Feral Experiments in CreaTures Co-Laboratory

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ABSTRACT

We share insights from our practice-based experimentation with 'feral' ways of sensemaking in the context of creative transformational practices. Drawing on three art and design research projects, we discuss how feral ways – open-ended, spontaneous, welcoming indeterminacy– may foster more-than-human co-creation of knowledge and data, and nurture shifts from anthropocentric 'making sense of' to relational 'making sense-with' other-than-human creatures. Through our cases, we illustrate how experimenting with feralness can foreground issues of power, agency, and control in the currently human-centric discourses around data, technology, and sensemaking in eco-social transformation. Our insights may nurture critical more-than-human perspectives in creative eco-social inquiries.

Introduction

Transformations towards more socially and ecologically sustainable ways of life are urgently needed to address impacts of climate breakdown (Lee et al., 2023). Pathways towards necessary changes to how we live together on the planet are contested and interdependent: they must go beyond awareness raising campaigns and behavior change to enable shifts in people's everyday practices, lifestyles, productive means, and political systems. An important role in understanding how to re-imagine and enact positive eco-social change is played by creative practices in art and design. Creative practitioners and practice-based researchers have long experimented with diverse approaches to support positive eco-social action, showing that art and design are transformative, particularly by provoking situations that bring together stakeholders into imaginative, reflective exchange (Dolejšová et al., 2021; Houston et al., 2022; Irwin, 2015; Light et al., 2019; Maggs & Robinson 2020; Neal, 2015).

The authors of this article are creative practitioners and practice-based researchers who have been engaging with eco-social sustainability through what we call 'feral' ways of sensemaking. In this article, we explore feral as a quality to appraise open-ended, spontaneous, unexpected, more-than-human encounters that unfold beyond the bounds of human control, embracing indeterminacy and surprise as both generative and critical elements (Dolejšová et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2024). We investigate how the concept of 'feral' within creative eco-social inquiries can help us better understand ways that human intentions may evolve beyond the bounds of anthropocentrism and rational sensemaking to support more-than-human collaborations and making sense with (rather than of) various creatures who make our worlds (in this article, we use the term more-than-human to recognize the many species, agencies, and processes which humans dwell in close relation with). In particular, we focus on questions of power, agency and control in the – currently human-centric – discourses around data, technology, and sensemaking in eco-social transformation.

To discuss these issues, we examine three experimental artistic productions that came together within an EU-funded research project CreaTures (Creative Practices for Transformational Futures). The three-year (2020 - 2022) project brought together over 60 transdisciplinary creative practitioners and researchers to collaborate around the Laboratory of 20 experimental productions (ExPs) and examine the possible links between creative practice, eco-social change, and transformative futures. In what follows, we introduce three of the 20 ExPs – Open Forest, Cyano Automaton and Open Urban Forest – that experimented with feral ways of sensemaking and discuss how they brought the complex task of making, or being an active part of, eco-social change into situated, relational and multispecies contexts. Drawing on our experiences from co-creating, researching, and documenting these ExPs as part of the CreaTures Laboratory, we share our emerging insights regarding feral ways of sensemaking and collaborating with other-than-human creatures and discuss them on the backdrop of creative eco-social inquiries in art and design.

Creative Practices for Eco-social Transformation

The CreaTures project started from the observation that creative practice in art and design can help us achieve eco-social change, by helping people imagine sustainable, caring, and just futures and bringing them into being (Light et al., 2019). The term 'eco-social' was used within the project to signal the interlinked concern for ecological and social relations (details in Light et al., 2023). We acknowledge, however, that this is not an entirely new concept and many Indigenous and non-Anglo-European cultures have lived with relational ontologies that would render any change as essentially eco-social.

Creative practitioners are addressing sustainability in various social and ecological contexts, using a diversity of creative expressions: from multi-sensory installations inviting spectators to contemplate new eco-social rituals (Beavers, 2023) to community projects enacting a change towards more equal and just social systems (Miller, 2023) to digital textile artefacts offering moments of embodied, peaceful reflection on war and reconciliation histories (Sanchez-Aldana et al., 2020).

Speaking from the context of art and artistic research, Maggs & Robinson (2020) propose that public engagement on sustainability can be explored through the lens of aesthetics; as a question of experience, affect, creativity, and self-reflection. Artists can produce knowledge that goes beyond rational and physical phenomena to uncover emotional, subjective, and experiential insights that lead to a greater understanding of barriers to

eco-social change (Houston et al., 2022; Light et al., 2019; Neal, 2015). In design research, creative approaches to inspire social change have long involved participatory design (Björgvinsson et al., 2012, Light et al., 2022; Parra-Agudelo et al., 2017), transition design (Irwin, 2015), critical speculative design (Dolejšová et al., 2020; Prado de O. Martins, 2014; Pennington, 2018) and more.

