

PLANETARNI PERFORMANS

Članek obravnava pojem planetarnega delovanja med sodobno performativno umetnostjo in političnim podnebnim delovanjem. Z osredotočanjem na obširne zbirne dejanja, ki so jih ustvarili umetniki, kot sta Khvay Samnang in Tomás Saraceno, razvija planetarni pristop k performansu. Članek skozi umetniška in neumetniška dejanja, njihovo zgodovinsko in geografsko obširno infrastrukturo ter interakcije med človeškimi in nečloveškimi akterji predlaga planetarno politiko, ki naslavlja ekološke katastrofe današnjega časa na telesni ravni delovanja in njegovi povezanosti z znanjem.



Khvay Samnang, *Gumijasti človek/ Rubber Man*, Digital C-Print, 80 x 120 cm, 2014. Z dovoljenjem/ Courtesy of Khvay Samnang

Lahko bi rekli, da so dejanja bistvo performativne umetnosti. Dejanja se posnemajo, ponavljajo, spreminjajo, uprizarjajo, povezujejo in razstavljajo. V zadnjih desetletjih so umetniki izolirali posamezna dejanja (npr. hojo, skakanje, poziranje, streljanje) in jih postavili v središče svojega dela. Uprizarjali in preizpraševali so dogodkovnost in enkratnost dejanj ter njihovo ponovljivost in izgradnjo. V zadnjih letih je – kot reakcija na aktualne in prihajajoče ekološke katastrofe – prišlo do premika angažmaja. Poudarek ni več na posameznih dejanjih in njihovi (ne)ponovljivosti, ampak na zbiru dejanj, njihovi umeščenosti in ekologijah nelinearnih razmerij, ki jih ustvarjajo. Te zbirne zaznamujejo odnos med umetniškimi in neumetniškimi dejanji, njihova zgodovinsko in geografsko obširna infrastruktura ter interakcije med človeškimi in nečloveškimi akterji.

Enega od teh zbirov je ustvaril Khvay Samnang v svojem performansu *Rubber Man* (Človek Guma, 2014). Vidimo Khvajja, kako zliva mlečno tekočino po svojem golem telesu. Sprva se zdi, da se to preprosto in hkrati ekscentrično dejanje lepo umešča v zgodovino ameriške in evropske performativne in telesne umetnosti, ki je na ogled v galerijah, muzejih in gledališčih od šestdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja naprej. Toda Khvay

ne poliva svojega golega telesa v omejenem prostoru galerije ali na praznem odru gledališča. Sredi plantaže je njegovo zlivanje ukoreninjeno v številna druga dejanja in procese, ki so prav tako del performansa: rast kavčukovcev na plantaži v Kambodži, kapljanje lateksa iz prerezanih skorij ali njegovo tavanje po poljih in vaseh Ratanakire. Vsi ti procesi tvorijo zbir performansa. In četudi prva semena hevee, ki so jih Francozi uvozili iz Brazilije, vzpostavitev plantaž leta 1922, izgon domorodnih ljudstev iz province Ratanakiri in način današnjih procesov proizvodnje kavčuka ter globalna trgovina s kavčukom niso neposredno vidni v performansu, so neločljivo povezani z zbirom *Človek guma*. Brez njih pridobivanje, nabiranje in zlivanje ne bi bili mogoči. Z njimi kolonialne razsežnosti proizvodnje kavčuka ter današnji izkoriščevalski pogoji v trgovini s kavčukom ekstraktivističnega kapitalizma postanejo del performansa.

Interakcije med temi različnimi dejanji artikulirajo ekološko razsežnost performativne umetnosti in so izhodišče mojih razmišljanj o sodobni politiki dejanj. Namesto dejanja posameznika zbir dejanj z drugimi dejanji usmerja tisto, kar je opisano kot planetarna politika dejanj. Planetarno delovanje se navezuje na vprašanje, kako delovati v današnjem svetu, v času podnebnih katastrof in množičnega izumrtja ali, kot pravi Jennifer Gabrys: kako biti planetaren v praksi?³

Namesto razumevanja planetarnega delovanja v performativni umetnosti kot zgolj nove oblike politične umetnosti bom opisal, kako performativni umetniki pletejo mrežo dejanj med umetnostjo, vsakdanjim življenjem in aktivizmom. Tako kot je pojem performativnosti v zadnjih desetletjih omogočal transverzalno analizo umetniških in vsakdanjih praks, se planetarno delovanje loti stare razprave o razmerju med umetnostjo in življenjem in tako razširi razpravo na vsako planetarno uprizorjanje (tako človeško kot nečloveško). Kakšne umetniške prakse, načini proizvodnje znanja in dejanja se ustvarjajo s temi povezavami? Kako dejanja prenašajo svoj vpliv onkraj svojih kontekstov izvora in kateri novi, močni zbiri se z njimi pojavijo?

