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Spaces of the In-Between

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Spaces of the In-Between Teleportation & Transformation

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Abstract

In our western understanding, stories of teleportation and transformation in principle consist of three stages: the state before, the in-between moment (the shift) and the state after. The middle part is where the blurry boundaries of what we commonly call “reality” and “fiction” lay: the boundaries of awareness, trust and believing. The in-between moment is a moment of trespass, change, shift, a moment often invisible. What exactly happens after Gregor Samsa falls asleep as a human and before he wakes up as an insect or what happens right after Alice steps into the mirror and before she enters Wonderland? What happens while Clark Kent is inside the phone booth? None of these events occur in plain sight, but in a liminal space, where a device (*τέχνασμα*: *technasma*) activates the process. They occur in an instant, bound by the Aristotelean time paradox.

How to deal with the presence of the body in terms of time and space during this in-between moment and how to stimulate imagination, memory and the senses towards the “impossible”, using the elements that define a teleportation/transformation device? To deal with the questions, I had extensive discussions with experts in the field (children, people with schizophrenia and people in love), supported by the investigation of the “daily-life” realm as well as the analysis of my personal experience (autoethnographic self-investigation).

Through a compositional, experimental methodology, this speculative transdisciplinary artistic research project looks into means of (s)low-tech immersive arts, exploring im/possibilities through storytelling and technologies of the bodymind, seeing no clear boundaries between the performative space and the daily life realm with its physical and metaphysical properties. It navigates the nostalgia for a past and a future as a continuum, contributing to ongoing conversations about the artist/researcher’s existence, their agency and their ability for interconnectedness and change.

Keywords: transdisciplinary artistic research, teleportation, composed methodologies, technologies of the bodymind, trance-formativity

Spaces of the In-Between

One could argue that this is rather a personal narrative than an academic text in its strict sense. They should be right and wrong at once. How much space does the personal hold within the academic and the other way around? Can we merge the two? How to re-connect, how to become un-divided, “whole” (Aronson, 2005) whilst in-between creative and institutional time and space? It is a story inseparable from my dissemination project in artistic research, a story of transitions, of shift, trespasses that during the process defined both the content and the methodology of my work. The need for creation is a need to live, to connect with the inner and the outer, the deeper and the higher with the conscious and the divine, with the soul that extends far beyond the body, not only vertically but also horizontally. It is my attempt to reconnect my motivation, that lays deep *within*, to the world that moves *without*. It is meant as a spoken text, here to be read, imagined or remembered. Departing both from lived experiences and abstract concepts simultaneously, this is a subjective perspective that aspires to become an entry point for anyone who shares the concern and the desire to activate elements of such “impossibilities”.

I presented this text at the Labour Center of Nafplio during Performing Space 2025, and I will challenge its performative and narrative aspects here as printed matter.

(Medium sized stage, podium, one moderator and four presenters seated, one more person on the right appears in slo-mo through a beam of light. Mic on.)

Looking for an exit is looking for an entrance

If I may now tell you that I believe in karma, I should also say that most likely this is my first time on Earth as a human. In this life, I was born as Eirini Sourgiadaki in Crete in 1981 in a working-class family and I grew up in Athens. There, I studied Sociology, and then Cultural Management.

I also studied Poetry and Dance. I left Athens in 2014, amidst what was then presented as “the peak of the crisis” which was only the beginning of an ongoing demise. At that time, among other underpaid or unpaid jobs, I was writing scripts for theatre and performance. I moved to Zurich to read for a second MA in Transdisciplinary Studies in the Arts and then a PhD. A very short version of my doctoral research will be presented in this paper. I am interested in the liminal spaces where more-than-human elements show up with humans, and the roles of these elements in practices of care and justice.