Much of this work places a focus on locally situated eco-social innovation that originates within concerned communities, starting from attention to local details, but aiming to inspire long-term, 'ontological' change (Escobar, 2018). Working towards eco-social change requires situated and embodied perspectives and lived experiences with the issues at hand (Hummels et al., 2018; Light et al., 2023). Haraway (2016) then reminds that on the more-than-human planet, such embodiments of change cannot be solo- or human-centered acts and proposes that eco-social change happens via *sympoiesis*: through human collaborations with other-than-human partners, in a pluralistic process of becoming-with each other.

CreaTures (Co-)Laboratory

The CreaTures Laboratory (https://creatures-eu. org/laboratory/) was a major component of the CreaTures project, which gathered, curated, and helped to co-develop a series of 20 experimental productions (ExPs) – creative projects aiming to foster a positive eco-social change. The ExPs emerged from different social, cultural, and geographical contexts and creative genres across art, design, and activism. Mobilizing distinct forms of creative knowledge and approaches drawn, for instance, from experimental and participatory design, socially oriented art, and sustainability science, these transdisciplinary projects addressed a wide array of eco-social themes, ranging from interspecies pluralism and more-than-human care to reproductive equality and transformative economies (details in CreaTures, 2023). The ExPs authors worked with researchers and practitioners directly involved in the CreaTures project and further invited external collaborators to contribute their expertise from various specialist areas, including forestry, microbiology, marine biology, and Indigenous land management. Many ExPs, including the three that will be discussed in this article, involved contributions from other-than-human collaborators such as dogs, trees, seaweed,

fungi, and cyanobacteria who were considered as co-creators of the creative inquiry.

As Laboratory curators and facilitators, our intention was to set up a collaborative space for the contributors to come together and learn from each others' creative practice and research, rather than developing their ExPs separately. Our aim with this collaborative, transdisciplinary setting was to experiment with diverse aspects and limits of co-creation in practice-based research projects. The Laboratory participants engaged in a wide range of co-creative activities, including internal workshops, interviews, and various means of self-reflection: they observed and participated in each others' projects, shared feedback, and organized joined public-facing engagement events such as exhibitions and panel discussions. The Laboratory thus unfolded as a collaborative space for shared moments of knowledge exchange and co-creative work on and around the ExPs. This was later reflected in the subsequent renaming of the Laboratory to 'Co-Laboratory'.

The 20 Co-Laboratory ExPs were curated collaboratively at different stages of the CreaTures project: some were invited at the project's outset; others were commissioned later in response to the emerging research findings and themes. The open-ended and relational approach to the Co-Laboratory curation reflects the process-based nature of many transformational creative practices, where it is often accepted that meanings emerge over time and initial standpoints are likely to change, rather than being fixed. By following this approach, we enabled ourselves (in CreaTures) to be reflective and flexible in responding to timely eco-social issues and emerging concerns. Through this curatorial approach emerged our interest and focus on 'feral' as a theme in eco-social creative practice, as we unfold in this text.

The three ExPs that we focus on here are entangled in multiple ways: some of us were creative authors of the ExPs and we were all involved with each other's ExPs through mutual participation in our creative activities and research processes such as on-site visits and interviews, internal feedback sessions, and jointly organized public engagement events.

Three Feral Co-Laboratory Experiments

Open Forest

Open Forest (OF) is an ongoing experimental, practice-based inquiry into forests and forest data that encourages a co-creative re-imagination of forest futures (https://openforest.care/). Co-authored and facilitated by the multispecies Open Forest Collective (Andrea Botero, Markéta Dolejšová, Jaz Hee-jeong Choi & Chewie), the project involves a series of experimental walks with various forests around the world, through which participants can explore local forest ecologies and share their experiences in the form of forest stories. One of the aims of the project is to bring together the existing – mostly quantitative – forest data with messier data, in order to expand and challenge dominant extractivist discourses that consider forests as resources to serve colonialist, neo-liberal agendas. The collected materials invite conversations about what can constitute a forest dataset, how it can be produced, and by whom. Thereby, the project aims to raise questions about power, values, and structural inequalities that shape forests and their futures (Botero et al., 2022; Dolejšová et al., 2022; 2023).

The experimental walks are guided by various human and other-than-human navigators with good knowledge or sense of local landscapes including forest scientists, data managers, a dog, a river, and Indigenous forest guardians (figure 1). Trees and other forest creatures are considered participants, in both the walking experiences and the larger eco-social phenomena happening in and around forests, such as climate change.

