

*on how a collaborative project adapts to post-pandemic needs /
creating a space / sharing what's urgent / how to feel close through space /
giving time for human connections /
twisting organizing and participating / a new idea*

with **Bianca Bauer**
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*an ongoing collective exploration / learning from experiences of togetherness and uncertainty / reflecting on listening – with Bianca Bauer, Matteo Zoccolo – 08 june 2021
matteozoccolo.net/on_listening/conversations.html*

BB: Hello Matteo!

MZ: Hello Bibi!

BB: Yeah, I think I want to share some thoughts. I remember the beginning of the 1+1=3 paper. I remember super clearly when we were hiking in France, talking about what the fuck is art and how do we create it, what do we actually want to do... The thing that we were both very clear about was that we don't want to create art just for artists or for an elite class. Not to work or dance as a tool for someone else, but to actually create a space for sharing mutually and exchanging. How much good can actually come from being in a group with shared energies of people? You don't always have to be alone. Especially in dance, you're just on your own constantly fighting against others, with competition and stuff like that.

I don't know, if you want to add something, add. But I realized that it's actually crazy helpful and healing to have a group to create things. I think with this paper, I just changed my point of view of how I want to live. Maybe it worked in some ways and failed in others, but it gave me a new perspective on the fact that I don't have to deal alone with things. My God, I'm going to be fried here.

MZ: That's so hot, let's move to the shadow.

BB: And when I'm saying this, I realise I'm still learning. Yeah, I don't know, it was super necessary and urgent, which is also a word we used a lot. To know that there's a space for things that are urgent, and to share things that are urgent for ourselves, to actually realize that most of the time you're not alone with whatever is urgent, and whatever you want to say in whatever artistic or non-artistic way. Sharing knowledge and experience. And on the other hand, to create a space where things can stay, sit, be digested, where they don't have to be floating around in space, on their own.

MZ: And this is how the paper kind of came to life.

BB: To combine all the people that we cared about and to enable a space to share whatever is urgent to whoever is part of this, and also who's not. And to realize that, most of the time, if you say something that is urgent for yourself, it doesn't only concern yourself.

MZ: What do you mean?

BB: Things can move to different places when you start sharing them. They can grow and they can be held somehow by this virtual space, room or a paper that holds things with black ink on white paper. Creating space, actually, is something that I learned a lot from this process. Creating space for yourself in a space with others, creating a space for yourself and others to share something and to exchange and to learn from each other. And not to judge, but to just

work together and see where things go without a certain outcome or goal that needs to be achieved, or a certain form that needs to be kept, or some kind of expectation that follows pre-learned structures. But to say, fucking basic, what is urgent for me now, and to share that. Yeah, it was crazy to create something you can have in your hands that contains all of this.

MZ: We can be proud of it!

BB: And similar to what you said, if two people want to meet each other, if people want to share things and want to collaborate, it doesn't matter where they are. We had people from everywhere, and every person in each place has something urgent. Yeah, now it feels like a monologue. Do you want to share something?

MZ: It was a nice adventure. It was a good excuse to move to a city. It was a beautiful opportunity to meet people or to get to know people better. To deepen connections and friendships, to learn unexpected things. I think it's true what we said before, if people want to meet and share, they will. But it's also true that space is something that can facilitate this process a lot. So, if the space is created with the aim of actually sharing and being open to all the different opinions of the people, then people will feel more comfortable to share and to be there. And by our own free will, we will feel like sharing what's urgent for us and what are our preoccupations and concerns. It was also a possibility to overcome things, to share problems and to try and find solutions. And I can say that it was also a good possibility for me to learn how those things can be organized, how to find out strategies to connect people and to do things together. Maybe not only under the lens of art. I would say it's a project that is more connected to life than art, if we want to make this distinction.

BB: I agree.

MZ: And it's growing. Now it's actually a bit stuck, but it's part of the process. We were stuck many times, but somehow, it's still happening. And it's good to see other people taking responsibility and caring about the space so that it doesn't die, and people don't forget about it.

BB: About learning, building connections and how to behave in terms of human connections, we learned that it's necessary to be human, close to each other. At the beginning, we realized we just needed to call people, we needed to talk. In this world of becoming all anonymous and the same, just functioning and doing things to do things, what actually works and reaches people is when you're close, even if you are distant in space. When you talk to people, when you call them, when you take time... Time is such a precious thing. And it's necessary to build connections, to have a conversation, to just spend time with someone sharing and talking. And this can be from one to one or it

can be in a group of more people. This is actually something I really learned, the value of taking time for human connections.

And it doesn't have to be a certain amount of time on a regular basis. There's a lot of potential in giving your time to something. And I wouldn't even say it needs to be a certain energy to be there, because sometimes one has a lower energy than someone else, for different reasons. But the willingness to share time, in whatever state, can create strong things. We tried, in the beginning, to automate a very nice, friendly message that we copy-pasted and sent to everyone.

