

DOCULEKTIV: A Curated Conversation on Creative Practice and Collective Work in the Time of Crisis

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated what Judith Butler describes as the exposure of our precarities through the “falling away” of many support systems within our society. Within these conditions of distance, disconnection, and precarity, the Aurora Artist Residency Program and Space (AARPS) Collective strive to gather and examine (their own) practices of collective making and *collective-making* through Doculektiv, a process-led research project in multiple iterations presented in this manuscript as, first, *Doculektiv*, a three-part series of curated conversations released in July 2020, and “Doculektiv,” this manuscript—as a continuation of the same conversation that articulates the process of inter-capturing that occurs between process and iteration, and within and among the collective as the participants of the research/creative practice. It presents the self-translated and self-edited transcript of *Doculektiv: Curated Conversations*, in which the AARPS Collective unpacks the term “collective” and describes how each member approaches ideas of processes and relationships,
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Part 0: Break

We are...in different places. Even emotionally, we are in different places. When we're all on the ground, physically, we really are there. But here [online], when we gather, we're always bringing everything else that's going on. We couldn't discard them the way we could when we are geographically together. The fact that we have different backgrounds, literally—we're always bringing everything with us [and] it's heavier.

That's why how you overcome is extra liberating. Because it's even more “despite,” “in spite of”... That's what's so moving about it. Because it's also our resolve as a collective.

It's something else, the way we gather.

(Sonido, Doculektiv: Archiving a Collective)

Times of crises, but perhaps especially the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced many into a long pause or into the long game of perpetual delay, are continuing exercises in grounding. The world as we knew it came to a stop in March 2020, when

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and how they work within the collective through these interweaving valuations and embodiments of "collectivity."

At once research and creative work, this manuscript ventures to capture the fluidity of such dynamic practices as, in this case, performance, collaboration, and collective work, and to understand collective-making as critical practice, as creative process, and as ethos of care and accountability. These words are fuelled by notions of history, care, ethics, failure, and trust, on which are built the resolve to gather despite, in spite of, and regardless of our precarities.

KEYWORDS

performance curation, performance studies,
performance-led research, art collectives,
ethics of care

COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic and it felt just as the Chinese proverb goes: "the wind got up in the night and took our plans away." Suddenly, we found ourselves in a temporal paradox, a "freezing acceleration" (Szendy), a space in-between with an unknown end.

In this paradox, we follow different paths marked by various and changing signposts, in the hope that we will arrive at some kind of destination or at least gain a sense of arrival at wherever this in-between is in between of—only to find ourselves always just a few steps short of the place we hope to see; more lost than when we started, more uncertain than before.

The pandemic has certainly exacerbated what Judith Butler describes as the exposure of our precarities through the "falling away" of many support systems within our society, whether economic, environmental, physical, mental, or emotional, even before this health crisis (67). Perhaps it is the creative impulse to find "new ways of making sense of the sensible [and] new configurations between the visible and the invisible...between the audible and the inaudible, new distributions of space and time—[and] new bodily capacities" (Ranciere 147) that artists and other creatives were some of the first to react and contend strongly with the precarities that the pandemic exposed and intensified in our lives, through various creative productions in and during quarantine.

Virtual productions, such as documentations of performance practices at home, balcony concerts, or online webinars and virtual festivals, are not only powerful demonstrations of creative resilience but also evocative conversations on the affordances—economic, environmental, and mental—that the upended world order has allowed performance-makers, not only as creatives, but as people. Meanwhile, initiatives such as the works of Sama-samang Artista para sa Kilusang Agraryo (SAKA), Respond and Break the Silence Against the Killings (RESBAK), Gantala Press, Save Our Schools Network (SOS), Dap-ayan ti Kultura iti Kordilyera (DKK) and other such cultural formations, organizations that have long-standing practices in collective making and collaborative work with and within marginalized communities throughout the

country, have proven to be some of the most radical and responsive acts of resistance against the worsening political and economic crisis in the Philippines. Globally, the pandemic has also seen new alliances emerge within the cultural sectors, such as the Art, Entertainment, and Culture Workers' Network in Rome, a group that calls for more active participation in global politics “to build a collective discourse,” to demand for safe spaces, to fight for economic rights, and to advocate for inclusive political participation, as stated in their manifesto to “Rifare il Mondo” (Remake the World/Globe).

Emerging from this unique context of disruption and production, *Doculektiv* is the AARPS Collective's attempt to grapple with the pandemic precarities of the COVID-19 health crisis. AARPS, which stands for the Aurora Artist Residency Program and Space, is the organization and space that has gathered the authors of this work time and again since 2018 in various creative collaborations with and for an indigenous community in Dingalan, Aurora. In the impossibility of such gatherings in the time of the pandemic and forced home quarantine, *Doculektiv* became the AARPS Collective's form of grounding and solidarity, through the documenting and archiving of our virtual gatherings, mostly via online platforms such as Zoom, Facebook Messenger and Discord, in order to understand, capture and (re)imagine creative practice and collective work during the lockdown.

