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Trans Radical Community Care

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Acknowledgement

This project emerged from my anger, love and care. From my experience of being a non-binary person, in a world that constantly tells us that we¹ do not or should not exist.

The paper will hold complexities of care, resistance, trans vitalities and radical healing in trans communities, from the knowledge that we generate in our bodies. It is written from inside the community with radical reciprocity. Showcasing how we practice ways of being, caring, and healing that are embodied in our experiences and holding space for each other.

This is already resistance.

But it is not rooted in resistance; it goes beyond it.

This is not only personal, but it is deeply political.

Strategies that create our healing, generate knowledge and ways of being which give us the energy to live in these systems that are not for us, or for anybody.

¹ By we, I mean trans people. In the paper, I will be using the expansive definition of transness. Including everyone who is connected to the term either gender questioning, non-binary, agender, genderqueer... Some days I do identify with the term trans, and some days I do not. Therefore, the way I refer to myself might be a bit messy.

Chapter 1

In the first chapter, I explore my personal story with the T4T Care Collective. I introduce the research topic with research (sub)questions. Afterwards, I focus on the unlearning process and the frameworks I am moving away from in the paper, such as obsession with trans pain, dominant notions of care and Dutch care systems for trans people. At the end, I introduce T4T care collective while thinking/feeling why T4T space is so special to me.

Starting point

In this section, I explore my personal story with T4T Care Collective, how I ended up in this space and why I stayed.

Living in this world, for me, feels like a constant battle. Capitalist, hetero-cis-normative, hierarchical, racist, queerphobic, ableist, and colonial structures are constantly trying to rip me away from myself, away from my feelings, needs, embodiment, care and love. Constantly thinking of hyper-productivity, policing, violence, dissociation, grief, rage, disconnection from pleasure and loss of my autonomy.

What is it that I am missing? I was thinking to myself.

A lot has changed in the past years. After opening up about my gender, soon after, I met someone interesting, and as I do, I started to develop a crush on them.

*“There is a T4T Care Collective open event in Leiden. I am going if you want to join 😊”
they texted me.*

On the 22nd of September, I did join the event, but my intentions were just to be around my crush.

Somehow, I ended up at an open event of T4T Care Collective, which was organised to find facilitators for trans-led peer support groups.

I remember opening the door of the room, my heart was racing so fast, just the thought of meeting so many new people, being in a new room, a new environment, hearing new voices. I felt physically sick.

My voice kept shaking, and I felt so uncomfortable to be there: “What am I doing here?” I kept thinking to myself.

I do not know what happened, but at some point I started feeling better, I was really surprised how present and comfortable I felt.

After the meeting, something has shifted.

I was still anxious, but it felt okay.

I was more present in my body,

I felt lighter, as if the heaviness had dissolved somehow.

I felt traces of the space in me days later.

It also felt very confusing.

How come I felt this way around so many strangers?

How come the space was so comfortable that I kept thinking about it, or comparing other spaces to it?

I was confused; usually it takes me so long to feel this way, but it happened so fast. I was so curious about what was so different about this space.

“I would never be able to facilitate a group”, I was thinking constantly, but there was something so interesting and intriguing about the space that I decided to join².

The more I kept going to these meetings, the more things kept feeling different.

The space combined gender and care in ways that it is hard to put into words.

I had known of similar care before, from my friends and chosen family, but in this space, it was entangled with transness in a way that just felt right.

² This time, I promise, it was not because of my crush.

The space made gender and care inseparable, and different from other trans spaces that I have been in; therefore, I allowed myself to slowly trust the space, which has not happened to me before.

I noticed how people were listening to each other,

how they dealt with difficulties,

and how silence was allowed.

It was subtle, but very radical.

What I thought of as care before has changed.

I saw the trans community care not as an afterthought, not a substitute, but rather a practice that teaches new ways of being with one another.

Over time, I noticed gradual healing when it came to my gender, my queerness, my needs, wants, and my presence in this world.

Thank you for creating this space.

Research topic

In this section, I explore questions such as: What is this research about? What is this knowledge for? What is the importance of the topic?

Even though we³ are surviving trans antagonism⁴, that does not mean that our community and bodies only hold the struggle for survival. Many of us are (re)imagining the world that we are living in, adapting, transforming and building relationships with others and ourselves that are based on deep love and care that is worth sharing.

Many of us, trans people, have held space to create a culture of care, to create environments that nurture us as full individuals, and create safety that moves us through fear and repression.

This is what T4T Care Collective is doing.

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde, 1988, p. 130).

Care is a radical political act.

Care is a powerful strategy of resistance, a radical strategy for survival that is rooted in pleasure. Our anger co-exists with pleasure.

Caring for myself, for my community, my needs, and for other people's needs is self and community preservation. Preservation that is rooted in radical care.

I want to show alternative ways of existence through radical care in trans communities, and in this case, within the T4T care collective (Barksdale, 2022).

³ Trans people

⁴ Malatino (2020) explains trans antagonism as the process of trans lives being utilized as a political weapon for ethnonationalism and neoliberalism.

“We are making the future, as well as bonding to survive the enormous pressure of the present, and that is what it means to be part of history” (Lorde, 1988, p. 131).

Research question

What forms of alternative care are imagined and practiced in trans communities to move towards the world that we want to live in?

Sub questions

How do practices of care within T4T Care Collective transform dominant notions of care?

How does T4T Care Collective create conditions that make these care practices possible?

What are the challenges to realizing alternative visions of care within T4T Care Collective?

Process of Unlearning

In this section, I am exploring what frameworks I am moving away from, such as obsession with trans pain, dominant notions of care and trans care in the Netherlands that do not fulfil the needs of our community. Then, I turn to the T4T Care Collective to show why this space feels so special to me.

“The only thing that keeps those in power in that position is the illusion of our powerlessness. A moment of freedom and connection can undo a lifetime of social conditioning and scatter seeds in a thousand directions” Mutual Aid Disaster Relief, quoted in (Spade, 2020).

Obsession with trans pain

The more I started doing research on transness in academia, the more I discovered that many academic papers focused on trauma, struggle and pathologising trans experiences.

The vast majority of articles are about trans people who experience traumatic lives, hate crimes, partner violence, sexual abuse, difficulties with health care, and exploring resilience in response to traumatic events (Singh & McKleroy, 2011). Framing trans identities and lives through suffering, discrimination, unemployment, mental health, struggle for security and more (Ramos and Marr, 2023).

Much research exclusively focuses on trans people who have limited access to resources, poor health outcomes, disability and chronic health conditions, poor life quality, always perceived as “vulnerable communities” (Velasco et al, 2023).

Not only in academia, but in my daily life, I grew up witnessing trans people being pitted, in constant need of help, judged, pathologized, bullied, killed and violently targeted.

I refuse this obsession with trans pain that measures the legitimacy of our existence.

I refuse to see love, care and pleasure as a luxury in our community when it can be an act of world-building.

Through the paper, I am building on theories that center joy and care in trans existence, shifting towards trans community practices and trans vitalities. Because trans vitalities resist the idea of trans people as always in crisis, and instead focus on the knowledge production in the community, making life livable on our terms. Trans vitalities, centers ethics of radical care, rethinks what is “valuable” life and re-centers collective community making and political resistance (Edelman, 2020).

Focusing so much on survival and resilience also shifts attention from the bigger picture. “Fetishization resilience can also result in not being able to identify the systems that create oppression” (Edelman, 2020, p. 112). Going beyond oppression and centering joy, love and pleasure is rooted in radical care (Edelman, 2020). Therefore, I am moving away from narratives of trans suffering, towards collective care, radical love and life-affirming practices.

Dominant notions of care

I want to problematize individualistic, clinical and institutionalised care, which also entails the structural neglect of collective community care practices. Today, we are talking about care more than ever before, but the way care is perceived and practised is tragic.

“In this capitalist world full of hierarchies, it made us believe that care is something that we have to buy for ourselves, with the focus on an individualistic notion of wellness and self-improvement as part of the self-care industry” (The Care Collective, 2020, p. 11).

Through institutionalised care, we see how historically “care” has justified the abusive power relations between colonisers and colonised, as a discourse proving domination (Narayan, 1995). Cambridge Dictionary explains the noun “care” as “to protect someone or something and provide the things that the person or thing needs” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Synonyms of care are described as: charge (control), custody, guardianship, guidance, keeping, protection and responsibility (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Words such as “control”, “custody” or “charge” show authority and clear power dynamics.

Eurofund defines care as “the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance and protection of someone or something. It includes early childhood education and care, long-term care of older persons or those with disabilities. To understand the implications of care, it is worth distinguishing between care recipients and people with care responsibilities (carers). It is also important to distinguish between care as paid or unpaid work and informal care provided by family and friends. The provision of care services is a key component of social protection, improving quality of life and access to education and employment for EU citizens” (Europa.eu, 2025).

This explanation by Eurofunds reproduces control and power hierarchies. Situating care in state institutions, and as something that is provided to some citizens, one-directional. The

quote focuses on the health, welfare, maintenance and protection of some things or people, showing strict binaries of the caregiver and care receiver with a clear power hierarchy, centering productivity and access to work, with obvious exclusions.

Through this dominant notion of care, I want to underline the replication of colonial power dynamics and ideology. In general, the colonializing project was presented as in the interests of and for the good of the colonised, where domination is morally palatable (Narayan, 1995). In this case, many times the state presents “care” as necessary, maintaining control over the people who are deemed deserving of care. This reproduced colonial logics of care where the state is perceived as a moral provider and “citizens” as dependent.