DELOVANJE S PLANETOM



3 Jennifer Gabrys, »Becoming Planetary«, e-flux Architecture, oktober 2018, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/accumulation/217051/becoming-planetary/> (zadnji dostop: 19. 10. 2022). O pojmu planetarnega v zvezi z aktualnimi besedili o podnebnih katastrofah glej: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021; Frederic Hanusch, Claus Leggewie in Erik Meyer (ur.), *Planetar denken: Ein Einstieg*, Bielefeld, Nemčija: transcript Verlag, 2021.

V dobi podnebnih katastrof se pogosto zdi, da je delovanje, še posebej vsakodnevno delovanje, postalo paradoksalno: po eni strani podnebne katastrofe in množično izumiranje vrst kaže, da vsako dejanje vpliva na Zemljo kot celoto in jo spreminja, po drugi strani pa se pogosto zdi nemogoče, da bi posamezniki nadzorovali te učinke z dejanji in na njih vplivali. Šele z združitvijo številnih dejanj nastanejo pojavi, kot je pregrevanje Zemlje in množično izumiranje vrst. Predati se ob tem očitnem paradoksu in se zateči v nedelovanje ali v prepričanje, da posamezna dejanja ne morejo ničesar spremeniti, ni samo cinično, ampak v luči aktualnih in prihajajočih katastrof pogubno za svet. Da bi naslovili nujna vprašanja družbene in podnebne pravičnosti, potrebujemo ne samo nova dejanja, ampak nove pojme delovanja samega.⁴

V performativni umetnosti umetniki, kot je Khvay Semang, raziskujejo nove in raznolike načine delovanja ter planetarne politike, ki jih spremljajo, pri čemer dejanj ne obravnavajo kot nekaj individualnega, ampak kot procese samega planeta: posamezno dejanje je del tega planeta, vpliva na Zemljo ravno toliko, kot Zemlja vpliva na druga dejanja. Z dejanji se ta svet udejanja, hkrati pa se z dejanji spreminja in modulira. Ta dejanja ustvarjanja sveta, kot bi dejal predstavnik teorije performansa, José Esteban Muñoz, povezujejo raznolike elemente nedokončanega kozmosa.⁵ V tem svetu dejanj človek ni niti središče niti izhodišče, in vendar je del teh dejanj: kot vmesnik vsak performer povezuje dejanja z dejanji in ustvarja iz sveta zbir človeške in nečloveške dejavnosti.

Zbire dejanj zaznamujejo velika negotovost in številne posledice. Njihove zapletene medsebojne povezave in nepredvidljivost delujejo na vseh ravneh. Zlasti podnebna katastrofa je eden od paradigmatičnih primerov, ki kaže, da tudi če imajo vsa dejanja učinek, je te učinke težko dojemati linearno. Linearosti pa ne gre nikakor zamenjati za kavzalnost. Tudi če niza dejanj ne moremo opisati kot linearne, ta nikakor ni brez učinka. Njegova logika vpliva je – kot je razvidno iz zgoraj opisanega paradoksa – tesno povezana z vprašanjem, kako se lahko dejanja navezujejo na druga dejanja. Namesto linearno-kavzalnih povezav planetarno delovanje zaznamujejo nelinearne, a učinkov polne interakcije.

Domnevni paradoks dejanj in njihovi skupni, vendar nelinearni učinki kažejo, da nihče ne deluje sam. »Ko ena oseba deluje, deluje več ljudi,« piše Judith Butler, ki poudarja, da je delovanje

4 Razmišljanja o delovanju črpajo iz številnih teorij, od feminističnih znanstvenih in tehnoloških študij (Karen Barad, Annemarie Mol) do performativne teorije (Judith Butler, Richard Schechner) in pragmatizma (Charles S. Peirce, William James). Namesto da bi uporabil te pojme v domeni umetnosti, bom izhajal iz teh teorij pri svojem razpravljanju o sodobni performativni umetnosti in politiki planetarnega delovanja, ki jih ponujajo za čas aktualnih in prihajajočih katastrof. Za pojem okoljske in podnebne pravičnosti glej na primer dela Kyle Powys Whyte. Z vidika severnoameriškega ljudstva Potawatomi Whyte razume podnebno katastrofo kot preplet zgodovine, ki so jo oblikovali kolonializem, kapitalizem, industrializacija in militarizem. Kyle Powys Whyte, »Way beyond the Lifeboat: An Indigenous Allegory of Climate Justice,« v Kum-Kum Bahvnani et al. (ur.), *Climate Futures: Re-Imagining Global Climate Justice*, London: Zed, 2019, str. 11–20.