We endearingly call these “gatherings” Daster Discourse, meaning “house dress” discourse, to pertain to the continuing obscurity between private and public time-spaces, performance and performativity, process and work, the collective and the individual in a physically distanced world. These Daster Discourse sessions consist of intense conversations, disposition checks, educational and political discussions, video viewings, project assessments and evaluations, creative collective-making, (virtual) physical group exercises, household chores, and listening sessions for self-care and psychosocial support. In a previous essay on *Doculektiv*, AARPS Collective member Roselle Pineda describes Daster Discourse as

the collective's safe space in which we thoroughly process and traverse our (1) asynchronous time zones and geographical spaces and (2) (dis)comforts, anxieties, baggage, “fatigue” specifically with virtual meetings, webinars and other online presences, and anger towards the political situation, especially in the Philippines. More importantly, Daster Discourse became our collective making process, in this case, our curatorial devising process for our projects during quarantine. [In a sense] Daster Discourse became the space and process that led the project—*Doculektiv*—and *Doculektiv* became the documentation, archive, and curatorial work that embodied the space and process—Daster Discourse.

Doculektiv is thus a continuing conversation on the Collective's process-led research and a curatorial exercise on fluid archiving and transdisciplinary modes of making. It takes on various iterations at each stage of the continuing conversation. First, *Doculektiv* the short-format video-conversation clips and curates recordings of various Daster Discourse sessions and presents them in three parts: “Archiving a Collective,” “(Dis) Comfort Zones,” and “Curated Conversations,” all aired via the AARPS Facebook Page and AARPS YouTube Channel in June 2020. Second, “*Doculektiv*,” the curated manuscript, an iteration-text, presented here now, as a form of performative critical writing (Pollock 1998; Schmidt 2018) of this same ongoing conversation, which does not only function as a documentation-critique of a live event or project, but also as an “event-text” (Heathfield) in itself, in which, as Theron Schmidt says, “how we talk about the work *is* the work” (37). This manuscript articulates the process of inter-capturing that occurs between process and iteration, and within and among the collective as the participants of the research/creative practice—a manuscript that is at once research and creative work, venturing to capture the fluidity of such dynamic practices as, in this case, performance, collaboration, and collective work.

We present here the largely self-translated and self-edited transcript of *Doculektiv: Curated Conversations*, the third and last of the *Doculektiv* video series, in which the AARPS members unpack the term “collective” and describe how each member approaches ideas of processes and relationships, and how we work within the collective through these interweaving valuations and embodiments of “collectivity.” The process of iterating this within the space of an academic publication has also effectively intervened in the flow of these conversations, and the work here in effect converses with the transmuted archive in a few imaginative conversations taken from more recent Daster Discourse sessions, where the Collective took stock of notes and feedback from our various interlocutors and readers of the work. In this way, the current manuscript forms part of Doculektiv's commitment to a fluid and continuing conversation.

Beginning with a collectively written introduction, Part 0, each subsequent segment is marked by a word volunteered by each member to describe what collectivity means, and each is unpacked by the collective so that it is no longer the individual member's alone—just as this manuscript is not written by five individual Women but by a Collective whose reflexivity has embodied and articulated collective-making as critical practice, as creative process, and as ethos of care and accountability. These words are fuelled by notions of history, care, ethics, failure, and trust, on which are built the resolve to gather despite, in spite of, and regardless of our precarities.

Part 1: Share

Roselle: So, this is “Curated Conversations.” It is the third and last part of our *Doculektiv* video series, which kicked off with an evaluation of our radio program and collaborative work with the Dumagat in “Archiving a Collective”; followed by “(Dis) Comfort Zones,” where we discussed more about our personal circumstance and anxieties while working within the parameters of the pandemic; and finally, “Curated Conversations,” where we began to articulate our collective practice and ideas of “collectivity.”

Should we follow an outline of how we should go about this discussion?

(The room is silent. There are tentative nods from the collective members.)

First, we will do an introduction of the Aurora Artist Residency Program and Space or AARPS, with introductions of individual members of the AARPS Collective, Angela Baguilat, Loujaye Sonido, Teta Tulay, Jen Gamboa, Reena Manalo, Roselle Pineda and Alysa Curioso. Though Alysa is not a part of this online conversation because of the intermittent mobile and internet data signal in Dingalan.

Second, we will relay the background of AARPS, that AARPS is a community-based cultural organization located in Dingalan, Aurora Province, guided by the slogan “building community empowerment through creativity,” through education, research and creative action. Then we introduce our five programs: (1) Art and Research Residency; (2) Education and Cultural Exchange; (3) Research Center; (4) Community Collaboration; and (5) Art Space programs. I guess we should also tell a bit about our projects, especially the most long-standing one, the Dumagat Day festival, in partnership with the five Dumagat communities of Dingalan headed by PAKNED or the Pasulosagkaden ah Kinasigepoan ne Domaget.

Third, we will proceed with the discussion of *Doculektiv*, that it is currently iterated as a three-part archival and curatorial project presented as a video document, focused on the discussion of our process in making the Adow ne Domaget (Dumagat Day) 2020 KKK – Kuwento, Kultura at Kalusugan sa Katutubong Komunidad radio program-festival.

