

# COMPOST FOR WILD WEEDS

## Chapter 4: Core Principles - Rehearsing Futures, Together

The following diagram sketches the core principles that guide the Disobedient Art School. They are not fixed doctrines but shared orientations, shaped through conversations, readings, artistic experiments, and collective reflection. Grouped into three interwoven clusters - Epistemic Foundations, Relational Grounds, and Organisational Methods - In other words; how we know, how we relate, and how we organise. Together, they help us navigate how to learn, create, and act in ways that feel alive and accountable. We developed these principles through a year-long process of dialogue, experimentation, and moments of both friction and care. As artists rooted in activist and participatory practices, we approached this task not as solitary authors but through relationships: with each other, with Fossil Free Culture NL, with the cultural and political landscape of the Netherlands, and with the legacies of feminist, anti-colonial, and climate justice movements. The principles are still unfolding, reshaped by those who join us, in and around Disobedient Art School. Rather than offering a finished program, the diagram gathers these foundations as orienting positions - open to critique, situated in relation, and alive to ecological imagination. In building this school together, we are rehearsing possible futures: grounded experiments in enacting the kind of world we want to inhabit. These rehearsals are not abstract; they contest the extractive, colonial, and patriarchal logics that structure the present. Even if the futures we seek are not yet fully realisable, we can trace their outlines, move toward them, and create moments that prefigure their arrival. In doing so, we resist the “prison house” of the now and practice living as if another world were already coming into being (Muñoz, 2009).

### 4.1 Epistemic Foundations

Disobedient Art School strives to resist knowledge forms that extract, dominate, or flatten experience. Instead, we turn to ways of knowing that are lived, shared, embodied - and grounded in the places, struggles, and relationships that shape us.

#### 4.1.1. Praxis – Knowledge Through Action

*Function: Reframes learning as a continuous process of action, reflection, and renewed action. It challenges academic hierarchies and centres collective, embodied, and experiential knowledge - especially the wisdom carried by those historically excluded from dominant systems like for example migrants, queer people, and people of colour, amongst others.*

*Role: Serves as the foundational epistemology of Disobedient Art School. Grounds its anti-institutional, participatory approach to pedagogy.*

Praxis is the understanding that knowledge emerges through experience, challenging the division between theory and practice. It is not a linear process, but a cyclical one: action, reflection, and refined action inform one another in an ongoing loop of learning. This principle affirms that all individuals hold knowledge - particularly through lived experience - and seeks to amplify those whose knowledge is often devalued or ignored, especially those from marginalised positions.

This principle draws from the concept of praxis, where education becomes a practice of freedom through the ongoing interplay of reflection and action (Freire, 1970). It also resonates with feminist epistemologies that challenge the “view from nowhere” in favour of embodied, partial perspectives (Haraway, 1988).

Praxis also disrupts the traditional hierarchy between teacher and student. It fosters a collaborative learning environment where everyone is both a learner and a teacher. In this setting, critical thinking is not abstract or detached, but grounded in doing - emerging through shared actions, reflection, and experimentation. For Disobedient Art School, praxis is foundational: it asserts that knowledge will not be passively received but actively co-created. Through collective experience, insights will be systematised, shared, and re-applied.

#### 4.1.2. Art – Aesthetics / Ethics – Plurality as Power

*Function: Redefines art as accessible, plural, collective, and ethically*

*driven. Resists dominant/colonial aesthetics. Blurs boundaries between art and activism.*

*Role: Offers a vision of artistic practice that supports disobedience, multiplicity, and social critique.*

Art, for Disobedient Art School, is both a medium of expression and a site of struggle. It refuses narrow definitions of art as professionalised, commodified, or discipline-bound. Instead, it affirms a transdisciplinary and plural understanding of artistic practice - one that allows for many ways of making sense of the world, expressing emotion, building knowledge, and resisting the forces of fossil capital, colonial extraction, and historical erasure. This approach resonates with the idea that aesthetic experience can be a tool for political transformation (Boal, 1974). The school draws from practices like those of Fossil Free Culture NL, where aesthetics - through creation of unsolicited art performance and installations in museum spaces - are mobilised to touch, disrupt, and shift the perception of the viewer, thereby creating space for critical reflection. These gestures interrupt dominant narratives not through confrontation alone, but by engaging the senses and inviting a different kind of attention. Beauty and balance are not rejected, but placed in tension with interruption, vulnerability and discomfort. Art then becoming a space where emotional resonance and political critique do not cancel each other out, but amplify one another - where we can feel the weight of a crisis and reflect on its structure at the same time.

