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FULL PROPOSAL TEXT

Ecosystemic Awareness LAB · Final deliverable, written version · Team 025

Type directly into the tinted fields. This is the complete text of your proposal. What survives onto the A3 poster is an editorial decision made later; what does not fit goes to the Complementary Document.

Started on paper during the workshops. Finalised here.

Team

025 - The Crows

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1 · Stakeholders

1.1 Key stakeholders / parties

Whose conditions or interests does the proposal attempt to represent? Who or what does the proposal seek to speak with or for?

Identify precisely the human and/or more-than-human beings, populations, ecological communities or processes whose conditions of existence orient your proposal.

We are representing the fairy ring mushrooms, latin name Marasmis oreades, which is a mushroom growing in the campus park of VDU. This is our stakeholder and the one we focus on, but it does exist in a network with other beings: the grass around it, small animals such as worms and birds, and also the humans how use the same campus. Since the allowed length of grass needed in order to mitigate the risks of ticks is enforced through automatic lawn mowers constantly cutting the grass of the meadows, the mushrooms keep being crushed and cut.

1.2 Pleasures and sufferings

What enables these parties to live or thrive? What causes stress, restriction, displacement, harm or disappearance?

Describe the spatial, material, environmental and relational conditions that support or disturb them.

Fairy ring mushrooms grow in the form of a circular network. The mycelium is at the center and from there it creates an underground network consisting of fine, tubular threats, called hyphae. This underground network is responsible for the mushrooms above ground to grow in the same circular shape. When the myceliums life cycle ends, the outer edges of the circle keep growing. The rings underground part will eventually die out, so also the overground part disappears. The mushrooms need moisture, nutrients in the soil and fairly undisturbed earth.

1.3 Allies and antagonists

Who or what supports, constrains, competes with, feeds, shelters, regulates or otherwise affects these parties?

Identify their relations, dependencies and tensions, recognising that these may change across space and time.

Fairy ring mushrooms are supported by organic matter in the soil, while surrounding plants benefit from the nutrients released by fungal decomposition. They interact and compete with other soil fungi and microorganisms, and their growth is influenced by soil moisture, nutrients and human disturbance such as mowing, fertilization and soil disruption. Therefore, preserving suitable soil conditions and minimizing unnecessary disturbance can help maintain their natural growth cycle.

1.4 Challenges and opportunities

Which conditions have restricted or enabled these parties in the past, which do so in the present, and which may emerge in the future?

Map challenges and opportunities across time. Consider how the same condition may be an opportunity for one party and a challenge for another, or may change its significance over time.

On the campus the fairy ring mushrooms can not grow in their circular shape, as they keep being cut and destroyed by the lawn mower, that is cutting everything without distinguishing if it is grass or something else. Understanding and fascination for this species is lacking, so it is not being protected, but treated the same as the rest of the lawn.

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1.5 How we came to know them, and what we got wrong

How did you come to know these parties and their conditions? What remains uncertain or misrepresented?

Identify your sources and methods, and explain what you had to infer or imagine and what your representation may simplify, exclude or get wrong.

We discovered this unique mushrooms while getting to know the plants, trees and fungi growing on the campus. We were all intrigued and then researched further, and came across not only the network behind the visible mushrooms (that are only the very tip of the mycelium and hyphea network), but also how the human intervention on the campus prevents it from growing in circles.

1.6 Space that matters

Which place and wider urban context matter most to these parties?

Read the environment from their position: identify the boundaries, distances, spatial components, materials, climatic conditions and temporal cycles relevant to them.

Open fields of grass, parks, lawns. Mainly found in forested areas. Their diameter depends on the age of the circular underground mat it grows in. Sixty different species of mushrooms are considered fairy. They alter the structure of the grass around them, which can appear either more brownish or more lush. They are found in the late summer and early autumn, especially after wet weather.

1.7 The conflict

Where do the conditions or interests of these parties come into tension with the park as it is currently organized, used, maintained or governed?

Identify the specific practice, spatial condition, relationship or expectation producing the conflict - or an important dependency that is currently overlooked.

Because the park is maintained they don't get the chance to grow fully/freely. A full circle of fairy ring mushrooms is rarely seen in the park.

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2 · Problem question

What specific change in the identified relationship, condition or conflict should the proposal address?

Rearticulate the conflict as a clear, specific and open-ended question grounded in your research. The question should identify whose conditions are at stake and what needs to change, without presupposing a particular architectural solution. End it with a question mark.

> How can we protect the fairy ring mushrooms and let them grow in the way they want to?

3 · The proposal

3.1 Aim

What do you seek to do?

State the proposal's main intention in response to the identified problem, formulated as a sentence beginning with "to" (to build, to initiate, to create, to begin, to transform, etc.).

> The aim of our project is to protect the fairy ring mushrooms from being destroyed by the automatic lawn mowers on campus of VDU, and from being stepped on, in order for them to grow in the circles they are usually growing in. We want to give the fairy ring mushrooms the space and time they need to complete their natural cycle within the campus lawn. The circles will be marked as points of interest on google/apple maps, and also on other maps of Kaunas. Additionally, there will be events twice a year, one on the 30th of April, or Walpurgis Night, and on another day in autumn (the growing season of the mushrooms).