Then we segue to our creative process as a collective in the fourth part, then reflect on how we “gathered” during the pandemic in the fifth part. Finally, we end on some kind of framing for our practice-led and creative-led project.

What do you think? Does that work? Game na ba tayo?

(Reena utters the word "game" very softly and tentatively. Roselle begins.)

"Welcome!"

(There is silence. It turns awkward. Very quickly.)

Ang awkward nito!

Reena: Ang awkward.

Loujaye: No, no, tara, let's try to do it. Umpisahan natin sa "Hi! I'm..."

(Everyone bursts out laughing.)

Roselle: We are AARPS!

Teta: Gawin natin parang banda.

Reena: Parang rock band? *(coolly)* "Siya nga pala, ako si..."

Roselle: It's weird!

Loujaye: Weird!

(The laughter continues.)

Jen: Tapos call tayo for questions from the audience!

Angela: Tama, parang phone-in questions?

Roselle: Ang tanda ng phone-in questions!

(Everyone laughs.)

Teta: What are we doing? Hindi ba ito nga ang iniwasan natin? Yung parang nagpe-perform or nagpe-present, or nagwe-webinar?

Reena: I agree. Kung gagawin natin ito, parang unang beses natin mag-"perform" eh hindi ba ayaw nga natin no'n?

Angela: So, paano nga?

Roselle: Umpisahan ba natin sa paano nagsimula ang Doculektiv? Though, 'di ba parang weird? Saan mag-uumpisa? Sasabihin ko ba na, "There was one time..."

(Everyone laughs again.)

Loujaye: This is silly. We're pretending we have an audience.

Angela: Nakakatawa 'to guys!

Jen: Ang fake eh! *(awkwardly)* "Oh, I remember when..."

(Everyone laughs again.)

Teta: What are we doing? Alam n'yo, tigilan na natin ang pagpapanggap na ito.

Loujaye: Ang hirap.

Roselle: Siya, tigilan na natin 'to!

Angela: Nakakatawa ito!

Roselle: Nakakatawa at the same time, parang, "what are we doing here?" Our comforts and discomforts are so obvious! Like what we shared in *Doculektiv 2: (Dis) Comfort Zones*, the project is really more of a consolidation for our collective, more than a presentation for a perceived audience. It is unpacking our conceptions and embodiments of the precarities in the time of pandemic and how all those intersect with the ethics of collaborative work and curatorship of care. And part of this care is occupying that liminal space between private and public, internal and external.

Loujaye: Right. Exposing our vulnerabilities, but also editing them, or consciously iterating them, in a way. Hindi performance ng vulnerability. There is a sincerity to showing those vulnerabilities that we will curate in the “curare” sense of being cared for.

Roselle: That’s why it’s not really some kind of webinar. So yes, ang weird nito.

Loujaye: Yes, that's why when we try to “present,” complete with an outline of a conversation, it seems like we're doing a webinar for ourselves. It’s...strange.

Roselle: Sobrang strange. So ang hatol ay...total failure ito mga kasama!

(Everyone bursts out laughing again.)

Teta: Aabot na tayo ng dalawang oras na nag-uusap wala pa rin tayo nagagawa dahil sa pagpapanggap na ito.

Roselle: Korek, so tigilan na natin!

(Everybody laughs.)

Part 2: Anchor

Roselle: Teta, paano mo nga ba naisip ang “Doculektiv” as a project title? Ikaw naman ang laging nakakaisip ng mga magagandang titles. Ikaw din ang nakaisip ng “Daster Discourse” for our collective process and virtual gatherings, and some other quarantine activities for our collective like “Diskusyon ni Auntie” and “Pelikulistahan.” So how did “Doculektiv” come about?

Angela: Hindi ba nag-start siya because Loujaye posted a prompt of reflecting on our process and somehow find a way to present it. Then we thought about archiving our process first. Kasi parang when we do Daster Discourse, it usually starts out as checking-in, kuwentuhan at kumustahan, pero laging napupunta sa mga evaluations, analyses and resolutions, na halos wala na talagang clear line between work and everyday life. So parang, we wanted to document this very organic process and it somehow ended up, vaguely, as a documentary?

Teta: Tama, and I think I liked the idea of a documentary and I wanted “collective” itself to be the core word for the title. I was left with two words, documentary and collective, and our purpose at that time was archiving and documenting the collective, our process and even our relationship towards each other and our community partner. In that process, nothing can be done without the collective, because the heart of the idea of the collective is individuals in a group who are amenable and committed to voicing one idea. Hence, I also wanted it, in a way, that the word “collective” will be at the heart of the project title. It is also to emphasize that “collective” is not a term that you can use loosely for any group. Hindi dapat siya nagagasgas. It’s a simple word, perhaps, even a commonly used term, but its meaning should not be common, or taken for granted.

Angela: I think Doculektiv is the embodiment of our core principles and practice as AARPS. I mean if you think about our initial orientation as collective back in 2017 or 2018 ba? We were already conversing about “fluid methodology” in relation to “sublation.” May pa-PowerPoint presentation pa nga on sublation si Roselle eh.

Loujaye: Yeah, because we already had several sublation projects then, even before AARPS. And even now, parang di ko naman naisip na tapos na ‘yon. It feels like we’re always sublating. We always have a dialectical approach to everything that we do, while still always anchored on practices of care—for our relationships with each other and for the community, and throughout our creative practices.