Figure 1
Self-portrait. (©ES)



Shift

It was the first Christmas break after I had moved from Greece to Switzerland, requiring quite a big effort to make this move, and after leaving what I knew, until then as my life, behind — not too far, but behind — when I felt that something was wrong with myself, I was becoming disconnected, living either in memories or in imaginations, with my thoughts circling in non-stop loops. When I decided to seek help, the psychotherapist diagnosed me with anxiety disorder and existential stress. But he considered it a good sign that I was functional and could go to work. He used to say that sadness comes with my artistic mentality and that it is common for artists to have a tendency for melancholy and drama. I had already told him that my father was killed in a work “accident” when I was a child, but maybe he took it as a minor detail. Every now and then he asked me what thoughts gave me comfort when I felt trapped in those loops. After several weeks, I eventually answered that the only thought

that gave me relief was to get instantly transformed into something or someone else, or to get teleported to another place in space or time. He replied that both are impossible. After that, I looked for a new therapist and started working on ways to prove that they were not.

Metaphors and Transports

Figure 2

Metaphorai, Zurich, 2017, MA Transdisciplinary Studies in the Arts, ZHdK (©ES).



A year later, in 2017, I created a project called *Metaphorai: Teleportation & Transformation Services*, a low-tech immersive installation, a service provider where one could refer to, if they wanted to get teleported or transformed (Sourgadiaki, 2017). It was accessible through a website and a pre-meeting was required, where candidates would explain in detail their wish, and sign a declaration form that they would proceed at their own risk. “Metaphorai”, is a reference to Swiss German scholar Wolfram Groddeck, who wrote in his book *Reden über Rhetorik* about his experience of seeing such trucks driving around when he visited Greece (1995, 249). “Metaphorai” means transports, but also metaphors. For that experiment, I met with eleven people who all confirmed afterwards that they were indeed somewhere else or in another body.

I continued experimenting with the format and technologies of the bodymind also through collaborations with other artists and non-artists, the transporter became a boat and a spaceship, an armchair, a phone booth, an elevator and a helmet. It featured on stages, in galleries, and in public space. But what happens outside the laboratory setting, outside the stage or a designated space and beyond the conventions of a performance or an

installation? How do such events take place in the daily life realm? This became the topic of my doctoral work.

Since the mental health expert had failed me, I needed to find new experts. Who could that be? A child, a “crazy” person, a person in love — someone in a non-normative state of mind, who is often made fun of, whose mind “doesn’t count”, who is often, therefore, unheard? My hypothesis was that people who are experienced in these ways of being, which are also not stable, in societies that assume stability and sanity (for the many), should know something. They all have a special relationship to imagination and fiction. I assumed a few things:

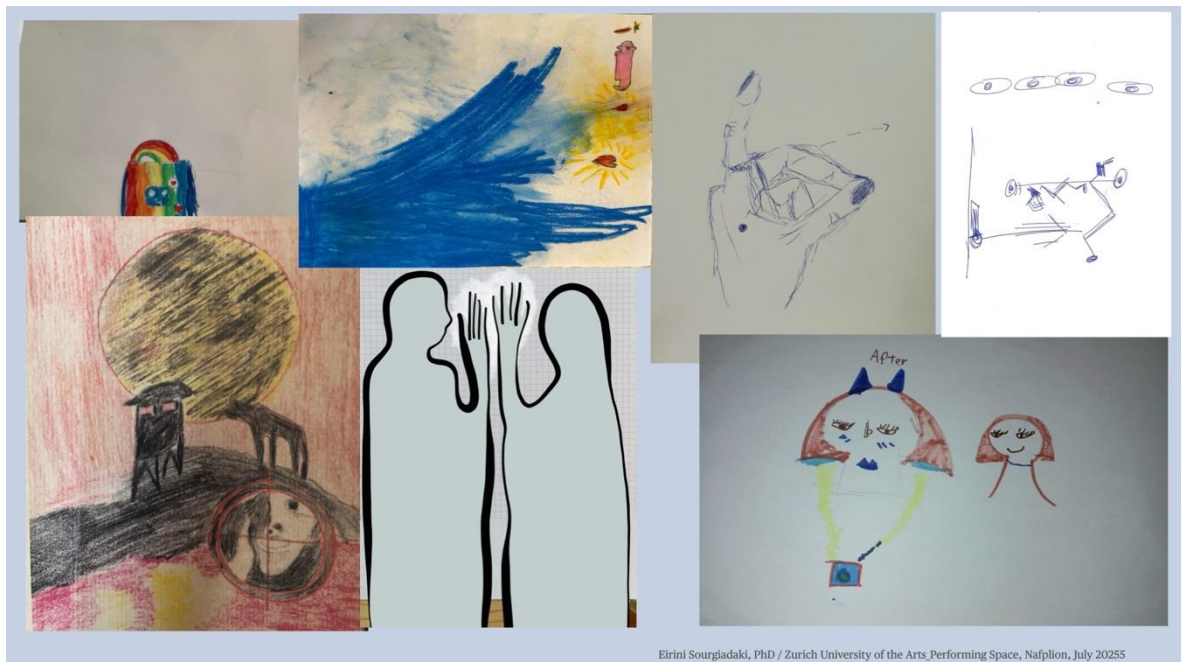
Every adult has experienced childhood. We all sleep and dream — here I refer to Carl Jung’s connection of the dream to the psychotic state (Hobson, J. Allan, 2005, p. 20). Another assumption I made is that most people experience falling in love — not necessarily with another human, but also with a non-human or an idea.