3.2 Change

What difference do you seek to initiate, for whom or for what?

Describe the change in conditions, relationships, behaviors, perceptions or decisions to which the proposal seeks to contribute.

> We want to shift the lawn from a landscape maintained to serve human interests and machine rhythms into one that can respond to the rhythm and life cycle of another living organism:

3.3 Function

What does the proposal do in terms of its function, and how might this contribute to the intended change?

Explain how the proposal operates and state its hypothesis of change: why you believe its actions or effects could help initiate the intended difference.

> If mowing is temporarily (or even permanently) paused around the fairy rings, then the human mushrooms may have more opportunity to emerge, fruit and expand visibly, because their above-ground fruiting bodies are not repeatedly cut down. This is our hypothesis, but we acknowledge, that the growth of the fairy ring mushrooms is uncontrollable. We can only give it the opportunity to grow the way it will.

3.4 Form

What spatial, material, organizational, legal, visual, political, performative or other form does the proposal take?

Show how the proposal looks, is experienced or enacted, and how its form supports its function.

The proposal is a mowing-free circle around an emerging fairy ring, marked by stones found on the premises of the campus, recognised by the robotic mower and left undisturbed until the ring has completed its visible fruiting cycle. The circle becomes a pause in the lawn and could take the form of a biodiversity island within the cut lawn.

3.5 Networks

How might the proposal affect existing relations, dependencies and tensions?

Explain how it may change the roles, agency and relationships of the key parties, including their allies, antagonists and other affected actors.

The fairy ring itself is an ever-growing network, but it is also connected with many other non-human beings. It is a saprotroph, meaning it feeds on dead organic matter and contributes to the nutrient cycling in the soil.

Fungus ↔ soil ↔ dead organic matter ↔ nutrients

- Fungus ↔ grass ↔ moisture ↔ temperature
- Fungus ↔ rain ↔ seasons
- Fungus ↔ insects/birds/other organisms
- Fungus ↔ robotic mower ↔ maintenance system
- Fungus ↔ students ↔ human perception
- Fungus ↔ folklore ↔ culture

3.6 Blind spots

What might the proposal overlook, exclude or unintentionally cause?

Identify its uncertainties, risks and possible unintended consequences, including which human or more-than-human parties might benefit, be harmed or be excluded.

Most of our blind spots stem from the uncontrollable nature of the fairy ring mushrooms:
Are the incomplete rings caused by mowing?
Does the fungus benefit from protecting its visible part, the ring?
How long should the pause in mowing last?
What happens to the grass and the other organisms inside the meadow?

Other blind spots result from questioning the very idea of the mushroom needing human intervention:
Who decides which organisms are given priority?
Are mushrooms more important because we deem them more fascinating than e.g. grass?
Are we protecting the mushrooms or just making them more visible to humans?
Do we need the proposed educational component in order to justify giving the mushrooms this space?

And, most importantly:
What if the mushrooms don't need our intervention at all?

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4 · Visuals

Include at least three visualizations. Each should perform a different epistemic task - revealing something about the proposal rather than merely illustrating it. Each visualization should include a short caption explaining what it reveals.

4.1 Descriptive render [3D render, drawing, painting]

What would the proposal look like if it were actualized?

Represent its spatial, material or performative form in relation to the existing place.



4.2 Assemblage [diagram]

Which human and more-than-human parties, processes and systems are involved, and how are they connected?

Show their different forms of agency, dependencies and tensions, and how these relationships and their collective agency might change if the proposal were actualized. Include relevant temporal changes or cycles. Express this as a diagram.



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4.3 Perspective shift [free form]

How is the place and the proposal encountered from the situated perspective of the key stakeholder or party?

Represent what may be perceived, sensed or experienced from this position, while acknowledging the limits of translating it into a human visual representation.

The mushroom has no eyes or brain, so it does not "see" the park like we do. What matters to it is what happens underground: moisture, temperature, and undisturbed soil. It does not feel the mower as "destruction", it just feels a repeated cut that breaks its growth before it can finish.

Our proposal, seen from this position, would simply mean fewer interruptions: more calm, more time, more continuous soil to grow in.

We want to turn this into a short sound piece, the sharp noise of the mower against a calmer, continuous sound standing for undisturbed soil. But we want to be honest: this is our interpretation, not the mushroom's real experience. We cannot know what, if anything, it senses.

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Complementary Components

What exists beyond the poster and the Complementary Document. Add hyperlinks for files, photographs for physical artefacts.

Component, what it does that the poster cannot, and where to find it

References

Studies, precedents, artists, legal cases, thinkers, and the lectures from this week.

1. Work of English sculptor, environmentalist and photographer Andy Goldsworthy
2. https://gardencollage.com/inspire/wild-earth/myth-lore-fairy-ring/
3. https://www.ignant.com/2017/06/12/andy-goldsworthys-land-art-photography/
4. https://artsci.usu.edu/herbarium/activities_fun-stuff/fun-facts-about-fungi/fairy-rings
5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairy_ring