratic nightmare for RTE who would have to expropriate everyone. Meetings, parties, radical folk songs, apple juice, cheese and new friendships were made at *l'Amassada*, until the autumn of 2019 when drones, tanks, helicopters and hundreds of riot police arrived to turn this commons into a pile of sawdust and erect razor wire fences to begin the work. This "new green industrial revolution" has the same toxic logic of the old one: extractivism and enclosure. Perhaps RTE thinks its partnership with *Agir pour le Vivant* will make us forget the struggle "Against the transformer and its world" and the bad PR it brought them.

Arles sits in the watershed of the Rhône, and la Compagnie nationale du Rhône (CNR's) job is to turn its flow of water into electricity and irrigate industrial scale agriculture by damming the river. They too are increasingly expanding into solar and wind. The private public partnership company tried to build its 20th dam in the 1980s, locals and fisherfolk resisted, in what was known as la bataille de Loyettes. It was one of France's first dams to be cancelled because of its threat to an ecologically sensitive site. Globally dams have never had a good image, every year between 40 and 80 million people, mostly the rural poor, are displaced from their lands, to provide electricity to the cities. In France, agri-business irrigation dams have a particular bad reputation after the conflicts at the zad of Sivens against one, resulted in the police killing 21 year old botanist and activist Remi Fraisse.

CNR is half owned by Engie, France's "leader in energy transition". The fossil fuel and nuclear power producing company made waves in the "green" energy markets in 2015 by selling some of its Dutch and German coal fired power stations and buying up industrial renewables around the world. In this climate crisis, owners of coal fired power stations have a simple choice: either they decide to shut their polluting plants down (and assuring a just conversion for its workers) or sell them to another company that cares less about its green credentials and is happy to continue to burn coal. Engie did the latter¹⁰. When Engie's CEO writes "Let's put the environment at the heart of economic recovery" (Le Monde, May 2020) he doesn't mention that his strategy remains within a logic at the heart of capitalism, i.e externalisation, displacement of the problem (to continue to make profits) rather than actually working towards genuine solutions. What is bad for capital is "Reputational Risk"; what is bad for life is a culture that has turned away from it.

10 Whilst simultaneously expanding its "natural" gas holdings, and in 2018, building a brand new coal power station named 'the red dragon' in a region where burning coal has already caused the highest number of cancer cases in Chili and a plague of respiratory illnesses.



Rebel towers built at the zad du Testet against Sivens Dam, October 2014.

Business cannot live without strong ties and trust in its banks : BNP Paribas has decided to partner *Agir Pour le Vivant*. One of Europe's biggest banks, not only are they very present in tax havens¹¹ but have always been France's biggest financiers of the fossil fuel industry and are thus directly responsible for fueling the expansion of the most destructive energy sources. In 2015, they sponsored the COP 21 UN climate talks in Paris, and together with Engie, won the Pinocchio award, a prize given by Friends of the Earth and Action Aid, to companies “whose activities have a direct impact on the climate and communities around the world, and whose influence, through lobbying, promoting false solutions or greenwashing weakens or destroys climate policies, or undermines action on climate change”. Between 2018 and 2019, as Greta Thunberg's voice entered households everywhere, the youth climate movements erupted and the UN IPCC scientists report said that if we want to avoid the worst of the climate catastrophe we had 12 years left for “rapid far reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society”¹², BNP Pparibas, whose climate policy is described as “a lasting commitment to a sustainable future”, became Europe's largest funders of fossil fuels increasing their extractivist portfolio by 72 percent¹³. This summer they are bailing out the ailing oil shale business of the US, which was on the verge of bankruptcy following the crash in oil prices during the pandemic.

11 https://www.financeresponsable.org/fiche-entreprise.php?id_entreprise=17

12 <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

13 <https://reclaimfinance.org/site/en/2020/03/18/bnp-paribas-massively-increases-fossil-fuels-financing/>



Protest against Fracking in front of BNP Paribas. Friends of the Earth France.