5 José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, str. 195.

vedno ukoreninjeno v druga dejanja.⁶ Dejanja vplivajo na dejanja, hkrati pa na njih same vplivajo druga dejanja. Gre za »ekologijo praks«, kot pravi Isabelle Stengers, v katero so ljudje vključeni, niso pa njeno središče.⁷ Planetarno delovanje je v tem smislu vedno ekološko delovanje, pri čemer pa ne ustvarja enotnega procesa povezanega planeta. Bruno Latour je to poimenoval mreža človeških in nečloveških akterjev ali dejanja »Zemljanov med Zemljani«. Njegovo več-kot-človeško videnje zreducira svet ne samo na predmete, ampak razširja »seznam gibanj, ki jih je treba upoštevati« in ki ustvarjajo svet, kakršen je.⁸

V performativni umetnosti so se številni umetniki ukvarjali z oblikami planetarnega delovanja vsaj od druge polovice dvajsetega stoletja naprej, pri čemer so zbirali človeških in nečloveških uprizoritev bistven del njihovih del. Umetni podvodni greben Betty Beaumont (*Ocean Landmark*, 1978–89), biološko-tehnični ekosistemi Pierra Huygheja (med drugim: *Untilled*, 2011–2012; *Untitled (Made Ecosystem Centre Pompidou)*, 2013) ali plavajoča kmetija na newyorških rekah Mary Mattingly (*Swale*, trajajoči projekt od leta 2016) izhajajo iz razmišljanja o človeških in nečloveških zbiri teorije akter-mreža in novega materializma, pri čemer se osredotočajo na performativna razmerja, ki se vzpostavljajo med umetniškimi in neumetniškimi (pomorskimi, biološkimi, tehničnimi) dejanji.⁹ Kakšna planetarna politika je mogoča danes, ko performativna umetnost ne temelji več na posameznih dejanjih (posameznemu dejanju ali nizu dejanj), ampak na odnosih in zemeljskih zbiri?

Medtem ko lahko skoraj vsak performans dojemamo kot ekologijo številnih dejanj, je v zadnjih letih več umetnikov vzelo ekološko naravo performansa za izhodišče politike, ki je sama po sebi ekološka. Zanje je ekologija tako temelj kot logika novo zamišljenega načina delovanja kot takega. To politiko omogočajo zgoraj opisani zbiri človeških in nečloveških dejanj (njena ekološka antologija), vendar pa politika izrablja to stanje, da deluje ekološko, tj. v smislu, ki ga predlaga Félix Guattari: ekološka politika, ki transverzalno združuje družbene, psihološke in planetarne dejavnosti.¹⁰

Namesto posameznih dejanj se politike, ki jih predlagajo umetniki, kot so Khay, Beaumont, Huyghe in Mattingly, ukvarjajo s preobrazbo celega niza dejanj. Način, kako se ti nizi oblikujejo,

je ključ do politike njihovih del. Habitus (Bourdieu), performans in iteracija (Butler) ter vaja (Buchmann) so le nekateri pojmi, s katerimi so bili opisani načini delovanja v nizu dejanj. Vsem je skupno osredotočanje na ponavljanje in navado. Toda ponavljanje je samo ena stran niza. Dejanja so vedno del večjih zbirov, na katere vplivajo nelinearno: ustvarjajo in spreminjajo svet. Vsako dejanje v celoti premakne zbir.

ZNANJE-DELOVANJE-ZBIR

Teorija performansa in filozofija pragmatizma sta pokazali, da ne le zavestna človeška dejanja, ampak tudi vsako obliko človeške in nečloveške dejavnosti lahko štejemo za dejanja. Vendar pa izjave »vse deluje« ne smemo enačiti z domnevo, da je delovanje vse. Vsak zbir dejanj je hkrati poln pojmov in znanja o tehnikah in modulacijah. Dejanja so pogosto rezultat naučenih tehnik, hkrati pa tudi sama proizvajajo znanje in ustvarjajo vzorce. Gojenje semen, sadja in zelenjave na primer ne bi bilo mogoče brez tehnik kmetovanja in vrtnarjenja. Istočasno ta dejanja proizvajajo obsežno zbirko biološkega, geološkega, geografskega in ekonomskega znanja, ki spet tvori podlago za nove tehnike in načine delovanja. Svet dejanj je odprt zbir, neločljivo povezan z znanjem, tehničnimi predmeti in jezikom. Kako bi lahko razmišljali o predmetih brez razmišljanja o načinih, na katere se uporabljajo? Kako bi lahko razmišljali o znanju brez razmišljanja o dejanjih, ki jih sproža? Pomislimo na zemljevid brez potovanja ali na žago brez žaganja. Pomislimo na vse znanje o koncu sveta brez kakršnegakoli ukrepanja.

