**WP 2+4**

*… from the correspondence with Marion …*

CCP3: Focus on a field visit to Viktor Gojkovič. The visit was an exemplary case of a creative co-production with different stakeholders working together: The point we can make is that we have realised that we have very scarce knowledge and even **less insight into death** as such, although we have boldly ‘volunteered’ as professional artists who can facilitate an interpretation of the death masks phenomenon while engaging a broad public.

We have decided to include him and his work on the exhibition and several issues appeared regarding this inclusion, mainly connected to the **fear of exploiting** him (appropriation). We have plenty of all sorts of material (transcriptions, blog post, images, recordings).

Another issue that keeps popping up is **a dictate of artistic expression** – perhaps a fixed expectation of the role of the artist by the stakeholders but also from the TRACES project itself. What if the potential of a creative co-production lies in each of the collaborators **stepping out of the expert’s shoes** and to give up what may seem the most precious – in the artist’s case the privileged position of an individual expression etc. These are the expectations that the members of the Domestic Research Society have been exposed recently by the other members of the CCP team when presenting the ideas for the upcoming exhibition: ‘This seems okay, but where is your artistic interpretation (elevation)?!’

MARION: *It appears to me that different types of knowledge interacted freely. You were able to realise and admit that you don't know much about death at such. I gather that your host was able to give you much insight. I understand one element of your role as artists to be "facilitators" of a process. No specific knowledge about death, so what would you say is the knowledge that you brought to the session?*

*Your second point is the risk of exploitation of - well, let's say "the people you work with as artists". I see this both as an ethical and a political question. Are these your worries? Or the worries of the death-mask maker and collector? How could the collaboration between you marked in the representation of the public work? And, bringing in the institution (archive, museum etc), do see ways how the relationship between artist-institution and the collector might develop? Are you maybe thinking about "tools" in your own working through the materials and their framing for public exhibition, which you intend to point to the co-productive part of the process?*

*This links in with your third point, broadly a critical evaluation of the role of the artist, a topic you have worked about a lot and in different ways. You propose for creative co-producers to "step out of the expert shoes". This, to me, sounds like a great "term to think with". Here are some ideas that come to my mind. In your first point, you indicated that different knowledges were floating freely during the field visit. It sounded as if there was a lot of listening, and an appreciation of the different knowledges on an equal level. Curiosity? So if there is "expertise", why is it necessary to "step out of the expert shoes"? Is this what allows communication on an equal level? What does it entail for you as artists? I can only think about what it would mean to me as an ethnographer.*

*I try not to treat people as "material providers". Sometimes, research relationships develop into long-term working relationships or friendships, sometimes the relationship is restricted to the moment of interaction. At the same time, I'm aware that in the end, it's me who writes up the story. In exceptional cases, people engage in the writing-up process. But this means asking a lot of time from people, spent on a project that often is not their priority. I have tried different things. I have used pseudonyms, in order not to capitalise as an individual on a work that was collective. In my protest research, I've written up protest reports for quick online publication, taking on a role as an activist-journalist. Sometimes, anthropologists or local historians are given a role in the field they are studying in and with ("she's our historian"). Ideally, I think, a shared interest (not necessarily a "project") is found. For instance, when protest researchers or artists bring their specific skills to a campaign, act as citizens along with other campaigners. I find it quite a task to manage the ever-shifting mode of field relationships, between immersion in the field and analytical distance. I need both to capture the cultural setting I work in, and I think this is an important part of my expertise as an ethnographer. How about "the artist"? What is s/he expected to do?*

*"Stepping out of the expert tools" - dropping the hierarchy of expertises, without loosing the specific skills and knowledges we have? Such as, publicly adding additional meanings to the practice of death-masking? Which practices and strategies can mark a project as a collaboration not just in naming (logos on the leaflet)?*