I met with 25 people of diverse age, gender, ethnicity/nationality, class, education, profession, religious views after asking them if they were willing to share with me their expertise on the matter.

Experts & devices

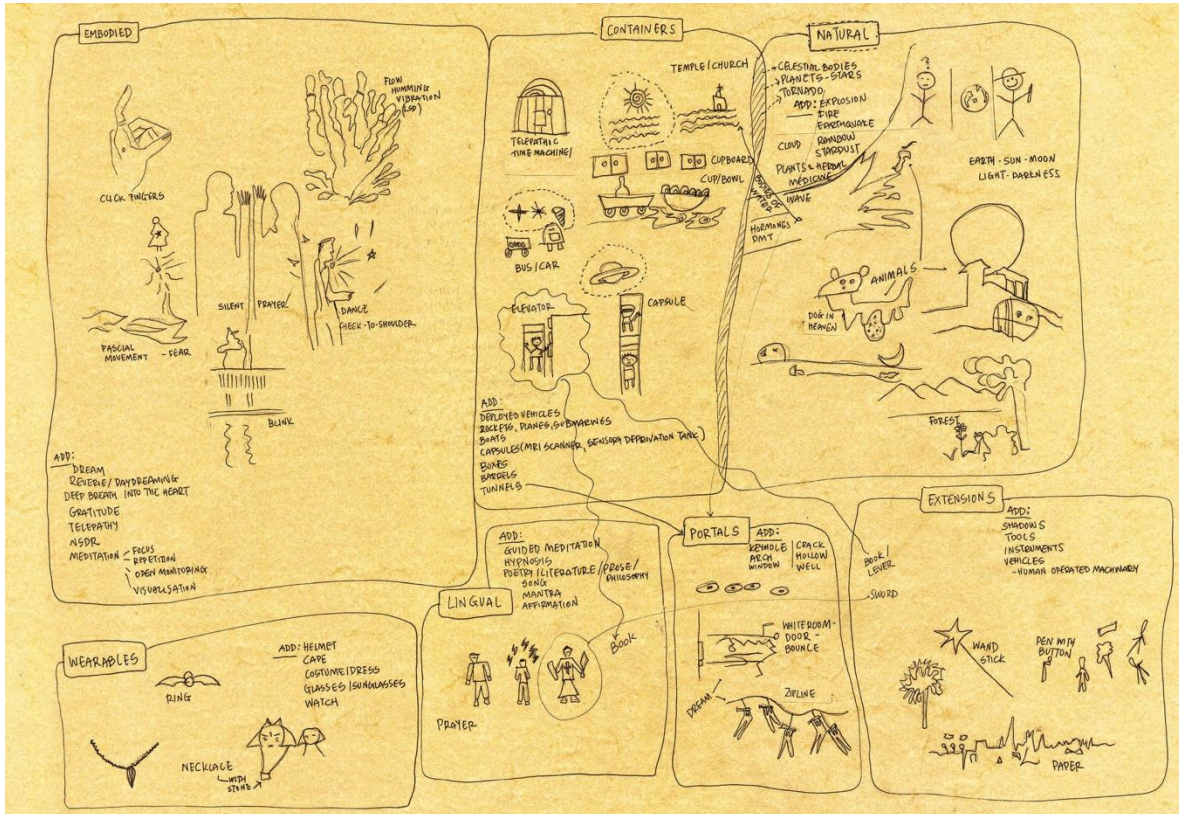
Figure 3

Experts’ drawings. (©ES)



After discussing experiences of teleportation and transformation, I asked them to draw either the device that once allowed or still allows this to happen, or a depiction of the very moment of the shift.

Figure 4
Map (©ES)

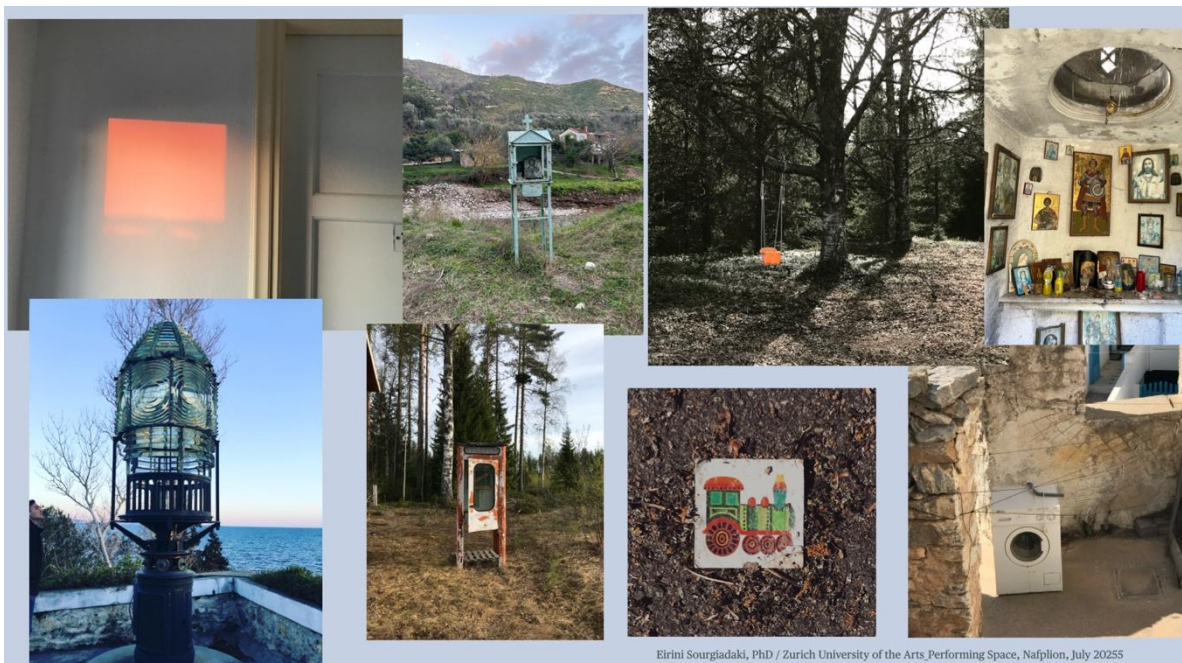


I transferred the drawings of the experts over transparent paper, a practice that emerged as a childhood memory of cartography class, and classified the devices in a rather arbitrary way but with their relationality to the physical body in mind, in a way that could fit in the signs, symbols but also the synchronicities described in the conversations. They are lingual, embodied, wearable, extensions, natural, portals and containers; one's own breath, a ring, a blink, or a book that, if pulled like a lever from the bookshelf, a big vacuum pipe comes and sucks you in and takes you to Saturn.