V diskurzu o podnebnih katastrofah in sprejetih in nesprejetih političnih ukrepih postane jasno, da je znanje-delovanje-zbir polno vrzeli in razlik. Psihologi temu pravijo vrzel med vrednostjo in delovanjem, pri čemer je ta opredeljena kot prekarnost znanja, ki zajema ne samo znanstvena dejstva, ampak tudi razmerje med znanjem in delovanjem.¹¹ Čeprav so znana vsa dejstva, se ne povezujejo z delovanjem. V našem času je ta vrzel najbolj značilna za stanje znanja in delovanja. Ko pisatelj Jonathan Safran Foer poziva k novemu ali drugačnemu pojmovanju znanja, govori prav o tej neskladnosti. Zanj pojem »verjeti« najbolje opiše način povezovanja znanja o antropogenih podnebnih katastrofah z delovanjem. Medtem ko »sprejemamo« dejstvo, da uničujemo planet, ne »verjamemo« vanj, pravi. V tem primeru, kot pravi Foer, nismo »nič boljši od tistih, ki zanikajo obstoj podnebnih sprememb, ki jih povzročata človek«. ¹² Pri tem, da verjamemo, namesto da sprejemamo, ne gre prav nič za opuščanje dejstev, ampak bolj za krepitev dejstev skozi delovanje. Verjeti pomeni znanje, ki deluje na podlagi delovanja, pri čemer potrjuje in ustvarja nove, drugačne zbirke. Verjeti pomeni znanje kot del niza dejanj, je nelinearno, vendar učinkujoče.

Tudi v performativni umetnosti dejanja ne predstavljajo nasprotja znanja in tehnike. Kot naučeni gibi, navade ali opra-

6 Judith Butler, »When Gesture Becomes Event«, v Anna Street, Julien Alliot in Magnolia Pauker (ur.), *Inter Views in Performance Philosophy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017, str. 179. Paradoks delovanja nikakor ni novost in je bil predmet razprave še v antiki kot »paradoks Sorites«. Če vzamemo iz kupa zrno peska, se kup ne spremeni. Enako velja za katerokoli drugo zrno peska. Kako lahko torej odstranjevanje zrn peska uniči kup? Ko zrna peska postanejo leti, imamo opravka z osrednjim problemom podnebne katastrofe. Andreas Malm, *How to Blow up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire*, London, New York: Verso, 2021, str. 143–44.

7 Isabelle Stengers, »Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices«, *Cultural Studies Review* XI/1, 2005: str. 183–96.

8 Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, Cambridge: Polity, 2018, str. 86–87.

9 Za vprašanje o nečloveški performativnosti in snovi kot sredstvu glej: Karen Barad, »Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter«, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* XXVIII/3, marec 2003, str. 801–31.

10 Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, prev. Ian Pindar in Paul Sutton, London: Athlone Press, 2000.

11 James Blake, »Overcoming the 'Value-action Gap' in Environmental Policy: Tensions between National Policy and Local Experience«, *Local Environment* IV/3, oktober 1999, str. 257–78.

12 Jonathan Safran Foer, *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019, pogl.: »Know Better, No Better«.

vljanje nalog in doseganje rezultatov so del zbira znanje-tehnika-dejanje. Dejanja se ustvarjajo z znanjem in tehnikami, tako kot se znanje ustvarja z eksperimentiranjem na podlagi dejanj. Izhajajoč iz potrebe po povezovanju znanja z delovanjem, da bi se borili z aktualnimi in prihajajočimi katastrofami, se vedno več performativnih umetnikov ukvarja z različnimi načini delovanja, z novimi možnostmi povezovanja znanja in delovanja.

