ruangrupa and
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LUMBUNG

Total football with many goals

This can be useful
ruangrupa is an art collective started in 2000 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Our experiments with lumbung began critically. A vernacular agrarian term in Bahasa Indonesia, "lumbung" refers to a rice barn where a village community stores their harvests together, to be managed collectively, as a way to face an unpredictable future. Its initial use was as a metaphor, to explain the possibility of putting financial resources in a central account to be managed together.

This centralised financial account and our initial approach to resources as purely financial both proved to be false. Only after several trial-and-error attempts did we realize that even shareable resources can be held by different hands, put in different pockets, and communally governed whenever different needs arise over time. Since 2013, we—ruangrupa with other Jakarta-based collectives—have tried to build ecosystems based on an understanding that even a group of people, a collective, cannot stand alone, but must purposefully play a part in their larger context—just as in nature, where different species have their specific functions and roles to keep an ecosystem in balance.

The first of these ecosystems was dubbed the Gudang Surinah Ekosistem, taking the name of the former-warehouse complex we occupied together in Jakarta and turned into the center of many of our activities. This way-too-large experiment gave way to Gudskul Ekosistem, an informal educational platform ruangrupa established with two other collectives, Serrum and Grafit Huru Hara, in 2018. With Gudskul, the notion of lumbung as the operational system for the ecosystem that believes and develops as a collective of collectives carries on indefinitely. Against this background, when we were invited to make a proposal for the fifteenth edition of documenta, instead of integrating ourselves into the long-established documenta system, we decided to stay on our path. We invited documenta back, asking it to be part of our journey. We refuse to be exploited by European, institutional agendas that are not ours to begin with. We believe that we must make this experience of imagining an edition of documenta contribute back to our own endeavors.

Gudskul can be understood as a miniature of what is to come with documenta's fifteenth edition. What ruangrupa has achieved together with Serrum and Grafit Huru Hara through Gudskul and the collective of collectives cannot be transposed literally to other contexts, not least because the build-up of trust and friendships cannot simply be copy-pasted. After realizing this, the timeline we first proposed was as follows:

- **2019**: warming up and research phase
- **2020**: institutional and artistic building phase
- **2021**: articulation and content finalization phase
- **2022**: souk or irtifal phase
- **2023**: sustainability schemes implementation phase

Yet, in time, it became clear that many different forces prevented us from implementing the protocols laid out in the original timeline. Covid-19 was one big element, but other realities became evident, which meant we had to be ready to be tactical. Negotiation became the name of the game.
After documenta accepted our invitation to join their journey and become part of their ecosystem, we decided—with their opportunities and support—to keep on extending invitations to different people. First, to five individuals in Kassel, Germany, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Jerusalem, Israel, and Malmö, Sweden, whom we believed could be an extension of our group. We thus formed the group that would become known as the Artistic Team. But there were also other initiatives in the world which we felt were already practicing luumbung and its values. We called on them to join us in imagining together what documenta fifteen could be. The first fourteen initiatives we invited committed to becoming part of luumbung-building processes before and beyond documenta fifteen. These initiatives became known as luumbung inter-lokal members. More than 50 other artistic practices, both individual and collective in nature, joined afterwards, forming what has become known as luumbung artists.

Besides these invitations, our own existences in our current localities had to be carved out more deeply in Indonesia, more broadly in our international circles, and newly in Kassel. Thus, together, luumbung Indonesia, luumbung inter-lokal, and luumbung Kassel were formed, with the aim of their members identifying what resources were in their power and deciding how to use them. This way, we were sure that documenta fifteen would not be solely cuangrupa's but would also belong to others. This was a high-risk move, as, in the time of writing, we are still curious to see whether the 100 days of documenta fifteen will only result in pragmatic exercises—a temporary "time-off" for artists and initiatives to learn from—only to swing back to the old system of doing things, relaxing to state funding and/or free art-market systems, or even the biennial circuits. Based on our different past, collective experiences of operating within these existing systems, they have proven to be highly competitive, globally expansive, greedy, and capitalistic—in short, exploitative and extractive.