The walks invite diverse local participants to walk-with, observe, smell, touch, taste, and listen carefully to the forests around them. Participants' observations inspire forest stories, which are shared via various engagement occasions and formats such as in-person workshops, sharing circles, interactive installations, a paper-based catalogue, and through an online Feral map (https://feral.more-than-human-derive.net/) which serves as the main story archive, holding over 200 forest stories so far (Choi et al., 2023). The map makes the collected forest stories available for further reflection and asynchronous engagement, which helps to enable iterative interactions and reach broader audiences (figure 2). Anyone, including those who did not participate in the walks, can share their stories anywhere on the map, thus contributing to an evolving dataset of diversely situated forest experiences. As a feral artefact, the map also invites interactions beyond the scope of the OF project and hosts various spaces

Figure 1. The Open Forest walks are guided by various human and other-than-human navigators.

and inputs from other creative inquiries, such as the Open Urban Forest project discussed later in this article.

Multiple forest walks have been organized in various parts of the world. For example, in Finland, the walks are situated in the highly instrumentalized Hyytiälä forestry field station that is full of sensors collecting measurements of gas exchanges between the forest and the atmosphere. In Australia the walks explore Melbourne's Urban Forest and its associated open data maintained by the municipality. In Colombia, it is the forest gardens of Kamëntŝa people and their related stories woven into textile sashes, who are the focus of attention in the walks. In the Czech Republic, the walks take place in Central Bohemia, in the protected landscape area Křivoklátsko and are guided by Chewie the dog (Dolejšová et al., 2023).

The forest stories and experiences collected from the walks aim to offer diversely situated more-than-human perspectives on what forests might mean and to whom. For example, the Bohemian walks guided by Chewie – who holds extensive sensorial knowledge of the local forest landscape – provide a unique other-than-human perspective. Chewie's sense of orientation and interests define what is worth exploring and his sensory capacities become

key. Human senses are present but their usual connection to rational decision-making is put on hold. When guided by Chewie, human participants walk into forest spaces and situations that they might never discover otherwise and engage in forest rituals such as 'Moss Spa' – plunging their faces into a moss, to explore the forest from different perspectives (figure 3). These experiences expand embodied knowledge of the forest and its different temporalities, as captured for example in the Bohemian forest stories (figure 4).

Along with this more-than-human guidance, the project explores what we can learn as humans if we surrender our control over daily movements through time and space, and instead attune to a rhythm and interests of surrounding creatures. Through the collected stories, the evolving Feral Map aims to obscure the currently available numeric data about forests, to include more nuanced data of various formats, including stories inspired by a dog's forest interests. These stories offer a peculiar kind of forest data that is messy, eclectic, colorful, varied and wild or 'feral.'

Open Urban Forest

Figure 2. Feral Map and example of a story shared by a participant at Open Forest walk in Hyytiälä forestry field station.

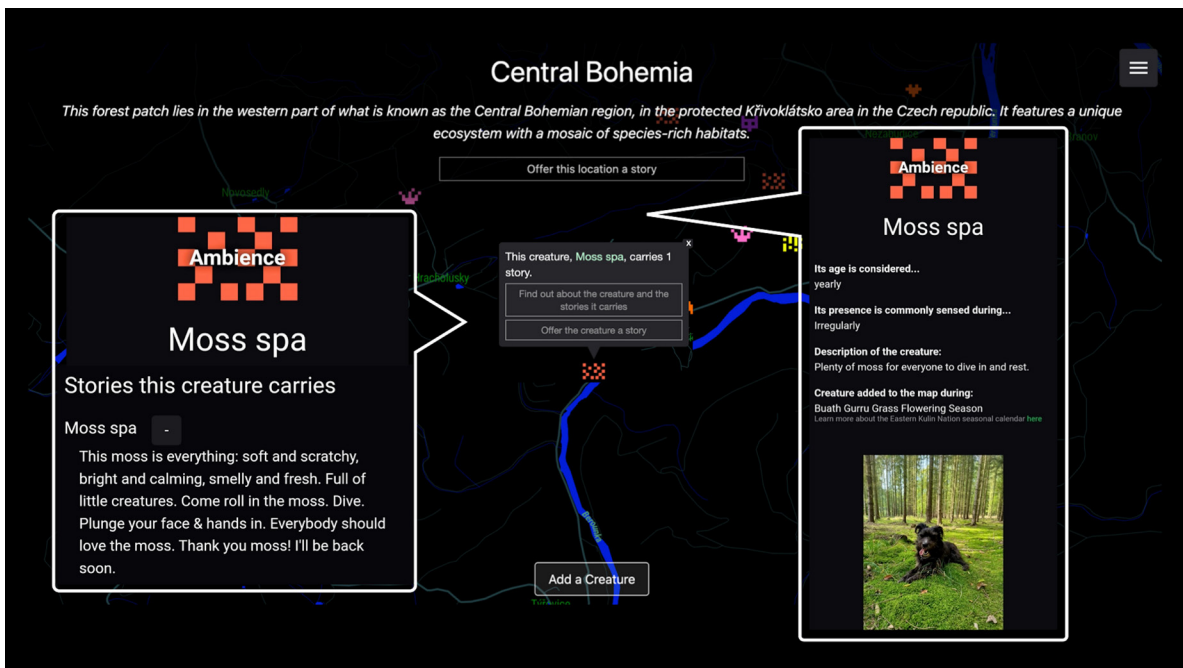*Figure 3. Face moss spa practised by the Bohemian walking guide and participants.*

Figure 4. Moss Spa story 'written by' Chewie.

