

“Ecotone” is an exhibition. Or rather, “Ecotone” is an audiovisual essay divided into 6 parts, dispersed in an exhibition space. Or more specifically: “Ecotone” is words and images scattered on screens, placed in this site for their viewing. They are waiting for you. Here.

Somewhere else, written in the dictionary, ecotone is a transition area between two adjacent ecological communities, an ecological boundary zone that occurs at multiple spatial scales. However in the mind of a biologist, ecotone is also the site where a meeting happens, such as a coast line, where water and land touch and transform each other. In fact, rather than a marker of connection, Astrida Neimanis argues that an ecotone is, above all, a place of becoming and assembling, and of diverging and multiplying. She says: “An ecotone is a sort of membrane, too: a pause, or even an increase in velocity, where/when/how matter comes to matter differently”¹.

The voice in this exhibition deals with the potential of the membrane, the urge to remain in-between, and the necessity of making matters matter differently. It’s a voice that mirrors a borderland: it situates you in the middle of a series of phone conversations where one part of the dialogue is always missing. The voice is talking to you. It says that for a border to exist there must first be a division of space. It states that there are practices of control that are exerted over spaces in order to maintain their separation. It wonders, unceasingly, how this fragmentation came into being and how it influences ways of perceiving, interacting, and behaving.

It’s OK to get lost in this telling. But there’s a chronology to it. Actually, each conversation refers to a specific form of space fragmentation—a different kind of field—, and there’s an order to them: from big to small. From an ecotone in the Central African Republic, an enormous natural reserve area that has been recorded with a giant constellation of camera traps, to the agricultural field, whose borders locate the margins of profit, and whose satellite images allow its visual description. From the private space, a field that is constantly surveilled by small portable machines, to the insides of the body, an even smaller sphere that is similarly surveilled, scanned, dissected, exploited. All those fields are bracketed by an introduction—a rather abstract preface—and one very last message, an epilogue that wraps up the whole content by saying: “the mountain has always been a wave, you know?”. It’s a declaration.

It’s a critique. It’s a critique on reductionism, on dualisms, on capitalisms, on surveillance, on History, on authorities, on the way a click can trigger an array of invisible injustices or the manner how forms must be filled out, on accuracy, on beeping barcodes, on the shapes of maps, on the tools needed to measure shapes, on eugenics, on the logic of either/or and the logic of accumulation, on progress, on who the fuck signed up for it and whatever his fucking name was, on fertilizers, on explosive factories, on exploitation, on the harness, on stability, on the stability of an imposed future, and, probably, a critique also on not frowning, or not being now, or not being here.

But here you are, and here is “Ecotone”, and exactly at this border—where what wants to be communicated and what is understood meets—is where the exhibition happens. Luckily, these words cannot describe it.

¹ Astrida Neimanis, “Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water”. In: Henriette Gunkel, Chrysanthi Nigianni, and Fanny Söderbäck (eds.), *Undutiful Daughters: Mobilizing Future Concepts, Bodies and Subjectivities in Feminist Thought and Practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 93.