As argued by Uma Narayan (1995), care discourses in colonial contexts justified the power relationship between people and colonisers. In the case of the state, care is also used to justify the power relation. Therefore, I am moving away from colonial care that centers state-driven, normative, hierarchical and abusive forms of care. Instead, I am building on scholars who center interdependency, mutual aid, accountability, relational and life-affirming care practices.

Trans care in the Netherlands

Some countries, such as the Netherlands, appear to be trans inclusive. But, in reality, there is a continued lack of understanding of trans identities. Based on the research done by Mahmoud and Hunklinger (2025), trans people in the Netherlands have underlined the institutional deficits and the binary system structures in the Dutch care systems. In the research, all participants found community solidarity crucial, where DIY and trans organizations have helped them to fill the gaps created by the Dutch “care” systems.

There is a need for space without abusive hierarchies, long waiting lists, pathologising, ignorance and continued exclusion. Space with trans care that exists outside of institutions and state control. A place that sees problems in the system rather than the people.

Therefore, some trans people in the Netherlands have organised to address this need in various capacities. There are online communities, WhatsApp groups, and Discord channels where people find community and support each other. Beyond digital platforms, there are spaces such as Transgender Network, a national advocacy organization that provides support for trans and non-binary people. Focusing on policy organization, legal equality and social inclusion. Transvisie is also an advocacy organization for trans and gender diverse people, offering psychosocial support and groups. Working on community and individual advocacy, mainly informing governments, health care providers regarding the needs of trans people and their loved ones. Trans Radical Resource Exchange (Trrex) is a trans-led organization based in The Hague. It offers information about self-injection and DIY hormones, organizing monthly meetings for various HRT options.

These are some organizations and collectives that I am familiar with that provide trans resources. However, I find that T4T Care Collective embodies something completely different from all the other organizations in the Netherlands.

About T4T Care Collective

The collective emerged with the need to find a trans community that not only focuses on gender but also goes beyond it. We advocate for collective liberation, we dream, embody and build care practices by transforming ourselves and our personal relationships. We are not a collective focusing on transness, but rather we concentrate on our collective care and practice alternative ways of living. To the community, we offer peer support groups for trans/nonbinary/gender-questioning individuals and workshops about care. In total, we are about 13 people.

Since 2022, T4T Care Collective has facilitated four peer support groups (Care, 2025). The support groups are about 10 sessions with 2-3 facilitators and about 10-13 participants. There are different topics discussed during the sessions, some examples are needs and boundaries, trans joy and art sessions. The peer groups aim to create an intentional, caring space for facilitators and participants to connect, support, share and co-exist.

We focus on community care by holding space and tuning in to our own and others' needs. We build relationships where we can be vulnerable and ourselves. We are building interdependence through healing and sustaining our community. We move at the speed of trust, creating conditions to trust ourselves and each other. We are unlearning harmful behaviours and learning new care practices that feel right to us and our community. Practising this by deep listening, adaptivity and modelling. Together we are (re)imagining the world that we want to live in, and through this, we are creating ways to care for and live with each other. I have been part of the collective for almost a year now, co-facilitated a student group in The Hague, while also being part of the Beavers team⁵.

⁵ We call ourselves beavers, those of us working behind the scenes of the support groups. Such as: finding venues, funding, organizing and more.

In the past year, there have been a lot of days when I didn't feel like getting out of bed because I was too overwhelmed with the world. Overwhelmed with my gender or the state of ongoing violence against queer people. Thinking about all the dominant notions of care, how we are used as political weapons, always focusing on our struggles. Being surrounded by people and organizations that only focus on trans safety and crisis-centered care.

T4T people and its environment kept constantly reminding me about all the other possibilities that we can have. Slowly, though T4T I noticed being more in touch with myself, connecting to my loved ones through alternative care practices. T4T space showed me loving ways for relating to myself and the world around me that are rooted in radical love and reciprocity that goes beyond resistance and survival. I kept being excited to be around T4T people, to facilitate groups and to show up as who I was that day. It reawakened my curiosity and reminded me about the transformative potential of care practices.

Chapter 2

In this chapter, I explore how I am doing this research. Why I am moving away from “positionality statements” and towards relational grounding. I underline how I am approaching knowledge through Sentipensar and Liminagraphy. I explain why I am moving away from “findings” and moving towards conversations with co-created knowledge, I discuss paying participants and the considerations of the paper.

Relational Grounding

In this section, I am moving away from “positionality statements” and moving towards relational grounding. Answering questions such as: where do I speak from? With whom am I speaking? What relationships make this research possible?

“Decolonizing methodologies are forcing us to confront Western academic canon, with self-generated arrogance” (Smith, 2012).

I want to go beyond identity-based claims because I believe that positionality statements in academia have a tendency to be a performative gesture from the researcher that also generates essentialist ideas of identity categories (Michalinos Zembylas, 2015).

My positioning is my ethical responsibility, which is deeply relational; it is connected to stories, land, place and context, rather than a claim for a “universal” authority over an experience (Smith, 2012). I try my best to speak from a place of reflexivity and self-examining practice through research. Meaning that, I am not centering neutrality and objectivity, situating myself within the research by critically examining my assumptions shaped by relationality.

I am not a detached observer; I am a participant as well. I am a co-creator of knowledge, which is something that has emerged from my relationships and connections with the T4T people.

One way of reflexivity and relationality manifests in this paper is through the co-production of knowledge. It all began from my sense/feeling that there was something special about T4T Collective. From this feeling, I started having conversations with the participants, and the research topic emerged from relational encounters rather than pre-determined plans or

research questions. This approach helped me to ground my perspectives on the lived experiences of trans people that were created in the community.

My involvement in the research goes beyond academic interests; it is grounded in deep love and relationships that I hold with the people I call “participants”.

At the same time, while I have tried my best to centre collective voices, I acknowledge the responsibility I hold to navigate participants' inputs and structure them through this paper. To not change the narratives of others around my own experiences, and not to represent the participants' perspectives like my own.

Since I started being open about my gender identity, T4T is one of the first trans spaces that I entered; therefore, it means a lot to me.

Because of this, I have realised that my strong feelings towards the collective create idealisation and romanticisation of the collective as well.

While T4T is a space for radical love and world-practising, I have tried my best to underline that it is also a space for conflict, anger, discomfort and exhaustion.

Approaches to knowing

In this section, I explore why I am moving away from Western academic epistemological frameworks. Focusing on how I will be approaching knowledge through the paper by using Liminagraphy and Sentipensar.

I have decided to move away from Western academic epistemological frameworks that center rationality, linearity and objectivity. I have consciously moved away from autoethnography, an Eurocentric method that focuses on a writer as a site of knowledge, and is not in relation to anti-oppressive research (Sheik, 2021).

This is a political and ethical choice.

I am moving towards lived experience and ways of knowing that are created through relations. Focusing on feeling, embodiment and sensing.

“Decolonizing methodologies have to do more than critique colonialism. It has opened up possibilities for understanding and knowing the world differently and offering different solutions to problems caused by colonialism and the failure of power structures to address these historic conditions” (Smith, 2012).

Disclaimer:

Grounding knowledge in bodies could also be misused for harmful behaviours.

Our embodied knowledge serves our ethical orientation towards collective liberation and radical care for one another, rather than control, oppression or harm. Where marginalized are reclaiming the right to know/sense/talk with relational accountability. Where knowledge is meaningful in relation. Therefore, I want to underline that my use of embodied knowledge is

a political approach to give voices to those, who have been historically denied legitimacy and were rendered invisible.

Liminagraphy

Reclaiming our knowledge and research practices.

Transformative justice, collective liberation and re-existence as a pathway of what Liminagraphy is. This is not a method of the research, but rather an approach and a journey.

Journey to find the ways in which “we can cultivate knowledge that is epistemically non-violent in the context of the racialized, gendered, colonial and neoliberal university” (Sheik, 2021, p. 8). By embracing multiple ways of knowing through embodied feminist and transformative justice approaches with relational ethics, this journey addresses the “how” of decolonizing (Sheik, 2021).

Liminagraphy is a “life-affirming approach to research that offers a pathway to decolonial re-existence and collective liberation through relationality, reciprocity, accountability and coalition” (Sheik, 2021, p. 8). This journey has been crucial, since it is grounded in a trans-post and anti-disciplinary approach to research, underlining the erased histories and approaches to our dehumanization (Sheik, 2021).

I am trying to approach research beyond the disciplinary and Western frameworks that are often forced upon us in academia. By using storytelling and conversing as a form of theorizing. Because our experiences, words, and embodied experience are crucial in knowledge production. Focusing on abolitionist practices of Liminagraphy and “what it means to dream-live-feel-think-sence-practice collective liberation” (Sheik, 2021, p. 9).

With Liminagraphy I am surrendering to the possibilities of change and to be changed by the process. Through this approach, I have focused on unlearning the research as an expert in the position of dominance, but rather as becoming in relation to the research topics and their fluidity.

One of the reasons why I chose to use Liminagraphy, is because it focuses on the ‘in-between’ of identity, knowledge or research. Focusing on the spaces of transition and transformation with constant fluidity of movement (Sheik, 2021). Embracing liminal spaces between theory and story, personal and collective, insider and outsider of a research, allowing the coexistence of multiple paradoxes that exist simultaneously.

Liminagraphy informed my understanding of how I write and also how I approached the research, as I wrote from the blurred boundaries of researcher and participant, between academic and intimate.

Sentipensar

Walking with my heart.

“The heart is the center of being, acting, thinking, feeling and doing” (Decolonize, 2023).

The term Sentipensar, has been in research and activist spaces mainly in Latin America; it shows an action that happens simultaneously, combining feelings (sentir) and thinking (pensar) (Decolonize, 2023).