V projektu *Aerocene* umetnik Tomás Saraceno v sodelovanju s skladom *Aerocene* ustvari niz performativnih struktur, ki združujejo umetnost, eksperimentalno raziskovanje in proizvodnjo znanja. Veliki, črnim balonom podobni predmeti se dvignejo v zrak, zgolj s pomočjo energije sonca in vetra. Gre za performans metastabilnih interakcij med človeškimi in nečloveškimi dejanji, ki iz teh letov delajo umetniške performanse, eksperimentalno odkrivanje možnosti ogljičnonevtralnega letenja in raziskovanje kakovosti zraka.¹³ Medtem ko se nekateri leti odvijajo v okviru umetniških festivalov, baloni pa so razstavljeni v muzejih, se podatki zbirajo v podatkovni bazi Public Lab (publiclab.org), kjer se povezujejo z dodatnimi podatki, zbranimi s celega sveta. Lokalne pobude, kot je bruseljski Filter Café, uporabljajo te podatke, da zahtevajo in izvajajo zapore cest na ulicah s posebej visoko stopnjo onesnaženosti zraka in prepričujejo občine, naj uvedejo omejitve hitrosti in prepovedi vožnje.¹⁴ Z združevanjem načinov letenja, merjenjem onesnaženosti zraka, obdelavo podatkov in političnim aktivizmom nastane zbir, v katerem znanje in delovanje ne obstajata neodvisno drug od drugega. Projekt *Aerocene* kot umetniški performans, proizvodnja znanja in politični aktivizem dokumentira onesnaženost zraka in sega na področje zbirov dejanj aktivistov proti onesnaževanju zraka in okolja, političnih institucij in univerzitetnih raziskav. Jennifer Gabrys imenuje to obliko performativnega ustvarjanja znanja *How to do Things with Sensors* (Kako početi stvari s senzorji). Pravi, da prakse merjenja ne samo mapirajo podatke, ampak »eksperimentirajo z novimi temami, izkušnjami, odnosi in okolji, ki jih lahko sprožijo prakse spremljanja«. ¹⁵ V smislu mreže znanje-dejanje performansi *Aerocene* ustvarjajo »druge oblike tehnično-oznanstvenega angažmaja in praks zaznavanja«. V povezavi z delovanjem ustvarjanje znanja ne samo »artikulira projekt okoljske ozaveščenosti«, ampak »ustvarja predmet, ki sproža nove oblike okoljske participacije in izpostavlja morebitne učinke naših materialnih življenj«. ¹⁶ Te interakcije med časovno in prostorsko porazdeljenimi dejanji v povezavi s praksami merjenja tvorijo politiko performansov *Aerocene*. Nelinearne povezave med delovanjem in znanjem, ki ne sledijo preprosti logiki uporabe, ustvarjajo prostor možnosti, ki povezuje umetniško delovanje,

politični aktivizem in vsakodnevno delovanje, hkrati pa mapirajo nova razmerja med vrednostjo in dejanjem.

Čeprav podnebno katastrofo določajo učinki človeškega delovanja, ta poziva k drugim načinom delovanja. Tako ni presenetljivo, da je raziskovanje planetarnega delovanja še posebej živo v času, ko se povezave med znanjem in delovanjem vedno bolj preizprašujejo, vrzel med vrednostjo in delovanjem pa postaja vedno bolj očitna. V tem smislu ustvarjanje novih zbir v umetniških in neumetniških dejanjih v performativni umetnosti artikulira planetarno politiko. To je politika, katere cilj je, če si znova izposodimo besede Gabrys, da nas uči, kako postanemo planetarni.

Prevedla Špela Bibič

GERKO EGERT (www.gwrkoegert.net) se ukvarja s performativnimi študijami na Inštitutu za uporabne gledališke študije na Univerzi Justus-Liebig v Giessnu. V svojem raziskovanju se posveča filozofiji in politiki gibanja, plesu in performansu, radikalni pedagogiki, procesni filozofiji in (spekulativnemu) pragmatizmu. Je soustanovitelj platforme za eksperimentalno proizvodnjo znanja Nocturne (www.nocturne-plattform.de).

13 Za merjenje onesnaženosti zraka so baloni opremljeni s senzorji DustDino. Za več informacij o senzorjih glej: www.aerocene.org/particulate-matter-sensor/ (zadnji dostop: 19. 10. 2022).

14 Za več informacij o dejavnostih Filter Café glej: www.filter-cafe.org (zadnji dostop: 19. 10. 2022).

15 *How to do Things with Sensors* je naslov knjige Jennifer Gabrys o praksah državljanske znanosti: Jennifer Gabrys, *How to Do Things with Sensors*, Minneapolis London: University of Minnesota Press, 2019. Citat je vzet iz: Jennifer Gabrys, *Program Earth: Environmental Sensing Technology and the Making of a Computational Planet*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016, str. 134.

16 Gabrys, *Program Earth*, str. 154–55.

Gerko Egert

PLANETARY PERFORMANCE

The paper discusses the concept of planetary action between contemporary performance art and political climate action. By focusing on the extensive assemblages of actions created by artists such as Khvay Samnang or Tomás Saraceno, it develops a planetary approach to performance. Between artistic and non-artistic actions, their historically and geographically far-stretching infrastructures, and the interplay of human and non-human actors, the paper proposes a planetary politics that addresses the ecological catastrophes of our times on the bodily level of action and its relation to knowledge.



Aerocene Gemini travels 605 km distance, floats over 12 hours, reaches 16,283 m altitude. All without any carbon, fossil fuels, helium, hydrogen, burners, or engines—using only air currents and the heat of the sun. 2016. Courtesy Aerocene Foundation. Foto/Photo: Studio Tomás Saraceno.

Actions, one might say, are what performance art is made of. They are imitated, repeated, changed, performed, linked and disassembled. During the last decades, artists have isolated individual actions (i.e. walking, jumping, posing, shooting) and placed them at the heart of their work. They performed and questioned actions' eventfulness and singularity as well as their repeatability and constructedness. In recent years – and as a reaction to the present and coming ecological catastrophes – the engagement has shifted. The focus is no longer on individual actions and their (un)repeatability, but on assemblages of actions, their situatedness and the ecologies of non-linear relations they create. These assemblages are characterised by the relationship between artistic and non-artistic actions, their historically and geographically far-stretching infrastructures, and the interplay between human and non-human actors.