But the event has not just made partnerships with those still stuck in the old world of extractivist, “nature as resource” logic of industrial capitalism. The forum aims to “rethink the way in which all of life lives side by side” (repenser la manière avec laquelle l’ensemble du vivant se côtoie). Some of those rethinking the new relationships of life within the “new spirit” of capital are Mirova, an asset management company creating “sustainable value” with their specialism: “natural capital”. The imaginary of life as an ever changing dynamic adaptive networked system has influenced capital for decades, as historian of science Christophe Bonneuil writes: “nature becomes (or re-becomes as that was the Darwinian vision) a juxtaposition of fluctuating species and individual freelancers rather than a big orderly Fordist factory”¹⁴ What has value in this growing new frontier of finance are the eco-services that nature can provide, biodiversity becomes an asset like every other, with market values and most importantly maximum returns. Everything can be traded in what Matthew Kiernan author of *Investing in a Sustainable World: Why Green is the New Colour of Money on Wall Street* calls the “sustainable investment revolution”, poised to re-engineer “the very ‘DNA’ of the capital markets”. Carbon emissions and carbon sinks, rivers and water quality, forests and national parks, everything is now a potential profitable asset for its services to life¹⁵.

The infamous 1997 *Nature* article by Costanza valued the biosphere's annual services at 16-54 trillion dollars. Life is finally entirely integrated and instrumentalised by market logic, and “markets (are) constructed as the realm through which environmental damage can best be mediated, mitigated and governed” without conflict in the smooth liquid abstraction of finance. As critical researcher in this field Sian Sullivan explains, we are seeing “the modelling of both conservation practice and understandings of the non-human world in terms of banking and financial concepts.” Forums like *Agir pour le vivant* are part of the smooth consensus building spectacle that “capital needs to create new natures that it can see. This requires that the earth-in-crisis is rethought and reworded such that it is brought further into alignment, conceptually, semiotically, and materially, with capital.”¹⁶

14 <https://books.openedition.org/irdeditions/21885?lang=en>

15 Such financial instruments are novelty playthings for the bigger asset management companies: Minerva is 'an expertise of Natixis investment managers'. In 2015 Natixis had 625 billion euros to play with, Minerva just 12 billion. Natixis fossil fuel portfolios once included 158 million euros invested in the Dakota Access Pipeline, until campaigners and the 'water defenders' forced the bank to disinvest in 2017. (As I write the pipeline running across sacred indigenous land is finally cancelled by US courts three years after the protests) and the company prides itself as being part of Act4nature international, making ten commitments to nature together with 10 fellow multinationals including Vinci, whose plans of building an airport on the bocage here was broken after 50 years of struggle.

16 Sian Sullivan <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4b5e/f1ff84a3242ccf736450d9d52a85af389e96.pdf>

Natural Capital

Mirova is a pioneer in financing sustainable land use, ocean management, biodiversity, and ecosystem-based climate activities, with an emphasis on blended value investments that seek to deliver the highest calibre social, environmental and economic performance.



Mirova website, July 2020. <https://www.mirova.com>

“Biodiversity is our roadmap for 2020” claims Mirova, whose asset managers find “solutions to sustainable development challenges, while pursuing financial performance.” It is the final enclosure of life, where it is no longer imagined and treated as a dead mechanistic resource to plunder, but a living flourishing chaotic flow, with its crisis and growths, no different from the financial markets which are there to make money by “protecting” it. But what those working for such innovative finance companies conveniently forget, is that life resembles a commons much more than a system of private property, based on relationships of reciprocity and mutual co-creation. In a commons there is no difference between users and resources, and the commoners’ higher aim for the system is that it is always able to continue to give life, not the bottomline of profit. Vandana Shiva, when you visited us at the zad speaking so beautifully in our library in the shadow of the lighthouse built where the future eaters wanted to build the airport control tower, you said “If we want a future, we want life, and that life has to be in common...”