The concept of Sentipensar shows how the heart centers the experiences of a person, which also produces knowledge, therefore, the heart is at the center of the reasoning (Decolonize, 2023). By using Sentipensar, I am honoring the knowledge that is generated through the lived experiences of marginalized people and resisting the hierarchies of rationality over emotions.

I grew up learning that everything has a heart before it even has a name. The food we eat, the water we drink or the trees we look at. I was always taught that the heart and feelings are our deepest selves as humans, and a way to connect to the non-human kin.

Moving into academia, I had to (re)learn that everything has to be objective, that all needs reasoning that holds superiority. But now, through academia again, I am reclaiming my body as a site of knowledge, with my deep emotions, thoughts, feelings and intuition.

Sentipensar - Feeling/thinking provides ways of shaping and interpreting the information or conversations in this paper. This means that I am not surrendering to neutrality, but rather I am embracing my feelings as part of the research. Most chapters have Sentipensar, where I am sharing my self-reflections and sensations. I have also taken this approach to understand, interpret and make meanings in T4T. My decision on how the research is structured has been guided by Sentipensar as well.

With Sentipensar, I am also inviting you into your feelings, to read this text with not only your mind but also with your heart. I hope the care, love, anger, tenderness, and confusion of the words, people, feelings and collective can be felt.

Rejecting analyses

In this part, I am explaining why I have decided to move away from “findings” and analysis of the conversations that I had with participants. Focusing on how I have structured our voice collage instead.

In chapter 3, I am moving towards participants as co-creators of the knowledge rather than the subject of analysis. I reject the idea that this co-created knowledge is a form of “data” that needs to be analyzed, and put through a certain lens.

People in the collective and the collective itself are not a “field” from which “data” is collected for “processing” through Eurocentric filters and theories (Hlabangane, 2018).

By saying this, I am moving away from conditions that constitute legitimate knowledge, moving away from the belief that knowledge needs to be justified through instrumental reasoning, which is defined by distance. Instead, I am moving towards allowing multiplicity where being in the world is knowing, “I am, therefore, I think” (Hlabangane, 2018, p. 676).

“The practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another's situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise” (Alcoff, 1991, p. 29).

With this quote, I want to underline that speaking for others can become acts of mastery and it goes against my orientation towards non-violent research practices. The conversations that I had with participants, therefore, are not going to be analyzed and put in a “lens” for “processing”. But rather the information will be looked at as a knowledge of how care and

world-building are practiced in the collective⁶. I am not refraining from interpretations altogether, but rather, I am refraining from interpretations that impose meanings from above.

While the conversations were held individually with the participants, in Chapter 3, I have decided to weave them together. I have assembled a collective conversation, a voice collage based on participants' quotes, with the aim to show relationality, interdependency and interconnectedness of the collective.

After having conversations individually, I realized that participants were addressing some themes that had emerged organically, and I followed their structure and focused on the topic they wanted to explore. The sub-questions of the research were also created after having these conversations.

“We do not write this text in an effort to prescribe (or proscribe) particular strands of theory or praxis to our peers. Rather, we demonstrate a snapshot of the life of a collective” (Hernández, 2021, p. 858).

The voice collage is something that has not happened, but does exist in our community. This was inspired and guided by Liminagraphy and Sentipensar that values sensing - feeling - thinking and relationality of knowledge.

Since one of the goals of the research is to challenge dominant frameworks of knowledge production and center community voices with our relational ways of knowing, rejecting the hierarchical meaning and analysis of the conversation is my way of contributing.

“We offer collective manifesting as a methodology: not only as a way of generating and sharing knowledge, but also of relationship-building by making ourselves vulnerable to one another, and indeed to those who read this work” (Hernández, 2021, p. 858).

⁶ By saying this, I very much do recognize the role and the responsibility I have as a person who is writing this paper. My aim is not to interpret from a position of authority but rather to engage in knowledge production and situated knowledge understanding.

I have organized a collective reflection session with participants to revisit the voice collage together. The meeting was very useful, after the guided embodied session, we began having conversations and found new ways to relate to one another. This meeting was particularly vulnerable because it also showed how much some of us needed to reconnect and refresh our memories about the importance of community care. In this process, I was able to contribute back to the community and nurture the reciprocity of our relations.

Conversations

In this section, I explore how and what kind of conversations I had with the participants.

The conversations that I had with participants did follow a semi-structured interview format and were guided by the broader themes. Our conversations were not designed to extract the knowledge, but rather to have a two-way conversational structure.

The themes allowed me to organize our conversations and actively listen to the participants and their body language; in case there was a topic which was significant for the participants, we were able to talk more about it more.

I decided to have conversations with only the members who have already facilitated the support groups. I made this decision since these members had to actively be part of the T4T Care Collective for the past year, who had to practice the care and be in the community almost every week. I have decided to only focus on the inner group of the collective rather than the participants of the peer support group. This decision was made due to the scope and feasibility of the research.

I have interviewed 7 current facilitators. Almost every conversation was conducted alone with the participant, except for one, which was conducted with two participants together; this was a request by the participants. Conversations took place in person; the exact location was chosen based on the participant's preference. All interviews were recorded on two different devices, with participants' consent.

Before the start of the interviews, I provided the basic overview of the project, my positioning and intentions. Before we began, I also read this quote to them:

“Research is a dirty word for many. There are some forms of knowledge that academia does not deserve. We can stop at any point with much left unsaid. This is both because there is so

much to say, and also because all refusal is particular. Refusal understands the wisdom in a story, as well as the wisdom in not passing that story on” (Tuck and Yang, 2014, p.224).

I elaborated more on the participants' rights and obtained their consent to start the conversation.

Paying participants

For a long time, I was thinking whether or not to pay participants.

Money is something that I feel deeply uncomfortable with, especially when it comes to community and care. So, I will keep this section very short.

Considering the fact that the participants took their time and energy to co-create this project, with the intention of avoiding unpaid labour and care work, I have decided to pay the participants. After the calculations and based on the allocated budget for my paper, I was able to pay 20 euros per hour for the conversations.

Considerations

In this section, I reflect on the ethical and relational considerations for the research that shaped this work.

In order to navigate the scope of the project, I want to point out some of the shared themes.

While I am trying to move away from identity claims, it is still important to acknowledge the social locations that made this research possible.

Most of us participants identify as non-binary, currently based in the Netherlands, with many who have studied or are still studying at Leiden University. A lot of them come from Western countries and are white. This is important to situate the care and community practices that have emerged from a privilege, location, marginalization and a place of sensing the “world”.

I also want to point out that the research only focused on the facilitators of the collective who have been part of the group for at least a year and not participants of the peer-support groups or the new members of the collective. This choice has eliminated some voices from the research.

One of the considerations that I find crucial is language and accessibility. My participation in activist, academic and T4T collective spaces gave me access to understand and participate in conversations, which otherwise would be inaccessible. Through this, I want to acknowledge the restricted knowledge through words that are practiced by certain educational backgrounds. By reflecting on this, I am thinking of how meaning-making in this research has been shaped by familiarity with specific vocabulary that enabled this research, but is also limited to those who can participate.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Grounding

In this chapter, I am grounding theories in the research. Focusing on topics such as trans radical care, mutual aid, personal relationships, conflicts, emergent strategies, interdependence / decentralized work and the role of gender in our collective.

Disclaimer: I have consciously chosen "theoretical grounding" which allowed me to have fluidity with the concepts in the research.

Based on the "shared library" of T4T Care Collective, from the books that travelled through our hands, I collected some concepts and main thinkers who have inspired and guided our practices of care within the collective. Most of these authors are part of a shared lineage of thoughts; their words travelled through our community, and now they will be presented in this chapter for grounding before we explore our voice collage.

"Knowledge and the power to define what counts as real knowledge lie at the epistemic core of colonialism" (Smith, 2012).

Before we start talking about care, I want to underline that I am not trying to argue that trans lives should be included in institutionalised care. I am not trying to resist the strategies that are portrayed through cis-normative outlooks, and I do not want to achieve “fairness” and “inclusion”. For me, this “inclusion” already has an assumption that this type of inclusion would make people “equal” in the system, in the system that is not fair at all.

Therefore, the care that I am talking about, the radical care, the trans radical community care, goes beyond the needs of inclusion; it goes beyond the resistance, and it calls for rethinking systems, values and practices of the normative dominant norms.

Radical Care

In this section, I explore what radical care is. Afterwards, I built up on trans radical community care.

Radical care is a collective capacity to create an alternative system to colonialism and capitalism while being submerged in the dominant systems. Radical care is something that emerges through collective action with autonomy and nonhierarchical work; it focuses on the survival and flourishing of the marginal communities.

Habart and Kneese (2020) explain radical care to be a set of strategies, ideologies and acts that offer alternative living structures through uncertain times, which is built on praxis. They are embodied practices of assistance and support that create community flourishing, which is also part of political movements (Malatino, 2019). I think radical care is both relational and political, disrupting, resisting and questioning the dominant systems by offering alternative ways of being.

Radical care is aligned with self-care, but not contained by it; this applies to antiracist and feminist political movements. Asking to see “self” as situated in complex relations, inherently networked and interdependent with particular histories, violences and vulnerabilities (Hobart and Kneese, 2020).

Radical care is an activity that embraces interdependencies and creates an ability to nurture all the creatures of the planet and the planet itself (The Care Collective, 2020). As suggested by the Care Manifesto (2020), radical care practices include feminist, queer, anti-racist, and eco-socialist perspectives, where approaches should be understood as broad as possible. It not only offers common humanity, but it also confronts us with our shared fears. It shows the

complexities of human relations and our ability to (re)imagine all levels of society (The Care Collective, 2020). It is a source of power that lets us question and create new forms of relating to the world around us.

