

RADIO

28 March 2018

Seçil: Hello everyone, we've just entered the studio. I'm Seçil. We're here at an unusual hour, an unusual day – outside of Açık Dergi. This is the special broadcast for the listener support project – we're at the 15th Radio Festival. Shall I give our listener support line? You can call 0212 343 41 41, and speak with our colleagues. Or you can click the "support us" button at acikradyo.com. Ömer Madra was just saying that 69 listeners have supported us today. We'd like to keep that going. We're starting a conversation with the birbuçuk collective – welcome, friends. Birbuçuk: Thank you. Hello. İlksen: Yes, we're with the birbuçuk collective, consisting of Ayşe Ceren Sarı, Yasemin Ülgen and Serkan Kaptan. We'd heard your voice at the collectives meeting at Kasa Gallery recently in the journal. And since we were about to discuss commons, and the 15th Radio Festival is about commons and shared assets, we said, come on – and you were kind enough to say yes. Thank you. Welcome. Shall we start with birbuçuk? Why birbuçuk? Seçil: Three people, each with a half share. I actually think of it as something like a group of people who are shy about taking a full share. Yasemin Ülgen: Let me actually say briefly why we do it. Ayşe, Serkan and I as the birbuçuk team have been organising sessions for about a year now on different topics within the field of ecology. Honestly, these sessions arose out of necessity. Because we noticed that art and ecology – which are a common point for all three of us – were not acquainted with one another. Starting from there, we put together a session programme stretching over a year. We invite people working in different areas – water, biodiversity, borders, climate, mining, energy – to the sessions. These are artists, and beyond artists, they are experts, academics or experienced practitioners whose knowledge we trust. Our aim is actually to bring these two fields together through new acquaintances and partnerships. We can say we've begun to make that happen slowly. We think of it both as a field of research and as a method of mutual learning. And the "halves" actually represent the people who come to these sessions. We do of course have a name taken from the one-and-a-half degree threshold. But the conceptual framework is actually the coming together of the halves of all those experiences. İlksen: The coming together of the halves of experiences. Can we open that up a little? Yasemin: We can. Ayşe Ceren Sarı: Yes, I'm Ayşe too. One of the things we aim to do – perhaps the most important – is to bring together the feeling of the artist and the fact of the academic. And to create a shared space here for thinking together. We mostly think about how to design that, actually. İlksen: So you have an idea aimed at transgressing known boundaries – we can say that comfortably. Ecology and cultural production are also among the key areas Açık Radyo follows. And if we see Açık Radyo as one of the spaces where these come together – then on top of that, given the urgency of the era we're living through, the calls that everyone can do what they can, working together. We broadcast these calls continuously. Seçil: Yes, sessions have happened until now. There have even been outputs. We'll ask you to speak about those too. But there's something in the sessions that Serkan Kaptan is also responsible for. There are core concerns that the birbuçuk collective holds. Let's hear a little about those, and then perhaps what's been discussed so far. Serkan Kaptan: I think a great deal about session practices. I attach great importance to how a session should be conducted. If people are giving us their time, if they're coming to our sessions, this session needs to be productive for those participants – and we need to be able to take our outputs away productively and well. So my primary thinking within birbuçuk is actually on these session practices. How should a session be held? What should the organisation and plan of a session look like? We've thought a great deal about it, all together. And our conclusion – starting from there, we built the session plan. We believe a session can't run longer than three hours. We thought that beyond three hours, people's attention disperses considerably more. And we decided that into these three hours we can fit at most six invited guests. İlksen: Six speakers? Serkan: Six speakers, yes. We call them voices – we can invite six voices to our sessions. We give half the session time to these people introducing themselves. These people, at the start, with perhaps more candour than in other academic meetings – using details they might not be able to use elsewhere – talk about why they became interested in ecology. How they were drawn to this field. Starting sometimes from their childhood, sometimes from their youth. Then in the remaining half of the session, we want people to share their own work, more focused on the topic. We steer people towards that. So more productive outputs result. We found it very productive. When half the session is given to people introducing themselves, we saw a kind of bonding, a candour emerge – and that this matters a great deal for the session's productivity. İlksen: It actually strikes me as something like using the language of everyday life. I mean, when you say "session" there's something a little more academic about it, but I feel there's also a concern of catching a different kind of language by drawing in everyday language. Yasemin Ülgen: We actually call the sessions a "solunum" – a breath. We try to produce a new word for everything like this, to get things out of their moulds. İlksen: So you say "ağız" (voice), you say "solunum" (breath). Can we say then that the birbuçuk collective also has a concern with producing a new kind of vocabulary? Yasemin: That develops by itself, I think. That language comes from itself. Not as a concern exactly, but it sounds nice. People step outside the limits they're used to. They share perhaps slightly different ideas. They too begin producing words. So we think this has a creative dimension. Seçil: Yes, changing names is genuinely useful. By the way, we mentioned the session output – some of it has been published as far as I know. There's also a web platform for the birbuçuk team. Yasemin: Yes, birbuçuk.org – as session output. Not as "Ali said this, Ayşe said that, then someone said such-and-such" – we present it entirely as an anonymous text. İlksen: Which sessions have outputs at the moment? Yasemin: The water and metabolism sessions have outputs at the moment. They can access them online at birbuçuk.org. These outputs don't consist only of texts, only writing. Also, because artists are among those who come to our sessions, their visual works and video links on the topic can be accessed there too. So I think it's a rich text. İlksen: Where do these sessions take place? Yasemin: Studio-X hosts us – we're grateful to them. We hold them on weekends. As Serkan said, it's a session lasting three and a half to four hours. For each topic heading we do it by inviting people