Simultaneously, we understand that aesthetics are never neutral - they are shaped by ethics. What is considered beautiful is typically determined by dominant norms, imaginaries, and systems of power (Rancière, 2004). Disobedient Art School will work to identify and resist oppressive aesthetics: those that promote exclusion, conformity, or the erasure of difference - such as sanitised depictions of climate solutions that erase frontline, or cultural representations that reinforce racial, gender, or body stereotypes. In contrast, we seek to nurture aesthetic forms rooted in other ways of living, sensing, and resisting. Inspired by traditions like the Theatre of the Oppressed, this principle foregrounds aesthetics that emerge from marginalised lives and insurgent perspectives - such as those shaped by migrant experience, queer embodiment, anti-colonial struggle, anti-patriarchal critique, or ecocentric worldviews.

This ethic is tied to a belief in pluralism and accessibility. Art is not reserved for those with formal training or institutional recognition.

It is a collective production of culture - a language of the people - available to anyone who chooses to use it, reshape it, or invent new forms entirely. At Disobedient Art School, we wish to actively affirm a collective ethics of making: one shaped through context, negotiation, shared agreements, and ongoing listening - rather than one dictated by rigid moral codes. This means paying attention to the needs, desires, and stories that emerge in each moment of creation - and allowing them to guide how and why we make.

In this way, Disobedient Art School approaches art as a transdisciplinary and insurgent practice - one that blurs boundaries between disciplines and between art and life, and where artistic methods are understood not as specialised tools for the few, but as shared resources for imagination, collective struggles against injustice, and for transformation.

#### **4.1.3. Situated Imagination - Speculation as Method.**

*Function: Activates imagination as a tool for contextual, collective sense-making and world-building beyond dominant paradigms.*

*Role: Enables creative risk, ambiguity, and visionary practice within both art and organising. It grounds speculation in lived experience.*

Our approach to imagination is situated, rooted in the lived realities, struggles, and capacities of those who practice it. We recognise that this position emerges in a time often described as a crisis of imagination: a historical moment in which dominant systems narrow the range of futures people believe are possible, making it harder to picture life beyond extraction, competition, and control. Against this narrowing, we align with the tradition of radical imagination, where communities collectively envision and rehearse futures that break from the logics of domination.

Disobedient Art School values imagination not as escapism, but as a critical tool for envisioning and rehearsing alternative futures. In a time of social, ecological, and political crisis, imagination becomes essential for unlearning dominant narratives of inevitability and permanence.

Situated imagination is rooted in context. It emerges from lived experience, collective memory, and embodied perception. It draws from speculative traditions in art, (science) fiction, activism, and spirituality, yet always returns to the here and now, to the conditions we are trying to shift.

The term situated imagination is not new, it sits in conversation with earlier uses of the term. Nira Yuval-Davis and Marcel

Stoetzler (2002) expand feminist standpoint theory to include a “situated imagination,” recognising that imaginative work, like knowledge, is shaped by social positioning and power relations. More recently, Ludger van Dijk and Erik Rietveld (2025) have described it within phenomenology<sup>12</sup> and cognitive science as an embodied, context-bound, and action-oriented process. Our use builds on these resonances while grounding the concept in the political and collective practices of disobedient art.

It also builds on the ideas of situated knowledges and speculative fabulation from Donna Haraway, on José Esteban Muñoz’s queer futurity, on bell hooks’ grounding of creativity in lived experience, and Paulo Freire’s praxis as historically situated action. Building on this lineage, we define situated imagination as both a political stance and a creative method: imagining from where we are, in dialogue with the conditions we seek to transform.

This principle encourages methods that stretch beyond the probable to engage with the possible. It values artistic experimentation, collective dreaming, scenario-building, and affective speculation<sup>13</sup>. These practices cultivate the capacity to hold contradictions, to act without guarantees, and to make space for what does not yet exist. Imagination, in this form, is grounded, practiced, and necessary - a tool for reclaiming the future from the grip of colonial, capitalist, and heteronormative timelines.