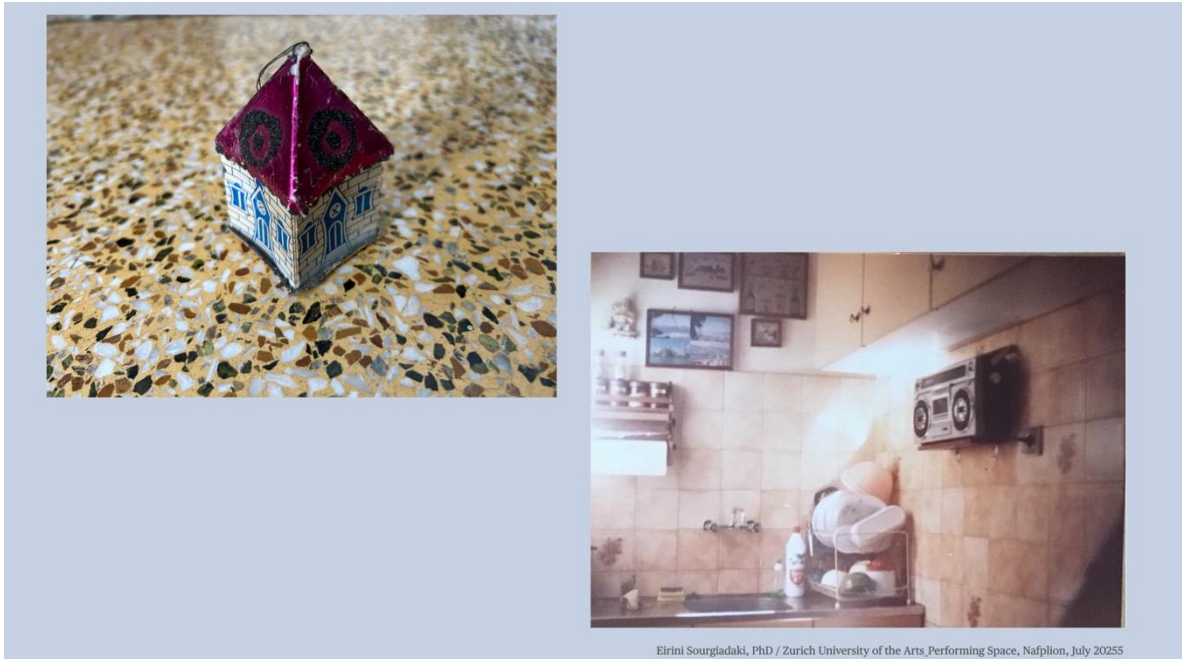
In 2019, right before the pandemic, due to a brain injury but also another great loss, I went through a long period of grief and recovery. I started practising walking meditations and endless strolling. Thanks to those walks, the next part of the project grew: a collection of images of teleportation and transformation devices that I came across in the places I inhabited or visited during that time. They were abandoned or operative; objects associated with other functions, often misplaced or forgotten. Sometimes they were openings, sometimes they enabled daydreaming, sometimes they were parts of hyperobjects —

objects whose dimensions in time and space are too massive for our human perception (Morton, 2017, p. 64). They often appeared in everyday life and they were usually ‘hidden’ in plain sight. They were new or old, sometimes even ancient: ruins, keyholes, sockets or cracks. They were indeed cracks in the solidities of daily life. Sometimes they contained levels of memories, like a photograph of a photograph of my mom’s radio when I was a child. Sometimes they were words that appeared as messages. And sometimes they were messages on my phone from friends who observed something that made them think of this research and sent me their findings.

Figures 5+5.1
Devices (©ES).