The much-needed dissolution of ownership and authorship happen in documenta fifteen? How will economy, credits, and aesthetics be practiced and therefore understood differently in the 100 days? These are things that we'd like to see happen.

There are different ways and practices of producing art (works). These practices are not (yet) visible, as they do not fit the existing model of the global art world(s). Documenta fifteen is an attempt to clash these different realities against each other, showing that different ways are possible. Instead of finding these various modes of production into what exists already, it should act as a series of exercises for reshaping and sowing seeds for more changes in the future. Different ways of producing art will create different works, which, in turn, will ask for other ways of being read and understood: artworks that are functioning in real lives in their respective contexts, no longer pursuing more individual expression, no longer needing to be exhibited as standalone objects or sold to individual collectors and hegemonic state-funded museums. Other ways are possible. In this way, we are resisting the domestication or taming of these different practices.
Through majelises, the lumbung artists and lumbung members could become part of the collective curatorial process and the wider documenta economy, or documenta lumbung. Before the pandemic, our idea was for majelises to occur every 100 days in order to decide collectively on the building of the exhibition, the principles of how to distribute resources, and other matters. The majelis is a learning space, where there is no competition. The majelises were to be held in a different city every time, and to be hosted by lumbung members. However, as a result of the pandemic, it was necessary to hold the majelises online.

The fourteen lumbung inter-lokal members have been discussing how to build both the exhibition and the longer term lumbung economy—beyond documenta fifteen—since June 2020, at first in bi-weekly majelises with the entire lumbung inter-lokal, and later in smaller groups. These discussions have produced several working groups that have taken on topics that are of common necessity. Most collectives in the lumbung inter-lokal come from contexts where the state had failed to support the development of infrastructure and a support system for art and culture.

Since the model of the stable institution had failed, they had seized the opportunity to rethink institutions. So, the questions of economic survival and autonomy were central in the lumbung inter-lokal. An economy working group grew out of discussions around what sustainability is and various experiments with currencies and circular economy, inviting economists to work sessions and putting forward ideas and mechanisms. Out of this working group, new ones formed: lumbung Gallery, lumbung Kios, and lumbung Currency working groups were set up to experiment practically with various ways to sustain and ask cultural questions through economic projects, as well as sustaining the lumbung pot after documenta fifteen. Another pressing issue in the lumbung inter-lokal members’ localities is land, since, whether endangered by corporate, political, or urban infringement, the sustainability of the members’ existences is at stake in the long run. The important discourse around the lumbung members’ artistic practices led to another dynamic discussion and what we called the “Where is the Art?” working group. lumbung space and a lumbung of Independent Publishers grew out of the need to amplify those discourses, where art and life are one.
With all the different majelises established—ten in total—we needed a gathering space for the majelises to come together and to get an overview of all the discussions going on. Our answer was to host a mega assembly, known as majelis akbar, on a regular basis. These online meetings have been attended by 150 to 200 artists and members. In these meetings, members and artists talk about specific projects for artists and members to collaborate on, as well as on how to be in solidarity with each other, and how to share space, knowledge, program, and equipment together during the 100 days. Examples of this are: Cinema Caravan opening their cinema for others to use, the ZK/U turning their building’s roof into a boat and bringing it to Kasel for other artists in the lumbung to activate. Party Office opening up the public program they host in their venue in WH22 for other artists to organize, and Richard Bell opening his Tent Embassy for artists to converse in during the hundred days and many more.

