

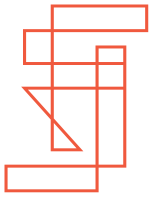
LANDSCAPES OF CARE

ABSCHLUSS - ARBEIT 2022 / EVELINA FALIAGKA

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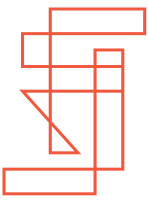
The Thessalian Campos in the era of the Plantationocene.
Agricultural Policies, Multispecies Exhaustion and the shift
towards a Landscape of Care.

EVELINA FALIAGKA

This thesis will explore one of the most productive landscapes in Greece, which is the Thessalian Campos (=lowland, arable valley). The reason why I found it important to talk about this landscape, is that today the valley that used to feed the entire country since the birth of the Greek nation-state now faces an ambiguous future. This landscape is threatened not only by quasi-desertification and hyper-humidity, both consequences of industrial agriculture, but it also suffered the effects of the global climate crisis. On the 19th of September 2020, hurricane “lanos” flooded the whole region, damaging hundreds of acres of cotton plantations, and destroying parts of the irrigation network. Thus, I believe it is more urgent than ever to explore such landscapes, and raise questions about their future. How could they resist their imminent exhaustion? Could they participate in their own care, maintenance, and repair?

In 1981, Greece entered the European Economic Community (EEC) and adopted the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The implementation of the CAP policies provoked the subsidization of crops like cotton that had nothing to do with the country’s needs and were dependent on international demands. In the following years, the cotton cultivation area and the cotton production rates rose exponentially. At the same time, CAP obliged cotton growers to use globally certified types of agricultural inputs, which came from all around the world and escalated the costs of production.

To better understand the impacts of these policies, I turned to the theoretical term: Plantationocene. The term was generated in a conversation for *Ethnos*, by the participants N. Ishikawa, A. Tsing, D. Haraway, S. F. Gilbert, N. Bubandt, and K. Olwig to describe “the devastating transformation of diverse kinds of human-tended farms, pastures, and forests into extractive and enclosed plantations, relying on slave labor and other forms of exploited, alienated, and usually spatially transported labor” (Haraway 2015: 162). I found this to be an insightful way to portray Campos since, after the implementation of the CAP policies, humans (farmers) and non-humans (soil, water, plants, machines) were “forced” to a specific type of farming that ultimately led to their exhaustion and extermination. To delve deeper into the system and grasp the way it operates, I did an in-depth analysis of the CAP deadlines and regulations, while at the same time I investigated the cotton supply chain, and exposed its actors. From the Farm Equipment Companies, to the Manufacturing Factories, I finally revealed each and everyone one of us as a potential consumer of the final product. Thus, I argued that if we



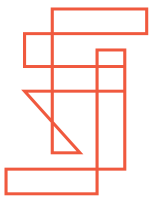
are the potential consumers of those products, we are also the consumers of the Thessalian soil and water system that were depleted to produce cotton in the first place.

At that point, I investigated the spatial manifestation of the system, proving that the aforementioned policies along with the global agro-industrial complex are responsible for the massive infrastructural transformations in the region. By illustrating the artificial lakes that were constructed to irrigate the plain, the irrigation canals, and the illegal water drills, I depicted the water infrastructures that were inflicted upon the valley. Consequently, I mapped the cotton monocultures and the local cotton gins (=cotton processing plants) that currently exist in the valley.

Beyond the spatial impacts, I explored the feral effects that the system had on the valley's natural resources. To begin with, soil has constantly been exploited and degraded for the sake of cotton production. The expansion of the cultivated area has led to the excessive use of chemicals, and has exposed the crops to pests and pathogens. Moreover, the lack of water and its misuse by the farmers has recently emerged as another threatening issue. As the loopholes and contradictions of the system were exposed, I began to wonder: How much more exploitation can the valley survive? Is there something we can do for the maintenance and repair of these resources?

These questions led to the last chapter of this thesis, which is driven by the notions of care. Drawing from the works of Joan Tronto, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, Angelika Fitz, and Elke Krasny I developed alternative strategies for the future of the Thessalian Campos. These are not proposed as one "great" masterplan. The complexity of the system and its multiple contradictions would never allow for such a design gesture. On the contrary, my design proposal aims at various caring micro-inventions at every part of the existing cotton supply chain. Re-framing the existing context will allow for the transition towards a Landscape of Care. The strategies for this landscape will also rely on a localized textile scheme, which will include the local textile manufacturers, the spinners, and the natural dyers. Starting from the agricultural inputs, to the production of the primary product, this thesis suggests the return to more caring farming practices. Crop rotation, cover crops, mulching, and composting, as well as the construction of composting facilities are proposed across the valley. Furthermore, the cultivation of alternative textile crops such as flax and kenaf is presented as a way to reduce cotton monocultures and introduce a variety of textile crops in the region. Finally, drawing upon the long dyeing tradition of Thessaly, the villages up in the mountains will emerge as the new dyeing centers of the Campos.

To conclude, I would like to take into account another contradiction of the system, that is the high cost of these locally made textiles. In a time of recession, who will afford to pay for them? For this, I believe that policy making is crucial, as well as the funding support of international institutions that are concerned with the notions of care. If we understand the dramatic exploitation of land and human labor that lies behind the production of textiles, then these are the questions we should be asking in our transition towards the Landscapes of Care.



Scenes from mulching.
Drawn by the author.