

*on joining a project / 1+1=3 / openness / transcending individuality /
spontaneity / ideas for a radio*

with **Julian Michael Mintz**
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*an ongoing collective exploration / learning from experiences of togetherness and uncertainty / reflecting on listening – with Julian Michael Mintz, Matteo Zoccolo – 13 may 2021
matteozoccolo.net/on_listening/conversations.html*

MZ: OK, so, what I'm trying to do here is to collect a sort of shared knowledge about different things that, in my opinion, go more or less in the same direction, but maybe not. And I thought you might give some interesting insights.

JMM: I hope I can say something interesting!

MZ: It must be easy for you, since you live in Jerusalem! I was thinking that you are the one who found the 1+1=3 paper in a café, and decided to write to us and join the group. All the other people around this project are more or less connected to Bibi and me, since we are the ones who invited people in the first place. So, it would be nice to hear your opinion, how you perceive it, what's good, what's wrong, what can be better... About you being in the project.

JMM: Well, I think that maybe, under other circumstances, I might not have had the courage to email you and jump into such a thing with strangers from everywhere. But maybe because of the Corona, because of this big feeling of isolation I already had some kind of energy, and I wished I could talk to someone outside. To make contact with other people and see how they see it, how they experience it.

I couldn't believe what was happening. In here we are so used to having a crisis, to something wrong going on, or something fucks up and nothing is going as it should. This is the way Israel is. So, it was really crazy for me to see that something very similar is happening almost everywhere in the world. I guess it made me wish to make contact with people who have a similar concern and, I would say, sensitivity.

Also regarding art and the way art can change things. I think all of this added up, and this is why I thought I had to contact you. I also hadn't really had the chance to really meet people my age from other countries, and I always had the little fear that they might be so different. I felt I really wanted to explore communication with people who are not from here, and from Europe, especially, because I'm so interested in European culture and history. And when I met you all in the first meeting, I was so happy to see how friendly you were, and how easy-going and yet serious it can be. And also how creative it is, not only the paper itself, but the conversations and the way everyone thinks, which is a little bit different from what I am used to, but which I also find amazing.

I really remember the idea of meeting every 6 days and not 7, so that it's on a different day every week. I thought this was so creative, I would never have thought about it in a way! You know, it was so spontaneous and good. And it's always like that in this group, this is just an example. Everyone is so... Bright. I still feel that I'm so slow compared to everyone else.

MZ: Cool. Yeah, I mean, I'm super happy that you joined.

I think you are bringing something. And I really liked what you were telling about the Prophets and storytelling in the Bible, in one of our first meetings. And I was very fascinated that this kind of spirituality would come in. Maybe we need some more spirituality. It's all about science over here. I remember, when I was in Israel and Palestine, I was exposed to all these other layers that were just hidden to me before. And I thought it was crazy that people don't base their whole life exclusively on evidence. There is something more, and people feel it. This also creates other troubles...

JMM: Yeah, I don't consider myself spiritual, I guess. I'm not religious or something, but maybe there is something about living here that is a kind of Jerusalem Syndrome or something, you know?

MZ: Cool. Um, do you have any wish for this project? Do you feel like there is a direction in which we are going, a sort of bigger picture? Or is it more about the here and now, doing stuff without a clear aim?

JMM: Wow, I don't know. I think there is clearly a direction. I still don't know where that leads, but I'm sure that with time and with experience, it will become more and more... I mean, I hope it won't become more organized, I very much like the anarchistic side of the project. But I do feel that you don't cross the same river twice. So. I'm sure that there is some kind of development or progress that goes on, and I really hope that it will be possible to meet everyone at the end, you know, I would really love to. And to make something even more real together, more collaborative face to face. I hope sometime in the future it will be possible. It has a direction, but it is not deterministic at all, I think it's open-ended.

MZ: I pretty much agree. So, how would you justify what we are doing from a philosophical point of view?

JMM: I think it's an important question, even though I don't know if I can answer. Thinking and thinking together doesn't have to be with words, it can be through pictures, music, cinema, text, poetry... But when people think together, through the individual we can transcend individuality. I mean, everyone could make their own art, poetry or music, I guess. But there is something about the tension between different individuals that makes it, I think, more relevant in the sense of it being based on what's happening around. I mean, it's relevant to the state of being of everyone. It is one picture that has an essence, which maybe you cannot define on itself, but it is there. I don't know if that makes any sense.

MZ: It does. It connects to the title of the thing, '1+1=3', right?

JMM: Yeah, exactly. There is something about not being

alone, that gives you... Yeah, I think humanity is the shared collective memory and shared collective thinking of a group, which also comes from the individual and transcends it. This is exactly what 1+1=3 means. How did you see it when you started it?

MZ: You mean when we initiated the project?

JMM: Yeah.

MZ: I guess there was this idea of doing something, just doing something with people. To act more at a structural level. So, we were thinking of providing a space for other people to do stuff, and for us to meet people who were our friends. We're not like strangers. And of course, I think it's very connected to the pandemic, that was the need at the time.

And I'm happy to see that this project continues even when the pandemic, hopefully, is gone. I mean, here in Austria it's pretty OK, all the restaurants and stuff will open in one week or so. I know that in Israel it's much better. And yeah, I still want to meet people and I still want to take care of this space, somehow, even when I can also go outside and grab a beer, which I couldn't do in the past months.