The majelis akbar was also a place for discussions about issues in the local context of Lumbung members, for exchanging ideas about collaboration, and for forging solidarity. For example, we also talked about how we should respond to accusations of anti-Semitism that emerged from a Kasel blog in January 2022 and were picked up by German media, during documenta fifteen, the artistic direction, team members, and individual artists were attacked in a way that we understood as racist. This was a shock to us and even led to concerns for our safety. During majelis akbar in January 2022, the artists discussed how both the Lumbung and documenta could stand behind and, in the spirit of Lumbung, support those affected. Documenta also published several statements in which it rejected the accusations and made it clear that anti-Semitism and racism have no place at documenta fifteen. At the same time, it emphasized the right to freedom of expression in art, culture, and science. The majelises have been important tools to develop common understandings and solidarity with everyone’s local contexts, allowing us to learn from differing situations and conditions in each of the lumbung localities, especially where there has been political upheaval over the two years leading up to documenta fifteen, such as in Colombia, Palestine, Cuba, and Mali. This has also compelled us to develop a common discourse on our artistic practice.

The Where is the Art? working group grew out of this strong, shared necessity among lumbung members and artists to discuss how art is rooted in life and their social, activist, economic practices, and not limited to disciplines or definitions. Every inter-local member experiences a distortion in the way their practices are translated to the mainstream international art scene, and what it tends to define as "art." We established a working group that organizes workshops in local ecosystems and among artists and members, which formed the basis of building a collective language and knowledge base across practices and contexts.

The lumbung land working group, on the other hand, has been discussing developing a way of "investing" by using the collective pot in specific land projects run by members—projects that question ownership of land, that start from community needs and collective use and governance, and that combine agriculture, biodiversity, culture, and the spiritual. Combining experimentation and engagement with decentralized autonomous organizations would be a start towards building a true, inter-connected and collectively governed economy.

While the conversations in the economy and working group about how to sustain ourselves beyond documenta fifteen were ongoing, we learned from the permanent staff that has produced previous editions that most of the artworks exhibited are sold backstage by gallerists during the hundred days of the exhibition and shipped to the collectors afterwards. We decided to move this to the front stage to make questions about...
space is an experimental social and publishing platform for sharing harvests by all the members online, the lumbung Press is a physical space and tool to realize artistic printing projects. lumbung space is non-extractive, co-governed by the users, and is built on open platforms. It functions as a lumbung with a members-only backend for artists to store, discuss, and organize content and a frontend where users can see and interact with the published content. Centrally stationed in documenta Halle and active from well before the opening and throughout the 100 days of documenta fifteen, lumbung Press is a proper offset printing workshop where artists can be closely involved in the printing process of their own publications, host events, and acquire skills needed to operate the printing press for the long haul, should the lumbung have the needs and means to keep it running after the exhibition.

**ALL TOGETHER COME TOGETHER TO CREATE A PRICE**

**AVAILABLE TO ALL PEOPLE**

**SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART COMES FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY AND THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE.**

**THIS INVOLVES PARTICIPANTS IN A HORIZONTAL SITUATION WHERE THERE IS NO LEADER OR ARTIST.**

**THIS IS DIFFERENT TO THE EUROPEAN PARADIGM OF AESTHETICS WHICH PRIVILEGES THE ROLE OF THE SPECTATOR.**

**WE TRY TO PRODUCE A NEW AESTHETICS—AN ETHICAL PARADIGM WHERE THE VIEWER IS OBSCURE.**

**THEY SHOULD NOT BE THERE TO OBSERVE BUT TO BE PART OF THE PROJECT.**

**SO WHAT ARE THE ETHICAL ELEMENTS THAT ANIMATE OUR PROJECTS?**

**HOW DO THESE ELEMENTS TRANSLATE AESTHETICALLY?**

**WHAT IS THE ELEMENT OF YOUR ART THAT YOU WOULD NEVER COMPROMISE IN ORDER TO BE LIKED OR UNDERSTOOD?**

**OUR WORK SHOULD NOT BE JUDGED BY AN OUTSIDER BUT IN TERMS OF THE BENEFITS THAT IT BRINGS TO THE COMMUNITY WHICH CREATES IT.**

**DRAWN BY SADFAK RUMI ON THE UNDED LANDS OF THE CUKUINN PEOPLE IN SOCIALIZED AUSTRALIA.**

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Page dimensions: 871.4x585.6

RAW TEXT ENDS
"KEEP ON DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING ..."

