

# SomeTimes

## Varia Goes Seasonal

This issue of SomeTimes is dedicated to the temporary, the not quite ready yet, the flourishing, and the almost over. This issue of SomeTimes is dedicated to a plan that we, Varia, wrote out in the summer of 2023. This issue of SomeTimes is dedicated to Seasonal Computing and all its seeds, apple-cores, mini-pears and the flourishings and wiltings that have happened and will soon come to be.

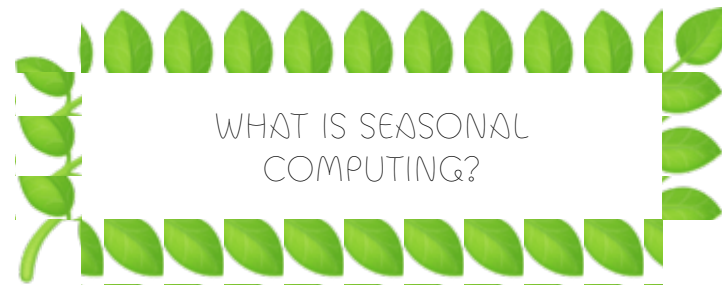
In 2024 Varia decided to explore what it would mean to connect our research and public programme with a different set of rhythms than that dictated by the social, cultural, political, and economical calendar. Our public programme in 2024 is titled Seasonal Computing.

Without having answers to the question of what Seasonal Computing actually was, we imagined what it might mean through writing and through discussions amongst ourselves and with friends. Was it something connected to the traditional four season rotation that is experienced in Western Europe? Did it mean we could begin to align ourselves with a different set of temporalities? Could we be less productive in Winter and then flourish in Summer and Autumn? What did it mean to connect computing to our local environment? What subjects and questions would emerge from that process?

So what does it mean for Varia to engage with Seasonal Computing? To help structure our programme, we divided our activities into three research 'seeds': Access, Counter Coloniality and Homebrewing. Each seed contains a different group of Varia members that facilitate events and conduct collective research. Each seed has its own temporality with some producing frequently during winter/spring and laying dormant in summer/autumn and others the opposite.

In this issue of SomeTimes, you'll be able to find out more about how we framed seasonal computing, what the seeds consist of and a selection of the activities that have happened already.

Seasons' Greetings, Varia



One important characteristic of today's approach and usage of technology, specifically when it comes to computing and digital practices, is a demand for constant availability in the service of profit-oriented tech-capitalism. This ideology exhausts material and human resources, from the extraction of rare earth minerals, which leave extended landscapes, oceans and their inhabitants devastated, to a widespread mental and physical exhaustion where the next burn-out is just around the corner. Thinking further; who can afford to have a burn-out? To what extent is the capitalist logic of economic circumstances deeply entrenched with colonial, classist and other discriminatory narratives? How can we address complex intersectional modes of exploitation within both our modes of working and our topics of research?

What do we mean when we use the word "seasonal"? Within a European context it commonly deals with the reckoning of four seasons: winter, spring, summer and autumn as divided periods of the year with distinct weather conditions and day lengths. While recognising that many other regions deal with other reckonings such as rainy and dry seasons, we want to structure our activities around the seasons we experience in this locality. Agrarian societies think with working conditions of preparing,

seeding, nurturing and gathering in a way that takes into account the dependence on weather conditions, as well as a resourceful approach so as not to exhaust soils in order to continue further cycles of growth. While an agricultural context still comes with problematic notions of controlling nature and landscapes, foraging for example allows for a different kind of relation to resources. The foragers' etiquette, for example, might teach us to not take too much, to leave enough food for other foragers as well as animals, enough seeds to sprout next year, enough wood for animal shelter and so on. Similarly, in computing, permacomputing refers to principles in permaculture, as it encourages a focus on minimising energy usage while extending hardware lifespans and on the use of already available computational resources, instead of always producing more. How to learn from these practices without enacting greenwashing? How to actively contribute in a non-extractive mode?

