

Synthesizing Knowledge

- **METHODOLOGIES**
- **EPISTEMOLOGIES**
- **WORLDS**

symposium on interdisciplinary, collective, reflexive, affective, and socially engaged research in art, design, humanities, and social sciences

5 – 7 December 2022, Faculty of Fine Arts
Brno University of Technology

Synthesizing consists in composing, combining, joining, and togetherness. Synthesis describes bringing things together, causing them to interact with one another in ways that give rise to a higher order of emergence, exceeding the sum of its parts. Synthesizing, as characterized by the action of multiple components interacting in entangled and situated ways, begets complexity, nonlinearity, randomness, collective dynamics, and sympoietic becoming.

Building upon the notion of synthesizing, this symposium aims to explore methods and formats of research with worldbuilding capacities; research that can configure and reconfigure worlds, affording new, desirable realities and futures. To this end, this symposium convenes researchers in the fields of art, design, humanities, and social sciences to discuss the ways in which they work (or want to work). In this forum, researchers shall share their experiences with situated research (whether embodied or materially embedded), reflexive research, collective research, collaboration and sharing, interdisciplinary experiments, and affective and socially engaged approaches to research.

Some of the questions to tackle with the group of the symposium participants are:

What are the conditions we work from and how do they affect the way we work?

How do we practice interdisciplinary, collective, reflexive, affective, and socially engaged research in art, design, humanities, and social sciences? What makes such research possible?

How does collaboration change how we work?

How do we deal with the diverse publics we create and the diverse audiences we feel committed to?

How do we evaluate multimodal research projects?

How can we “undiscipline” academic knowledge production?

The format for this symposium is an *unconference*. “Unconferencing” constitutes an innovative approach to scholarly assembly that abandons the traditional program of individual presentations in favor of a lively collective debate. Unconferences are participant-driven gatherings without pre-planned sessions, thus enabling attendees to set the agenda according to their most urgent and unfolding needs. Unconferences facilitate and promote peer-to-peer learning, collaboration, and collective, imaginative creativity.

Open Program of Short Keynotes

**DELIVERED AS PART OF THE
SYMPOSIUM/UNCONFERENCE
SYNTHESIZING KNOWLEDGE**

Monday 5 December 2022, from 4 pm

■ **MARTINA RŮŽIČKOVÁ:** *Uncovering the Infrastructure of Segregation*

How can we... improve living conditions of residents in council housing?

RUVK is an interdisciplinary research group comprising designers, architects, artists, social scientists, and a lawyer. Martina Růžičková, a member of RUVK, will talk about some of their activities which they understand not only as research but also as an intervention. As part of their activities in Velký Krtíš, a small town in Slovakia, RUVK assisted council housing residents in communication with the municipality owning their homes and, eventually, took part in a direct confrontation between the tenants and the municipality in the eviction court case, providing support to the tenants facing the eviction crisis and submitting evidence to the court. Drawing on their intervention, Martina Růžičková will discuss the ways in which research data can be recontextualized for other than academic forums, such as their analysis of urban planning documents that was used as a base for an art exhibition and speculative design prototyping or the aforementioned court case involvement. Procedural evidence and visual records, she will argue, can be effective tools of persuasion and argument building in academia and beyond.

Martina Růžičková is a designer, artist, and researcher. She is a PhD candidate and an assistant at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Brno University of Technology. Her work addresses the question of how interdisciplinary design practices – and new approaches to design process that arise from it – can contribute to solve the complex and urgent problems of today.

Tuesday 6 December 2022, from 4 pm

■ **BOB KUŘÍK:** *The Late Times of More-Than-Human Resistance*

How to notice, approach, and analyze more-than-human forms of resistance in which people are not only fighting for nature or fighting against resource extractions but fighting together with various biological and geological allies in struggles where resisting agency is recognized and redistributed along multispecies lines?

Whereas the contemporary anthropology of resistance experiences a kind of resurrection, the related late times of climate crisis, extractivism, and exterminism garner yet a new urgency: to rethink resistance in the light of the turn to multispecies ethnography, in which attention is given to the agency of non-humans beyond their reduction to sources, symbols, or foods for humans. Building on the fieldwork Bob Kuřík and his students are conducting in the Western Carpathians, the talk will discuss the concept of resistance in political anthropology in relation to the agency of non-humans – their capacity to fight back and deny being controlled and dominated, form alliances, make social and political changes, affect more-than-human others in a political way, and thus also co-produce rebelliously charged effects, meanings, and interpretations.

Bob Kuřík is an assistant professor at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Charles University in Prague. His research captures issues from political and environmental anthropology, ranging from power, resistance, and protest to post-humans, geological worlds, and infrastructures. Together with his students and as a part of a new project, he develops The Carpathian Bestiary of More-Than-Human Resistance.

Open Program of Short Keynotes

**DELIVERED AS PART OF THE
SYMPOSIUM/UNCONFERENCE
*SYNTHESIZING KNOWLEDGE***

Wednesday 7 December 2022, from 10 am

■ **MARTIN ŽÁK:** *Permaculture Design Principles
as Tools for Creating and Sustaining Non-Hierarchical
Communities*

What are the pros and cons of non-hierarchical organizing? What makes creating and maintaining a non-hierarchical community possible? And how can permaculture design principles inform such an approach?

Drawing on his doctoral research on permaculture design and his experience with non-hierarchical communities, such as “Vegýna,” a fluid non-hierarchical community of people taking care of the faculty’s student club, of which he is an initiator, or “Ekobuňka” and “Orgán,” of which he is a founding member, Martin Žák will discuss what we can learn from permaculture design when engaging in (creative) community organizing.

Martin Žák received his Master’s degree from the Masaryk University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Musicology, as well as from the Brno University of Technology (BUT), the Faculty of Fine Arts (FFA) where he pursued his artistic practice in Intermedia Studio and Environment Studio. Presently, he is a doctoral candidate and lecturer at the FFA BUT. His research, teaching practice, and organizational activities concern permaculture design. He is an initiator of “Vegýna,” a non-hierarchical community taking care of the faculty’s student club, a founding member of student initiatives “Ekobuňka” and “Orgán,” and an active member of an academic senate at both FFA and BUT.