## **4.2. Relational Grounds**

We want to build and discover new guiding values and practices that shape how people relate to one another, to more-than-human life, and to power - within and beyond the collective.

### **4.2.1. Community Care – Beyond individualistic Self-Care**

*Function: Focuses on collective, mutual support. Emphasises joy, humour, emotion, and seasonal rhythms.*

*Role: Provides a relational and temporal structure for how Disobedient Art School sustains its people.*

Community care reclaims care as a shared, political, and relational practice. It pushes back against the commercialised and individualistic version of self-care popularised by neoliberal culture. While self-care began as a radical strategy for survival and autonomy - particularly for those facing systemic violence - it has too often become an isolating and commodified burden.

This principle draws on the understanding that caring for oneself

is not self-indulgence but an act of self-preservation in a hostile world (Lorde, 1988). Disobedient Art School builds on this lineage by relocating care in the collective. Here, burnout, depression, and exhaustion are not seen as individual shortcomings, but as outcomes of structural conditions - social, economic, and ecological. This principle also recognises that these pressures are not experienced equally: systems of oppression overlap and blend (Crenshaw, 1991), making care work inseparable from a commitment to justice. Community care, as Disobedient Art School endeavours to practice it, is rooted in shared responsibility, emotional reciprocity, and practical solidarity. It creates space for vulnerability and joy, and nurtures emotional intelligence as a vital tool for collective life.

Within this principle, celebration becomes a radical form of connection. Humour offers a way to navigate hardship while sustaining resistance. Seasonal practices invite us to reimagine time - not as a capitalist treadmill, but as a cycle of rest, emergence, fullness, and decay. Attuning to these rhythms, even amid ecological breakdown, becomes a method for living otherwise. These practices are not decorative; they are foundational to cultivating another way of being and caring together.

### **4.2.2. Ecocentrism – Beyond the Human**

*Function: De-centres the human. Embraces multispecies justice and interconnected thinking while critically acknowledging the colonial risks of appropriating non-Western or Indigenous knowledge.*

*Role: Sets a broader relational frame - ecological, ethical, political.*

Disobedient Art School begins from an ecocentric perspective, one that works to shift attention away from the human as the default reference point. We recognise the interdependence of all living systems, while remaining attentive to the ethical complexity of invoking perspectives beyond the human. We recognise that even in naming this, we expose the anthropocentrism of the cultures that shaped us, which continually pull thought back toward human perspectives and limits our ability to imagine otherwise (Plumwood, 1993). For this reason, we also strive to learn how more-than-human beings - plants, animals, and ecosystems - might be given active roles as participants in our aesthetics and politics (Meijer, 2017). This is not only an imagination, but an emerging reality: in 2022, Spain’s Mar Menor lagoon became the first ecosystem in Europe granted

legal personhood, recognised as a subject of rights with the capacity to be defended in court against ecological destruction. Such cases show how more-than-human worlds can intervene directly in political and legal arenas (stopeccode.earth). In this way, ecocentrism expands the field of participation: not only to more-than-human beings, but also to the diverse, land-based knowledges within Europe that have long been marginalised by dominant Western narratives. The school approaches these knowledges with deep respect, while actively avoiding appropriation. It seeks to decentre dominant Western narratives without romanticising or homogenising cultural difference, and to explore diverse epistemologies situated within the European continent. We focus here on European contexts because our work is grounded in the territories where we live and act, and we do not claim authority to speak from or for Indigenous knowledge systems rooted in other lands.

This approach resonates with currents of land-based European knowledge that persist at the margins of official history - including, but not limited to ancestral practices tied to herbal knowledge, lunar cycles, intuitive sensing, and local cosmologies<sup>14</sup> often transmitted through women's oral traditions. These epistemologies, though long suppressed, reflect a deep entanglement with ecological rhythms and communal modes of survival, and invite a re-reading of European history from the perspective of those who maintained intimate, embodied relations with the land across generations (Federici, 2004). While some of the forces behind their suppression - such as patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism - echo global patterns, in Europe these forces unfolded through historically specific processes: the witch hunts that criminalised women's knowledge of healing and reproduction, the enclosure of common lands that severed communities from their subsistence base, the Roman and later Christian campaigns to erase local cosmologies, and the industrial revolutions that reoriented economies toward extraction and wage labour. This shift was reinforced by the Scientific Revolution's mechanistic worldview, replacing earlier organic understandings of nature with the metaphor of nature as machine - rendering the earth inert, exploitable, and subject to mastery (Merchant, 1980). These differ from the histories of Indigenous peoples elsewhere, who faced settler colonialism and land dispossession under European expansion, yet they share a root logic of domination over people and nature.

