

Brief Encounter with the Taos Institute

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My experience at the TAOS 2022 *Gathering*, *Ongoing Dialogues: Relational Resources for Global Good*



By Annalena Schmidt-Faber, a Performatory student @ Breda University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

How do we cope with the complex challenges that are affecting our society all over the globe? “Performatory”, a community of Social Innovators at Breda University of Applied Sciences (<https://www.performatory.nl>) addresses societal challenges by using collaborative and co-creative approaches to practices. Students and teachers are committed to transforming the educational system into a more contextual and human-based system. As a student, I learn how to create change around complex societal issues through real-life projects, e.g. working with socially deprived neighbourhoods in Breda. This approach gives us, the students, knowledge about how to facilitate group conversations, how to build and strengthen communities and how to create meaningful experiences that initiate shifts in mindsets and relational practices leading to transformative action. The various backgrounds, countries and lived experiences of students promote a plurality of perspectives and multiple points of views, making Performatory a living lab for innovative ways of thinking and doing.

Within this context, I am looking back at my participation in the Taos 2022 virtual Gathering, “Unfolding Dialogues: Relational Resources for Global Good”, and asking the question: *How can social constructionist ideas and practices help us in creating and bringing forward new ways of going on together?*

I joined different events/sessions at the Gathering such as releasing generational trauma, how to resist colonial structures and many sessions about language shaping and framing who we are and how we express ourselves. During one of these sessions, hosted by Claudia Gross, I learned that most of the language we use in businesses and organisations is rooted in military, master, and machine language. Expressions like “target”, “deadline”, “We are killing it”, “recruitment”, “head quarter”, “divide and conquer”, “producing” and “letting off steam” are maybe obvious in their background however I have never questioned them when hearing or using them. The concept of social constructionism suggests that we live in a world of meaning and that we understand the world



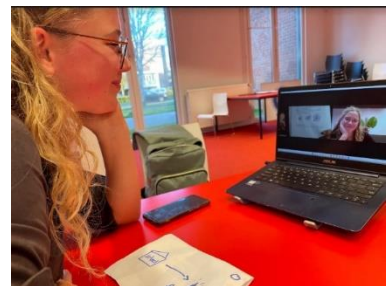
from our personal history, experience, and shared culture. Interesting to me is how the words we choose create worlds and as Anais Nin said, “We don’t express things as they are, we express them as we are”. As a 23-year-old student, trying to change the world into a better place, these ideas are very compelling to me and make me feel powerful and hopeful.



We from the Performatory - Angelica van Dam, Celiane Camargo-Borges and Jovita Steeman – also hosted a session, called “Community Design – Performing Social Innovation”. This session was about imagining the ideal education and giving the participants an idea about how Performatory is challenging traditional education and re-constructing education in social practices. But apart from imagining possible futures, I learned the importance of

how language is also key for social innovation. Do we still want to use language that implies hierarchal and hurtful structures? Do these words match the intentions and values we want to communicate? The world is going through changes, shouldn’t we also change our language with it? If in doubt about the meaning of a word, we can always check and research and then create and re-create, cultivate, and adapt new words that are not rooted in colonial structures. If we change our language, we can change our realities and practices of education, and I think that is a beautiful opportunity that we can all explore together.

About Annalena: I am Annalena Schmidt-Faber from Berlin, Germany currently a bachelor student of social innovation at Breda University of Applied Sciences. In the past year I did an internship at Curiko (Vancouver/Canada) founded by Janey Roh and Sarah Schulman, working in the disability justice sector. Next year, after my graduation, I would like to start my master in the area of social sciences.



I am always curious about other people’s stories. If you would like to have a conversation please feel free to reach out to me: annalenasf@posteo.de