

# Proyectos Rurales ANT (Art Nature Technology) in Latin America

## Authors:

**Yto Aranda**, Rao Caya, Santiago/Alhué, Chile, ytoaranda@gmail.com

**Lucía Egaña Rojas**, Independent Investigator, Barcelona, Spain, lucysombra@gmail.com

**Pedro Soler**, Upayakuwasi, Cayambe, Ecuador, pedruski@gmail.com

**Gabriel Vanegas/Katharina Klemm**, Minkalab, Colombia, info@minkalab.org

**Valentina Montero**, PAM / Plataforma Arte y Medios, Concón, Chile, valentina.montero@gmail.com

**Vanessa Gocksch**, Selvatorium, Santa Marta, Colombia, vanessagocksch@gmail.com

**Additional paper: Rachel Rosalen**, rural\_scapes, Brasil, rosalen.ra@gmail.com

## Abstract

“Proyectos rurales ANT: Art, Nature & Technology in Latin America” brings together creators, teachers and researchers involved in art, digital culture and the development of rural spaces, in the shared conviction that, to face the environmental and social challenges that confront us all, it is necessary to engage with rural areas and other forms of “post-extractivist” relationships, technologies and sensibilities.

The challenge lies in how to apply our knowledge of the arts, our experience in collaborative networking skills and digital culture to the healing of ecosystems and their respective communities, with indigenous people and local farmers as guides and companions. Together we are organizing spaces, gardens and houses that nourish experimental practices, new autonomies and investigations in common. We hope that many more will join us in this act of love and survival.

The projects represented are Upayakuwasi and Pujinostro (Ecuador), Manga Libre and Selvatorium (Colombia), Nuvem and Ruralscapes (Brasil), Rao Caya (Chile) and Goctalab (Peru). Valentina Montero (PAM - Plataforma de Artes Mediales) and Lucía Egaña have made theoretical and cartographic contributions.

## Keywords

Art, nature, technology and society. Rural areas, education, network. Environment, peace. Residences. Interculturality. Community.

## Proyectos rurales ANT (Art Nature Technology) in Latin America.

Human beings have become a danger for our planet. Their destructive and ignorant attitude in manipulating natural resources has resulted in a tiny percentage of the population accumulating immense riches while laying waste to the ecosystems of the world.

In the beginning humans sought simply to prosper, organized in small groups with face to face

interspecies relationships. But then certain sectors and peoples began to dominate and conquer, constructing immense machines (understood as dispositives or articulations of bodies, technologies, plants, animals and so on) for resource extraction and the accumulation of capital, the ultimate goal of all human effort.

The contemporary relationship of humans with nature is dominated by this patriarchal perspective, where machines have served as the symbol of their assumed dominance over nature. This relationship converts everything, including nature, into objects under the control of the rational will, separated and outside from humans, orientated towards economic gain and acting as if the mere fact of existing gives them the right to consume the resources of an ecosystem which goes far beyond the human.

The technological progress of capitalist culture has also been ruled by these principles. An example is “planned obsolescence” where technology is purposefully dysfunctional and ends up as waste, often toxic or contaminating. Another well known example is the creation of imaginaries that produce artificial needs and unending consumption, ending up with immense quantities of waste and the overproduction of products. This endless cycle of production and consumption completely ignores the impacts on ecosystems and the environment, treating them simply as a limitless source of resources.

This hegemonic ideology, based on financial speculation and an extractivist economic model, has diversified its forms of control, instrumentalizing scientific and technical knowledge and imposing a single model of production, adopting and distorting concepts like “progress” and “innovation”. Natural disasters and

environmental imbalances are just considered as collateral damage, without great importance, justified by the greater goal of economic progress and minimizing the importance of the extinction of animal and vegetable forms of life and the impact on the quality of life for humans.

However, there are other ways of working with technology and taking back the imaginaries and the narratives. A network of artists, creators, activists, technologists and cultural managers are seeing from a different perspective, opening the possibility of other forms of relationships with nature and with technology. Internet and its collaborative forms of working have opened up access to information and communication, enabling organization and knowledge sharing between local and remote realities, blurring to some extent the separation between rural and urban. Art understood as a space for experimentation and the reworking of imaginaries and generating new narratives without which there is no possibility of social and environmental change.

The majority of artists, teachers and investigators specialised in New Media and Digital Culture have worked in these collaborative contexts, intensely connected, creating knowledge together and confronting social and environmental issues, generally from urban spaces. The increasing knowledge and implication in these issues has deeply influenced the direction of the work of the members of Proyectos Rurales ANT leading them to start to apply their knowledge and carry out their investigations in rural environments, difficult as they often are, considering that it is our urgent duty to work towards the preservation and recuperation of our planet, to undermine the immense divisions of wealth, to fight against colonial systems and to seek sustainability with nature.