One of these assemblages is produced by Khvay Samnangs in his performance *Rubber Man* (2014). You see Khvay pouring a milky liquid over his naked body. At first, this simple and at the same time eccentric act seems to fit neatly into the history of American and European performance and body art shown in galleries, museums, and theatres since the 1960s. But Khvay does not douse his naked body in the reduced space of a gallery or on the empty stage of a theatre. In the midst of a plantation, his pouring is embedded in a multitude of other actions and processes that are also part of the performance: the growing of rubber plants on the plantations in Cambodia, the dripping of the latex from the cut barks, or his wandering through the fields and villages in Ratanakiri. All of these processes form the assemblage of the performance. And even if the import of the first Hevea seeds by the French from Brazil, the establishment of plantations in 1922, the expulsion of the indigenous population from Ratanakiri, as well as how the current processes of rubber production and its global trade are not directly visible in the performance, they are inseparable

from the *Rubber Man* assemblage. Without them, the harvesting, the gathering, as well as the pouring would not be possible. Through them the colonial dimensions of rubber production, as well as current exploitative conditions in the rubber trade of extractivist capitalism, become part of the performance.

The interplay of these different actions articulates the ecological dimension of a performance art, and is the starting point of my reflections on a contemporary politics of action. Instead of the act of an individual, the assemblage of actions with other actions guides what will be described as the planetary politics of action. Planetary action engages with the question of how to act today, in times of climate catastrophe and mass extinction, or, in the words of Jennifer Gabrys: how to be planetary as a praxis?¹

Instead of understanding the planetary action in performance art merely as a new form of a political art, I will describe how performance artists weave a web of action between art, everyday life, and activism. Just as the concept of performativity has in the past decades enabled a transversal analysis of artistic and everyday practices, planetary action takes up the old discussion about the relationship between art and life, extending the discussion to any planetary performance (human as well as non-human). What artistic practices, modes of knowledge production and actions are created through these connections? How do actions have an effect beyond their contexts of origin and what new, powerful assemblages emerge with them?

1 Jennifer Gabrys, "Becoming Planetary," *e-flux Architecture*, October 2018, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/accumulation/217051/becoming-planetary/> (last accessed 19 Oct 2022). On the concept of the planetary in relation to current writings on the climate catastrophe see: Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021; Frederic Hanusch, Claus Leggewie, and Erik Meyer (ed.), *Planetar denken: Ein Einstieg*, Bielefeld, Germany: transcript Verlag, 2021.

ACTING WITH THE PLANET

In the age of the climate catastrophe, action, especially everyday action, often seems to have become paradoxical: on the one hand, the climate catastrophe and the mass extinction of species show that every action affects and changes the Earth in its entirety, on the other hand, it often seems impossible for individuals to control and influence these effects through actions. It is only through the coming together of many actions that phenomena such as the overheating of the earth or the mass extinction of species emerge. To surrender in the face of this apparent paradox and to flee into inaction or into the belief that individual actions cannot make a difference is not only cynical, but in the face of existing and coming catastrophes, world-destroying. To address the urgent questions of social and climate justice, we not only need new actions but new concepts of action itself.²

In performance art, artists like Khvay Semang explore new and different modes of action, as well as the planetary politics that accompany them, by addressing action not as individual but as a processes of the planet itself: action is part of this planet, it affects the earth just as the earth affects other action. Through action, this world comes into being while at the same time it is altered and modulated itself through action. These world-making actions, as the performance theorist José Esteban Muñoz would say, link the manifold elements of an unfinished cosmos.³ In this world of actions, the human is neither the centre nor the starting point, and yet she is part of these actions: as a relay, every performer links actions with actions, making the world an assemblage of human and non-human activity.

Assemblages of action are characterised by great uncertainty and multiple ramifications. Their complex interconnections and their unpredictability is at work on all levels. The climate catastrophe in particular is one of the paradigmatic examples which shows that even if all actions have an effect, these effects can hardly be grasped in a linear manner. But linearity is by no means to be confused with causality. Even if a series of actions cannot be described as linear, they are by no means ineffective. Their impact logic is – as the paradox described above shows – closely connected to the question of how actions relate to other actions. Instead of linear-causal connections, planetary action is characterised by a non-linear yet effect-laden interplay.