who have specialised in that area or artists pursuing their work on that topic. So each topic heading has different participants. And we develop the text of the conversation that emerges from bringing those six people together. İlksen: So you've determined a heading before a session and you reach out to people. Yasemin: We reach out to people. For those who want it, there's a session programme, the topic headings are set. We try to follow these as closely as possible. Through these we invite participants for each session. Seçil: Now you say this is taking shape around ecology, both as a scientific discipline and as a social-political movement, on our planet and in the geography we belong to. What should we understand by ecological sensibility? Perhaps we can say a few words about reaching one another through your backgrounds. Ayşe Ceren Sari: I'm a climate change economist. I'm also a dancer. I'm interested in the performing arts. I had a story that began with economics. From there it turned to energy. I did a master's in resource economics. Then I started working more in the field of political ecology, drifted in that direction. And since then I've been working on these topics through a network. I work on various projects. On the other side I'm trying to keep dancing, let me say. For us the ecology question has this importance: on one hand there's the matter of it being worked on as a scientific discipline, and on the other we can speak of modes of relationship. When we say a social-political matter, a movement, this is what we mean. By modes of relationship – we treat ecology as a commons. We're talking here about ecological commons like water, climate, food. And also our modes of relationship with these ecological commons: modes and processes of relationship like borders, gender, culture. So we don't want to treat ecology as a domain cut off from everything, isolated. This is actually one of the places the "halves" come from too. We're aiming to explore a little the conversation about the modes of relationship right there, between the disciplines. And we hope a new output will come from this, something new will emerge. With this mentality, we don't think we're in a time for staying separate, brief, isolated any longer. İlksen: We're in the 15th Radio Festival where the motto of being together predominates. Everything finds its place in this conversation too. Seçil: Let's hear the phone number from you. Let's say it together if you'd like, friends. 0212 343 41 41. Please call! Seçil: The three of us are friends. We were friends before too. It wouldn't be right to say we came together through the project. Yasemin: Naturally. And while doing this thesis research I was constantly consulting Serkan and Ayşe for various sources. And it came out of those conversations. How has visual arts in Turkey looked at ecology, what's happened, what has continued, what was never heard, never seen. And we continued doing the research together. İlksen: Is the thesis finished, by the way? Yasemin: Not yet. Very little left. Because our research doesn't finish. We keep researching. Yasemin Ülgen: We also mentioned a little earlier – we don't want to use the word interdisciplinary either. I mean it's very much used in art too. Since the subject is ecology and the commons, we prefer to say interdisciplinary. Because we're talking about headings that exist in all our lives and are vital matters. Saying interdisciplinary seems to distribute the topic a little. It's like saying we brought two separate headings together. I feel it separates things by itself. Because we're trying to look more holistically, we tried to use that term too. Indisciplinarity became one of our new framings. İlksen: That's a new word too. I've started a dictionary from you here. Even if you claim otherwise, I'm writing it down. Another new word. Serkan Kaptan: Let me pick up right there – taking disciplinarity with me too. I worked on environmental topics in academia for a long time. Environmental engineering, then at an environmental sciences institute I found the opportunity to work on environment and ecology again. After that I didn't want to stay only in academia. I wanted to step outside of it, both in terms of ecological topics and in terms of other kinds of production. I actually have an art collective – I'm in another collective at the same time – called oddvz. I live and work with two friends. My connection to art comes from there actually. My beginning to think about art. And actually when academic production stays only within itself – when it stays within articles and universities, when it's read