I see care as an active, fluid, warm, extensive and experimental river that runs through our bodies and the world's ⁷. For me, to be radical means to grasp things from their roots. Radical care is “outside, beside, underneath, and perhaps even above normative outlets”, and it is also the care that refuses a logic of cruel optimism (Elijah Adiv Edelman, 2020, p. 125). It is care that follows desire lines born from “the capacity to engage and produce care for others” (Elijah Adiv Edelman, 2020, p. 125). When radical community care is practiced in marginalized groups, it fights against organized loneliness and hyper-individualism. The practices generate networks of belonging and nurture our interdependencies by forming mutual support systems (The Care Collective, 2020). By fostering environments where individuals feel supported and understood, a sense of healing is created that helps us move through and beyond our struggles.

When it comes to trans radical care, it becomes an embodied and relational love for me. Hil Malatino (2020) describes T4T as a praxis of love, a promise, an identifier, an antitopian practice of solidarity and commitment to trans love that makes life livable. Trans radical care work starts from different locations and relations. It centers mutual aid and communization of care that does not rely on the heteronormative family structures, but rather around people who are socially consubstantial (Malatino, 2020). It focuses on the people we have interdependences with, many of whom we do not know, which enables constituting, repairing and resilience. Minimally, trans radical community care is a commitment, faithfulness, a certain kind of obligation to show up for your community and is a recurrent practice that

⁷ By saying worlds, I am engaging with María Lugones, definition of worlds. As social realities that are inhabited differently based on one's experience with navigating multiple identities within the worlds. (Lugones, 1987)

makes us less willing to participate in the systems that fail to show up for us (Malatino, 2020).

Mutual aid

In this section, I focus on mutual aid, underlining the structure through which radical care manifests.

One of the ways to approach radical care is through mutual aid. Being forced into labour, private property, and other capitalist and colonial values has disrupted how people have historically related to one another. In response to these systems, mutual aid reminds us of our capacities, centering reciprocity, community care and cooperation. Dean Spade (2020) explains mutual aid as a “collective coordination to meet each other's needs, usually from an awareness that the systems we have in place are not going to meet them” (p.7).

Dean Spade (2020) underlines that through mutual aid, we are able to demonstrate and imagine the world on our terms, where we can organize things without coercion and create new ways of being together.

Mutual aid is supposed to make you feel like you are living in alignment with your hopes, dreams for your community and the world. Based on a belief that all of us matter, where we can practice our own and each other's needs for dignity, care and justice (Spade, 2020).

“We imagine a world rooted in (mutual) care where we, as trans people, can collectively tend to our needs in a way that goes beyond existing interlocking systems of oppression. We envision worlds where we can all dream, embody, and build care that advances our collective liberation, starting by transforming ourselves and our relationships” (Care, 2025).

Dean Spade (2020) suggests that getting support from the people who see problems in the system and not in people helps individuals to move from shame and suffering to anger and defiance.

Personal relationships, allowance of “being” and loving perceptions

In this section, I explore the importance of personal relationships in mutual aid projects. I focus on the allowance of “being” as our authentic selves that foster loving perception and generate a sense of belonging.

“While we often put our attention on the state and demand transformative and restorative justice, it is important that individuals begin practising care in our personal lives” (Brown, 2021, p. 66). Relationships are everything; collective change and healing begin with nurturing our connections on micro levels (Brown, 2021).

Mutual aid projects are where we can start dreaming and practice the relationships we want to have in the outside world. A project that goes beyond “agenda”, builds relationships and invites people's personalities to shine within the group, creating internal practices for the strength and sustainability of the group (Spade, 2020). Fostering personal relationships is crucial, where people not only work together to change the world, but also have deeper friendships, feed each other, make art or have sex. This cultivates liberation in all aspects of an individual's life and endures a sense of purpose (Spade, 2020). Having personal relationships within the mutual aid project not only creates community cohesion, but it can also be a source of empowerment and motivation.

Transformative practices that begin small, like in our personal relationships, eventually will demand new societal structures! Through the book *Holding Change*, Brown tells about the importance of liberated relationships where people have the freedom to be themselves, and practice radical honesty and interdependencies (Brown, 2021). To be able to speak the truth and ask questions without white lies encourages the relationship to build on truth (Brown,

2021). Allowing our full selves to be present in a space creates a sense of belonging and moves us through systemic violence.

Basing personal relationships on truthfulness, enabling the practice of loving perceptions.

“To perceive lovingly is to perceive with playfulness and openness, to travel to the other’s ‘world’ without arrogance and without the desire to conquer” (Lugones, 1987, p.8).

María Lugones (1987) explores loving perceptions as a way of seeing each other across the differences that fosters trust and belonging. Loving perceptions of others enable the world-travelling and world-building, surrendering to people's other ways of being (Lugones, 1987).

Loving perceptions and decolonial praxis of love show new ways to reconnect with each other, foster solidarity, liberation and healing (Malebranche, 2023). Love is a motivating force for community care processes, connecting all humans and non-human kind, love is a felt and enacted commitment⁸ to the well-being of all⁹ (Malebranche, 2023).

Our personal relationships create ground for mutual aid. Within them, we practice the allowance of being where emotions such as anger, sadness or jealousy are not disruptive but rather they can foster a deeper sense of connection.

⁸ Malebranche (2023) describes commitment as an activity that we choose and return to one another. I also see it as a dedication to collective liberation and healing.

⁹ Well being as a radical healing and liberation.

Conflict, anger and repair

In this section, I explore conflict, anger and repair in mutual aid projects.

Conflict is a crucial part of mutual aid projects since it highlights the differences, tensions and power dynamics in decentralized work. Dean Spade (2020) suggests that conflicts should be welcomed and are a normal part of care in all groups and relationships. The more projects normalize conflict, the more likely challenges are addressed, and people come through it stronger (Spade, 2020).

Anger plays a key role in conflicts and shows deep care for the community. However, experiencing anger in personal relationships and mutual aid projects can be very challenging, and many times it can generate guilt and discomfort.

But as suggested by María Lugones (2003), anger is crucial for resistance. It is communicative and backwards-looking, meaning that it is informed by history and relational harm. Anger that challenges respectability goes against and in response to domination¹⁰. By embracing anger, we tap into its transformative power to drive healing through collective and personal liberation. Anger is deeply epistemological, liberatory and transformative (McWeeny, 2001). Anger empowers us, it shows us our agency and self-worth.

In mutual aid networks, anger and conflict highlight gaps, unmet needs, and strengthen care and accountability. When I feel angry, I almost feel possessed, and the depth of my anger also shows the depth of my passion and love towards the people. As Lorde (1981) explains, one's anger is loaded with information and energy. “Anger between peers' births change, not

¹⁰ I understand anger that challenges respectability as a form of anger that goes beyond social expectations of what anger is supposed to be, not prioritizing respectability such as "politeness" or being “nice”. I see this anger as a form of political resistance.

destruction, the discomfort and sense of loss it often causes is not fatal, but a sign of growth” (Lorde, 1981).

Lugones (1987) underlines that anger is also part of loving perception, since it invites one to be seen truthfully. It is from here, when repair becomes possible, as one of the ethics of care. Repair is essential for healing and accountability in the process of envisioning the world we want to live in, especially when it comes to conflicts (Malatino, 2019). Malatino (2019) expands on the importance of the duty of repair in the community, where our support should remain during and after the conflict as well. Repair challenges carceral frameworks, it deeply reflects on the values of transformative justice, and it becomes an ongoing practice of returning to each other with care.

Working on conflicts, anger, or repair underlines how much in the mutual aid projects we are not trying to find people who are perfect, ideal to work with, ideal to talk with, but rather, people who already have their full lives and full personalities (Brown, 2021).

Emergent Strategies

In this section, I am exploring emergent strategies and the role they play in world-building.

Emergent Strategies is a framework introduced by Adrienne Maree Brown in their book *Emergent Strategy*. Focusing on radical changes, “these strategies are ways creatures and ecosystems function together in and with the natural world” (Brown, 2017). I see these concepts as practices for world-dreaming and world-building, for organising and transforming, on how to care for one another sustainably.

“Emergence is the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions” (Brown, 2017, p. 6). In the study of emergent strategies, these are some core principles/methods presented:

“Small is good, small is all. (The large is a reflection of the small.)

Change is constant. (Be like water.)

There is always enough time for the right work.

There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it.

Never a failure, always a lesson.

Trust the People. (If you trust the people, they become trustworthy.)

Move at the speed of trust. Focus on critical connections more than critical mass—build resilience by building relationships.

Less prep, more presence.

What you pay attention to grows” (Brown, 2017, p. 8).

As argued by Adrienne Maree Brown, intentional adaptation is the heart of the emergent strategy framework. The ways we adapt to the constant changes around us determine our life quality as well as the impact that we have when we take action together in a collective.

A lot of us have been taught that change is negative, and it creates chaos, stress and crisis in our lives. The author encourages readers to ask a question: “How do we practice increasing our ease with what is?” as change is something that happens constantly, no matter how much we plan (Brown, 2017, p. 42). The concept suggests staying in touch with our longing and with a deeper purpose in times of adaptation. Think of how to bring these longings and deeper purposes to life in aspects of our work. “Adaptation is crucial; it reduces exhaustion of the movement. With decentralised work, nobody has the burden to fight alone. It is necessary to develop one's capacity to adapt, to measure the reactions, and see if the reaction to the change has the space for new opportunities and connections to the deeper purpose” (Brown, 2017).