MZ: Didn't work.

BB: You just need to take the time to call, to share and to say, "Hey, you know, it's important for me that you're there too, because I care."

MZ: Actually, this is what Elnatan and I are trying to do now. After all these months in which we got in touch with people through emails, we realized that maybe the people around this community need to be taken care of. So, we will contact everyone in the group and maybe send emails that are not anonymous like we used to do, but which are really connected to the specific needs of everyone. Because, in the end, this space is for that. It's not for numbers, it's for people who have different needs, agencies and energies. And maybe this is the reason why in the past month, not many people contributed to the meetings. They probably could not see the value of what we are doing, and this is our fault. This is up to us, the organizers, how we communicate the way the space is structured, and the possibilities that the space has. And to do that, as you said, we need time and energy.

BB: Definitely. If you're trying to create the space, you need much more energy than time, maybe. But in general, every participant needs time as a basis for participating.

MZ: I don't know if we can say 'participating', because then you have a structure of...

BB: Division.

MZ: Exactly. This dichotomy between organizing and participating is also something we are trying to twist. Because the organizers participate, and the participants can organize.

BB: To share the responsibility. But I wonder, how to switch it? Because it needs something that holds it, maybe not everyone feels responsible. How to share the responsibility, if maybe for someone it's not that important?

MZ: That's the point. You cannot force people to believe that something is important. For me, it's not really about seeking this participation saying, "We have a space now,

we want people to participate.” Because that doesn’t really work. It’s very tricky... I think it worked very well at the beginning, when we were in a lockdown. Everybody was in different cities, but everybody was kind of facing the same situation. So, we had something in common, we had a lot of time and we thought that spending it together was a good idea. That’s why at the beginning it was very fast to produce the first issue of the paper. We did it in one month, many people contributing and discussing together every week. We had those big Zoom meetings of more than 15 people each time.

BB: For hours.

MZ: And nobody wanted to go to sleep! There was such a great energy in those calls that... Now, I wonder how to bring back those energies, now that we don’t share this surplus of time anymore. It seems like the pandemic is over, at least here in Austria, in Jerusalem and in other places. And people start again their routine, the school, their work, we are meeting people physically again. This is, of course, something we prefer to do. Sometimes it may feel like a loss of time to stay one evening in front of a screen, to connect to people that are not physically present in the same place. I wonder how this group will grow and how this space will evolve. Maybe in the future it will be a room, or it will be something more connected to a physical space. I don’t know.

BB: I think this is the biggest question. Now that things are opening up again, I wonder how to adapt the whole format that was created and that fit very well to the time in which it was created. Because I don’t think it’s a waste of time, but it’s a fact that people have other things to do now. I’ve heard from a few people that they really want to participate, but it’s hard because they need to work in the evenings, or they have other projects going on. But they want to participate. I don’t know how, I really don’t know. But maybe there needs to be some kind of other solution. Either these calls still happen frequently so that maybe sometimes two people join, and maybe sometimes 10 people join. Or maybe we create a different kind of space that enables people to have a dialogue about what is urgent for them, or what they want to share, but maybe not in a Zoom call. I also heard from a few that this Zoom triggers lockdown emotions, and people don’t want to sit in front of it, even if it’s a good tool to connect. But they just don’t want that anymore. And I really believe that it’s not about people not caring about this space. But they just see their reality as it is, which is a reality you can actually live without screens, thanks God. We choose what we didn’t have for the last two years.

MZ: Maybe we should start to send letters.

BB: Maybe! So that it becomes a package and it goes through all the contacts that we have. And each one

receives a letter every few months, or every few weeks. And then we collect everything that we wrote, or that people wanted to add, and this is the new paper!

MZ: Yeah, it’s something we can try out.

BB: We go back to the original writing letters, not fucking emails. It could be.

MZ: Let’s do it. Yeah, I think it works!

BB: Much more. Because then we get people to sit down with a real pen and a paper, to share whatever is urgent at that moment. And maybe they want to put flowers in it, or I don’t know, beer cans. And they just send it. Maybe someone sends it with a BlaBlaCar, someone sends it with the post, someone goes to another person in a different city to have a trip... It could be cool.

MZ: Yeah, this actually would connect people more than a call. Even though it’s harder and it takes more time and effort. Maybe we need to be more radical in this concept of connecting people in a post-corona environment.

BB: Yes! I would love to write a letter to... I don’t know, like Kaja in The Netherlands, and see what she takes with my letter to another place. How cool, I never thought about that before.

MZ: Then we do that!

BB: From the idea of a room we go to paper, then we go to Zoom meetings, and from Zoom meetings back to paper!

MZ: Gul!

BB: Gul!