And so we return somehow to our home on the bocage, for our last stop on the cartography. Whilst Vinci never got to build the airport here, one of the forum’s partners, design and branding agency Saguez & Partners might well have worked on the branding of what was meant to be a ground breaking example of an ecological infrastructure covering 1650 hectares of wetlands and farmland in concrete, with eco compensation offsets for the destroyed habitats, green living roof for the airport and shorter runways for the airplanes. So far Saguez & Partners have re-branded five international airports. They describe their work on the Marseille airport like a poem: “Olive green, sunny yellow, yellow sand, ocher yellow of the Montagne Sainte-Victoire, Van Gogh orange, Terre d’Oc red. The colors form a range on a white background, which calms travel anxiety. Here, planes land in the middle of nature.” These designers are the ingenious aesthetisers of the toxic machines, using design to mask infrastructure hostile to life. The shape shifters of capital, they can even turn Europe’s largest Hypermarket into something human scaled: « While maintaining the same enormous surface, the impression of gigantism has disappeared. » they tell us.



Saguez & Partners interior design for Aéroport de Paris. From <https://saguez-and-partners.com/>

Saguez & Partners have even invented new (trademarked) concepts such as “Hosping – the meeting of hospitality and shopping”, the aim of which is “To create a friendly and sensitive place that offers personalized experiences... shopping is dead long live Hosping !” The first building to embody this design concept is Chinese telecommunications giant and the world's biggest seller of smartphones, Huawei's global flagship store. To be built in China's capital of high tech, Shenzhen, more known for its suffocating smog and factories with suicide nets than its 'feel good' stores.

“Designers have become a dangerous breed”,¹⁷ lamented designer and educator Victor Papanek in 1971, long before even the designers themselves had to scrub clean their own image. Olivier Saguez, designer and CEO of the company, will likely be present in Arles. *Agir pour le vivant* and the forums partners have been publishing articles all summer for Liberation newspaper. In a piece entitled *Shouldn't design reconnect to the living world? Le design ne doit-il pas se reconnecter au monde du vivant?* Saguez wrote that design is “an art of observation that has much to learn from living things. By becoming more frugal, modest, thrifty, clever, 100% useful and necessarily sustainable, design will be closer to nature and the living.” (“c'est un art de l'observation qui a beaucoup à apprendre du vivant. En redevenant plus frugal, modeste, économe, malin, utile à 100% et forcément durable, le design sera plus proche de la nature et du vivant.”)

To us, the art of observation is perhaps the other most important skill we can learn after making kin in this fragile moment. Whenever we are invited to an event, conference, exhibition or theatre festival, the first thing we do, before we accept the invitation, is to look at the sponsors list. It might seem geeky and we recognise that this is often difficult in our always-busy-lives when our psychic landscape is besieged by electronic weapons of mass distraction firing neuron stimulating semiotic goods at us 24/7. But we see this as a discipline of attention, a way of trying to be present in this world despite the tendency towards autopilot. It is an attitude that gives us the capacity to truly inhabit a situation, to make choices between what continues to feed toxic cultures or ones that turn towards life. To pay attention, (the word's roots are - *ad-* “toward” - *tender* - “stretch”) to sense and understand the textures and life stories of something, is literally a stretch towards the other. All

¹⁷ Papanek Victor, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*, 2nd Ed. Academy Chicago, 2000.

life's sensing bodies involves a process of reaching out towards and transforming the other to become oneself.

As a result we have often refused invitations, including some big budget commissions, and written public letters to explain why we won't participate. For us this is not about being pure, but coherent and deciding which friends we contaminate (more Anna Tsing than COVID-19) with beautiful ideas and which we don't. And perhaps it is also a question of our cultures mental health. When our needs and values are out of kilter, when our forms of life no longer fit our ideas, when thinking and acting are out of tune, we loose our minds and our anchors on reality. And when we loose our minds we can no longer make choices, and when we can no longer make choices, we loose our way.

We urge you to chose in favour of life and friendship,

Yours,

Isabelle Fremeaux and John Jordan.

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