A

B

lumbung
documenta

... AND FIND A TRANSLATION TO KASSEL

Translation should not be understood too literally, but more as a poetic way of bringing something already existing in touch with more potential users. In contrast to commissioning, which would mean bringing more stuff into the world, translation thus became a way for the artists and collectives to continue practicing in their localities, without having to put their often longstanding work on hold in order to be part of a big art event such as documenta. Some have harvested assemblies in their localities and brought them to Kassel as models and challenges to learn from and in conversation with others. Many have moved their practice to Kassel as temporary occupations of the city. Others have extended their invitation and budgets to colleagues from their ekosistems to work alongside them in Kassel. Connecting their localities on one hand and Kassel on the other, all artists have redistributed resources in a circular flow of money and cultural capital between the two sites.

When we started hanging out in conversation with the artists it was shortly after Covid-19 was declared a pandemic. We thought we had two years to build and fill the lumbung with resources for both the everyday and crises alike. With Covid, the collapse came much earlier and with such brute force that it pressured us to consider how we could speed up and start sharing resources straight away. At the same time, we insisted on going slow, meeting several times, and building up trust. We wanted to get to know everyone better and to let them experience us and our dynamics, beyond simply discussing their artworks.

Speaking to the artists about how they coped with Covid in their local communities helped us understand more about their survival strategies and to decouple from their actual artworks. In this manner, we have developed a way of working collectively where we present practices or projects and the people behind them to each other, and then discuss them in several steps that allow for time to revisit and reflect. Our different processes follow different paces and modes, but common to them all are trust, intuition, collectivity, and accepting that we might be wrong and make mistakes.

In the beginning, we spoke a lot about finding mechanisms for practicing lumbung values at an expanded scale. Mechanisms that can be shared without becoming mechanistic, or disciplines that one would need to follow to be lumbung. Just as lumbung is not a theme, neither is it a discipline. Intuitively, every time we invent a principle, we don’t see it through completely; we happen to leave a part open and unruly, like when we decided to turn Fridericianum into a school but still needed the space for work that demands controlled museum conditions. Our approach is nonsystematic, not crystalline or exhaustive. It is dynamic, and changes according to conversations between people and their needs, rather than based on one static line of conceptual thinking.
In thinking about translation to Kassel, we grouped the lumbug artists in what we termed *mini-majelis*, small assemblies of four to five artists (individuals and collectives), put together according to time zones, due to digital meetings, and to existing friendships predating Covid that could nurture trust-building online. The first mini-majelises started meeting in February 2021. Artistic Team met with the groups a few times, but then left it to the artists and a curatorial assistant to decide on the rhythm and way of meeting, and, crucially, on how to make decisions around their common resources, known as the common pot.

As one of the artists pointed out, the common pot is like a totem pole, something highly symbolic that holds the community together. One hand the artists have been generous with their time and knowledge with each other, and on the other it was a challenge for them to decide on the common pot together because they didn’t know each other so well. It was also a challenge that the budget had to be spent by September 2022 and that all budgets pertaining to documents are conditioned by traditional exhibition logics, with the bulk of spending being allocated to the narrow time frame of a limited exhibition period and not the extended spacetime of lumbug building.

The mini-majelises adopted different ways of running the majelis and making decisions. One group used *agrar*: an assembly from the North African Amazigh tradition, which takes the physical form of a circle where the moderator walks around the circle, while participants stop the moderator if they wish to speak. A Zoom version of this was adapted in the majelis. Another mini-majelis met over dinner on Zoom and spoke in depth about their recipes and food as well as their practices.

Another group would always decide on two hosts each time, who would prepare the session together and ask questions of everyone, passing the mike around, as well as taking turns to present their art practices for each other.