Within the mutual aid projects, surrendering to change is crucial, adapting in response to each other's needs and creating small-scale interactions that produce collective transformation.

Interdependence / decision-making / decentralization

In this sub-chapter, I focus on the interdependence, decentralization and decision-making processes in mutual aid projects.

Interdependence, decentralized work and consensus decision-making processes are crucial in mutual aid projects. Decentralisation is described as the dispersion of functions or power within the movement, where power is distributed to all the members of the group (Brown, 2017). Decentralization requires more work and trust building through the process, but at the end it's more fluid, relaxed, collaborative and easier for everyone to work in.

Decentralized work raises questions about how decisions are made. Dean Spade underlines that being transparent in decision-making with a culture of care and intentional work allows the group to flourish (Spade, 2020). In mutual aid projects, decisions are based on consensus, where everyone has a say in the decision that is affecting them. Many of us are taught that people are naturally competitive and greedy, not really caring about others. Consensus decision-making shows how people are capable and willing to cooperate with one another, where they care about each other's well-being. Consensus encourages conversations, invites curiosity, addresses concerns and practices new possibilities of leaderless and leaderful leading (Spade, 2020).

As decisions emerge from collective dialogues, they create interdependencies on members' trust, accountability and input. Adrienne Maree Brown explains interdependence as mutual dependency and reliance between things and people (Brown, 2017). Interdependence is more transformative, acknowledges everybody's needs and that everyone has something to offer, and it moves away from hierarchies with mutual responsibility in the space.

It is important to embrace and see each other's complexities, with a belief that we can meet each other's needs in different ways, where it is possible to lean on each other (Brown, 2017). Interdependence, decision-making and decentralized work are crucial in mutual aid projects, but they are also effective political practices of care. Refusal of hierarchies and commitment to horizontal decision making directly challenge dominant and institutionalized models of care. By practicing interdependence, participants tap into a form of care that is co-created through community.

Gender

In this part, I explore the role of gender in the collective.

I am leaving this sub-chapter empty.

When I am in T4T Space

Finally,

Finally, I am in a place where:

I do not have to think about gender;

I do not have to talk about gender;

I do not have to explain my gender;

I do not have to prove my gender;

I do not have to confirm any gender.

“Refusal understands the wisdom in a story, as well as the wisdom in not passing that story on”

(Tuck and Yang, 2024, p. 244).

Chapter 4

Knowledge co-creation

In this section, you will read our collective voice collage. You will get to know T4T Care Collective a bit and read about the knowledge that we produce in our community.

Introductions

Marisha:

My name is Marisha (They/Them), and I hate introducing myself because I never know what to say. I am a recent lover of cats, good food and tattoos. Currently hyperfixating on Twilight.

I spend a lot of time studying gender, and when I don't, I think about my own. So I often ask myself if I am hunting gender? Or is gender hunting me?

I joined T4T a year ago, and facilitated one peer support group in The Hague. Currently in the Beavers team, and also dreaming to facilitate more groups in the future.

It has been a long process of trying to figure out what gender means to me, and it's hard to give it one label, because nothing really feels right. I'm just trying to be myself, but not really understanding what it means. My gender changes every day, which is confusing as fuck, but also fun to play with. On good days, I love to call myself a gender fucker.

Freddie:

I am Freddie (they/them). At present, my days are filled with communal dreaming on anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, anti-transphobic and feminist ways of existing in and resisting our current societal structures. I'm a fermentation and pickling enthusiast, as well as a lover of tea. My gender is a life-long endeavour I hope to never fully understand.

For day to day conversational purposes I use non-binary because it's easy to communicate. I think on some days it's more masculine, some days it's more feminine, some days it is just fear or joy. I just want to be a little twink one day, a little girly pop the next, or just some amorphous blob that has nothing attached to it!

Syd:

My name's Syd (they/them) - new name, it still feels weird to say that, but it's the beauty of being in community with people who encourage you to follow what feels good!

I joined T4T as a participant back in 2022, fell in love with it and its beautiful people, and then facilitated two student groups. I always say facilitating support groups is what I want to do when I grow up. In the near future I want to make what we explore with the student groups more accessible to more people, hoping to spread the joy, care, grief (and all that comes with being in community) even further, like little seeds.

I have big dreams but limited energy; when I do have some spoons left, I like to craft, make zines, and obsess over small weird statues of animals.

Syd: I am gender queer

Marisha: What does that mean to you?

Syd: that I let myself do what feels good. I follow euphoria. I don't need to question it or hate something else. Genderqueer for me is allowing myself to go beyond

Marisha: So you are fucking around?

Syd: That's also what genderqueer means to me. I'm just fucking around

Marisha: Oh, I love the gender fuckery

Syd: Exactly. Yeah, thank you.

Sally:

Hello!

I am Sally! BSc Psychology student at Leiden University. Peer Facilitator. Sentimental, sappy and lover of stories. I love writing, talking, and people above all.

I've been pretty confidently a trans woman. Recently, I've been wondering if I'm non-binary, but even if I'm questioning it, it's not something that I'm struggling with, per se. Thanks to T4T, it's very much I don't know, and it's okay that I don't know.

Jules:

(I also hate introducing myself aah)

I'm Jules and I'm a learner of queerness, care, and lately, snails (and the intersection of the three?). I organize and facilitate with T4T because it's a practice space for the tenderness, slowness and courage I long for. My dream day is filled with cat snuggles, yummy tofu cooked with friends and lovers, and the smell of pine trees in the summer heat.

When I feel most in my gender is when I'm in transition to something. When there is a period of change. Whoa, I'm really trans, what I like about the transes is the transing, the shifting from a thing to a thing. So my gender fluctuates.

Amix:

I'm Amix. I go by she/they pronouns. I'm a community organiser, facilitator, teacher, sustainability advisor and a gardener of healing ideas. I'm a co-founder and facilitator of T4T Care Collective. Lately, I've been wondering — if I go way, way back, which one of my ancestors was queer or trans. What did their life look like across different eras, from the Khmer Empire to French colonial rule?

I have a sense of radical permission to be Amix with my gender. I identify as non-binary, but this means being in a community where people just know that I'm Amix. Just me.

Agnese:

My name is Agnese, my pronouns are they/them around other they/thems or people I feel can validate my gender, otherwise in more hetero spaces I stick to my she/her and pretend not to notice. Sometimes I pretend so well I start questioning myself.

I love to cook and to consider myself the elder in groups of people I care about. I have two adorable kitties who I adore because they force me to slow down, take some time at home, and give me lots of cuddles. I like to dream of living in nature, with a select few I love, and abandoning capitalist everyday expectations.

I feel a lot more comfortable with non-binary than trans. A new term that I discovered is gender creative. I also feel like my gender switches a lot. T4T was one of the first to validate that I am not cis.

Za:

My name is Za (they/them). Currently, I feel as everchanging as ever, so I find it very hard to say anything stable about myself, may that be gender related or not. Nonetheless, I'll try. I love dancing, hugs, poetry and gossip. And I try to justify my ongoing existential crisis by studying philosophy.

Za: I am so over gender currently. But we live in this gendered society...

I would be so uncomfortable with people perceiving me as a man or a woman.

Marisha: But what about a boy?

Za: Oh my god, I mean, a boy is different. A boy... Who does not want to be a boy? Tell me!

Sentipensar - “ing”

In this section, we are thinking/feeling about the collective and what it means to us.

Freddie:

On the first meeting, when I joined T4T was like, whoa, this is what it's like to have access needs, to talk about 100% of your needs 100% of the time, crazy! I was thinking: what are these people talking about? How do I get more of it?

It really started for me that day. That day changed a lot.

Syd:

I envision T4T like a warm yellow little thing in my chest that grows over time. So when I am feeling like the world is going to shit, I'm reconnecting to that little ball like an anchor.

Agnese:

With T4T, I have this feeling of finally, like I was finally around people who were saying the things that I didn't have the vocabulary to say.

Marisha:

I experience so much joy in T4T. One of the things that I really love about T4T is that it goes beyond the idea of resistance and struggles. We are more than just people who are fighting, and our being together is about love and tenderness. This gives me a lot of joy and energy when I am outside of T4T.

Syd:

There's definitely a lot of joy in the whole process. It's about tenderness and care. It's a different kind of resistance. I could see how people would be like: Y'all are not doing enough, but what we are doing has so completely transformed my understanding of the world.

What we are doing is more radical than going to a protest.

Agnese:

Oh my god, T4T really changed me. It was a very slow burn. It radicalized me in a lot of ways, the people in T4T and the approaches of T4T.

Za:

I connect T4T to a lot of excitement. It's something I believe in. I'm realizing I really want to do this, it's so nice to be around people who feel the same and feel aligned in that way, who really want to care and learn how to care for each other.

Sally:

I felt like my presence anywhere was negative. Like I'm taking up space in a room or that I look bad, I shouldn't be there, people don't like it.

T4T is the reason why I don't have this anymore.

Emergence of T4T

In this section, we are sharing how T4T emerged.

Jules:

I remember that me and Amix wanted to create a community, a peer support group and find other trans people, which was very difficult during COVID. We wanted to have a physical space for care. But we didn't know where to start or how to do it. We started with where we knew, going to talk to queer psychologists.

Amix:

I remember having a lot of doubts, like, I'm not a psychologist. How can I hold such a space with people? How do we make trauma-informed? And then we found care,¹¹ who gave us training, they are psychologists who held support group for survivors of sexual assault.

Jules:

Care hadn't given training like this before. They gave the training based on what they have learned. We had a lot of reflections after.

