Vilém Flusser, *Natural:Mind, 2013*

*“We have several ways of relating to nature, some of which may be called ‘supernatural’, ‘theoretical’, or ‘perspectival’ (according to our many tastes). One of these ways is to see nature as a map. In this view, we have inverted the epistemological relation between landscape and map. The map no longer represents the landscape, but now it is the landscape that represents the map. The map no longer serves as an instrument so that we may orient ourselves in the landscape, but now it is the landscape that serves as an instrument so that we may orient ourselves in the map.”*

**Toxic Lands** is a research-based experimental curatorial intervention and collaborative creation that crosses landscape architecture, film, art installations, performances and activist initiatives. It is developed in the destroyed and polluted environment, intersecting physical and digital space, exposing the unseen effects of the Anthropocene (the current geological age where humans have been the dominant influence on the environment).

The curatorial intention is to create an experimental space of inclusion, exploration and transformation, starting from the destroyed landscape system of the Neretva River and the City of Mostar. The experimental space hosts and forms a planetary impermanent society that is living and thinking with destruction and pollution, initially caused by military activities during the 1992-1996 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina that are still present today in different forms and ecological relationships. Beside the environmental disaster caused by the war, today the lands in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its bordering states are subject to air, land, river and sea pollution caused by excessive real estate developments, outdated infrastructures, illegal landfills and long-term deposits of munition in nature.

In this specific context, and using feminist theory and spatial practices, the Toxic Lands working process will expand to other lands, existing or fictional. It proposes “thinking with” different agents, as the scholar Donna Haraway suggests in her work, exploring the war, post-war, as well as other forms of destruction of natural and urban environments, human and other then human agents, plants animals and their associated interspecies interactions.

The spatial ecological conditions on the Earth, defined by human exploitation and destruction, went too extreme spatially and socially for all, human and other than human species. It is evident that humans are technically late to plan and design solutions to our environmental disasters. Instead, following the philosopher Vilém Flusser’s suggestions, we need to start to re-create our maps, as well as toxic lands, in the present ecological timeline, possibly from destroyed landscapes and existing interspecies habitats.

**Toxic Lands will create two lines of investigation between March and July 2021:**

**Line #1 – EXHIBITION**

With an exhibition across physical venues in the City of Mostar and through digital display online, we will examine the unseen effects of the Anthropocene, showing cross-media art works and performances of the artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, post-Yugoslav region and the UK.

For Line #1 of the investigation, with the Un-War Space Lab collective we will create an autonomous exhibition device with audio and visual equipment, easily movable through the city space. The device will project views on the destroyed environment in a broader sense, unknown ecologies of interactions between humans and the Earth, military traces, climate change, Western colonial practices, extractive industries and vulnerable urban futures. The device’s mobility and placement in the destroyed areas of Mostar and on the Neretva River banks invites ecological awareness through individual and collective reflection on everything we have seen, experienced and imagined together.

**Line #2 – INTERSPECIES ENCOUNTERS**

The interspecies encounters are partly online, partly site-specific and will be on the river Neretva and within the public and polluted spaces across the city and other landscapes. This line of investigation will include artists, activist communities and citizens of Mostar and from other cities. The interspecies encounters programme features:

1. ‘It could be poisonous’ events series that are happening on-line including different landscapes as well as within the landscape system of Neretva river and Mostar with aim to open critical discussions and analyse human destruction in a broad sense.
2. Toxic Lands collage by Andreja Dugandžić of endangered species of Neretva river located on the web and the street walls within the urban space of Mostar
3. Listening Neretva river lead by architect and music producer Belma Zvizdić and sound artist Haris Sahačić, violinist and sound artists Manja Ristić resulting with the collaborative vinyl production of Neretva and Mostar sounds including also sounds from other Toxic Lands artists’ sound explorations and works.

1. Public walk along Neretva river with the theme ‘Plants Pedagogies of Hybrid Landscapes’ lead by Un-War Space Lab and botanist Bojan Spasojević resulting with the on-line and handmade herbarium.
2. Audio performance on the Partisan cemetery in Mostar by artist Gildo Bavčević.
3. Environmental readings on Neretva and within the city of Mostar with activists of the Alternative Library in Mostar resulting with the video and audio podcasts.
4. Toxic portraits on the Neretva river with photographer Dijana Zadro.

The site-specific interspecies encounters will be transmitted at the AbrašRadio Mostar.

Toxic Lands, curated by Armina Pilav, is part of FUTURE ECOLOGIES, a programme from WE ARE HERE: Artists’ Moving Image from the British Council Collection and LUX developed by Tendai John Mutambu, British Council and LUX. In the Western Balkans, FUTURE ECOLOGIES is presented through a programme of exhibitions, screenings and public events, curated by curators from the region.