only by people who read those – I don't think the impact factor is very high. So let me say I think it can be raised further. Because I think we need to attack every platform, every topic a little – that we need to make our knowledge, our sharing, our production heard across very different platforms – I've directed myself somewhat towards that. İlksen: It seems as if there's a horizontal objective of sorts. Your way of coming together is already like that – from horizontal relationships. And your approach to the topic actually too. Ayşe Ceren Sari: On the other hand, perhaps I can add something at this point. Here we're treating knowledge too as a commons. And we advocate the commonality of knowledge. Knowledge, as Yasemin also said, is not something that can be confined to disciplines. And what we need to do is to acquaint the particles of knowledge trapped in different disciplines with one another, to bring them together. Seçil: How did you come across Açık Radyo, Serkan? Serkan Kaptan: I came from Ankara to Istanbul in 2008. For various reasons – the most important being my postgraduate study; the second most important, Istanbul's pull – I arrived. And I moved into a completely empty apartment. There was an inflatable mattress I'd got from a friend. And there was a radio. I had nothing else. I inflated my mattress, turned on the radio, and discovered something that didn't exist in Ankara: Açık Radyo. From that day to this – ten years I've been listening. But I didn't stop at listening; certain cooperative products come from Ankara at intervals – almonds, roasted chickpeas, dried mulberries. I took those to Açık Radyo. Bringing this good and just food to the radio helped the friendship grow. Ayşe Ceren Sari: I came from Ankara too, in 2013. I can say that I'm not a very good radio listener but I am a very good Açık Radyo listener. Before the 2014 Paris Climate Agreement, before the G20, there were meetings where we discussed what could be done in Istanbul and how. A process of acquaintance began in the upstairs rooms of Açık Radyo. I see Açık Radyo as an organisation I care about deeply. We spoke of the commonality of knowledge, the integrity of knowledge, the commons of knowledge – I think this genuinely happens at Açık Radyo, it actually takes place. I value spaces like this enormously. I also think we need spaces like this very much. İlksen: It's certain that we're passing through such processes, times of urgency. In exactly that sense we're trying to explain the importance of support. 0212 343 41 41. Yasemin: Honestly I don't remember when, but the exhibitions at Tütün Deposu, the programmes at Açık Radyo, the programmes made by artists or many people from other fields – for years it's been a platform I listen to too. İlksen: You didn't come from Ankara, did you? Yasemin: I came from Ankara too. İlksen: All the stories started that way. Escape from Ankara moments! Yasemin: Yes, we've been friends with Açık Radyo for a while now. And because we can listen to many different ideas from many different fields and ideas close to our own – especially in today's Turkey – I think it's more valuable than anything. That's why we can all imagine how difficult it is to carry on. So we care about it deeply – we hope it continues with people and supporters of all kinds. As a platform that survives, Açık Radyo is an organisation that has passed through the lives of many generations. Serkan Kaptan: Açık Radyo is not only an organisation that produces cultural output. I think it's an organisation that cultivates the people who will produce cultural output. To elaborate a little: in my view, this is a school that produces not poems but poets, not criticism but critics. What does that mean? Açık Radyo doesn't only produce – it teaches production. At least in my own example, at my own scale, it worked that way. So I think the impact of Açık Radyo on

the system is large, and I think this impact will multiply. I think it has a locomotive effect, an accelerating effect – because it produces the producer. Ayşe Ceren Sarı: It actually learns by itself over the years. All together – continuously changing and transforming with you, towards a certain common goal. Seçil: Thank you very much. Birbuçuk: Thank you. Seçil: The birbuçuk collective was with us. We thank all of our supporting listeners and our non-supporting listeners too. Before we hear the phone line from you one last time – let's also ask what we'll listen to as we leave. Serkan: There's one more piece. [Music: The Murlocs – Rolling On] Seçil: All together: 0212 343 41 41. Please call. You'll see your support repaid.