¹¹ Care is an organization in the Netherlands that offers individual therapy, support groups and workshops.

Amix:

We asked ourselves, is this how we want to organize? Do we want it to be a certain way? How do we deal with substances, trust and all of that. So reflections give us confidence, and the supervision grounded us.

Jules:

In September 2021, we had one big meetup with trans people in The Hague. A lot of people came and I felt overwhelmed! Like what we do with this? We kept reaching out to psychologists, and got more training.

Syd:

At the beginning, it wasn't very structured. We were just a group of friends doing things. Like we didn't have an Instagram or the name of T4T Care Collective.

Agnese:

I think it's just the fact that it really started as two friends talking amongst themselves is the reason that we are able to have what is T4T now. It really started from a place of care. Then the challenge was, how do we maintain that care as we grow? how do we make it into something and spread it?

Sally :

When I joined T4T, it was a bit intimidating at first. But I never felt like I couldn't ask any questions. I felt the vibe of, this is a space of people who are working towards something, and even if I don't really fully understand the ins and outs at the time, I understood what we were working towards, and I was happy to work with that.

Beyond gender

In this section we explore how gender shows up in T4T space.

Freddie:

From my experience, within T4T transness is not the main thing. It's more about care than transness. It's very nice, because you don't always want to be reminded about your gender, and you just want to feel like a person. And I think that's something that T4T gives, but then it's still trans space.

We use an expansive understanding of transness, and it allows for people to show up as they are. Gender is a lifelong process. Gender is a lifelong experiment. But also, gender is play, gender is drag, gender is whatever the fuck you want it to be.

Syd:

I forget that we're all trans. The gender aspect almost comes second, because we're finally in a place where we don't need to explain anything. I don't know what people's genders are, I just know what they want to be called.

Sally:

I think gender is something that is kind of a common point for everyone in T4T, but I also don't think it's a big focus. I think you're united as a community based on our experiences related to gender. But T4T isn't about gender.

Agnese:

A lot of the healing process for me was realizing that even though they were all using different frameworks of gender, there was no judgment passed on. I realized that I could figure out my own framework.

Care beyond the norm

In this section, we are answering the question of how do practices of care within T4T transform dominant notions of care?

Freddie:

As we were having more and more T4T meetings, I noticed such a stark difference in how I was feeling in T4T versus other spaces. Completely different stories. I started realizing when there is no care in the space, in direct opposition to how I feel in T4T.

I struggle so much when I am outside of T4T. T4T feels very radical. I think it is very radical.

Za:

When I entered T4T space for the first time, I was very nervous and shy. It was one of the first spaces I've been in where this shyness had a space to be, where I didn't have that feeling that I have to push through the shyness, like I have in all other spaces.

Sally:

When I first came into that space, that was the first time for me where it was incredibly open, incredibly caring, with looking out for each other's needs. Not only was it my first time in a space like that, but I am more used to the exact opposite kind of space. Where it's very much everyone has their own issues, but you're meant to suck it up and just work towards the community. "Go deal with it on your own" attitude.

Syd:

Something that I miss in spaces outside of T4T is showing up however you are, it doesn't matter if you're tired or fatigued, and if you want to be without your shoes, or if you want to eat you want to stretch, being able to do what your body needs. I think that was really big for me.

Za:

I agree, I think T4T changed my perspective on how I want to be in other spaces. Because it allowed me to feel my feelings and to just be as I am. When you give people the tools to actually be their whole complicated person in a space, it's very cool, I admire the people for creating this.

Agnese:

I used to see care as a very conditional system. How much are you giving back? How much appreciation are you showing for the care you're receiving? How much money do you have? How much time do you have? I think it would be silly to say that in T4T it's not there at all. That would be basically saying we've cracked the code, no. But I think there is such an open conversation and an acknowledgement when things are not how we want them to be, and we try to find alternative routes to it. This is not the same in the spaces outside of T4T.

Marisha:

Yeah, care in T4T and outside is so different. During our first introduction meeting, a person asked us if we are comfortable with the light intensity in the room, and I was like, Oh my god, why do people not think about this in other spaces? Everybody was so relaxed. Finally, I could listen. In other spaces, for example, if somebody burps, there is so much shame. When it happens in T4T, it's like yeah, bodies make noises.

Za:

Yes, I remember in the first meeting with T4T, someone farted, and they were so comfortable about it. I was like, Wow. This is such a small detail, but I remember it so much.

Jules:

We move slowly and go with relationships, focusing really on our community, if we don't feel good that day. We don't come. But it's very different from other activist spaces that I've been in, and I don't know how to navigate the two.

Syd:

I agree, when I was organizing with other activist groups, I felt very different, and I can really feel when that care aspect is missing.

Freddie:

When you go to a group space, the introductions are: name, something about yourself, pronouns if it's a queer space, but not usually, but then in T4T, baselines are name, pronouns and access needs. I think that was the first time that I was introduced to access needs as a baseline for a meeting. Like, I'm going to be fidgeting, but if the sound bothers you, let me know, and I'll fidget a different way. People being so open about what they need and a willingness to accommodate for other people.

Syd:

A lot of outside spaces reproduce the things that we are trying to fight. For example, if you don't show up for a while, it's not: Hey, are you okay? But it's: Hey, why didn't you turn in the thing that you said you would do? It is the little practices that we do that shows care compared to other spaces.

Za:

I don't think about how I present when I go to T4T for example, but a lot of the time outside of T4T I feel pressure to present masculine, so the people accept my gender identity. With T4T, I show up in dresses; this is an act of care.

Sally:

In a lot of Western settings, it's like: Check out this new radical idea about community care, and I am thinking, this is my culture, (Filipino culture) what I grew up with. But what I love about T4T is that it builds community care without the social pressures that are associated

that you would normally see in a very collectivist culture. You can rely on the community without having to be what the community wants you to be.

Agnese:

I think intentionality is a big part of care, the fact that nothing is given for granted. Care is a practice. The things we practice can and should be the norm. We're not doing anything wild, we're caring for one another, but most of the other spaces are so far from this that it seems so radical. It is not performative, It's very, very simple. It's not that weird. It's not that difficult to learn to do this with people.

Jules:

I think what we do is very radical in a way. We develop further relationships on a super small scale. We integrate accessibility needs and rest in between.

Amix:

Yes, I would want to build something with you and connect with you on a deeper level as a person. So we can dream together. We can unlearn together. We can hold each other accountable and try not reproduce the harm. This is care.

Agnese:

I often find myself working so hard to avoid harm. We will do harm because we are fragile beings, and we're especially fragile because we put ourselves in these situations where we're over analyzing gender. So it's very easy to say the wrong thing to somebody who has nitpicked every single word in the vocabulary for gender. You are likely gonna offend

somebody. We focus on the repair. I fucked up. What do you need me to do now? How do I repair? There is a lot of curiosity and interest in navigating repair with people.

Syd:

We're dreaming of something different, practicing all words that resonate. It just feels right to me. It makes the space very different, this is what I envision as care.

Sally:

I've spent enough time in an atmosphere of care in T4T, that allows me to extend that care within my internal mindset. I'm allowing myself to build that for myself, because of T4T, and that's what is care.

Jules:

Are you sensitive to mouth noise by the way? Because you are recording

Marisha:

You are all good, I am gonna be transcribing it.

Grounding care practices

In this section, we talk about the practices of allowance, answering how the collective creates conditions that make care practices possible?

Freddie:

We have a cozy, warm welcoming space with couches, pillows and snacks, so the physical environment feels safe.

If it is facilitation or a workshop, we show people around, let them get familiar with space for the practical things. So people can do things autonomously, and do things on their own terms.

It's a practical form of care, but very important.

Agnese:

We also have food during the meetings. We are all crazy busy people, so feeding one another has really been like a ritual that the basics are important. You don't have to choose between hanging out with us, having this meeting, or taking care of yourself and your basic needs.

Freddie:

We start meetings with a check-in. Finish it with checkout. Seeing how people are feeling on that day, if somebody is really overwhelmed or excited, it gives people space to say that and giving space for that is care.

Agnese:

We also have fidget toys during the meetings. I'm a very fidgety person, but I always forget my fidgety toys because I'm also very absent-minded. So we always bring enough fidget toys to share with all of us.

Za:

We have plushies during the meetings as well. I love having plushies in a room. It makes me immediately more comfortable. Acknowledging that people participate in different ways, and that you're not expected to participate in any way that doesn't feel comfortable for you.

Amix:

There is a lot of attention on showing up as we are and with what we need. Everything centers around that. These practices are important to make our bodies feel more relaxed so we can feel the connection. And that's like an essential ritual, right?

I'm gonna dim the light, we're gonna talk at a slower pace. We're moving slowly. We make ourselves comfortable. You don't have to be in a chair. You can roll around. You can go pee. With these rituals, we create a space of allowance, of radical permission to just be. I think that's already in itself an act of care.

Syd:

We are modeling it for each other. So many times I have been called in¹², I was like, shit! But also that's so cool. Because then that means I can come to you if something happens. Until somebody does it, I'm not gonna do it. So modeling gives me permission to do it as well. I've seen it work so nicely. Modeling is the biggest thing to be able to do all these.

Agnese:

I also think it comes down to modeling.

For example, if someone is checking in with themselves to do something, then I also have this moment of reflection.

Jules:

Yes, modeling also facilitates groups. When we show up in different ways as facilitators, people also see that it's okay to show up as they are.

Sally:

All these care rituals that we talk about are being modeled. Like speaking in drafts, where it's more normalized not to be perfect. Modeling not only in terms of rituals but also with identity or even knowledge.