Ecocentrism, as we endeavour to practice it here, intrinsically challenges entrenched power structures. It welcomes complexity, contradiction, and speculative thinking as tools for opening ethical questions and imagining alternate futures. While acknowledging the paradox of humans envisioning a world not centred around ourselves, we work to embrace this tension as a generative space for learning and unlearning.

#### **4.2.3. Intangible Commons - Valuing the Unseen.**

*Function: Reframes invisible and non-material contributions - such as time, emotional labour, intuition, and lived experience - as shared, collective energies vital to sustaining creative and communal work.*

*Role: Challenges dominant systems that ignore these contributions.*

*Reorients attention toward less visible forms of labour, value, and care, including those shared with non-human actors and environments.*

In the context of Disobedient Art School's ecocentric and relational ethos, the intangible commons refer to shared, often unseen contributions such as time, emotional labour, attention, intuition, and lived experience. These resources may not leave immediate traces, but they are foundational to sustaining collaborative, creative, and political processes. They circulate through a group quietly: in the care someone takes to hold space during a difficult discussion, in the deep listening that allows others to speak their mind fully, or in the intuitive labour of sensing group dynamics before conflict emerges.

Valuing soft or invisible labour builds on feminist economic critiques that highlight how such forms of work are systematically undervalued or erased in capitalist systems (Federici, 2012).

Tasks like caregiving, emotional regulation, informal mentoring, or even the labour of imagining alternatives tend to be dismissed as secondary, despite being essential to the life of any community or movement. Yet these often-invisible commons are central to sustaining collective and creative work, particularly in settings that refuse extractive or hierarchical models.

Disobedient Art School will emphasise the need to actively recognise, protect, and redistribute these energies - not only among humans but also in relation to non-human actors and environments. This approach resists the extractive logic that demands endless output, and instead cultivates a culture of reciprocity where care, pause, and presence are seen as contributions in their own right.

Valuing these intangible commons invites a rethinking of what counts as contribution, capacity, or success. It challenges systems that privilege speed, productivity, and visibility over process, vulnerability, and sustainability. In doing so, it expands the field of who gets to be seen as a contributor, what forms of labour are worthy of acknowledgement, and how we might organise ourselves in ways that honour the quiet, continuous work of collective survival.

#### **4.2.4. Solidarity - Interdependence Across Difference**

*Function: Grounds the project in intersectional and planetary responsibility, while acknowledging the limits of its positionality in Europe.*

*Role: Provides ethical orientation for working across asymmetries without appropriation. Cultivates humility and long-term commitment.*

Disobedient Art School commits to approaching solidarity as an embodied, situated practice of accountability and connection. A practice rooted in the recognition of interdependence - between people, places, species, and struggles - and a commitment to nurturing relations across lines of difference.

This principle holds space for planetary thinking while remaining grounded in the specificities of being located in Europe.

Disobedient Art School does not claim to speak from or for the Global Majority (the peoples and nations who have borne the brunt of colonial domination and who together make up most of the world's population). At the same time, we recognise that hegemonic<sup>15</sup> European culture itself has been constituted through colonialism, and that our own position is inseparable from these histories. In this sense, solidarity means listening across asymmetries, acting with awareness of colonial and extractive systems, and building forms of collaboration that are reciprocal, critical, and non-appropriative.

It draws from intersectional feminist thought, which understands that systems of oppression are interlinked and must be addressed together (Crenshaw, 1989). Solidarity, in this frame, is not charity or sameness - it is a way of standing with, of acting in relation, and of remaining open to correction and reorientation. It affirms connectedness while resisting flattening of differences.

It's important for us to note that, Indigenous communities have long been the primary protectors of biodiversity through lifeways rooted in interdependence, care, and resistance. The planetary

crisis at hand is not intrinsically borne of humanity or human numbers, but of the violent systems that dominate it: capitalism, imperialism, white supremacy, and (colonial) extractivism.