Roselle: Through the years, we've shaped this practice as community-led; time-based, or durational, as opposed to time-bound; process-led and practice-led; and relational. Mostly, through our fluid

and immersive reflections and evaluation of our projects, in short, through practice *din*. So Doculektiv is both the documentation and practice of the practice.

Part 3: Lessons

Reena: But how do you define a collective?

Loujaye: With AARPS it's not just how we work together. It's also the premise of the collective. We trust each other. The primacy of our trust in each other, including the organic way of "pagpapaubaya" (conceding) to one another, is really hard to find in other groups. There is trust that the collective is taking care of you and looking out for the principles that you all share, and so it is never just about credit. Those shared principles are also the compass of the collective that you commit to. Because it's a *commitment* to a certain way and process of doing things where you will really surrender a part of how you do things on your own, as an individual. Being a collective has that kind of component.

Teta: You remember the poem/lyrics to the song, "Awit ng Hinirang," which I wrote during the pandemic? And in it I described how I see our organic roles taking shape within the collective and through our creative process: "hakbang ng nagtitiwala" for Jen, "kapit ng malasakit sa tanan" for Loujaye, "dalangin ng nagsisilbi" for Reena and Alysa, "pangarap ng nagpapapele" for Angela, "tinig ng nagtitumon ng madla" for Roselle, and you all chose "tibok ng nagpapakatag" for me; and finally, "ngiti ng umiibig" for our AARPS collective. These lines from the poem/song, I feel, reflect who we are in and as the collective. They were sort of roles that I saw were necessary even if it wasn't asked of us to be this or that. On the one hand, the roles melded to form the collective organically, but on the other, there was also a conscious effort to know your strengths and limitations and you had to mould yourself into that certain—for the lack of a better term—role, so that the collective can move forward. You trust and surrender to that.

Roselle: I think each collective has its own values and principles. In many art collectives, a lot of value is given to collaborative making, which rests mainly on methods and modes of making rather than collaborative principles.

But the practice of collaborative making itself is also a fluid practice. It can differ from one condition to another depending on the context, the participants, and the mode of production in that time-space of making. I think our practice of collaborative making has also varied from one project to another, depending also on our specific objectives in making.

Doculektiv's process is also different. It is a process-led mode of making that enables a more fluid methodology of collective-making and ownership in the sense that we are not only making together, but the principles of making are drawn and/or led by a long process of being together as a collective; so, there is also an ethical obligation to one another as well as the communities that we serve or collaborate with.

Teta: But what is the process, really, of a collective? What is a person's claim to his/her creative work even if you had an agreement, for example, that this is a creation of the group? Isn't it that most of the time, when clashes arise and when it comes to the difficult discussions, the individual claims arise?

Loujaye: Right, and it's hurtful and demoralizing when collaborative making becomes casualty to arguments over attribution. Of course, attribution does have very real economic impacts and is a very valid area of concern, lalo na sa Pilipinas na napakahirap maging artist at cultural worker. But that's why the internal discourse and dialectics of the collective is so important, as well as our reflexivity in our collective process.

When we think about process-led methodology, I think we also need to ask, what is part of that process? Is it just the actual assembly of the clips? Maybe that's directly before the actual work,

but is that where the “art” actually began? I don't think so. The art process certainly started much earlier—way earlier in our case. Doculektiv is like an accumulation or a distillation of our experiences and you can only do that kind of distillation if you've had this long history together. Many of the things that we discussed in Doculektiv have always been there, but we articulate them differently across time, iba-ibang iterations, and they have become part of our research too, part of the process that led the work, the research, and the creative work. So, it is also both research and creative work.

In Doculektiv, or in our collective, everyone is a critic and a creative person at the same time, which became possible because we've had this long history of creating things together. Even since the earlier periods, our manner of creation was always different, because our collective process begins not only when a work, or when work for a creative work, begins. When we say a work is “collectively created,” it's not just about who clicked what button but *how* we participated in sustaining the collective across so many experiences. Even in terms of aesthetics, if you consider all our discussions about embodiment and physically manifesting our conceptual ideas, the process itself becomes a clear manifestation or embodiment of these ideas. We are able to do it, and we do that through and with each other. I think this kind of practice challenges and approaches the question of attribution in a very generative and transformative sense.

Roselle: Most of the time, the ways that we work appear to be very organic. We respond to the conditions at hand and adjust to the materials, the audience, the community. But in our collaborative processes, for example in the AnD2020 KKK radio program, there are always prompts and parameters that we are working from and working within. For the radio program, we were drawing from many things: the concept of “sound relationality” (LaBelle), the materials that we gathered from our cultural mapping interviews in 2018, the use of the principles of appropriate technology in order to determine what platform to use for the 2020 “festival,” the mode of communication with the community that was available to us and, eventually, the themes and scripts which I wrote from these affordances.