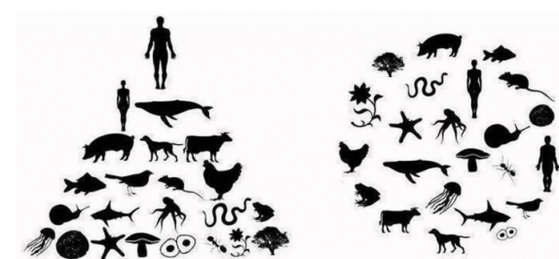
Selvatorium - "Sinduli" by Andrea Valenti and Sophia Aghia ©Selavtorium

Nature in all its expressions of abundance, beauty, complementarity, cruelty, synchronicity, nodality,

chaos, multiverse, love, danger, serendipity, synergy, autopoiesis, amongst other infinity of concepts, has given us the precious gift of personal and collective expression: our bodies and an endless variety of materials, energy and beings which can be transformed and formed to express our most profound desires. In exchange for all this she only asks for responsibility and the recognition of this gift that life itself gives us.

The artists united around this table are working on awareness, starting from the personal (is political), then the home and out to the communities around us, learning from them and, at the same time, teaching our specialties. We are all interested in working in collaboration with similar projects because the problems that we are facing are impossible to resolve alone, they require us to act together, with the adequate tools for communication and community development.

This *comunalidad* – as theorised by Jaime Martinez Luna in Oaxaca - is one of the thematic threads that unite the different projects, all of them thinking about technology, art and nature from the optic of relationships, understanding themselves not as outside the rest of the world but as part of it and interdependent with it. Living in a continual experiment or exercise, an attitude of respect and in tune with our habitat, attentive and perceiving the multiple times and responsibilities. Relearning the relationship with the earth and, at the same time, integrating contemporary tools that help us to sustain us all, expanding the knowledge of our respective fields so that the earth, nature and communities may prosper.



Internet meme. Anonymous.

We have special interest in integrating concepts like permaculture, bio-construction, organic farming, medicinal plants, do it yourself DIY, do it with others DIWO, minka (or minga – a traditional form of collective work organization), home education, wikis, digital platforms, networks, interculturality, the commons and so on. We develop free and open source technologies in relation with the models that nature shows us – decentralized, horizontal and powered by solar energy. We recognize the necessity of

interculturality, of building a common construction indigenous and migrants, through the appreciation of difference and the overcoming of colonial social structures. Generations who have lived on the land have valuable lessons for those who arrive from the city, who, in turn, bring new views, art and knowledge to often closed rural spaces. This exchange, circulation and common construction is vital. All these relations need to become increasingly like organic choreographies.

The creation of these new (neo?) rural spaces requires an immense physical, mental and economic effort. One has to step right outside of one's "comfort zone", change one's way of life. Be ready to learn every day about this new habitat. Coordinate our tasks with the climate, the time, the animal and vegetable life that starts to become our responsibility. It is an exciting challenge but also very complicated, because we often find ourselves in situations typical of the current global state: contamination, depredation, mistreating of animals, bad food, lack of water, threats and industrial or economic projects that don't respect the interests of the community. It is surprising to see how these problems are repeated in almost all rural areas.

The countryside is a warzone not a bucolic paradise. Poverty, ignorance and the lack of resources impulse a continual migration to the city and the impoverishment of those who remain. Resistance to change and suspicion of the stranger mark the characters of many while the profound colonial imprint of centuries of domination make interculturality so difficult and yet so necessary. Multiple battles in overlapping wars, brutal and ferocious. Our struggle is confrontation, creation and healing instead of destruction; learning, teaching and communicating instead of division.

### Participants in Proyectos Rurales ANT:

#### Goctalab (Peru)

<https://goctalab.lamula.pe>

Goctalab is a community platform for exchange and creation. Through programs of interdisciplinary rural residences we share, debate and spread techniques and knowledge that support the implementation of concrete actions towards a new definition of development. In the context of a planet with limited resources, we are searching for balance instead of infinite growth.

Founded in 2012 in Cocachimba the space has developed a close relationship with the local

between different peoples and nations, community, a key element in the project. These relations develop reciprocal exchange which feed the transmission of knowledge to and from the community. The building, built with adobe and integrated into the slope of the mountain, is a practical example of the philosophy of Goctalab and provides accommodation as well as a big well equipped studio/workshop for making projects. Our next step is to construct a freely accessible center for multimedia resources which will function as a seed bank, a library and a community cinema.