While Seasonal Computing comes directly from discussions that happened around A Traversal Network of Feminist Servers (ATNOFS)<sup>1</sup> in 2022, it has roots in previous trans\*feminist and anti-capitalist articulations of collective practices. It connects to values described in the Feminist Server Manifesto of the work session organised by Constant, Are You Being Served?<sup>2</sup>, by celebrating seamfulness and not apologising for unavailability. It aligns with A Wishlist for Trans\*Feminist Servers<sup>3</sup> proposed by the Digital Discomfort Working Group, as it is non-extractive and scales up or down as needed. It follows similar values put forward by the communities of practice around Permacomputing<sup>4</sup> and the Damaged Earth Catalog<sup>5</sup>, with their different visions on technology that span convivial technologies, patchwork approaches, recognition of limits and calls for de-growth.

By applying seasonality to our 2024 programme we acknowledge the cyclical implications the actions of this year will have on the years to come. This is not

to be mistaken for trying to predict the future. Instead we are giving attention to the consequences of our actions and our shifting environment, for we recognise, and already experience, the way in which seasonality is rapidly changing due to climate breakdown.

In 2024 we will focus on three topics that will run throughout the year. These will manifest as several research threads, otherwise known as seeds, that we will continue to explore in groups. Seeds have different moments for sowing, germination and growth. The thematic activities for 2024 are structured within three different seeds: Access, Counter Coloniality, and Homebrewing.



### ACCESS SEED

The Access seed is beginning a trajectory that will start with accessibility of the public programme for people who are caregivers and neighbours of the space. It is concerned with the hows of sharing, and the who of our audience. The core motivations of our Access seed are to practice hosting and communicating resourcefully and within limits that are appropriate to our means and to values we want Varia to represent. These resourceful actions are to pay attention to, imagine, and act on, different ways of hosting and of using our tools and forming our space.

The importance of Access seed's recurring rhythm is to be locally situated, and therefore work towards accessibility for people who live nearby and who may have different appreciation and understandings of Varia's role in the neighbourhood. Caregivers

Unite and Open Street Mic are two activities that will run throughout the year, both share an urgency to open up to people who may not be a typical Varia visitor. Caregivers Unite proposes to be a regular meeting streamed via the Varia radio for people who are caregivers for other kin, while Open Street Mic hands over our physical and digital spaces to amplify the voice of local community.

## 🌱 COUNTER COLONIALITY SEED 🌱

Counter Coloniality seed intends to further our investigations into how colonisation is intertwined and embedded into the technologies we use everyday. Our research is organised around seemingly concise objects, such as FM radio signals, fake designer handbags, videogames, rates of pay on container ships, sand and the narration in an ethnographic film. These objects of focus will be a mooring point for learning as we try to unravel that vast colonial mesh of our futures, pasts and presents. The aim is to learn from subversive tactics that emerge as response, rejection, reuse and misuse of these technological objects and their infrastructures.

For Counter Coloniality seed, its relation to Seasonal Computing is multifold. It wishes to dig up the vast technocapitalist colonial networks that allow for privileged, seamful and available experiences, be that in relation to digital tools, Amazon orders, fast fashion or the shelves of supermarkets. Coloniality is the dark side of modernity, as scholar Walter Dignolo tells us in 'The Darker Side of Western Modernity, Global Futures, Decolonial Options', with extraction being the submerged reality of capitalist accumulation. Counter Coloniality seed intends to make visible the injustices of extractive processes.

Our Counter Coloniality seed learns from the Colonial Infrastructures Worksession at Varia in 2022 that covered the circulation of news in colonial Algeria, control and resistance on and within Palestinian internet and non-extractive modes of archiving. As well as other previous projects including a collaboration with SALWA Foundation around Rotterdam Belhuizen and their role within local internet infrastructures.

## 🌱 HOMEBREWING SEED 🌱

This seed connects with the felt urgencies and joy for technical amateurism, and opens up accessibility for making, sharing and exploring tools. Instead of performing expert knowledge-making, our goal is to co-create understandings through collaboratively experimenting with other amateurs, using homebrewed DIY materials and techniques. Amateurism provides space to practise outside of so-called professional contexts, challenging the gap between those who make a technology and those who consume it. It refuses the common binary between so-called low and high-tech, where "sophisticated" technology is made in far away, highly inaccessible places, and low-tech homemade approaches are considered hobbyistic, and therefore illegitimate. "Home" for us is a place where we spend our time and find shelter. It is also a seat of common knowledges. According to 'Thrifty Science', the dawn of early modern science established a culture where everyday objects, materials and spaces were embraced in home experiments and a communal pursuit of knowledge. In this seed we propose and investigate possible approaches within the concept of homebrewing, emphasising the necessity of lower thresholds to everyday technologies. For us, this is not simply a mode of sharing, but an invitation to amateur publics to experiment with tool-making.