Our varying availabilities and capacities as individuals also played a central role in what we can do; but so did our history and continuing relations with our community. Even while they were mostly absent from the process of stitching together the different parts of the program, they continued to have the largest hand in granting affordances in the project. In this way, they serve, as Loujaye said before, as our ethical compass in making; and they played a central role in the content creation for the program, so there was still a clear collaborative perspective in working with the community even as we worked among ourselves. But the collective claim to the radio program still mainly rested on the community.

Loujaye: Yeah, you remember that the radio program actually started as our “voice letter” to the community? Parang just letting them know that we are still here, even though we couldn't go to Dingalan for the Adow ne Domaget because of the pandemic? This was just at the start of the lockdown, when we found out that one of our communities was being militarized again. And because the pandemic response was so highly militarized from the start, and Dingalan is so remote and therefore vulnerable—of course, it was right next to a military base from the start—may urgency talaga for us to keep the community visible and audible—*present*, to us as much as to themselves, kahit na hindi tayo lahat nagkikita-kita. Every episode was always in conversation with that context.

Angel: Ironically, that was also how I came to know and understand “immersion,” specifically in community work. It is a bit strange, 'di ba, that my experience of community immersion happened during this time that we are all physically distanced. Before kasi, when I would go to the community, I would be there and I would be immersed as a manager of the project with my team—sina Alysa, sina Rhenelyn—but it was always Roselle who spoke with the

community leaders, like the Chieftains and the Elders. She facilitated the community meetings, so my work was more peripheral.

However, with AnD2020 KKK radio program, I was pushed into the role of being the main communication line between us and the community because Roselle was in Australia, I had the basic tools for communicating with them, and as the manager for the AnD 2018 and 2019 festivals, I guess I had acquired this active presence within the community. Ako din kasi yung nakakausap nila kapag stage manager mode ako, so in that sense, may connection na rin na pagsisimulan. But it was really hard because all communications were done via phone, and the phone signal there in Dingalan is so poor and slow. Alysa, our main local coordinator, cannot even go to the Municipality center for better signal because of the community quarantine due to COVID-19!

Roselle: True, kitang-kita ko, kitang-kita naming lahat, how hard it was. And we had to do the program immediately. Otherwise, baka lahat na ng community members natin ay biglang nasa Order of Battle na bilang NPA. Mahirap talaga.

Angela: Mismo! Kaya, my God, everyday ang usap namin! I had to call them all the time for numerous consultations, tungkol sa content and plans, para sa ethics consultations, para sa phone interviews and recordings for the program, following up song files, and eventually, kahit makipagkumustahan lang.

So, our day-to-day communication became a part of our lives together, ako and the community; and during that time of almost two months of talking to them on a daily basis, I felt accepted already. I felt that they became more comfortable sharing their day-to-day activities with me. Even yung impatience nila sa akin whenever I called (*laughs*), hindi na sila polite! Pati how I talked changed at some point! Nakuha ko na ang Dumagat accent! I had embodied the way they speak, their accent, vocabulary; I empathized with their sadness and frustrations. Naiiyak din ako when they were sad, I got mad also when they got mad. To me, it was really extraordinary that my deepest and most engaged community immersion happened during a time of physical distancing. The voice is really a powerful tool.

Roselle: Community immersion in the time of physical distancing! Bongga!

Loujaye: Super proud kami sa 'yo doon, Angel. I have my own limits too sa community immersion. As the documenter in the group, when I'm in the community, I'm always with my camera, and in a way it's a security blanket for me. Medyo nahihirapan ako because I never feel confident about my language. Hirap na hirap ako sa Filipino, at lalong hindi ako marunong mag-Domagat. I'm always anxious na bigla akong mapapa-English because my Filipino is so limited, and I might alienate them because of my short vocabulary. Ang dami kong gustong sabihin, at frustrating din na lagi akong kinakapos when I want to express them.

Teta: Talaga? Parang hindi naman. Parang lagi ka namang very articulate.

Loujaye: Hindi totoo 'yan! That's why most of the time, I'm more comfortable listening. And I love listening. This is also how I think about editing. When I had to edit the radio program from the fragmented and separate interviews, I listened to the stories and the voices. I think editing—whether video, audio, or even literature—is best when it is mostly invisible but is able to bring out the best of story and the clearest voice. It's a way of caring for the community, by caring for their voice. And in that way, I think, I find my own "voice" in my craft and it converses with them too—so *I* converse with them too, in a way that I think is more meaningful and faithful to what I want to say.

Roselle: Ang ganda nung laro sa pagitan ng invisible and visible "voice" through deep listening and editing.

Angela: The project really taught us how to see things differently. Hindi puwede ang nakasanayan; we needed to step back, to observe and to listen...to really be patient. We needed to understand that not everything is in our control, to be mindful that there is a deep relationship between progress and making mistakes—and we will make mistakes no matter how much we think we've prepared for something. We had to learn how to humbly embrace, accept, and own up to those mistakes.

Loujaye: And I think that's what it means to be led by the process, right? To be process-led. I hate to intellectualize, because of course what we do is always much more than any theoretical articulation or paper, but isn't this what it means? The vulnerability needed to be fluid and to be compassionate, to listen and adjust, to try and fail and learn. Our curatorial framework is somewhere in this self-awareness and reflexivity toward collective making that forms and informs ethos, craft, intellectual practice, creative practice...