Eirini Sourgiadaki, PhD / Zurich University of the Arts_Performing Space, Nafplion, July 20255



Eirini Sourgiadaki, PhD / Zurich University of the Arts_Performing Space, Nafplion, July 20255

Figure 6
Card deck (©ES)



Reflecting on whether this collection could also follow the same classification as the drawings, I returned to the map and transferred them a second time. I ended up with a set of 28 cards that one could use for divination and self-reflection. And instead of a reading, I proposed a writing of the cards. I wrote 28 short texts. Sometimes they were reflections; sometimes notes of inspiration; sometimes stories about impossibilities in science, literature, mythology that I felt belonged together or were in conversation with each other: a collection of references that I would have loved to have available when I am trapped in hopelessness. They are not about hope though, but about the realisation that we are interconnected.

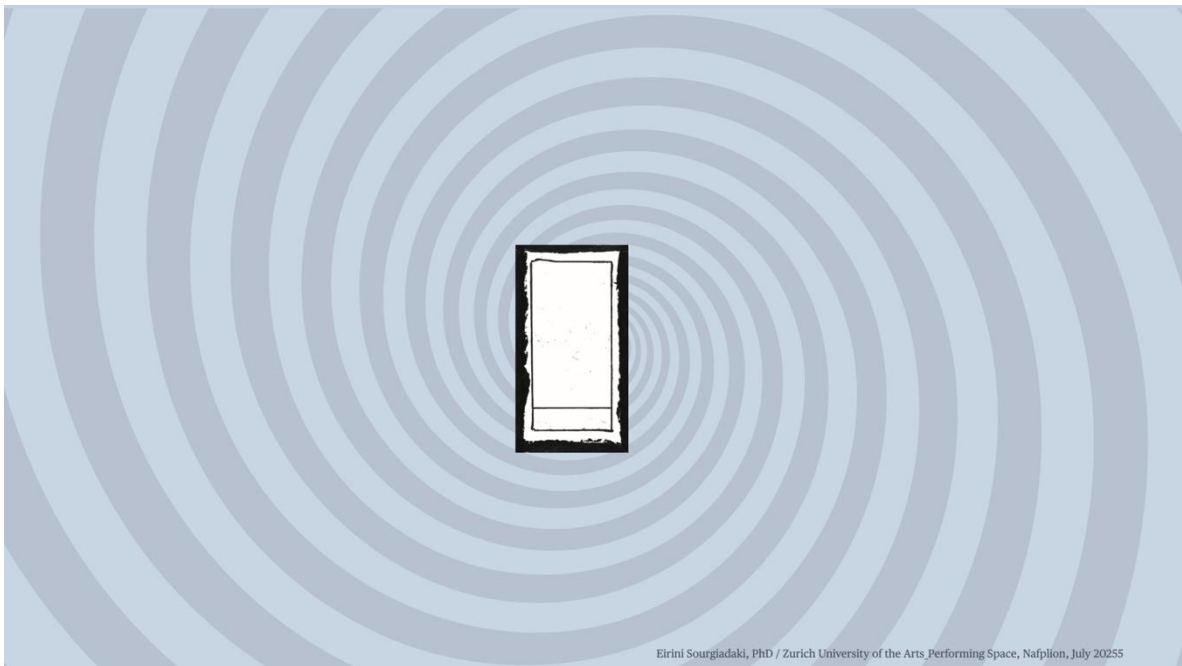
The end is the beginning is the end

This work was my response to something that did not feel right. The liminal space I was looking for was a trespass towards healing. I would dare to say that this work came with my “response-ability”, this beautiful term Donna Haraway gave us (2016, p. 29), a response for and with the ability to use the imagination and the memory and still to be present in this here and this now. In the transition we find ourselves today as artists, researchers, educators and

beyond, I believe that we need to make this effort: to address dis-ease, discomfort, and unwellness as common places. This effort around art and health needs to go on and remain vivid. It may not eventually define our wellness, but it defines our integrity. In times of endless war, control and climate anxiety, it is crucial to be able to sense and respond, to observe, preserve and find the passages, the in-between spaces for us and for others to go through uncomfortable ways of being. In this timeline, on this planet, this is my contribution.

Figure 7

Blank Card (©ES)



(Presenter on the right disappears in slo-mo through a beam of light, the four and the moderator get up, mic off. Doors open. Coffee break.)

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