The supposed paradox of action and its collective yet non-linear effects, shows that no one acts alone. “[W]hen one person acts, many people are acting” writes Judith Butler, emphasising that action is always embedded in other actions.⁴ Actions affect actions, as well as they

2 The thinking of action draws on a range of theories from feminist STS (Karen Barad, Annemarie Mol), performance theory (Judith Butler, Richard Schechner), and pragmatism (Charles S. Peirce, William James). Instead of applying these concepts to the realm of art, I will build on these theories to discuss contemporary performance art and the politics of planetary action they offer for a time of existing and coming catastrophes. On the concept of environmental and climate justice, see, for example, Kyle Powys Whyte’s writings. From a North American, Potawatomi perspective, Whyte understands the climate catastrophe as an entanglement of a history shaped by colonialism, capitalism, industrialization, and militarism. Kyle Powys Whyte, “Way beyond the Lifeboat: An Indigenous Allegory of Climate Justice,” in Kum-Kum Bahynani et al. (ed.), *Climate Futures: Re-Imagining Global Climate Justice*, London: Zed, 2019, pp. 11–20.

3 José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, p. 195.

4 Judith Butler, “When Gesture Becomes Event,” in Anna Street, Julien Alliot and Magnolia Pauker (ed.), *Inter Views in Performance Philosophy*, London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017, p. 179. The paradox of action is by no means new and was already discussed in antiquity

themselves are affected by other actions. It is an “ecology of practices,” in the words of Isabelle Stengers, in which humans participate without forming its centre.⁵ Planetary action is in this sense always ecological action without creating the unified process of a coherent planet. Bruno Latour has dubbed this the network of human and non-human actors or the actions of “terrestrials amid terrestrials.” His more-than-human perspective reduces the world no longer to objects, but extends “the list of movements that must be taken into account” that produce the world as such.⁶

In performance art, multiple artists have engaged in forms of planetary action at least since the second half of the 20th century, making the assemblages of human and non-human performance an essential part of their work. Betty Beaumont’s artificial underwater reef (Ocean Landmark, 1978-80), Pierre Huyghe’s biological-technical ecosystems (among others: *Untitled*, 2011-2012; *Untitled* (Made Ecosystem Centre Pompidou), 2013), or Mary Mattingly’s floating farm in the rivers of New York City (*Swale*, ongoing, since 2016), build on the thinking of human and non-human assemblages of Actor-Network Theory and New Materialism, while focusing on the performative relationships that are established between artistic and non-artistic (maritime, biological, technical) actions.⁷ What kind of planetary politics becomes possible today, when performance art is no longer based on individual acts (an individual action or a set of actions), but on a relational and earthy assemblage?

While just about any performance can be seen as an ecology of multiple actions, in recent years a number of artists took the ecological nature of performance as a starting point to propose a politics that is in itself ecological. For them, ecology is both the grounding as much as the logic for rethinking the mode of action itself. This politics is made possible by the assemblages of human and non-human action described above (its ecological ontology) but uses this condition to act in an ecological manner, that is, in the sense of Félix Guattari: an ecological politics, transversally combining social, psychic, and planetary activity.⁸

Instead of individual actions, the politics proposed by artists such as Khay, Beaumont, Huyghe, and Mattingly engage in the transformation of an entire series of actions. How these series are formed is key to the politics of their work. Habit (*Habitus*, Bourdieu), performance and iteration (Butler), and rehearsal (Buchmann), are just some of the concepts that have been used to describe the modes of operation in the series of actions. They all have in common the focus on repetition and habit. But repetition is only one side of a series. Actions are always part of larger assemblages which they affect in non-linear ways: they are world-making and world-changing. Every action shifts the assemblage in its entirety.

as the “Sorites paradox.” If one takes a grain of sand from a heap, the heap does not change. The same is true for removing any other grain of sand. So how can removing grains of sand destroy a heap? When grains of sand become flights we are dealing with a central problem of climate catastrophe. Andreas Malm, *How to Blow up a Pipeline: Learning to Fight in a World on Fire*, London, New York: Verso, 2021, pp. 143–44.

5 Isabelle Stengers, “Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices,” *Cultural Studies Review* XI/1, 2005, pp. 183–96.

6 Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, Cambridge: Polity, 2018, pp. 86–87.

7 On the question of non-human performativity and the agency of matter see: Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* XXVIII/3, March 2003, pp. 801–31.

8 Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, London: Athlone Press, 2000.

THE KNOWLEDGE ACTION ASSEMBLAGE

Performance theory and the philosophy of pragmatism have shown that not only conscious human acts but every form of human and non-human activity can be considered actions. However, the statement that *everything acts* should not be equated with the assumption that action is everything. Every assemblage of action is at the same time full of concepts and knowledge of techniques and modulations. Actions are often the result of habitualized techniques while at the same time they themselves produce knowledge and create patterns. The cultivation of grain, fruit, and vegetables would for example not be possible without the techniques of farming and gardening. Simultaneously, these actions produce a vast body of biological, geological, geographical, economic knowledge, which again forms the basis for new techniques and modes of action. The world of actions is an open assemblage, inseparable from knowledge, technical objects and language. How could one think of objects without the way they are used? How could one think of knowledge without the actions it evokes? Think of a map without travelling or a saw without sawing. Think of all the knowledge about the end of the world without any action taken.