Roselle: Practice is primarily our frame of analysis, if you think about it. In the same way, many of our prompts or devices in making emerge from the intensive conversations that we have during Daster Discourse. None of these were pre-planned. Most of the time, we just start with a question, a small idea, or even an aspirational joke—

Reena: Like wearing Doc Marten boots kahit naka-video call lang naman tayo.

(Everyone laughs.)

Loujaye: Pakana mo 'yun eh! But, maygahd, 'di ba that's really how we started with this Daster Discourse? I think that must have been our first Daster Discourse, nung nakasuot tayo lahat ng boots because we were sharing Reena's photos in our group chat from her trip to Korea or somewhere in Europe? So we decided magbibihis tayo for our first recorded Zoom call together.

Angel: Oo, tapos naka-daster tayo kasi nasa bahay lang naman tayo dahil sa quarantine! Kakabili ko lang din ng white Docs ko noon to celebrate a promotion, tapos biglang nag-lockdown. 'Di ko na tuloy masuot sa labas.

Loujaye: And now here we are with Daster Discourse and Doculektiv.

Roselle: It's funny how even our jokes transform into collective-making conversations. There is no timeline to it, no conscious idea of a project. The projects and the way we intend to do them just unfold as our conversations progress. Loujaye said that our projects, Doculektiv in particular, is somehow a distillation of everything that we are as a collective: our projects, our relationships with each other, what we read, what conversations we are having, what jokes are we sharing, what we are doing in a given time-space. In this sense, Doculektiv is always present. To me, it is a practice of "ongoingness." It traverses different disciplines and different time-spaces. It engages and is brought forth by flows of the past, and it projects towards the future through the aspirational or the imaginative, but it is always an iteration of present conversations, materials, and conditions.

(The scene suddenly freezes. Each member is frozen except Loujaye. She is spotlighted in the video conference and she speaks directly to the audience)

Loujaye: And so *to present*, this journal article is an "iteration-text" curated into a form of script from past and present utterances and transcripts of Daster Discourse, as well as notes, feedback, and comments from interlocutors of the Doculektiv project as it shifts in form, fluidly, through the process of publication. It is an active imprint of this "ongoingness" as some of this conversation is unfolding right here within the time-space of this page. Here, in this text, the conversation is ours, yours, and others' as well.

(The scene returns to gallery mode. Screens unfreeze. The conversation resumes.)

Loujaye: This fluidity is also an important aspect of our creative collective process, as the idea of the collective always brings forth the relationship between the individual and the collective, and the individual changes shape within and through the collective. It has that kind of effect, and I mean this on the level of our work as well. For instance, when I present my input and the collective reads so much more from it, eventually the input becomes *that*. Our devices are vital components of the process because those become actual tools not just for feedbacking but of finding more meaning in our work and, as a result, the work is enriched and it does become more, on both levels as an individual and collective work.

Roselle: How about in consideration of a perceived public or audience? Did we consider what kind of audience we want for Doculektiv? As I see it, when different audiences encounter Doculektiv, even in its various iterations, it presents itself as a present conversation of an ongoing conversation in a sense that we are engaging our audiences as eavesdroppers.

Reena: Parang nangangapit-bahay ang peg. ‘Yong tipong nag-uusap tayo sa bukas na bakuran, tatal pang pandemya naman, open spaces are in, tapos in and out lang mga kapitbahay sa pagdaan sa bakuran at pag-sabad sa usapan.

Angela: Actually, ganoon din ang mga surotan or community meetings natin sa Dingalan, ‘di ba? Nasa ilalim ng punong mangga, come and go mga tao, hindi mo na minsan ma-keep track kung sino ang kausap mo. Failure ang attendance check (*laughs*). Basta gusto nila mag-join, join, kung ayaw na, go.

Roselle: In fairness, legit itong “eavesdropping” as method (Parker and Stern). It focuses on questions of listening and the parameters from which you are receiving a specific set of sound-text data. I like this emerging field because it brings forth the aspects of partial connections (Strathern), incomprehensibility, and even confusion in present encounters with any set of data, whether sound or text.

So our eavesdroppers can engage with Doculektiv in many different ways. Some might see it as fluid data or archival data that they can analyze further. Others may be more interlocutory, conversing with this iteration as intellectual practice or for their own research work, creative work, or community work. Or others may simply read it as a conversation in itself about care, loss, anguish, anger, the pandemic, the government—all these precarities. There are probably other ways that we have not perceived before.

Loujaye: And that’s what the practice-led process is about, the concession that you are not the sole owner of the practice and the work, I suppose, especially in the context of archiving or thinking about collective making itself.

Angela: That is the beauty of being in this collective. Apart from looking out for each other, we share and combine our expertise to create and build projects that are meaningful and relevant not just to the communities we serve but also to ourselves and each other. Doculektiv is that creation, where not only did we come up with ideas but we made our processes the center of the project. We let ourselves be vulnerable, we bared what we felt and consolidated all of them in meaningful conversations. I felt fulfilled curating with all of you. I am very accustomed to the live stage; that is why to be able to curate in this platform was a very big revelation for me.

