

Minifesto¹ for Coming-together

Who are We?

We are individuals, perhaps important individuals whose prominence is not only measured by our achievements, but also by our endless failures which have inadvertently presumed the possibilities of our future failures. We have embraced our creative and critical engagement as a means to struggle against the persistent obstacles that routinely confronted us. We are individuals with a desire to collectively experience the conditions of our lived experience in order to shape our collective becoming. We come together with an intention to go forward into the unknown. We call ourselves Gize². Our “We” is jointly shared with those individuals who endure similar limited conditions, and who struggle to give meaning to their creative and political engagements.

Where do We come from?

We come from a society with deep history, knowledge and understanding of the pluriversal world. We come from communities with a long experience of dignified coexistence; not only among humans, but also with non-human agents and with nature. We live in an oppressive state where political lives are constantly exposed to vulnerability and violence. We come from a context where support structures for what we do and what we intend to do are entirely nonexistent. We have repeatedly experienced and witnessed the failure of many of our experimental projects. Yet our spirits remain un-shattered and we continue to try—even as we anticipate failure.

Why do We come-together?

We will not forget what happened to us. How do we forgive those who have troubled our collective journey? We wonder how we can recuperate from the damage imposed on us. “Wonder” is what brought us together. We believe that our “wonder” will lead us to the unknown, to the not known and to the yet to be known. Our “wonder” will daringly help us walk, fall and enter with our allies. We were able to understand our predicaments—the gnawing void in our existence—by coming together. We have come together to activate, maximize, and elevate the ability we have as individuals. We come together to collectively struggle for affective encounters to happen. Most importantly, we come together because we care.

How do We come-together?

We recognize that to come together requires the ability to “Care”. To care is to become vulnerable through the conditions of one another. Our everyday struggle rests on trust and a relationships that is constantly negotiated. There is a quality in our relationship, a quality that is based on shared experience, desire, and commitment to the collective becoming. Our

¹ The term “Minifesto” is borrowed from the book *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide*, by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2014.

² Gize is the name of our collective. Gize is an Amharic term that represents a certain notion of time. Here, the term Gize should be understood as a momentum, that is a property, a strength or a force gained by motion or by a series of events. The Gize collective was formed as a product of our collective project “Coming-together”, supported by Kinshull Oslo in 2020.

conversation with/in Oslo has generated a productive platform for us to closely discuss our needs, questions, concerns, and frustrations around the problematics of coming-together. Our coming-together is a product of continual friction, negotiation, agreements and misunderstandings. We imagined our coming-together to generate multiple bodies and heads, through which we stretch, elongate, and branch out.

How long do We imagine our “We” to last?

We have asked ourselves how to sustain our collectivity, knowing that there is always a possibility of impermanence in coming-together. More importantly, what matters most is not the duration of our collective existence, but what we are able to do in the here-and-now. We know the reasons that brought us together. Therefore, we entertain the factors that will lead us apart. We created a desired “We” that has a lifespan of five years. We are together not only with an intention to start something, but also to end it. We value that every ending has the potential to become the beginning of something else.

How do We function?

We recognize it is not only the outcome of our struggle that matters, but also the quality of the process. So we should keep asking questions, not only to seek answers but to also generate better understanding. We are required to be formal while the essence of our engagement is grounded on informality. We witness the problematics of formality in the context through which we are struggling to function. We understand informality as a fluid form of engagement. And that is why we chose to be informal. Our understanding of informality does not reject formal structures nor does it encourage working against legal systems. But our informality is certainly a political statement. We recognize the power of care, trust and solidarity can be maintained, sustained and redefined without the seemingly protective intervention of state politics. Such humanistic qualifications are generated from informal and yet embodied experiences that have developed through time. We are informal—at least, we desire to be informal.

What do We desire?

We want to exist in a way that makes a difference. We desire to build a strong creative and political community. We dedicate ourselves in order to support others, hoping that others would support others as well. We imagine ourselves actively engaged in a process of worldmaking. Through creative, pedagogical, and political engagements, we desire to facilitate a coming-together, despite and because of differences. We allow ourselves to embrace the potentiality of failure as a constructive possibility, so that we may fail again—and again.

Who are our allies?

We extend our invitation to build alliances to anyone and everything; animals and plants, biodiversity and water, ancestors and future generations, spirits and ghosts. We desire to work with entities functioning on the basis of trust, care, and negotiation, through imagining different worlds that value new attitudes towards the unknown. We also hope that there will be moments when those on the other side of our beliefs will understand the cause of our struggles; they may not join us, but at least they will not be obstacles in our journey.

What un/certainties do We have?

We have emotions, reasons, actions, and differences that are potential resources in facilitating our collective journey. We recognize our difference not only as productive experience, but also as grounds for possible misunderstanding, friction, and conflict. Regardless, the trust, care, and relationships that exist between us can help us to resolve unexpected conflicts without critical damage. The mutual understanding of our collective engagement will allow us to overcome possible risks. We believe that our grief caused by past experiences, and the indignation generated through the ongoing political reality, is a driving force to further question and act. There are many individuals and organisms from different localities facing similar challenges, who will become potential allies. Our form of engagement as an informal entity helps us to stay open-minded, and through this new possibilities can emerge.

What do We fear?

We fear that our form of engagement might be interpreted differently, where we might face challenges to gain trust from those who could become potential allies. We fear that we may not be as ready to face the unknown as we think we are. We worry that we might have misunderstood our form of temporality. We fear that the formal system in place might consider our informality as a threat of its own making. Our greatest fear is that the culture of fear will continue to be cultivated for too long, as it has prevailed for too long with us.

What risks are We taking?

Our informal intervention may cause friction with the state that we fear could lead to unnecessary negotiations with this same entity. We risk the protection and access to resources that come along with formal recognition. Our collective engagements may affect our individual practices and professional relationships with other bodies. The trust developed among us over time might also be at stake through our collective engagements. We recognize the risks in our form of coming-together, but we have a mutual understanding and a readiness to face challenges collectively.

What kinds of knowledge are available to us?

We embrace ecologies of knowledge. Moreover, we value the epistemologies of the South where the existence of a pluriversal world is well recognized. The world has been facing enormous problems that could not find “modern” solutions thus far. Clearly different knowledge systems from different localities should be revisited since the remedies of the “modern” are being seriously challenged. We want to form creative and political communities in a complex order by adapting traditional community formations and leadership systems. We have witnessed many effective social and political struggles that were facilitated through such community formations, especially on the basis of loss and vulnerability. The endogenous struggle of the Zapatistas, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, the Black lives matter movements, Women in Black and Un violador en tu camino [the Chilean protest performance “A Rapist in your Path”] are a few examples. We would like to adapt local knowledge and embodied experiences for local causes, to look for alternative possibilities to experience our realities differently.

What kind of language do We speak?

Our coming-together functions beyond contemporary logics of participation and collaboration within which individuals, not communities are the subjects; within which artists, intellectuals, or activists are considered to be creators or leaders. Our coming-together considers such individuals as *initiators* and then *followers* of communities. Sharing a language of informality opens the door to endless unknown resources and possibilities. We speak languages of protest and struggle where we value the quality of our actions and emotions in the process, more than the outcome of our engagements. We also speak languages of hope, care, trust, and desire. We humbly use such languages to allow ourselves to be affected by the conditions of one another. We speak the language of communities where respectful relations, co-existence, and solidarity have been the center. Our languages are creative, pedagogical, and political with a potential to constantly mutate.