

With For About: When words fail

Glossary 2024



This glossary is intended as a playful and open-ended tool for conversation.

The words and definitions included have been crowdsourced with artists, practitioners and researchers contributing to *With For About: When words fail* (2024) and *Care and the Commons* (2023). Words included here may or may not be used within the context of the gathering.

You may have different definitions and usages of these words and meanings. Please feel free to challenge, question, edit and play with these words as a method of linguistic resistance.

You are invited to use this glossary as you wish. Please scribble, stick, cut, paste, and edit this booklet.

One way you could test how you feel about certain words and their contested definitions is by giving them a colour or a 'temperature' (i.e. hot, cold, lukewarm).

There are a couple of pages left blank at the end of the booklet for you to let your mind wander or add your own words and definitions.

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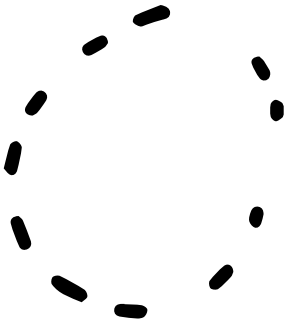
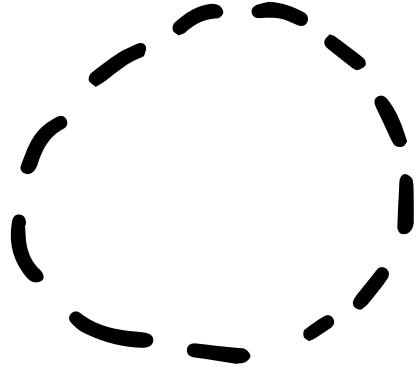
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Agonism

Derived from the Greek word 'agon' meaning 'struggle'. Agonism describes a political conversation that celebrates disagreement. Unlike 'antagonism' (a struggle between enemies), agonism describes friendly contestation between adversaries.

Political Scientist Chantal Mouffe's understanding of agonism defuses the exaggeration between us/them dichotomies. In her theory, agonism celebrates difference and conflictual discourse as a constructive device. It recognises unequal power dynamics, embraces conversational knowledge production and makes 'room for dissent' (Mouffe, 2000, pp.17).

Read more:

Mouffe, C. (2020). *The Democratic Paradox*. United Kingdom: Verso.

Anthropocene

The Anthropocene Epoch is an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in Earth's history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems.

(National Geographic, N.D).

The Commons

Land or resources belonging to or affecting the whole of a community.

See the work of Elinor Ostrom:

Ostrom, E. (2012). *The Future of the Commons: Beyond Market Failure and Government Regulation*. United Kingdom: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Bodily nature

Bodily nature emphasises the interconnectedness between human and nonhuman bodies within ecological systems, viewing **bodies as porous** and continuously interacting with their environments.

Rooted in the concept of trans-corporeality, it challenges the division between nature and culture, highlighting how external forces like pollutants impact human health. This perspective focuses on the material exchanges between bodies and ecosystems, revealing the ethical and political dimensions of these relationships in addressing environmental justice and sustainability. It underscores the agency of both human and nonhuman entities in shaping our material world.

Read more:

Alaimo, S. (2010). *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. United States: Indiana University Press.



Breathing

Breathing is an intimate, rhythmic dance connecting the body with the universe. It is not just the inhalation and exhalation of air, but a cosmic cycle, an orbit that unites us with the earth, the stars, and the intricate systems within and beyond.

Each breath is an exchange of life, a continuous flow of energy, grounding us in communion with all living beings and the universe's infinite pulse. Through breath, we honour our connection to existence, embracing the multiplicity of our being in each moment.

Care

For Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher, care is everything that we do to 'maintain, continue, and repair “our world” so that we may live in it as well as possible' (Tronto & Fisher, 1990).

Contemporary feminists have updated this definition to include 'relations [that] maintain and repair a world so that humans and non-humans can live in it as well as possible in a complex life-sustaining web' (Puig de La Bellacasa, 2017).

See the work of:

Tronto, J. C., & Fisher, B. (1990). Toward a Feminist Theory of Caring. In E. Abel, & M. Nelson (Eds.), *Circles of Care* (pp. 36-54). SUNY Press.

Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017). *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*. United States: University of Minnesota Press.

Pirate Care. (No date). [syllabus.pirate.care](#)

Climate Justice

Climate justice recognises the climate crisis as a social and political problem, as well as an environmental one. It acknowledges that different communities feel the effects of the climate crisis differently and that the responsibility for the crisis rests with some countries and companies more than others.

Climate justice understands that the lives of those already facing injustice and oppression are made harder by the impacts of the climate crisis. It is about recognising the interconnectedness of struggles and, in doing so, fighting for solutions to the climate crisis that not only reduce emissions but create a fairer and more just world in the process.

([Friends of the Earth, 2022.](https://groups.friendsoftheearth.uk/resources/whats-climate-justice)
groups.friendsoftheearth.uk/resources/whats-climate-justice)

Compassionate communication

The practice of observing actions, identifying your feelings and how your needs inform your feelings and making positive requests.