Teta: And we always cry. Tanggapin na natin. Kaya nga tayo “fluid methodology.” Because we always cry.

(*Everybody laughs*)

Angel: Tootoo ‘yan. After (*Dis*) *Comfort Zones*, I was really quiet because it felt like I went on a retreat! I was reflecting. It felt like a lifetime of learning took place during these past four months. (*voice breaking*) I don't want to cry but I can't help it because just like what Roselle said in one of our conversations, *Doculektiv* was so brave! And I saw myself in a different light, especially when

Jen used my message for her ending scene saying "Good night, everybody! Junk Terror Bill!" I was thinking that's very new to me, to be politically vocal, and I realized that I can be bold and brave even at 44 years old! There's really a time for everything. You can be somebody else regardless of your age.

I love our collaboration for Episode 2. I love the idea of the songs stitching through each of the video segments that we edited; and to end with Roselle's song, "I'll Be Seeing You" is like saying goodbye. It made me think if we are closing a door within Doculektiv? Are we closing this chapter on a part of our collective process? But it's so beautiful behind that door. Even if you close that door, that collaboration, our collective process is so beautiful to look back on. *(breaks into sobs)* I really can't speak naturally, I always need to cry! Ayoko na umiyak!

Roselle: Umiyak or magalit.

Teta: Choose between the two.

(Everybody laughs.)

Angel: And that opening scene with Teta's segment! You captured all our anxieties with just those two words: comfort, discomfort. That was all! And when it was pointed out that my daughter Ily was there, I watched it again and, oh my God, it's beautiful! I don't have any word for it but beautiful. It's effective. It's affective. It's brave. It's us. It embodies us.

Part 4: Relationships

Loujaye: Are we too cliquish? I was thinking about that before. But I have come to realize that what makes a collective a collective is everyone's commitment to stick with what the collective is about at its core, even when the going gets rough, and maybe especially when there are mistakes that need to be rectified. In a clique, people might go only as far as what's comfortable for them, and they can just revoke membership when there is disagreement. To me, to us, because we "sublate" as we said, we work with and work through our contradictions. In my case, I am thankful that I don't have many heartaches in my experiences with collectives and I enter into things understanding the terms of that collective.

Angel: This is my first collective and I am glad to hear all of your many definitions of a collective because this is the only process I know of how a collective should be, so I am lucky to be in this collective the first time.

Jen: Even me, I am lucky, like Angel, that this is the first collective that I joined. And I am lucky that I "flowed" into this group because the people I am "flowing" with are worth the trust.

Reena: Maybe that's why I said before that I'm not a collective type of person because I know so many people who have so many collectives, so it's easy to take for granted.

Teta: Collectors of collectives.

(Everyone laughs.)

Reena: Exactly, so you feel that the relationships forged in those many, many, many collectives are not deep because now that there is this collective, I know what should be entailed by joining a collective. I also think that there's a reason why people are brought together in a collective, and you cannot force it on anyone.

Angela: The centrality of people and the relationships forged among people is key to our practice as a collective. Hindi kailangan personal lagi ang relationship, but Roselle used to say to me a lot that "our greatest source is the people," and as long as there are people who are willing to make up the collective—whether that's the community, the movement, or kung anuman—and they give us strength, everything else is secondary. Kahit maghirap ka pa. Ang hirap tanggapin pero may katotohanan.

Sobrang diverse din natin as as individual persons, hindi mo akalain that we will click. But we do because we have been working and conversing like this for years din as a collective, and as friends and collaborators. I mean, kami ni Roselle we have been BFFs and creative collaborators since high school, so talk about longevity of relations. Throughout these years we have become each other's greatest critics and greatest supporters as well.

Teta: Meron din itong concrete practice. 'Yong mga disposition checks, criticism and self-criticism natin, all helped us stay grounded. I remember well that Daster Discourse session that we had, when the opening line of the session was Angel saying "Ako, Teta, galit na galit talaga ako sa iyo!" and while the session was ongoing, I had to remind myself that these women want the best for me and the community and the work; that's why we needed to go through such a hard process. As cheesy as it may sound, that was when I decided that there is no escaping the love that I have for the collective, and we ended that almost four-hour session with "ngiti ng umiibig."

Roselle: In this space-in-between especially, the collective becomes central to our being and becoming. It is the collective that grounds us into being and it is also at the same time what gives us a starting point to become. Kasama na dito ang aspirational and imaginative diffractions. For instance, alam ko na kung gaano kalaki ang magiging bahagi ng convos natin sa aking current PhD on relationality in collaborative and collective work. Actually, ito lang ang nakakapag-power through sa akin to continue. So, I honour the practice by writing and finishing the dissertation. Cheesy but true.

Teta: Parang kung paano ang AARPS nag-encourage sa akin na mag-enroll sa UP Open University Organic Agriculture program. It's a scary career shift from being a musician and art teacher, but knowing that we have our creative community program in AARPS, I took my chances with my long-term aspiration to be a creative organic farmer.

Jen: Ang cute ng musician turned creative organic farmer klasmeyt Teta! (*raises hand and speaks as if in a classroom*) Ako, Teacher, gusto ko (*everybody laughs*) maka-contribute sa UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) para sa pagpapaunlad ng mga komunidad, Teacher.

