

Prologue

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Hope is a paradoxical place. It is where we store what we long for and what we are fearful of at the same time. It is where we acknowledge the fragility of our lives. Hope lies in uncertainty.

Writing poems can be a poetic expression of hope, but desire is a matter of the body. And so it needs to be read out loud so that hope can become an embodied expression that works as an integral part of our bodily sensorium. Hearing ourselves saying out loud “I hope” frames everything that follows it. How many facets of hope exist? It is our voices that tell us about it, that resonate with and interconnect various bodies. It can be firm and strong like the trunk of a tree or fragile and nearly non-existent like a breeze whispering in the foliage. But, even when it is nearly not there, this nearly is enough for hope to persist in the most hostile situations. Thus hope is the ultimate expression of life – and yet it has to be practised. Reading the following poem out loud as a practice of hope is directed towards what matters to people when thinking about their work lives.

Yet “I hope” can also be used as an incantation that evokes any other landscape of what really matters and concurrently what is really at stake in our lives. Becoming aware of this landscape might allow us to navigate through the dust that the collapse of our current (Western) worlds entails and reinvent how to live on our damaged planet.

Working Utopias¹

I hope work as a relation is friendship.

I hope work as a relation becomes less dominated by fear.

I hope work as a relation is trying again.

I worry that work relations become increasingly strategic.

I worry work relations are undermined by competition.

I hope that work relations can be structured differently than merely through market logic.

I hope work as a relation is collective daydreaming.

I worry about the strategic cruelty of professionals.

I wonder what parasites do to work relations.

I worry that work as a relation is defined by efficiency.

I hope work as a relation can transgress networking logics.
 I hope we start building packs.
 I hope work as a relation is based on trust.
 I worry that work as a relation is dominated by opportunism.

 I hope that work as a relation is making space for togetherness.
 I hope work as a relation has more time to unfold.
 I hope that work as a relation can balance fears.
 I worry about how much is excluded in current work relations.
 I hope that decision-making is shared in work relations.
 I worry about abusive work relations.
 I wonder what complicity does to work relations.

 I worry that work as a relation is affected by opportunistic strategies.
 I worry that work as a relation is affected by an increasingly unequal distribution of resources.
 I hope that work as a relation embraces the unpredictable.
 I hope that work as a relation gives shelter for the not yet fully grown, not fully developed ideas, desires, plans and people.

 I hope that work as a relation can also handle deals.
 I hope that work as a relation can recuperate patience again.
 I worry that work as a relation is overpowered by expectations.
 I worry that work as a relation has been replaced by functions and positions.
 I hope we can work side by side.
 I hope that work as a relation gives more space to everyone.
 I worry that intimacy can be abused in work relations.

 I hope that we do not lose respect for the other.
 I hope work as a relation nurtures solidarity.
 I hope that work as a relation is growing.
 I wonder how to think about the future of work relations.
 I hope that work as a relation gives enough time for listening.
 I hope that work as a relation leads to joint forces.
 I hope work as a relation invites [ex]change.
 I hope work as a relation becomes more caring.
 I hope we can also let go of work relations.

 I hope.

 Hope as being committed to a proposal as a practice of respect.
 Hope as listening.
 Hope as witchcraft that names and invites those who are missing.
 Hope as a sensing and working with different energy levels.
 Hope as a practice to unfold something powerful.

 Hope as picking up and joining ideas of different people as a practice of mutual engagement.
 Hope as sharing worries, dreams and personal longings as a practice of trust.
 Hope as awareness of the importance of protecting, nourishing and letting the inside grow to open up to the outside.
 Hope as a being open and curious towards others as a practice of being non-judgmental.

Hope as acknowledging the fragility of embryonic encounters as a practice of protecting.

Hope as making space despite fear.

Hope as a practice of spacing.

Hope as a practice of bricolage.

Hope as exploring the threshold that in- and excludes instead of reproducing it.

Hope as rejecting the power of the factual.

Hope as dancing as a practice of togetherness, that does not need words.

Hope as focusing on interest and fascination instead of achievement and expertise.

Hope as a practice of rendering the unknown as a lateral presence that does not give answers but determines action.

Hope as experimenting with transgressing one's own boundaries as a practice of taking risks.

Hope as being prepared to be disappointed.

Hope as remaining prepared to be affected and to affect.

NOTE

1. Working Utopias is a research collaboration between an organization studies scholar and a choreographer. It researches various artist-run organizations to explore the role of utopian imaginaries for organizing work lives based on solidarity despite conditions of individualization. This text has many roots, two of which are the writings of Ernst Bloch and our experiences with the process of the Artist Summit at Dance Platform 2018 in Germany. We would like to thank all participants and particularly the HOOD artist collective for their generous invitation for co-creating hope.