Counter-mapping

Counter-mapping is a form of **resistance** that challenges dominant power structures by creating alternative maps that represent marginalised perspectives.

It subverts conventional cartography, which often serves state or corporate interests, and instead highlights the cultural, ecological, and social significance of landscapes. Counter-mapping **reclaims space** by documenting and amplifying local knowledge, relationships, and histories, offering a more inclusive, community-centered view of land and resources.

Ecosystem

An interconnected ecological system of living and non-living things and entities existing within a shared physical environment or habitat. An ecological system will comprise of communities of animals, plants, micro-organisms, soils, decaying organic matter, and non-living matter such as rocks and minerals.

Ecocrip

Eco-crip is an interdisciplinary concept that explores the relationship between disability and ecological issues. It challenges traditional environmentalism that excludes disabled bodies and emphasises how disabled people and non-human entities are intertwined within ecological systems. The eco-crip lens sees how environmental injustice unfairly affects certain communities, advocating for an **intersectional approach** to environmental justice that recognises mutual vulnerability and **interspecies solidarity**.

Ecological grief

In inter-species care, the remit of grief doesn't limit to the loss of human/animal life. Ecological grief expands the acknowledgement of the loss towards the complexity of systematic destruction, damaged lands, rivers and broken communities. Holding public funerals over lost glaciers is one such example.

Enriching

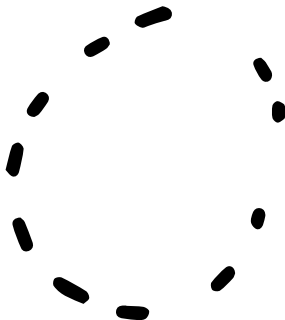
(verb) Improving oneself in a deeply positive manner via an external media or event, like a meal, conversation or art exhibition.

Fermentation

The chemical breakdown of a substance by bacteria, yeasts, or other microorganisms, typically involving effervescence and the giving off of heat.

Imperialism

Imperialism is defined as a doctrine, political strategy, practice, state policy, or advocacy that extends power by exerting political and economic control outward over other areas (usually a former colony).



Inter-species Care

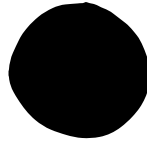
Countering the hierarchical classification of species that justifies human domination and abuse of other species, different species are considered equally precious and deeply care for one another in understanding that all living beings, including the soil and rocks, are interdependent and interconnected in the ecosystem.

Intimacy

A queer thing, a slippery thing, a dream of proximity that allows oneself to become porous towards or with another being. Often also a sense of being heard or felt at eye-level, closely, carefully.

Interlocutor

(noun) someone who helps dialogue flow between multiple parties, a social lubricator and a point of contact for information.



Landworker

A person who works with the land for the benefit of wider ecosystems.

Learning Community

A group of people engaging in a 'process of collective learning' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) where practitioners share opinions, ideas, values and learning by virtue of their shared interests and practices.

Learning communities are motivated towards co-developing knowledge and understanding, enriched by bringing different voices, experiences, and intersections to the fore.

Listening Circle

A listening circle is a specific type of talking circle designed to support people in processing an event or issue that **poses a challenge** or has impacted people in a significant way.

They are community-oriented forums that provide an **equitable** opportunity for participants to have a **voice**. Listening circles can be used in a variety of settings, including communities, workplaces, schools, organisations, neighbourhoods, universities, and within families. They have roots in indigenous cultures and are backed by research in interdisciplinary studies.

They are not focused on problem-solving, dialogue, or debating. They are meant to **create a space for expressing, listening, processing, and community building**.

Read more:

iirp.edu/professional-development/facilitating-listening-circles

Ma

A Japanese concept of negative space, and a Japanese reading of the Sino-Japanese character 間. Though commonly used to refer to literal, visible negative space, ma may also refer to the perception of a space, gap or interval, without necessarily requiring a physical compositional element. This results in the concept of ma being less reliant on the existence of a gap, and more closely related to the perception of a gap.

The existence of ma in an artwork has been interpreted as "an emptiness full of possibilities, like a promise yet to be fulfilled", and has been described as "the silence between the notes which make the music".

Read more:

<http://www.columbia.edu/itc/ealac/V3613/ma/>

<https://wawaza.com/blogs/when-less-is-more-japanese-concept-of-ma-minimalism-and-beyond/>

Mycorrhizal

a fungus which grows in association with the roots of a plant in a symbiotic or mildly pathogenic relationship.

More-than-human

Living creatures and entities, other than humans.



Neocolonialism

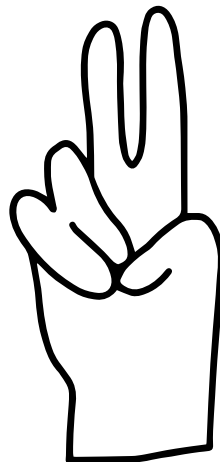
Neocolonialism is the continuation or reimposition of imperialist rule by a state over another nominally independent state.