Roselle: Nakakalula ang peg!

(*Everybody laughs*)

Jen: Pero seriously, thinking about enrolling in a Master's program or special course program on Cultural Development, para na rin makatulong sa possibilities ng ethical cultural industries programs natin in the future. Para hindi nangungutang sa sarili nating bulsa ang AARPS. While tama naman yung people ang main source natin, hindi naman tama ang maghirap ka.

Loujaye: True. Siyempre poverty alleviation naman ang isang long-term goal. Lalo na sa practice-led research, we know being able to practice means addressing also very material considerations to stay alive. Walang art kung walang pagkain. Kaya lang tayo yata papuntang bankruptcy! O natranscend na ba natin?

(*Everybody laughs*)

Angela: Ako, I apply our practices, especially of care and fluidity, in my current administrative work and in my family, especially in time of crises. My family and I actually just went through a very difficult ordeal that resulted in the passing of my father. I would not have had the strength to go through it without the tools I got from this collective. The patience and practice of accepting all situations as they are would have been unbearable, pero dapat talaga dialectic ang approach sa lahat, like what we always do in AARPS. Because of what I learned, I was able to go through it day by day. That required a lot of patience and strength of will. And because our struggles are always shared in this collective, we are synchronized in a way...even if we are not in the same space-time.

Teta: Maybe this synchronicity means that we have the same beliefs, principles, and energies.
Parang *affectif* ni Robert Seyfert: "beyond the personal...towards collective emotions."

Loujaye: You become what your collective also envisions you to be; and to be part of that becoming is not only special but vital to being better...to *become*.

Part 5: Capture

Loujaye: In terms of how we work together, it's nothing different in a sense that our core principles have always been there—trust, concession, respect, care. It's there forever. *(Loujaye's screen freezes.)*

Jen: Louj? Nag-freeze si Loujaye!
(Everyone laughs.)

Teta: Kung nariyan ka, iparamdam mo ang iyong presensiya.
(The laughter continues.)

Jen: Kung naririyang ang iyong kaluluwa, galawin mo itong panyo.
(More laughter.)

Teta: O itong baso.
(At this point, the whole group is just laughing continuously.)

Roselle: Oh my, bakit laging nangyayari sa kaniya 'yan? May moment talaga na nagfi-freeze lagi si Sonido! Hindi nagfe-fail.

Teta: Uy tara, mag-hug emoji gesture na tayo at mag-picture habang naka-freeze siya. Sino magpicture?

Roselle: Teka, subukan ko...

(Loujaye's screen disappears.)

Ay, nawala siya!

(Loujaye's screen reappears as she logs back in.)

Ay, nandiyan na ulit siya. Baka naramdaman na niya na pinag-uusapan natin siya.

Angel: Nandiyan na nga siya pero walang sound!
(The group bursts into laughter again.)

Teta: Hindi mo alam mga pinag-uusapan namin habang wala ka.
(Loujaye continues to say things while on mute.)

Jen: You're still on mute, Loujaye!

Loujaye: Ang dami ko na naman nasabi na hindi n'yo narinig! But wait, I need to pick up a delivery at the gate. Your package for me just arrived, Mama R!

Roselle: Talaga?!

Teta: Wow! The timing!

(Loujaye returns with the package.)

Roselle: Bubuksan mo na ngayon?

Loujaye: Yes!

Roselle: Uy, maiiyak yata ako!

Loujaye: We're really giving this unboxing some airtime?

Angel: Yes, of course!

Loujaye: (*opening the package*) I am going to cry, wait!

Roselle: Ako rin!

Loujaye: I'll show you the actual gift.

(*The package reveals a beautiful blue woven poncho.*)

Oh, it's beautiful!

Roselle: That's a very important piece of gift.

Angel: Hugs, Louj!

Loujaye: (*wears the poncho*) It feels like Mama R is hugging me already.

Roselle: (*exhales shakily*) I have not thought about how we are going to gather when we flow into our different iterations after this project.

Loujaye: Still through Daster Discourse.

That's why this is still not a webinar

(*Everyone laughs.*)

Teta: Who were we kidding?!

Roselle: I am almost sorry that I even gave that idea of presenting this as a webinar. That's a really bad idea.

(*Everybody laughs.*)

Reena: It is a bad idea. Nag-jacket pa man din ako para dito! Pero ang init ng jacket na ito!

Roselle: Tigilan na natin itong pagpapanggap na ito! Ako naman pa-sleeveless pa pero ginaw na ginaw na ako! Winter pa kaya dito!

Loujaye: That's what happens when we perform.

Angel: Nakakatawa ito guys! Malamang papanoorin ko ulit ito when we upload this. It's super awkward the way we were trying to be super formal at first!

Jen: And nobody wanted to speak at first!

Reena: Naghikaw pa man din ako!

Angel: I even planned how I should look.

Loujaye: Fake webinar.

Angel: Tinitignan ko pa kung naka-comb in place ba ang hair ko.

Reena: Inisip ko pa kung magsusuot ako ng pearl earrings. Pero huwag na, ito na lang.

(*Everybody laughs.*)

Part 6: Break.

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