View of the Manga Libre. The structure was created in collaboration with the collectives Todo Por la Praxis (España) and Proyecto NN (Medellín). In the distance is the community vegetable garden and beyond, colorfully painted, the Platóhedro house. Source: Platohedro.org | licencia CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

#### Manga Libre (Colombia)

[www.platohedro.org](http://www.platohedro.org)

Manga libre is a project aimed at rehabilitating a wasteland in the Buenos Aires neighborhood of Medellín left by the demolition of a building that was there before. From 2011 Platohedro started carrying out actions to recuperate the area such as cleaning, planting a community vegetable garden and the collaborative construction of a public structure where the local community gathers. Through various "Mingas", artistic interventions and the participation of the community this wasteland has been transformed into a garden and natural space in an area that doesn't have parks close by.

The Platohedro Corporation is a non-profit organization that functions as a collaborative creative platform in the city of Medellín, Colombia. Since 2004 it has been dedicated to the permanent investigation of free culture, self-education, artistic creation and experimentation. These processes are guided by the search for collective well-being based on the philosophy of Buen Vivir (Good Living) and Buen Conocer (Good Knowing).





Minkalab ©Minkalab.

### **Minkalab (Colombia)**

[www.minkalab.org](http://www.minkalab.org)

Minkalab is a rural lab that encourages the horizontal exchange of traditional and technical knowledge, the development of a stable social network, the strengthening of local skills, innovative projects and cultural diversity in order to tackle issues of local priority. The lack of autonomy and the lack of access to decent living in the countryside, the loss of biodiversity, the cultural and social isolation in rural areas in Colombia, have encouraged us to create this platform for the exchange of knowledge.

Since 2014 Minkalab has organised various meetings, mingas and collaborative projects in the space.



Agroforestral systems in Nuvem 2016 CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

### **Nuvem (Brasil)**

<http://nuvem.tk>

Nuvem emerged in October 2011 as an initiative where desires, people, actions and thoughts converge, intended to welcome artistic and non-artistic creation and research, located in the mountains 200km from Rio de Janeiro and 300km from São Paulo.

We seek autonomy that aims for sustainability. This autonomy is not only technical - electricity generation, communication networks, etc. - but

covers all of life: food, health, body, territory. In a context where cities are becoming increasingly unsustainable, we believe that a rural space is the most appropriate environment for these experiences. The project had a house for ten people, laboratory, teams; now it is based in an experimental farm. Since its founding, more than 300 people have participated in 31 activities that took place in Nuvem.



Pujinostro ©Pujinostro.

### **Pujinostro (Ecuador)**

[residenciadeartistaspujinostro.wordpress.com](http://residenciadeartistaspujinostro.wordpress.com)

Pujinostro is a farm for creators and artists located in Pujilí, in the province of Cotopaxi in the Sierra of Northern Ecuador, 2800 metres above sea level. It is a strategic site for its central location, close to the Cotopaxi volcano, the Quilotoa lake and the road to the coast (La Maná). Pujilí keeps Andes culture alive and has a strong tradition of pottery making.

It is an ideal space for creators and artists where people with common interests in the areas of visual arts, digital arts, new and old technologies, can meet, get to know each other, exchange and collaborate in an open way. The space was created out of the necessity for encouraging meetings for creative development, a rural headquarters for critical thinking and experimentation. It is also a place for recovery, sharing bread and thought, meditating, and to be inspired for creation, learning from the rural context and its traditional knowledge.

Pujilí in the indigenous kichwa language means “House of Games” and it is precisely this element of play which permeates the space where dialogue flows naturally and generates an open thinking, propulsing an organic educative project which affirms that “education can happen anywhere. At any time.” (Educación Expandida, ZEMOS98).



Rao Caya, Alhué, Chile. Fotos: Omar Gatica - CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

### Rao Caya (Chile)

[www.yto.cl/raocaya](http://www.yto.cl/raocaya)

Rao Caya is a art, nature and technology project that was started in 2015 by Yto Aranda, Omar Gatica and Ytyo Díaz. Its main objective is to conserve the sclerophyll forest (unique to Chile), its flora and fauna in an area of thirty six hectares. The first year we have dedicated to the construction of a cabin, future residences for artists and researchers in areas related to the project. We have also dedicated to build roads, implementing gardens (vegetables, medicinal herbs, fruit trees) and enabling irrigation systems.