Figure 5. AVA collective members collecting sonic data of the multispecies forest-garden site.

Figure 6. AVA's jam with the beat of the tunnel construction, followed by their note: "Daily 7 am till 7 pm. Piercing the earth. Making way for more traffic to pass through the valley."

Figures 7 & 8. d'Epog performing with the forest-garden: Rising lower, diving higher. Progress. Forward.

Open Urban Forest (OUF) explored how human and other-than-human dwellers live with and around each other in the context of everyday, situated cohabitation. The exploration took place in the specific context of a nature-reclaimed communal site – 'a forest-turned garden-turned forest' – located on the steep hills of the Svratka river valley in the city of Brno, Czech Republic, where the lead ExP initiator Michal Mitro has been dwelling for the past eight years. The site is affected by local urban planning that includes the building of a road tunnel on the opposite side of the Svratka valley. The construction has impacted the lives of local inhabitants, through clear-cutting of trees and removal of vegetation, and the noise produced by the construction, as well as the changes to local landscape plan.

OUF consisted of a series of performative and co-creative interactions involving various local experts who were invited to observe the multispecies garden: who grows where and whose interests matter to whom on-site. Local expert teams – for instance from forestry sciences, sound, and performance art – came to use their distinct knowledge, tools, and skills to elaborate on diverse aspects of the site. Combining creative research, poetic speculation, performance art, and attentiveness to the OUF site, they gathered images, notes, videos, sounds, and other sensorial impressions to arrive at layered representations of the burgeoning forest-garden site. Their collected materials were also added to the Feral Map in the late 2022 after a year-long collaborative entanglement of the OUF and OF projects and their activities (details in Choi et al., 2023).

For example, the AVA collective, sonic enthusiasts re-searching environmental sounds, worked on the site to record local sonic footprints including a variety of ambient sounds such as unused gardening utensils, snails crawling in grass, or water interacting with metal objects. They also jammed with the heavy machinery operating at the road tunnel construction at the opposite side of the valley, aiming to capture the entanglements and clashes of local nature and human culture (figure 5, 6). The collected sonic datasets were presented at a site-specific, public exhibition.

Figure 9. An ortho-photogrammetric model of the OUF site to map the site's current state and possibilities for rewilding.

Another visiting group, a post-dramatic theatre company d'Epog, conducted on-site research for a three-hour performance titled d'Epog Exists at the Green Fields (ssessi space, 2023). Through the durational performance of a – visibly exhausting – climb-up to the top of the hilly forest site, the group embodied tensions between different scales of eco-social crises: their physical struggle navigating the seemingly ever-rising, steep and sloped forest, resonates with ever-increasing acceleration and demand for progress affecting the 'health' of individuals, communities, institutions as well as countries and the whole planet (figure 7, 8).

Another visit involved the forestry professor Radek Pokorný and a team from the Mendel University's Forest Department who created an ortho-photo-grammetric model of the site and explored the possibilities of its rewilding (figure 9). For instance, acknowledging the upcoming 'dry century', Pokorný proposed that the rocky surface recently unveiled due to road tunnel construction on the opposing slope, would draw more sunlight and heat to the site. As a result, he recommended cutting a large number of existing tall trees on the forest-garden site despite that they currently provide shade and living conditions for many of its inhabitants.

Some of the most prominent and recurring features that emerged across all the OUF expert

engagements turned out to be reflective of the differential power dynamics involved in human-led observations of and cohabitations with the local more-than-human ecologies. Through their varied creative engagements with the site, the contributing experts were constantly reminded that it is them humans conducting a creative research on the garden's other-than-human inhabitants and not the other way around: that the motivations and intentions are theirs, and that their human habits, preconceptions, and imperfections are inherent in guiding the ways they interact with the raw, messy, and feral ambiance of the forest-garden.