Solidarity means centering those most impacted - not as symbols, but as holders of vital knowledge for survival and transformation.

Whether expressed through shared action, resource redistribution, co-learning, aesthetic exchange, or other forms that emerge in relation to context, solidarity is held as a continuous practice - not a fixed position but a way of moving together through uncertainty and care.

#### **4.2.5. Staying with the Trouble - Embracing Complexity and Discomfort**

*Function: Encourages tolerance of discomfort, critical reflection, non-perfectionist engagement, and sustained commitment in moments of contradiction, conflict, or uncertainty.*

*Role: Strengthens relational resilience and ethical depth. Enables us to stay present with discomfort, complexity and contradiction and apply this presence in interpersonal relationships, our collective work and wider political, social, and ecological struggles. Prevents collapse into shame, avoidance and reactive judgment. Fosters the capacity to act with care and clarity and remain grounded amid uncertainty.*

“Staying with the trouble” means holding space for complexity, discomfort, and contradiction without rushing toward resolution (Haraway, 2016). Disobedient Art School adopts this approach as a core principle, working to resist the pressure for clarity, consensus, or moral certainty. In a cultural climate that often rewards closure and simplicity, Disobedient Art School strives to remain present in the messy, unresolved spaces where real transformation becomes possible.

“Staying with the trouble” means making room for ambivalence, for feeling torn, for navigating dilemmas that don't resolve cleanly. It asks for both self and collective acceptance: a practice of being accountable to each other without falling into shame, purity politics, or fear of being wrong. It cultivates a space where attacks can be transformed into dialogue, where discomfort becomes a teacher, and where complexity is not a problem to be solved, but a condition to be met with care.

This principle supports a culture that values reflection over reaction, nuance over simplicity, and relational resilience over ideological certainty. It holds space for contradiction, imperfection, and becoming.

### 4.3. Organisational Methods

Refers to the practical principles and systems that guide how a group organises itself - how it makes decisions, distributes responsibility, coordinates actions, and sustains itself over time.

#### 4.3.1. Critical Facilitation - Power-Conscious Organising

*Function: Acknowledges power in facilitation and proposes a balanced, reflective approach - neither rigidly horizontal nor naively structureless. Draws on horizontalist traditions within anarchism - those grounded in mutual aid and collective decision-making - alongside anti-fascist vigilance and an ethics of shared responsibility.*  
*Role: Provides a structure for working together that avoids rigid, top-down hierarchies, while still recognising differences in skill, experience, and responsibility.*

Facilitation always involves power. Disobedient Art School does not assume that egalitarian structures automatically eliminate all hierarchy. Instead, it commits to a practice of critical facilitation - a method of working together that actively navigates the tensions between horizontality and necessary forms of coordination.

Disobedient Art School rejects both rigid verticality and naïve structurelessness. In their place, it endeavours to cultivate a reflective and accountable way of organising that honours autonomy while maintaining responsibility.

We refer to this approach as critical horizontality: a dynamic form of shared leadership grounded in consent, and collective care. It recognises that hierarchy is not always harmful - but when fixed and left unexamined, it often reproduces existing inequalities. Experience and skill are valued alongside emerging voices and situated knowledges. Leadership becomes a rotating practice, held with care and continually open to challenge.

Invisible hierarchies often wield more power than formal ones (Freeman, 1970). When roles and responsibilities are not consciously shaped, they are shaped by default - often in ways that reinforce domination, exclusion, or social capital. Critical facilitation therefore takes seriously the subtleties of voice, space, and influence. It attends to the reality that some people are more fluent in speaking, more comfortable in groups, or more familiar with political codes - and works to ensure that participation does not become a performance of privilege.

The facilitation ethics at Disobedient Art School are rooted in interconnected principles drawn from anarchist organising, anti-fascist vigilance, and intersectional responsibility. These are not

moral postures but living practices - cultivated through attention, friction, and care.

##### 4.3.1.1. Values in Facilitation:

Anarchism offers a philosophy of self-organisation and mutual aid. Rather than insisting on total horizontality, it emphasises distributed responsibility, voluntary association, and a respect for autonomy. In this frame, facilitation is not a form of control, but a collective method for co-governing the space between us.

