





The highest hill—or should I say point—in Lithuania is 293 meters above sea level. Despite some dunes and mounds, the terrain is more or less plain. Now, I am driving through one of the flattest areas in the country, and suddenly, the landscape changes dramatically before my eyes. A massive artificial hill rises up, breaking the monotony. This means that only a few kilometers are left to my destination: one of the biggest free economic zones or, in other words, one of the largest industrial areas in the country.



The area of this part of town, with a population of a bit more than 20,000 residents, is equal to the size of the residential areas. It took me 10 minutes to drive around the industrial zone, built with many chimneys and heroic industrial architecture, to reach the main office. Everything is automated here. Workers are not walking in the architectural complex—it's just too far. You need to drive.



A loud laugh and wide smile greeted me at the entrance at the security post. The production director and another worker brought two huge packages of phosphogypsum as a gift for my experiments and loaded them into the car. After this gesture, they were about to say goodbye to me, but I mentioned that I had too many questions to leave without walking inside. “Would you take us to the hill?”—I asked. Just a few moments later, I jumped from one car to another, and the local worker was already driving me to the top.



Finally, I stepped out of the car onto the artificial ground. This human-made landscape, white-gray on one side and green on the other, exists for a specific reason: to enable us to grow food. It is a byproduct of phosphorus fertilizer production. Phosphorus is an indispensable component for agriculture, and this local pile is a consequence of global demand. More than 90 percent of the production is exported to foreign countries. I move from one side of the hill to the other—from the green, older layer,



to the white, younger one. In just a few minutes, I travel through time—from the late 1970s to the present—where freshly prepared, still-warm, robotically-made gypsum lies beneath my feet. Did you know that for the first year, it doesn't even have the status of waste? Time and memory carry immense significance in this place; it stands like a monument for future generations.



The pile covers an area of over 155 hectares and weighs more than 55 million tons. Its perimeter stretches over 7 kilometers, with an absolute altitude reaching more than 120 meters, revealing an unbelievable natural landscape filled with forests. Somehow, it is still hard to grasp the scale. This story unfolds in the countryside, and most people have never heard of it, since entry is restricted. Now, I see how the countryside suddenly appears more futuristic and post-natural than any city (Koolhaas, R., 2020).



Then, I began converting the global scale into one more perceptible to humans. I stand still on the hill for a while, silently calculating. Every two minutes, a truck arrives to pour out leftovers. This means that, in 24 hours, more than 700 trips are made to dispose of waste created by all of us.

Suddenly, my phone started to ring.
The screen showed a call from my mom.

- What's up, how are you doing?— she asked.
- All good, I answered briefly. I'm in the mountains.
- Mountains? - she asked, sounding worried, understanding exactly which mountains I meant (we had lived nearby a few decades ago).
- Yes, in Kėdainiai
- Are you wearing a gas mask? - she asked nervously. I started laughing on the other end of the line.
- Do you think this hill affects me only when I'm on top of it? Many people live and work around here. It doesn't matter how close or far I am from this landscape— sooner or later, it will be part of my life. Actually, it already is.



After this call, I stayed completely silent for a moment. From this enormous, global scale, I began to rethink things on a human scale. I have an individual body, in which I exist, eat, sleep, and go about my day-to-day life. I also have a second body that affects foreign countries (Hildyard, D., 2017). Now, as I walk here, in this plot created entirely by human act, I truly see—especially as trucks move up and down, endlessly—how other countries affect my country and me, here and now.



I realize how everything is connected to everything. All life forms are metamorphoses of those that existed before. The same life continually creates new bodies, enabling existence (Coccia, E., 2021). Phosphorus is the remnant of plants and the fossilized remains of animals that lived millions of years before me. Now, as I stand here, my feet and my entire body are touching a landscape of phosphorus waste. My lungs, which breathe now, are connected to lives that existed millions of years ago. The oxygen I breathe is made up of bacteria, and my lungs are part of an ancient lineage (Latour, B., 2021). Here and now, I feel connected to geological time through this landscape—transformed by human hands.



Everything I touch, see, and even eat is connected to something that existed before. Vegetables bought at the market or a piece of meat, after less than a week, end up in the food waste bin as they begin to rot, because I couldn't eat everything I bought or accurately calculate my needs. Domestic waste is a minority compared to industrial waste, both in terms of weight, volume, and toxicity (Liboiron, M., Lepawsky, J. 2022). But eating and throwing out food means that I am also contributing to the transportation of phosphate from mines in Morocco to Lithuania. I promote fertilizer production, which (over)fertilizes fields, depleting the land to feed not only people, but also livestock animals that are exploited in overcrowded farms for a short time and eventually slaughtered. I am contributing to the environmental impact. I am also part of the pile. All of my daily food is part of the waste. Now I feel how my body can be anywhere on this planet, not necessarily physically.

EMBODYING DISSENT

REFERENCES

- Coccia, Emanuelle. 2021. „Metamorphosis“. Polity Press.
- Hildyard, Daisy. 2017. „The Second Body“. Fitzcarraldo Editions.
- Koolhaas, Rem. 2020. „Countryside. A report“. Taschen Books.
- Latour, Bruno. 2021. „After Lockdown: A Metamorphosis“. Polity Press.
- Liboiron, M., Lepwsky, J. 2022. „Discard studies“. The MIT Press.
- All visual documentation by the author. Autumn, 2024, Kėdainiai.