Cyano Automaton

The Cyano Automaton (CA) was a co-creative, more-than-human collaboration that explored the possible connections between the lifecycle of cyanobacteria and storytelling on terrestrial and interplanetary colonization and extractivism. The project provided opportunities to learn about the lifecycle of this well-known, yet ambiguous species. Cyanobacteria (*Arthrospira platensis*) are the first photosynthetic organisms responsible for the development of all life on Earth. They also stand behind toxic blue-green algae blooms, spirulina known as 'superfood', and are often presented as a potential source of nutrients for the first colonizers of Mars.
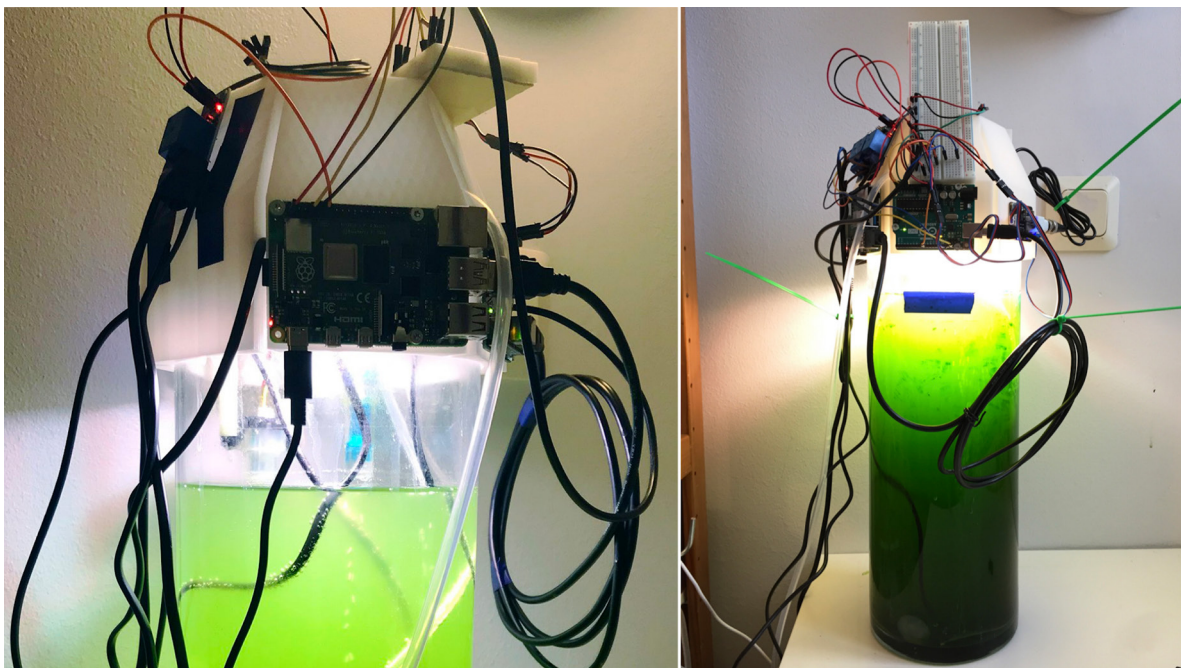

Figure 10. The CA bioreactor cultivating cyanobacteria as a speculative storyteller.

The project activities were centered around an interactive DIY bioreactor built to cultivate cyanobacteria. The bioreactor was connected to a website, a Twitter account, and an engagement activity to explore what it would mean to 'give voice' to this species. The central question for the speculative exploration was: could a long and multifaceted story – of exploitation, space exploration and colonialism, as three deeply interconnected, painful chapters in the story of human civilization – be told by cultivating and working-with cyanobacteria as a speculative narrator? Since cyanobacteria played important role in all these historical and cultural processes, the project author Agnieszka Pokrywka chose to engage this particular other-than-human species as the main project collaborator.

The CA bioreactor was composed of a 5-litre glass vessel and a 3D-printed dome-like cover to hold a light, temperature sensor, and a heater (figure 10). At the bottom and top of the vessel, photoresistors were placed to estimate the turbidity of the spirulina. This measurement was used as a proxy indicator of its growth. The set up allowed for the temperature and light of the bioreactor to be controlled, and for the data on spirulina growth to be presented on the project's website (https://cyano-automaton.monster/) along with a video live-stream of the bioreactor. Aside from cultivating and monitoring the lifecycle of cyanobacteria, in the project's website graphs and

numbers of the bioreactor's cyanobacteria cultivation activity were compiled, visualized, and juxtaposed with open data on NASA's space exploration budgets, annual gold mining in terms of tons and profit, and the estimated production of CO_2 linked to these activities (figure 11).

To offer a space to speculate how these huge numbers might be interrelated, a bot algorithm was developed to post daily tweets in Twitter. A typical tweet post read like this: *Guess what? NASA spent $1706.1mil on space missions in 2011! It represented 1% of the gold mined worldwide that same year. To obtain that amount of gold, 66685854 tons of CO_2 were produced. To compensate, we need 37047697 tons of spirulina. We produced 24.348g today!*