The challenges and goals to be developed are: to organize art, nature and technology meetings in the place. Generate a residential program, make a registry of the local wildflowers, implement projects of bio-construction and permaculture, integrate the community, and in the medium term, begin with the recovery of the waters that flow from the mountain slopes. The process will be documented and periodically published on the Internet.

### rural.scapes (Brasil)

<http://www.ruralscapes.net>

rural.scapes – lab in residence is a rural residence program that focuses on research, articulation, reflection and transdisciplinary artistic practices and critical production in the rural environment. rural.scapes – lab in residence works as an interface between regional, state, national and international networks and focuses on the revaluation of the rural environment through a revision of our notions of individual and collective identity in terms of territory. These actions stimulate the development of projects that promote new productive networks and alternative micro-economies, making the region more self-sustaining and fostering new creative dialogues between city and countryside.

Rural culture, traditionally based on the construction of tools and technologies in order to guarantee a self-sustainable survival, could now be recognized or misread as the culture of DIY (Do It Yourself). However, differently from the DIY, the transmission and exchange of this knowledge represent a value of negotiation, which conforms the local socio-environmental dynamics.



Selvatorium - Anti Vamp circuit by Constanza Piña ©Selvatorium

### Selvatorium (Colombia)

[www.selvatorium.co](http://www.selvatorium.co)

Selvatorium is a living laboratory that grows out of the experience of an urban family that has decided to abandon the city and build their life in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia; a sacred mountain range where nature still vibrates with magic thanks to the spiritual practice of its inhabitants; the Kogui, Arahua and Wiwa indigenous people.

There, since 2008 this (our) family and other families and individuals, who have joined the process, form a community with permanent and transient members. Between ourselves and our habitat and neighbors, we have constructed a space in which to live, create, learn, educate our children and share with temporary guests, this experience of existing within nature.

Our objective is for all the members of our community to attain a full and comfortable life as well as to contribute positively to our local and global community and natural environment. We are interested in minimizing our dependency on the monetary system and we aim for autonomy. We wish to learn to utilize modern technology when it is truly worthwhile and recognize and abandon what is superfluous. We have many challenges; health; security; agriculture; home construction; home-schooling of the children; as well as resolving community and spiritual conflicts. We are learning enormously at all levels and are convinced that this way of life is the best we can offer ourselves and our children.

The experience that we (the permanent and transient inhabitants) have; the processes that we invent; the experiments that we try, the reflections we share; the works of art that we create are all a part of the living laboratory Selvatorium. Our space is open and throughout most of the year to receive volunteers and residents, which come to develop personal projects or carry out activities that benefit our community. We have made happen a few events; mainly the Mango Jam during the years 2014 / 15/ 16; a festival that takes advantage of the mango harvest to inspire creative projects related to food sovereignty, art and music.



Transmestizx residency. Still from VR video. Upayakuwasi 2016.

### **Upayakuwasi (Ecuador)**

<http://upayakuwasi.hotglue.me>

Upayakuwasi is a rural space near the town of Cayambe that began in 2016 inspired by the necessity to activate experimental dialogues with the rural context and to generate meetings between artists of different origins, the local communities and the natural environment while questioning our relation to memory, the past and its archives, aesthetic practises, imaginaries and relations, resituating the concept of the rural in contemporary narratives.

Cayambe has an important place in the history of the indigenous movement, home to leaders such as Dolores Cacuango, Transito Amaguaña and Jesus Gualasivi and now, for the first time, has an indigenous mayor, Guillermo Churuchumbi. It was also here where the capitalist transformation of the traditional system of the hacienda began, beginning with milk production and, more recently, the intensive cultivation of flowers under plastic that dominate the region and its economy.

The first project carried out there, in 2016, was the Transmestizx residence where 17 artists met to invent and develop a collective performance exploring interculturality and diverse identities, the trans as possibility, the memory of indigenous resistance and art as the creation of new imaginaries. This work was exhibited in the Centre for Contemporary Art in Quito.

Upayakuwasi has a house, gardens, library and studio as well as a food treatment workshop called La Divina Papaya. This is a project that is concentrated on the deshydration of organic fruits, flowers and other foods, result of a search for sustainability and ecological management. The workshop is also a laboratory for the exploration of the properties of plants, fruits and flowers, of the local soil and water, nourishing the diverse artistic investigations (such as film scripts, documentaries, or interactive installations) of the residents and users.

## **Authors Biographies**

The biographies of the authors can be consulted by following this link:

<http://yto.cl/participants-biographyies>