Non Violent Communication

Conversations with the heart of understanding, empathy, and transformation.

Ontological

Showing the relations between the concepts and categories in a subject area or domain.



Pluriverse

The world, considered as lacking uniformity, the world as a non-homogenous domain.

Postvention

Aftercare that protects against or seeks to prevent further harm.

Reading the air

A common phrase “Ba no Kuuki wo Yomu”(場の空気を読む), “understanding the situation without words” or “sensing someone’s feelings”.

Understanding without words is an important concept for Japanese culture. The literal meaning is “reading air”.

Reciprocal

Something that is done or given mutually, or felt equally by both sides.

Regenerative

"A regenerative' mindset is one that sees the world as built around reciprocal and co-evolutionary relationships, where humans, other living beings and ecosystems rely on one another for health, and shape (and are shaped by) their connections with one another" (The Royal Society of Arts, 2021).

Safe and brave spaces

Environments where we can comfortably voice ideas, questions and concerns, and everyone is respected and listened to.

SEA Heartbreak

Socially Engaged Art (SEA) Heartbreak is a concept developed by Kate O'Shea and Ciaran Smyth to explain the heartbreak of falsity in the field of art and activism.

The term attempts to put a language on what it means to be betrayed in socially engaged art. It describes the breakdown of collaborative relationships built on assumptions of trust, friendship and values that reveal themselves to be contradictory in practice.

“Getting betrayed by someone for the first time in socially engaged art is like a breakup. Trust, friendship and work: all smashed into tiny pieces. The second time is different. By the third time, you begin to see the power structures at play. Now I can see that each of my SEA heartbreaks unfolded within unequal power relations. I thought each person had a practice which was similar to mine: aligned politically and ethically. But that was only a shared language.”

Kate O'Shea (2022)

Slow Resistance

Slow resistance is a gradual, persistent form of opposition to systemic oppression, focusing on subtle, everyday actions rather than immediate, visible protests.

It counters “slow violence” through long-term strategies that foster resilience and solidarity. By sustaining cultural practices and small acts of defiance, slow resistance builds strength over time, challenging oppressive structures through enduring, collective effort.

It also draws from multiple leakages in the narrative or representation of slow violence, manifesting as small changes, such as language choices, withdrawal, or the refusal of everyday conventions.



Slow Violence

Slow Violence refers to harm that occurs gradually and out of sight, often over long periods. It includes environmental degradation, social inequality, and systemic oppression, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities. Unlike immediate violence, its effects are delayed and cumulative, making it harder to recognise and address despite its long-term impact.

Speculative fiction

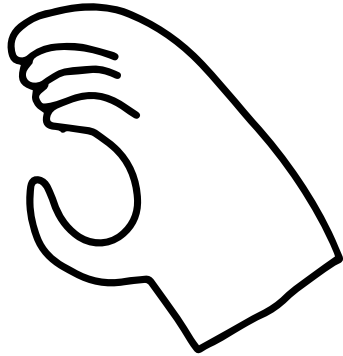
A category of fiction that, in its broadest sense, encompasses the genres that depart from reality, and can be used as a tool to imagine alternative ways of living.

Tools

Physical and non-physical objects that help one to collaborate or interrupt power - a term Sophie Mak-Schram is using to describe their current practice of making art-pedagogical objects in collaboration with others. Tools can be poetic, processual, or even conceptual.

Transdisciplinary

The coming together of people with expertise and knowledge across disciplines, professions, sectors, communities, and lived experience to co-produce work. An individual with a transdisciplinary practice will straddle professions, disciplines and communities, they will know and have experience of, for example, being an artist, an activist, an anthropologist.



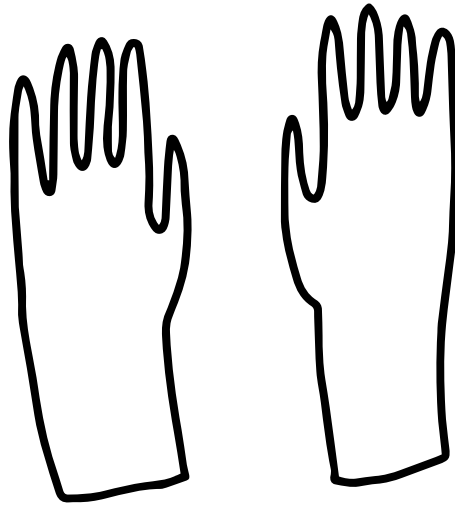
Unfixing

Akin to unlearning, unfixing is a gentle resistance to becoming folded in; a refusal to be co-opted into a singular identity, position, voice. Unfixing aims to shift away from a horizon of a resolution or majority consensus that doesn't resolve or heed the voices at stake.

Wicked Problems

Complex problems that are difficult, seemingly impossible, to solve and have no one solution, for example, climate justice and catastrophe.

An invitation...



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