The CA was built and maintained in an art studio in Helsinki during the times of Covid-19 lockdowns, when it was sharing its story mostly through the Twitter account. To experiment with other modes of engagement an online workshop was organized as part of the Uroboros online art-design festival (https://2021.uroboros.design/). In the workshop participants were invited to explore (via Zoom) the technological design of the bioreactor, watch the data livestream and learn how to grow spirulina (figure 12). Working remotely from their own home kitchens, participants crafted their own spirulina-based space food, following an experimental
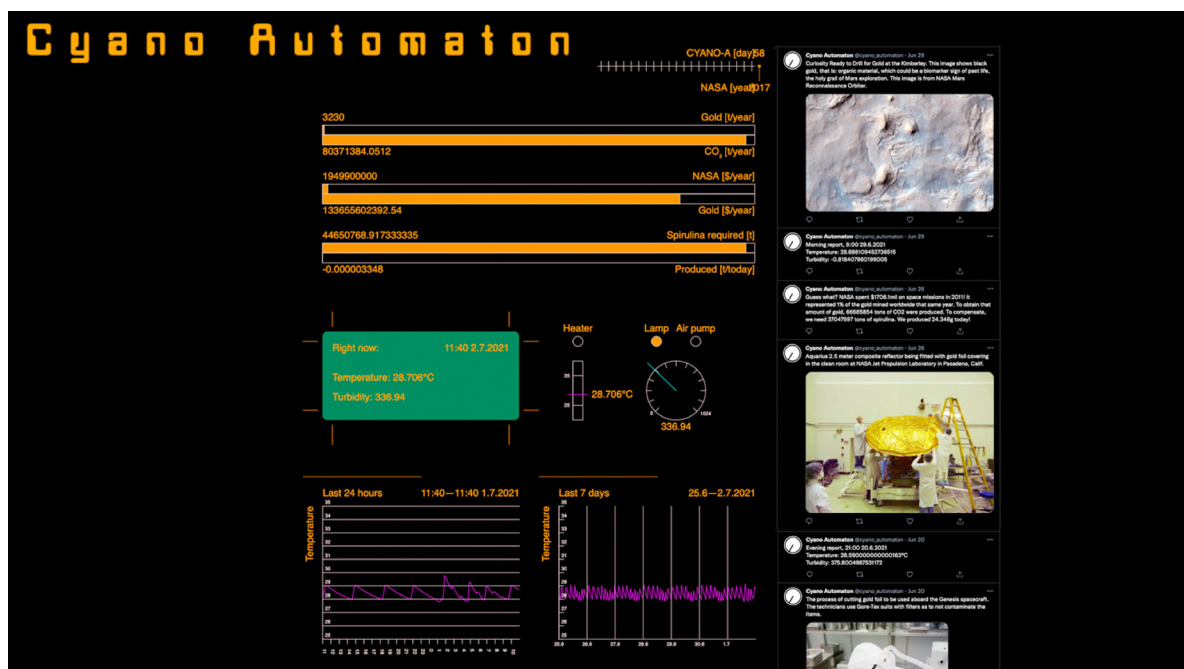

Figure 11. The feed on CA website juxtaposing various types of data.

recipe, and listened to the CA's story concerning its connection with gold mining, terrestrial and interplanetary colonization, and spirulina super-food. Each step of the recipe performed together became the background for a critical discussion on extractivism, colonization, space travel, and connected eco-social challenges such as emissions, displacement of local communities, biodiversity loss and more.

At the end of the workshop, participants tasted their spirulina snacks together, discussing the details of their flavor – both literal and metaphorical, capturing the stories shared as a group (figure 12). This embodied and sensory-rich storytelling, inspired by the Automaton machine and its speculative 'voice' created an occasion to explore and think about critical and interconnected eco-social issues. Working together with the spirulina-cultivating automaton, as an experimental 'feral' technology, created – at least for a brief moment in time – an occasion for us to experience more-than-human perspectives to the story.

Feral Ways of Change

In this article, we have introduced three creative practice-based research projects brought together by the CreaTures Co-Laboratory that open up

terrains for thinking and engaging with alternate visions for relational ways of living and co-creating with local more-than-human ecologies. Each of the three projects involve unique ways of engaging with these ecologies that allow for multi-disciplinary and multi-species exchange of local yet diversely situated knowledge and experiences. Their ways of engaging and bringing together diverse more-than-human contributors to collaboratively produce data and insights about their surroundings share the qualities of being experimental, messy, eclectic, playful, open-ended and wild, or what we call 'feral'. In this section, we present our preliminary understanding about what feral as a term may encompass. Drawing on the related theories and concepts, we consider the possible roles of feral ways of sensemaking in creative eco-social inquiries that have emerged from our ongoing, practice-based research.