With this, we reject planned obsolescence, technological solutionism and the valorisation of so-called high-technology, while celebrating the joy in experimenting with low-impact methods closer to home and our local environments. An important approach is hereby situated within feminist thinking and doing. This means to demystify current technological practices (whether related to computing, design, preservation, mass-produced everyday objects, etc) and to make them more shareable as well as questionable, as an important step to the imagining of other kinds of practices.

Homebrewing depends on seasonal conditions. It means waiting, letting processes take their course, leaving time and resources to be able to react and deal with unexpected situations and collectively sharing the outcomes. We respond to these conditions by choosing moments and locations, adapting

to changes beyond our control. But what kinds of tools and approaches would we need to do so?

- <sup>1</sup> <https://varia.zone/ATNOFS/>
- <sup>2</sup> [https://areyoubeingserved.constantvzw.org/Summit\\_afterlife.xhtml](https://areyoubeingserved.constantvzw.org/Summit_afterlife.xhtml)
- <sup>3</sup> <https://etherpad.mur.at/p/tfs>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://permacomputing.net/>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://damaged.bleu255.com/>

## Open Tap

The Open-Tap is a drip-feed of brief announcements, shout-outs, activities and other leakages from the members of Varia and their Friends. This is an Open Tap from the last six months.

- 🔹 Radio Extratinality #3 was broadcasted live on Tuesday, the 5th of March 2024 between 19:00 and 20:00 o'clock. The Platform For Extratinality discussed the latest tendencies. Tune-in on WORM Radio: <https://radio.worm.org>
- 🔹 Radio Extratinality #4 was broadcasted live on Tuesday, the 2nd of March 2024 between 19:00 and 20:00 o'clock. The Platform For Extratinality discussed the latest tendencies. Tune-in on WORM Radio: <https://radio.worm.org>
- 🔹 p\_p went to Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) to present a workshop in their Spring Academy 'May Artists Think?'
- 🔹 With Clara J:son Borg, p\_p organised Performance Lab on May 11, with workshop and screening by the artist Josefin Arnell.
- 🔹 Kaue performed @ WORM on the 13th of June from 20:00: <https://worm.org/production/vinterrupcion-2-cosmica-bandida-carolo-kaue-werner-edgar-nevermoo>
- 🔹 We have new books in the Varia library via Read & Repair, among which: Modern Sudanese Poetry; Fun & Software: Exploring Pleasure, Paradox and Pain in Computing; Bleak Joys; Technic and Magic; From Conflict to Community; In The Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities are Plundering our Cities, and more. Pass by during the Open Hours or Calm Coding events to check them out
- 🔹 Varia has a fediverse instance, you can find it here: <https://gts.varia.zone/> This is the account on the instance: @varia@gts.varia.zone
- 🔹 the communication workgroup has made a zine about the communication infrastructure and practices of Varia: <https://varia.zone/archive/2024-Social-In-The-Media/>. If anyone is interested to think together about communication methods that don't rely on Big Tech, please reach out to us at info@varia.zone
- 🔹 ccl joined the Decentric Circles Assembly in Warsaw on July 25-28 <http://workhardplay.pw/en/2024/>
- 🔹 strt will contribute some work to Roodkapje as part of their archive, more details to come!
- 🔹 p\_p has been on residence at Parramatta Artists' Studios, situated on the land of the Dharug people in Western Sydney,

working with Laura Hindmarsh and learning about self-organisation with PARI <https://pariari.org/about/> and Frontyard <https://wiki.frontyardprojects.org/everything/Frontyard>. More knowledges to be shared later.

- 🔹 The 15th Extratinality Infrastructure Event will happen on Thursday, the 3rd of October. A full announcement will follow soon.

## COLOPHON

SomeTimes is an initiative of Varia.

<https://varia.zone/en/>

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## VARIA NEWSLETTER

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<https://varia.zone/en/pages/newsletter.html>