Anti-fascism is understood not only as resistance to authoritarianism, but also as a proactive culture of vigilance, refusal, and solidarity. Within facilitation, this means noticing the dynamics that might quietly replicate domination - be they racialised, gendered, ableist, or class-based - and interrupting them before they harden into patterns.

Decentralisation and shared power remain guiding aims, though they are not romanticised. Disobedient Art School recognises that power differences are always present; instead of denying them, it endeavours to cultivate transparency, shared responsibility, and continual reflection on how power circulates.

Respect, responsibility, and non-judgment form the interpersonal basis of critical facilitation. Respect is extended to all contributions, responsibility implies care for follow-through and accountability, and non-judgment includes creating learning environments where risk and vulnerability are not punished. These values work together to foster spaces in which participants can express, question, and transform - without shame, and without fear of exclusion.

#### 4.3.2. Temporal Dissonance - Refusing Productive Time

*Function: Challenges the dominant, extractive tempo of capitalist time by honouring slowness, pause, and cyclical rhythms.*

*Role: Supports sustainability, presence, and depth in collective work. Protects against burnout by legitimising rest, repair, and refusal.*

Disobedient Art School recognises that time is not neutral. Dominant systems enforce a linear, mechanical, accelerated, and extractive sense of time - demanding constant availability, productivity, and measurable progress. Against this, Disobedient Art School embraces temporal dissonance: the right to move at multiple rhythms, to slow down, to stop, to return, or to begin again. This approach acknowledges that urgency often serves the agendas of efficiency and control, leaving little space for

reflection, care, or relational complexity.

This principle draws on seasonal practices, ecological cycles, and embodied knowledges that resist capitalist time (Haraway, 2016; Adam, 1988). It values the unfinished, the waiting, the dormant, and the cyclical - modes of being often erased by developmental or linear narratives of progress. It creates space for hesitation, non-linearity, and repair as essential conditions for ethical and sustainable collective work.

Rather than framing delay or rest as loss, temporal dissonance recognises these states as regenerative - necessary for resisting burnout, sustaining imagination, and cultivating depth. This refusal of urgency is not apathy; it is a political act that prioritises presence, relational pacing, and the reweaving of time as something held, not spent. To move at multiple rhythms is also to practice anti-extraction: resisting the demand to produce outcomes at a pace that drains people and relations. Instead, temporal dissonance creates space for replenishment - treating time itself as a commons to be cared for, not extracted.

#### **4.3.3. Situated Commoning Process - Practising Shared Responsibility**

Function: To redefine how Disobedient Art School organises itself.

It frames collective organisation as a situated, relational process that unfolds through reflection, action, celebration and rest.

Role: To translate .d.a.s.'s ethics of interdependence into practice.

It guides the way in which responsibilities, decisions, and rhythms are shared - proposing not a system, but a living choreography of doing, sensing, and caring together.

We prefer not to use the term governance. The term carries histories of colonial administration and corporate control.

Instead, we propose a situated commoning process: a relational practice, socially and materially specific to its context, in which responsibility is shared by those engaged in the doing. Situated commoning builds and tends the relationships that make shared life possible, recognising care, reciprocity, and accountability as infrastructural conditions for creating, learning, and struggle. It is a process that is never finished: it unfolds through cycles, listening to ecological rhythms and treating contradiction not as failure but as a site of learning. The situated commoning process also requires confronting friction, imbalance, and disagreement as a regenerative part of the task.

In this approach, what is usually called decision-making becomes

a praxis of deliberation: a collective act of sensing, pausing, and responding. Deliberation is an act of care and accountability that shapes how we move together through uncertainty. Rather than seeking closure or efficiency, this praxis cultivates awareness of relations, capacities, and consequences for both human and more-than-human relations.

Practically, this means valuing soft resources like time, emotion, creativity, and care, as forms of knowledge; maintaining anti-extractive processes that prevent burnout and invisibilised labour.

Operational power follows doing: responsibility and voice grow from participation rather than position.

Our aspiration is a horizontal structure that allows temporary, context-bound roles where needed, when validated by the collective and exercised with humility. Rooted in an anarchist lineage of self-organisation and responsibility, this situated commoning process remains plural and ecological, a living choreography of interdependence and care.