Feral Ways: Emerging Insights

The term feral derives from the Latin *ferus*, or wild, and is mostly used in biology in the context of feral species – once domesticated creatures that have returned to the wild and become untamed. Feral species are known to have an ambivalent relationship with their local ecosystems: they can be disruptive and invasive, even displacing
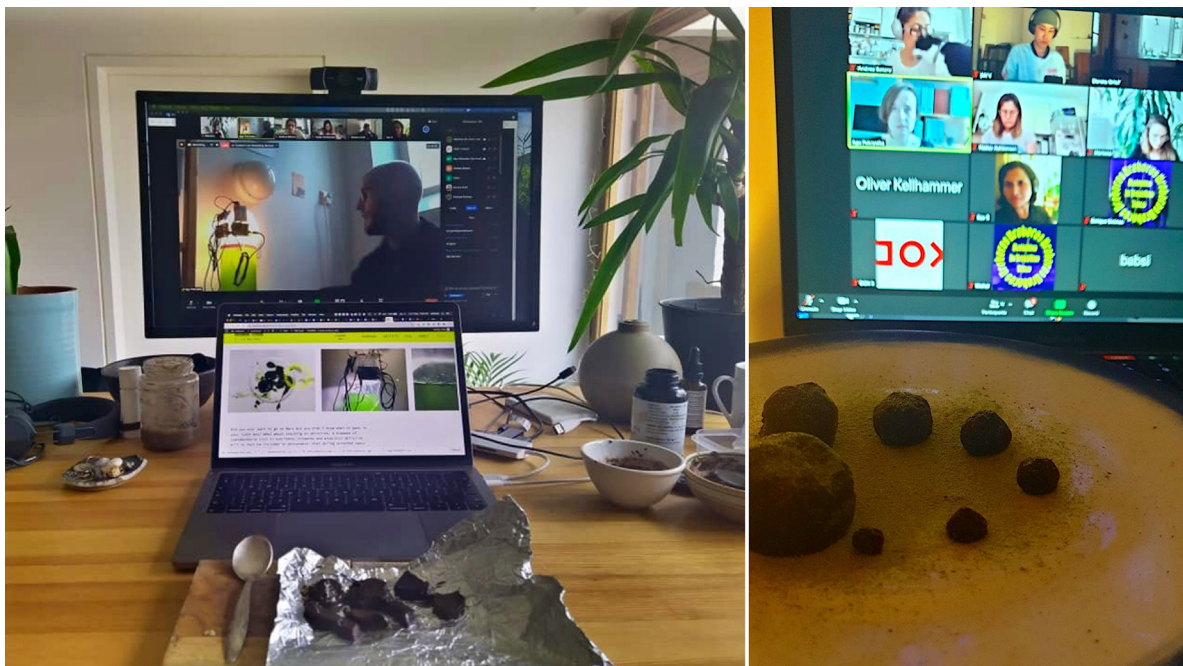

Figure 12. The CA workshop and crafting of experimental spirulina space-snacks.

local indigenous species but also contribute to the enrichment of local biodiversity. The notion of feral has been used in various areas of creative practice and research to denote situations and phenomena unfolding beyond human control, often driven by curiosity and search for alternatives, thus outliving their intended purpose and seeding unexpected collaborations (Bell, 2018; Choi et al., 2023; Dolejšová et al., 2023; Tsing et al., 2020).

In environmental humanities, feral has been used to address the phenomena of unsupervised domestic animals in urban environments (Fortuny, 2019). Mike Michael (2018) uses the notion of feral in the context of STS research to describe a genre of online videos detailing a destructive testing of iPhones by their owners – modes of engagement that escaped the intended use of iPhones and driven by users' curiosity, started operating within their own rules, as a form of 'feral citizen science'. Genevieve Bell (2018), talks about data and technologies becoming feral, outliving their intended purpose, and slipping the received wisdom about users, contexts, and regulatory regimes to emerge in new situations as feral versions of their former selves. Data in different forms can disrupt, expose, and create new social, economic, political, and environmental possibilities as well as hide and exclude others (Henry et al., 2022). Experimenting with data as a feral element acting outside its anthropocentric and often extractive nature can thus reveal what may have previously been less visible or in the margins. Feralness can be seen as marking a creative deviation from what is considered and practiced as the norm, thus providing a useful metaphor for thinking of technology and data becoming untamed, standing in opposition to a normative order that is assumed to be rational and orderly (Scroggins, 2023).

The three ExPs experiment with this notion of *feralness* in multiple ways. The concept of feral data has been central to OF inquiry, through the co-creation of Feral Map that provides a space for diverse forest stories shared by various human and other-than-human forest stakeholders. These stories are considered in the project as feral forest data, offering alternative perspectives on what forests can be, in what kinds of power relations. OUF brings together human contributors with diverse disciplinary perspectives to collect and create various data capturing different aspects of more-than-human cohabitation in a wild forest-garden. These data sets compiled through their on-the-ground engagements with the garden help surface

various tensions in cohabiting the place. They draw attention to the problematic convention of anthropocentric, human-led observing and collecting of data on the other-than-human nature – similarly to how Chewie's guidance in OF provided alternative epistemological and ontological possibilities for being-with forests. CA experiments with the bioreactor as a feral technology for 'bacterial storytelling' helping participants to cultivate diverse understandings about colonization and related eco-social issues. All ExPs bring to attention the power dynamics emerging from who produces data and tells the stories about the worlds that surround us, with a particular concern for what might constitute 'data' and how this understanding might change as channeled through diverse stakeholders in different space-times.