¹² Syd: instead of calling each other out, which is ostracizing, we call each other in.

Marisha: Yeah, by calling in, the orientation is towards understanding rather than punishment, shaming or humiliation. I think it has a more relational approach.

Syd: Focusing on transformative justice.

Agnese:

I think, trans community as a whole is modeling for everyone else.

Like those memes “Oh, I just remembered I have free will” I think trans folks are walking personifications of this meme. We are modeling that people have a choice and its the biggest care service that the trans community is giving to the world.

Embodied Care

In this section, we explore how embodied care is practiced and felt within the community.

Syd:

You know what's the biggest thing for me?

People taking off their shoes.

That means that we're doing something right!

That means that you took a moment to ask yourself what does my body need? And then shoes off.

We always take one moment to be with ourselves and do anything that would make it 1% more comfortable to be in space.

But also different bodies come with different stories. So assuming that everybody wants to connect to their body is not the way to go, but giving people the chance to, if they want to, and acknowledging that it's hard is something that we practice.

Amix:

I focus on how I feel in my body when we're connecting with one another. How do you make me feel, how I'm in the space with you, What are you dreaming about? This is also embodied care.

Za:

I also think there is so much potential in connecting with our body, to also be able to connect with others in the non human world.

Sally:

To be honest, the only time I ever think about my body is when I'm in T4T. I recognize that it means a lot for some people but I don't think about my body a lot. It just doesn't mean that much to me.

Marisha:

Yeah, I realized that the body plays a big role for other people, but I find it really difficult to practice that for myself. I really can't connect to my body. I'm not there yet.

Agnese:

I can relate to that. A lot of the time we'll do the check-ins, and I say I'm really overstimulated today, then someone is asked, what do you need? Well, I don't fucking know. I don't know what I need. So I'm not at that level yet, but for me, already being able to say I am overstimulated is already a step forward from the mind-body connection I did not have before T4T.

Amix:

Sometimes I feel so disconnected from my body or how I feel. In T4T we create a space where the body can feel relaxed. And a relaxed body is a very powerful body.

Freddie:

T4T is a space where I don't have to think about my body. I don't feel dysphoria the same way I do outside of T4T.

Agnese:

I feel like I crave embodying what we do in T4T to an extent that there is nobody that can sit in front of me that can take that away from me.

Interdependence

In this part, we explore the role of interdependence in the collective.

Syd:

I love that we're all attentive to different things. Like Jules always brings snacks, and then Amix gives a reminder to take a break. And then some people bring goofiness. So then it kind of comes together.

Marisha:

Yeah, there is also a lot of consideration for one another and interdependencies with small actions.

Freddie:

I love the feeling of not doing care alone; I love that the structure requires us to rely on each other. I can show up to T4T scattered and spacey and that's okay because my peers and fellow facilitators can hold me in that state. Us doing care for the collective is tied to us doing care for each other.

Sally:

There is a lot of interdependence in the group. I think one of the biggest things with it is openness and honesty, where we foster an environment to speak about certain things. Being

open and honest promotes this inner community care with each other with cooperation and that, in itself, is a form of care.

Za:

Yeah, fuck doing things alone.

Learning through care

In this section, we explore relational complexities of our care practices. We are answering the question of what are the challenges to realizing alternative visions of care within T4T? Some of the topics that we focus on are: internalized transphobia, not having a structure, running away from conflict, personal relationships and hierarchies of knowledge.

Internalized transphobia

Marisha:

I sometimes have a lot of guilt in doing all these. I keep thinking so much about how my life was before coming to the Netherlands; gender never even crossed my mind. I feel like there is so much privilege for me to think about this, to worry about gender. My internalized transphobia also comes out a lot.

Syd:

Sometimes, there is a voice in the back of my head that tells me “you are doing it for attention” it puts a little doubt in my mouth.

A voice telling me you're not really trans, because you're not suffering, and it's so deep, like the internal stressor is crazy, because I would never say this to anybody, but for me, I'm outside of that.

Ageneese:

When someone asks me if I am trans, I have a panic moment, because I don't know. I think a lot of the reasons I don't identify with trans are the wrong reasons. Since I cannot relate to the trans struggle, I feel like I cannot identify myself as trans, but also a big part of that journey has been realizing that this is transphobic of me. Trans people are more than struggle. It points out a lot of my internalized transphobia. There's euphoria in it, a lot of trans joy. Yet, I still don't think I am comfortable saying I am trans.

Marisha:

I get you a lot, the word trans freaks me out so much that I can feel it in my body. There are days where I feel more comfortable, and days where I think I am tripping.

Za:

Yeah, I also so often feel like I am not trans enough.

No structure

Za:

I feel impatience at times. There is no structure in T4T. I feel like I don't know how to do things because there's no structure to doing it. I think everybody would profit if things are structured and more transparent, I feel like we've been speaking about that for months.

Marisha:

Yeah, I also feel like there is no structure, I really thrive in structured work and I am missing it a lot. I want to know what I am responsible for, I almost want to feel needed, and now, I don't know if I am needed.

Sally:

It doesn't have to be a complete shift to becoming a compartmentalized team, but more of just having ideas for who to speak to. I need more structure. The lack of structure gives freedom, but it also leads to a lot of confusion.

Running away from conflict

Syd:

Sometimes I think we're too careful. We're too scared of making each other uncomfortable and confronting shit.

Taking away other people's agency, because I am thinking 10 steps ahead of what others are going to feel, we're kind of producing the same, we're not going anywhere, because we're just trying to be too careful, which is so interesting.

So weird to think that we might be going in the other direction.

Maybe there's too much care and now we're running away from conflict.

Za:

We as a collective are collectively scared of conflict. The whole thing around mistakes and messing up and having conflict, and actually allowing for conflict, allowing people to be angry and to then resolve it. I want my anger to be transformative. I would love to have a space where I feel like I can be angry and I can say things that are not super nice or kind all the time, and maybe people get hurt, and I'm very happy to do the repair work after but let's create a space where people can be honest and that might hurt, and then we see from there.

Agnese:

Sometimes, I feel like we take things to an extent that we end up in the same patterns as the oppressor.

Jules:

There are times where it's harder to practice things, or maybe I center care less also intentionally, and then don't know how to navigate all this.

Marisha:

Yeah, currently I feel very angry and frustrated with T4T. I realized that I do not feel as comfortable in the space as I thought I did. Are we actually able to have conflict? Or are we too afraid to hurt each other? I don't mean only with access needs but rather something that's more vulnerable. Are we actually radically honest? There are so many things that we can handle better, and I have so much guilt for even saying that.

Personal relationships

Syd:

So many hierarchies come also with people being in each other's life outside of T4T.

Za:

We have all these friendships within T4T, people talk as friends, and that's how things happen, but that's not very transparent, and it's very hard for people who aren't in that kind of friend group to know what's going on.

Sally:

So I still sort of feel like I am part of an outer group, I guess. So that makes me want to just go home and hide in a cave.

Za:

Yeah, internal friendships create dynamics. I also think it creates hierarchies. But I think the problem is not necessarily hierarchy. There are hierarchies, but they're made invisible.

Marisha:

While I think personal relationships, I think they hold us together, but I feel like they push us apart also. I really feel the intensity of personal relationships within T4T and not always in a

positive way. Polyamory also comes into play in T4T. And then it gets very messy. Yeah, that shit is not fun.

Syd:

Yeah, I've seen other groups put a rule of no dating.

Marisha:

There were some days when I did not feel like going on a meeting, or facilitating because of personal relationships that were established outside of the space. There were days when I was really hurt, heartbroken, or simply too in love with someone in space and it was very challenging.

Za:

With polyamory, I had moments when I was like I can't handle this anymore. Some people took up a lot of my energy and focus. I was so caught up in all my emotional mess inside of me and trying to not step on anybody's toes also.

Sally:

When there are some people in the group and they all are dating each other, I feel like I'm six wheeling.

Freddie:

I enjoy the relationships we have within T4T, I think the poly-induced chaos can be fun. But it can also cause harm and bring in room for hierarchy, where some people are more involved because of the personal relationships they are in, and it hurts the collective.

Hierarchies of knowledge

Syd:

I think the hierarchy of knowledge is really big. The fact that we trained you, puts us in a weird position, and that we don't have roles either.

That's not how I would want it to be. So I think there's more work that we could be doing there. I don't really know how.

Za:

I think there is still a difference between, let's call it first generation T4T people and second generation T4T people. I don't think that's necessarily bad, because others just have more experience. I think that's all good. I just want that to be more transparent, not just for our sakes but also for theirs.

Sally:

Yeah, we shouldn't use terms that people have no idea what the fuck it means, like radical acceptance and collective liberation. In the meeting, words like that are used very confidently by people who probably know exactly what it means, and they speak it in such a way where it seems like everyone should know what it means, and you don't know what it means. But now I am okay with just asking, because I am not a new person anymore.

Marisha:

I don't think hierarchies are inherently bad. It also depends on what kind of hierarchies we're talking about. Sometimes, I feel like I need somebody with more experience to be able to share their knowledge or experiences and take the lead when I do not feel confident.

For me, I think it's crucial to have trust in the group that this will not be abused. I definitely have that trust for the group.

Syd:

Well, I feel like we could do a better job. Since I am on the side that has been there longer, I feel more responsibility for this. I think it's good that we name it, but I don't really know what to necessarily do with it, or how to kind of neutralize it, which maybe is not even the point.

Agnese:

Even though some people have been doing this for longer, I never felt like they were teaching me something. It felt like we were exchanging. The intentionality is behind it.