These meetings happened over the course of almost a year and a half for some groups online. Some of the mini-majelises in Kassel, as we tried to organize their trips to coincide with each other. In early 2022, we asked them for their final decisions on their common pot budgets. Some of the artists redirected the budgets back into their production budgets, mostly to be able to host more collaborators from their eco-system in Kassel, or to support them in their localities after discussing with the rest of the members of their mini-majelises. Many of the artists decided to invite artists to present work in the exhibition, such as Nino Bulging, Jumana Emil Abboud, Safdar Ahmed, Alice Yard, Kiri Dalena, and Saodat Ismailova. Many worked on common projects, such as the mini-majelis that BOLOHO is part of, as they developed an online shop for which the whole mini-majelis is making artworks and developing artistic advertisements. Another majelis made a public program together called “chasing the sunset” to be held during the 100 days to allow lumbug members and artists to get together. Some members and artists have managed to use funds from the common pot to visit each other before the opening, such as Jatiwangi art Factory visiting Más Arte Más Acción in Colombia.

Many majelises are still trying to use the common pot for meeting and exchanging after the passing of the 100 days of documents, and are trying to find ways to do so, despite the conditions of the funds. Fridskul is somewhat of a different mini-majelis, as the group also share the Friterciunam. Through their majelises they have come to see it as a neighborhood, where in addition to their project spaces, they share living spaces, a library, as well as a public program.
WHAT IS HARVEST?

Harvest refers to artistic recordings of discussions and meetings. Harvesterers listen, reflect, and depict this process from their own perspectives, forms, and artistic practices. Harvest can be humorous, poetic, or candid. They can take the shape of a sticky note, a written story, a drawing, a film, sound piece, or a meme.

The process of the making of lumbung where members share resources together is an integral part of documenta fifteen. Harvesting can be seen as a way of collective writing that enables continuous collective learning, from different sensory experiences. Harvests are made to share what is being discussed with absent members and the general public and they are present throughout the handbook and the exhibition to illustrate and expand our thinking and methodologies. They are also published in books, zines, on social media, and on the lumbung’s digital publishing platform lumbung space.

Due to the nature of harvesting, it is difficult to come up with a complete list of all individuals who contributed to lumbung with their harvests. In this space we highlight practitioners whom we have invited especially to harvest our meetings. The list of harvesters includes many others, from lumbung members and artists who were harvesting their meetings, to the Artistic Team, sobas-sobas, and visitors who are invited to contribute to the rice barn with their harvests during the 100 days.

Abdul Dube and Putra Hidayatullah have been invited to accompany the artistic team, lumbung inter-lokal and majelises since the beginning. They harvested through graphic recordings and creative writing, respectively.

Having followed and been part of ruangrupa’s practice since the early 2000s, Sebastian Diaz Morales and Simon Danng Anggoro collaborate to produce artistic work that can be seen as harvest. Nonkrong is used as a method for creating films. The films can be seen in several locations of the exhibition and will continue after documenta fifteen.

Victoria Lumhako has been invited to harvest the making of the exhibition with an illustrated book. The book harvests her witnessing the practice and exosystem of lumbung members and artists while the exhibition is opening.

Cem A. is known for running the art meme account @freeze_magazine and he works as a curatorial assistant for documenta fifteen. He has been invited to harvest his experiences working for documenta fifteen through internet memes and situated memes.

There are several lumbung artists for whom harvesting is an integral part of their practice and thus have been very active in harvesting meetings. Reinart vanhoe has harvested and (self-)published his note-drawings. Arts Collaboratory has published several documentantam, and keeps on doing so during the 100 days. Documentantam includes harvests from Arts Collaboratory members, as well as the work of other harvesters. Documentantam can be read at www.artscollaboratory.org. Other artists who have harvested include Saffdar Ahmed, Nino Buling, Keleketla! Library and Dan Perjovschi.

Radio Alhara, Tropical Tap Water and Community Immunity have accompanied us during several Majelis Akbar and working groups and made audio and visual harvesting out of it, as well as a glossary of terms.

Sheree Domingo, Tupac, and Melanie Badiano have also contributed generously with their harvests, as well as many others who have contributed after this book went to print.