Anna Tsing and colleagues (Tsing et al., 2020, n.p.) use feral to describe "a situation in which an entity, nurtured and transformed by a human-made infrastructural project, assumes a trajectory beyond human control." By complicating the anthropocentric sense of control over different space-times, feral can serve as a lens to investigate and develop a better understanding of relations and tensions in more-than-human ecologies. Cathryn Ploehn (2021), referring to Haraway's (2016) notion of sympoiesis, proposes feral as a process of de-estrangement and re-familiarization with other-than-humans around us that can nurture pluralistic *making sense-with each other*. Here, feral ways can actively challenge notions of instrumental human mastery and 'absolute control', and question anthropocentric understandings of agency as attributed exclusively to human intentionality or subjectivity (Davis, 2017; Barad, 2003).

The ExPs share the aim to create occasions for such feral sensemaking, as they experiment with limiting human control in their working and being with other-than-humans. By doing so, the ExP's initiators and co-authors create opportunities to learn from and better understand the diverse creatures living with and around them. Through the relational *walking-with* various forests that follows a more-than-human guidance, the OF offers new ways to explore local forest ecologies and investigate how different forest stakeholders might make sense of forests. OUF extends this investigation into a longer cohabitation and co-creative sensemaking with a specific forest-garden site. CA makes explicit the linkage between a machine as both a site and agency, and the broader societal issues such as colonialism and the climate change through

a speculative collaboration with cyanobacteria. In doing so, it creates a space of connection and learning for participants about the lifecycle of this peculiar species that has ambiguous (both existing and envisioned) impacts on life on the planet.

In our attempts to cultivate a pluralistic *making sense-with* the ExPs' other-than-human contributors, we also learned about the limitations to our approaches: while we have experimented with letting different other-than-humans have guiding roles, it was often possible only to a limited extent. For instance, the Moss Spa story resulting from the Bohemian walks was written from the perspective of Chewie for whom typing on a keyboard does not make much sense. While the human author of the story might have aimed to playfully capture what they assumed to be Chewie's experience, the story can only ever be 'speaking' on Chewie's behalf from a human interpretation of other-than-human experiences. Similarly, the OUF contributors observed the human dominance in collecting and discussing observations about the multispecies forest-garden. In the CA's case, the experiments with 'giving voice' to spirulina could happen only speculatively: the stories of colonization that are 'told' by the spirulina – through the technical operations of the bioreactor vessel, Twitter account, and algorithms involved – are all human-made. Yet still, these sensemaking experiments, where the agency of other-than-human contributors is mostly "imagined" rather than instrumental, can provide a fruitful creative stimulus for eco-social thinking and action (Ferguson, 2013). That is, if we can remain mindful that agency is not an intrinsic attribute of an object, but rather a relational process emerging as "the enactment of iterative changes to particular practices through the dynamics of intra-activity" as Karen Barad (2003, p. 826) reminds us.

Conclusion

In this article, we presented three creative practice-based projects that experiment with feral ways of sensemaking in diversely situated more-than-human contexts. By fostering collective will and abilities to observe, feel, and interact together in more-than-human collaborations – instead of staying with human-centric extractive approaches that render other-than humans as resources to be used for human interests – the three projects illustrate how feral ways can support more-than-human co-creation of knowledge and data, and cultivate sympoetic relations. The three projects facilitate

such feral experiments on the scale of locally situated and temporary interactions, engaging small groups of human and other-than-human actors for varied periods of time. Arranging feral inquiries in more collective terms, as we tried, for instance, within the broader setting of the CreaTures Co-Laboratory, may help create a greater momentum for creative and critical experimentation. In times of climate collapse and multiple social crises, when the fracturedness of human-led strategies for planetary survival becomes intensely apparent, such collective experimentation – on all scales – may be seen as a much-needed endeavor.

The three feral experiments also helped to reveal various tensions and challenges involved in more-than-human collaborations. There remain many questions that we continue critically engaging: How can human-built technologies like the Automaton or the Feral Map claim to 'capture' other-than-human experiences and perspectives? How do we reach beyond speculative metaphors in the context of collaborative more-than-human inquiries? Relatedly, how can we as human researchers and practitioners think about and do co-creation with other-than-humans? How can we learn from each other in a mutualistic way, beyond the unidirectional mode of humans observing and learning from other creatures? Rather than offering clear answers to these questions, we hope our insights about feral ways and the possibilities of embracing more-than-human perspectives in human-driven inquiries, will provide inspiration for other similar approaches in different domains of creative practice-based research.

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