JMM: Yeah.

MZ: And there are other projects I followed that were born as a reaction to the pandemic and died together with the pandemic. I'm happy to see that this project is having a second life, overcoming the end of the lockdowns, or at least in Europe and Israel, because now in India, where Anjali is, the situation is definitely not good. And I hope this will bring many things in the future. It's, like an organism on its own, now it's up to us to keep it alive and to evolve into new forms. Maybe in the future it will be a radio program or, you know. Actually, how do you see the future of this project, if you think everything is possible?

JMM: I mean, radio sounds great! It was always a dream of mine to make radio.

MZ: Same for me!

JMM: Yeah. There's something about radio that's much more interesting than television.

MZ: I think it's the loss of images. It's a colder medium.

JMM: Yeah, it feels more flexible. You can do a lot more with it.

MZ: The structure of radio is interesting too. You have a sender and many receivers. But what happens when the receivers can come to the studio and send, like in the 70s with Radio Alice in Bologna? Actually, we are also doing it

now, on a smaller scale. We have a small handmade radio transmitter in Linz, in the context of a project we called hörraum.

JMM: Oh, really? That's amazing!

MZ: Yeah. Radio, which is the most unbalanced structure between who can speak and who listens, I think it's much more participative than what we might think.

JMM: It's more like reading.

MZ: Exactly. It's much more about language. The message is not only the sound that people receive through the radio device, but it's also how they process this information. It's a low-definition medium, there is much more space to fill in the gaps. I mean, it's a bit McLuhan...

JMM: Exactly.

MZ: I believe there is a great potential in radio art, or even radio without art.

JMM: It's also interesting for someone who studies music like me, who is surrounded by musicians. It's such a closed world, in a way. Musicians are artists, but especially classical musicians, in my experience, don't really have an interest in other forms of art, or other forms of communication. Which is really interesting, and weird, in a way. I always think that you cannot understand some music without having read novels or seen movies. Nothing is separated. For me, it's really great to meet people who are as serious in what they do as those musicians I know, but much more open-minded. And much more spontaneous in the way they react to things. And this spontaneity is very deep. That's what I felt from the meetings, that the stream of consciousness in our conversations are not superficial at all. I mean, they really get to the essence of things, which is great. I have very few friends and teachers who have this ability to think that way.

MZ: I can feel you.

JMM: But what about the other radio project you were talking about?

MZ: So, the initial idea of radiosq was to have this tension of something that happens only now and in a specific place. It's an event, a happening that doesn't repeat itself. And we were working days to produce these crazy compositions.

JMM: That's so amazing, wow!

MZ: We were putting field recordings, people speaking, WhatsApp voice messages and music together, working each time in collaboration with different people. My friend

Luisa was into Ableton, so there were all these jazzy rhythms. And then, we were broadcasting them, but only once.

JMM: How did you do that? Online?

MZ: Yeah, it's a website called www.radiosq.net. There was a play button popping out after the countdown reached zero. You're listening live, you cannot go back and forth, you cannot listen to it twice. And it was feeling like we were losing a lot of time, but we actually had a lot of time! It was during the lockdown in Jerusalem and Bolzano, we could spend days producing these pieces, and then just around 10 to 50 people would listen to it. We never had a big audience, just a small community of people who wanted to listen to us every few days.

JMM: Wow. Did you also perform it live or was it pre-recorded?

MZ: It was not performed live, but the way you perceive it is live. I mean, people would text us saying, "You so crazy, guys! How can you do that, live?" Actually, it's not a proper radio because we didn't have money to buy a server service to be able to stream live, online. It's just some HTML and JavaScript which makes it look like live.

JMM: But it works! It also looks great.

MZ: Thanks! But now this space is dead, nothing has happened since... too many months. But people still know about it. We recently created a WhatsApp group, that is called '... --- ..- -.- ..', which is 'sound' written in Morse code.

JMM: Alright.

MZ: I can also invite you, it's a very inclusive and open WhatsApp group. You can call whatever you want, people just send audios and voice messages with sounds, with not a lot of language involved, I have to say. This has been happening since this winter, and every once in a while, someone sends an audio and then other people react to it, but they don't know each other, they are mostly friends of friends of friends.

JMM: It can be an idea for a social network.

MZ: Yeah, it's a sort of small-scale social network with around 60 people. And so, this is the latest development of this project. Luisa's and my wish is that we can re-birth this online platform also involving other people. That was also the main idea. We wanted to provide the space, and the broadcasts were made by us, in collaboration with people. So, for example, one day I met a friend in Jerusalem, Mariona, to record the sounds of the bread baking. Then we were sending the audio files back and forth to Luisa in

Italy. We called it ‘the bread concert’. Another time, Luisa interviewed her grandma, who speaks only a very specific dialect from north Italy. Another time it was about the political situation in Jerusalem... It was a sort of small residency program, in which we would produce audio pieces and broadcast them.

JMM: I think it’s great.

MZ: And if you said you’d like to make a radio, then let’s do it, let’s give this project a second life!

JMM: I would like to, yeah! If I can make anything, I would love to. I’m definitely up for it.

MZ: Cool, then let’s work! Do you have ideas?

JMM: So, maybe I can share something with you, if you have time.

MZ: I have the whole afternoon.

JMM: Great, I share my screen.