In the discourse on climate catastrophe and the political measures taken and not taken, it becomes evident that the knowledge-action-assemblage is riddled with gaps and differences. Psychologists call this the value-action gap, describing a precarity of knowledge that encompasses not only scientific facts but also the relationship between knowledge and action.⁹ Although all facts are known, they do not relate to action. For our present times, this gap is most characteristic for the state of knowledge and action. When novelist Jonathan Safran Foer calls for a new or different concept of knowledge, he precisely addresses this discrepancy. For him “belief” is the term that best describes the way to link knowledge about the anthropogenic climate catastrophe to action. While we *accept* the fact that we are destroying the planet, we do not *believe* in it, he states. In this case we are, according to Foer, “no better than those who deny the existence of human-caused climate change.”¹⁰ Believing instead of accepting is not at all the abandonment of facts; rather, it is an intensification of facts through action. Belief is knowledge acting on action, while affirming and generating new, different assemblages. Belief is knowledge as part of a series of action, non-linear yet effectual.

In performance art, too, actions do not form the opposite to knowledge and technique. As trained movements, habits or the execution of tasks and scores, they are part of a knowledge-technique-action assemblage. Action is generated by knowledge and techniques, just as knowledge is generated through action-based experimentation. Starting from the necessity of linking knowledge with action in order to combat current and coming catastrophes, more and more performance artists have been engaging in different modes of action, new possibilities of bringing knowledge and action together.

In his project *Aerocene*, artist Tomás Saraceno collaborates with the *Aerocene* Foundation to create a series of performative sculptures linking art, experimental research and knowledge production. Huge black balloon-like objects are lifted in the air, solely by the powers of sun and wind. It is the performance of a metastable interplay of human and non-human actions that make these flights

9 James Blake, “Overcoming the ‘Value-Action Gap’ in Environmental Policy: Tensions between National Policy and Local Experience,” *Local Environment* IV/3, October 1999, pp. 257–78.

10 Jonathan Safran Foer, *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019, chap.: “Know Better, No Better.”

artistic performances, experimental exploration into the possibilities of CO₂-neutral aviation and a survey of air quality.¹¹ While some flights take part in the frame of art festivals and the balloons are exhibited in museums, the data is fed into the Public Lab database (publiclab.org), where it is linked to additional data recorded around the world. Local initiatives such as the Filter Café in Brussels use this data to demand and implement road closures in streets with particularly high levels of air pollution and to convince municipalities to introduce speed limits and driving bans.¹² By bringing together modes of flying, the measuring of air pollution, data processing, and political activism, an assemblage emerges in which knowledge and action do not exist independently of one another. As artistic performance, knowledge production, and political activism, the *Aerocene* project documents air pollution and extends into the action assemblages of air and environmental activists, political institutions, and university research. Jennifer Gabrys calls this form of performative knowledge generation *How to do Things with Sensors*. She argues that measurement practices do not merely map data, but that they “experiment with the new subjects, experiences, relationships, and milieus that monitoring practices might set in motion.”¹³ In terms of a knowledge-action nexus, the *Aerocene* performances create “other forms of technoscientific engagement and sensing practices.” In connection with action, knowledge production does not only “articulate a project of environmental awareness” but “generate[s] an object that provokes new forms of environmental participation and attention to the eventual effects of our material lives.”¹⁴ This interplay of temporally and spatially distributed actions, linked to practices of measurement, form the politics of the *Aerocene* performances. The non-linear connections of action and knowledge, which do not follow the simple logic of application, create a space of possibility that connects artistic action, political activism, and everyday action while at the same time mapping new value-action relations.

As much as the climate catastrophe is defined by the effects of human action, it calls for other modes of action. It is not surprising, then, that the exploration of planetary action is particularly vivid at times when links between knowledge and action are increasingly being called into question and the value-action gap is becoming more and more apparent. In this sense, the creation of new assemblages across artistic and non-artistic actions in performance arts articulates a planetary politics. It is a politics that, to come back to the words of Gabrys, aims at teaching us how to become planetary.

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11 To measure air pollution, the balloons are equipped with DustDino sensors. For more information on the sensors see: www.aerocene.org/particulate-matter-sensor/ (last accessed 19 Oct 2022)

12 For more information on the activities of Filter Café see: www.filter-cafe.org (last accessed 19 Oct 2022).

13 *How to do Things with Sensors* is the title of Jennifer Gabrys’ book on the practices of citizen science: Jennifer Gabrys, *How to Do Things with Sensors*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019. The quote is from: Jennifer Gabrys, *Program Earth: Environmental Sensing Technology and the Making of a Computational Planet*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016, p. 134.

14 Gabrys, *Program Earth*, pp. 154–55.