Za:

I want to have a conversation about positionality with T4T people. Like class, gender, race and more.

Marisha:

Yeah, I feel like we need to have this conversation. Most of us are non-binary, from a certain class, also mostly from western countries.

Sally:

I hate to say this next bit, but it also comes down to being like two trans women in T4T. That's no one's fault. Despite being, again, one of two trans women, I've never felt like the token trans woman. I am also one of the only three people of color. We're saying just a thing that's an unfortunate consequence of the way the group is right now.

Dreaming together

In this section, we are dreaming together, connecting to our hopes and radical desires for our futures.

Freddie:

I'd love to see T4T grow, in the sense that anybody who attends a support group could then theoretically start their own and then it just kind of spreads in that way. Practices of care have the ability to be multiplied, and I think that it really can be. Eventually, it would be really lovely to see these care practices reach the mainstream, like for it to be like the norm everywhere. It's radical, but I think one day maybe it doesn't have to be.

Syd:

I think that's the only way, because I practice it with you, and then you practice with someone else, I practice with someone else, and they practice inside, and then hopefully it will spread.

Agnese:

To kind of infect the world. Yeah, exactly that would be my dream.

Syd:

I dream of also finding a space in the city that can host us regularly. Where we can host whatever we want. I would want to do more microcosm of care, which is bringing a little bit of what we learned and what we experienced in the support group to one event open to anyone.

Sally:

None of us really live in a single world. We view the world through our own lens. It is about creating the world for ourselves. For example, being patient, providing care, being open to care, imagining a world where we have permission. T4T for me means that I can bring that world for myself, in the sense that I can be like that to me. I hope people can have those worlds for themselves.

Syd:

I remember a quote, It was like capitalism and the systems of oppression tell us to leave the impossible alone, to not consider the craziest thing you could want for your future, especially as an organization or a collective.

But we are practicing our dreams in T4T. My dream is to keep reflecting on these things, but not too much reflection. Also just doing things and doing them wrong and then going back to it. I think that's my dream.

Agnese:

My dream is for T4T not to be necessary anymore. So all these become such a normal practice that we are not needed. but on a smaller, more practical and maybe a bit more egoistic level that we grow, that we can sustain ourselves and make this our main labor without falling into the hands of capitalistic thinking, getting lost in it! I would love for us to grow without getting lost.

Anyways, I also wish everyone was trans.

Za

I feel very strong “yes” with T4T and everything that we do. My dream is to do more body work, combine art and activism, I want to do this with a collective.

Sally:

I signed up for a program, and I proposed to do what we do in T4T.

I want more people to have what we have. With interdependence, to have the tools and the knowledge and the skills to build this community and to take care of each other.

I want this to spread, and reach the ones who need it, which is everyone.

Soon, I will leave the Netherlands, I will try to organize something like T4T.

Because it's been amazing for me, I know how I was in the past, and finding T4T has been life changing, really, life changing. I want to be able to do that for other people.

Now I am gonna cry.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this final part of the paper, I am connecting the process of unlearning, relational grounding, approaches to knowing, theoretical grounding and our voice collage to the research question. The chapter will be divided into the sub-questions of the research paper.

Throughout this paper, I hope to demonstrate to you the importance of moving away from dominant and colonial notions of care, and how care practices can be used as a tool for collective liberation.

I have tried to ground my work in my relational ethical responsibility, speak from a place of reflexivity, center collective voices while also acknowledging the responsibility I hold as a writer.

It has been crucial to use ways of knowing such as Liminagraphy and Sentipensar. This shaped the whole experience of my research, shaped how I approach the conversations, knowledge and the research itself. Sentipensar allowed me to follow and include my heart as the centre of reasoning, to feel and think about knowledge and not to surrender to neutrality.

Liminagraphy allowed me to explore the in-between of the research. To be a researcher while also being part of the community. Underlining that the in between is a valid way of knowing, honoring the uncertainty and transformation, where paradoxes can coexist.

I have refused to do analysis of our voice collage, rejected putting our knowledge into a pre-determined lens, because what we say and how we have been experiencing the space is already enough.

How do practices of care within T4T transform dominant notions of care?

Radical care is how T4T practices political resistance, creating alternatives to colonialism, capitalism and other harmful systems. We situate ourselves in complex relations and histories, practice interdependence by tuning into our and each other's needs, being vulnerable and open to change. We are being confronted with our shared fears, trying to grasp things from their roots, following the lines of our desires.

Through us being together, talking, laughing, disagreeing or cuddling we are radically fighting against this organized loneliness and moving towards belonging, creating beautiful support care webs.

We are not healing or recovering, but rather we are regenerating, creating, transforming and dreaming by creating the environment where we feel understood and seen. Because in T4T we have radical permission to at least practice to be ourselves, come as who we are, with our imperfections.

As Dean Spade (2020), underlines mutual aid is supposed to make you feel aligned with your hopes and dreams. This is what we do, we are practicing the world on our terms. Our peer support groups break stigmas by creating space where we are united by our gender rather than defined by it. We move beyond gender, and finally are in a space where we don't have to constantly think about our gender identities. We move beyond individual blame, we fight the system with our playfulness, joy, anger or grief. We practice care from a “small” scale, moving at the speed of trust with each other, creating internal practices that centre reciprocity, loving perceptions and world traveling.

We share resources and hold on to the decolonial praxis of love.

How does T4T create conditions that make these care practices possible?

When we practice collective dialogues and check-in with each other it directs our intentions to curiosity, and opens new possibilities. We are showing each other that the world that we want to live in is possible, and we are doing it through modeling.

Modeling is done when we show each other that we can ask for what we need, show up as messy as we are, or that we can have conversations that are uncomfortable.

We create an environment where we have autonomy to do things, to ask for our needs or freely move around in space, with our bodies that hold histories and complexities. Recognizing that care lives in the small things, and we need to feel comfortable in the space in order to show up as our full selves.

Practically, we direct the focus on our feelings and needs. This means integrating accessibility needs in our work, having meetings with check-in and check-outs and acknowledging that people participate in different ways. Having cute plushes and many fidget toys, dimming the lights, having snacks and staying away from loud noises. These practices create space of allowance and radical permission to be.

What are the challenges to realizing alternative visions of care within T4T?

While we build an alternative world, our inner harmful systems still linger. Sometimes we want to be more productive, feeling not “trans enough”, self-policing, avoiding conflict, being too careful, being scared to make each other uncomfortable and having blurred boundaries of our relationships. I notice how the normative systems are internalized, sometimes unconsciously reproducing the things that we are trying to resist, like exclusion, rushing or power imbalance.

Our conversations surprised me a lot, learning about the paradoxes within the collective and the individuals. Liminal spaces between feeling love, belonging, but also experiencing exclusion, trying to be authentically ourselves but feeling like there is no space for anger or conflict, creating space for joy but also being triggered, being vulnerable or open, but also

feeling judgment or exposure. While trying to dismantle the systems that hurt us, sometimes unconsciously we keep reproducing them ourselves.

We are trying to practice decentralized work, it is hard and challenging, creating many paradoxes and conflicting feelings about structure and hierarchies and sometimes we end up in not-so-leaderful and leaderless dynamics.

We try not to be moved by urgency and be conscious about our capacities, and yes, sometimes this makes us very uncomfortable because we are all humans who live in this fucked up world.

We are still figuring out how to have conflict and not to be scared of it. Often, our deep care and love also make us hesitant to cause disagreements, but we began talking about this, and the conversations have already marked a step towards learning.

The way of knowing, Liminagraphy lets me stay in-between spaces and embrace fluidity because the goal is not to know the answers and have it all figured out, but to know that where we are now is enough. These tensions and paradoxes are part of our practices of care, we are not perfect and we are not trying to be. This shows how much trans radical community care is a continuous process, not something that has a formula to fit, because we are all constantly changing, and trying to surrender to all the possibilities of change.

As I mentioned in the beginning, I see care as an active, fluid, warm, extensive and experimental river that runs through our bodies and the world around us. I think this is the form of alternative care that we imagine and practice in our community, which lets us create a world that we want to live in.

Right now, I am sitting in the same room in Leiden, where I met T4T for the first time.

I still remember where I was sitting on the 22nd of September 2024,

I still remember how I was feeling,

how much I felt uncomfortable

and how much my body was shaking.

I am forever grateful for following my crush

and for allowing myself to be uncomfortable in the unknown.

Grateful for all the experiences that we shared.

Throughout the past year, I see how gradually but radically the space has changed me,

how much it made me question and reflect,

how much it made me more vulnerable and open.

I remember they said in the first meeting: “We move at the speed of trust”

I did not really understand what they meant by this.

Now, it makes sense.

Change happened gradually,

at first the trust and relationship building were very slow,

but over time, the speed increased.

My speed also increased while writing this paper.

I felt so much love, anger or sadness towards the collective,

but somehow these so-called “uncomfortable” feelings made my connection to them stronger.

I catch myself going back to them,

*back to each other,
back to our conversations,
and back to the world that we are building.*

*I know I am not supposed to romanticize what we are doing,
but it's really hard not to,
when I have seen what T4T space does to people.*

*This collective existing is already a radical act of care,
We are not perfect, and we for sure have some internal challenges,
but we are trying,
we are trying our best
and we keep going back to each other because this matters,
because we matter.*

*You saw a glimpse of us, what we are becoming as a result of our experiences
and as a result of the work that we are doing all together.*

I hope our dialogue moved you.

*I hope you accumulated some love, grief, care, anger, hope, yearning or desire for all the
other worlds that we can have,
because we are like mushrooms,
spreading and infecting the world with our little
(or not so little)
seeds of care.*

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