

Press Release
 Kassel, June 18, 2020

DOCUMENTA FIFTEEN AND LUMBUNG PRACTICE

Announcement of the first lumbung members

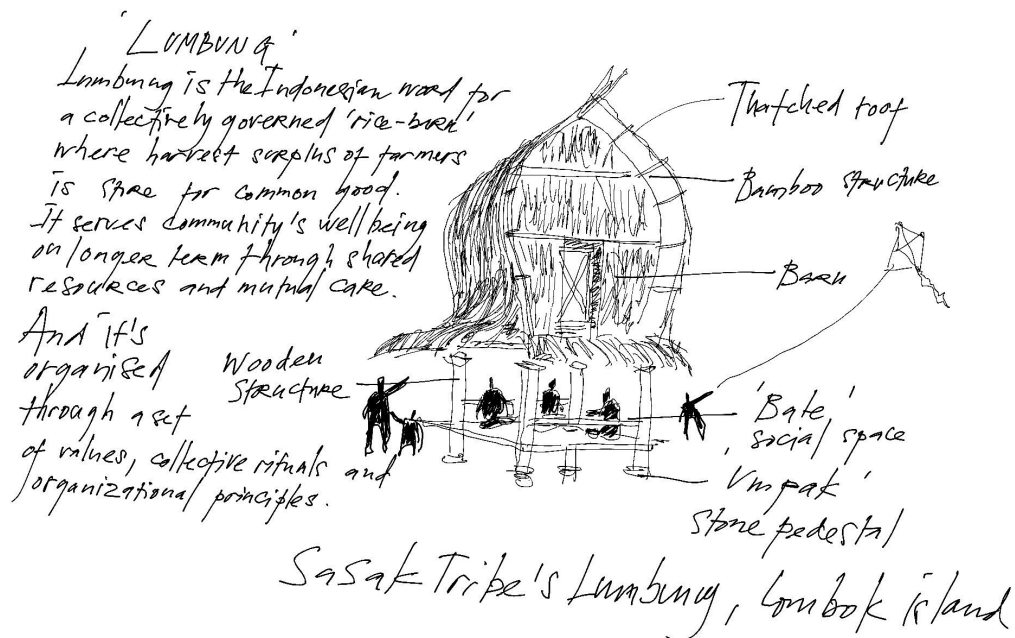


Image: lumbung drawing, Iswanto Hartono, 2020

lumbung is the Indonesian word for a collectively governed rice-barn, where the gathered harvest is stored for the common good of the community. ruangrupa has built the foundation of documenta fifteen on its core values and ideas. lumbung, as a concept, is the starting point for documenta fifteen. Over the coming years, lumbung will be operational in the lead up to documenta fifteen in 2022, and beyond. At this stage, ruangrupa gives an insight into how they understand and implement lumbung in their curatorial practice. In the spirit of lumbung, ruangrupa has invited the first lumbung members and the Artistic Team to individually introduce themselves by sharing stories of their respective practices and how they connect to the wider project.

ruangrupa on their lumbung concept for documenta fifteen

The concept

lumbung as a collectively-governed architecture for the storage of food serves a community's long-term well-being through communal resources and mutual care, and it is organized around a set of shared values, collective rituals, and organizational principles. ruangrupa translates and continues this tradition of sharing within our own practice.

We do not consider lumbung merely as a chosen “theme” for documenta fifteen. Instead, it is deeply imbued in ruangrupa's everyday practice and is a summary of our methods and values thus far. As a collective, we share resources, time, energy, funds, ideas, and knowledge among ourselves and others. We first developed the concept of lumbung five years ago, when we formed a collective of collectives with Serrum and Grafis Huru Hara, an initiative that through ongoing trial and error finds its latest iteration in Gudskul, our collective-run space and school in South Jakarta.

Values

lumbung as an artistic and economic model will be practiced alongside its values of collectivity, generosity, humor, trust, independence, curiosity, endurance, regeneration, transparency, sufficiency, and connectivity between a multiplicity of locales, rendering them planetary as a result.

Through the framework of documenta fifteen, the Artistic Team approaches collectives, organizations, and institutions from around the world to gather and develop lumbung together. Each of the lumbung members will contribute to and receive diverse resources, such as time, space, money, knowledge, care, and art. We are extremely eager to work with and learn from other concepts and models of regeneration, education, and economy—other lumbungs practiced in different parts of the world.

lumbung with regard to the current situation

Due to the critical situation that has unfolded over the last few months, we shifted the use of our collective space Gudskul into a mini factory manufacturing much-needed face masks and hazmat suits to be distributed directly to medical workers in hospitals and clinics on different islands in Indonesia. We partnered up with various local initiatives and sourced donations in the process.

Through our collective experience under COVID-19, we reflected again on the value of solidarity. We need to go even further in fostering new networking models and questioning how to make small to medium art's initiatives models sustainable. Consequently, we need to rethink further what artistic practice and event making is, what they could and should be.

If operating on a large scale means losing relevance in respect to our own practices, should we degrow? What does it mean to be locally and globally rooted today, and what potential does locality currently hold? What does materiality mean in contemporary art today for art and artists? How should we use space to redefine our relationship with the public? In

considering regenerative economies, we should examine and develop new strategies, parallel to well-tested practices.

When ruangrupa initially proposed the idea of lumbung as a collectively governed pot of surplus resources, it was speculating artistically on how to build such a common structure over time. Under the current conditions, the concept of lumbung, and its values of solidarity and collectivity, has never been more vital and relevant. In moments when so many are experiencing the inequality and injustice of the current systems, lumbung can act as an effort (alongside so many others) to show that things can be done differently. We are therefore not suspending lumbung, but accelerating it.

Introducing the first lumbung-members

Against the background of today's challenging times, in which numerous initiatives and groups of people in many places are struggling, the starting point of this lumbung has been built by Fondation Festival Sur Le Niger (Ségou, Mali), Gudskul (Jakarta, Indonesia), INLAND (various locations, Spain), Jatiwangi art Factory (Jatiwangi, Indonesia), Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center (Ramallah, Palestine), Más Arte Más Acción (MAMA) (Nuquí, Chocó, Colombia), OFF-Biennale (Budapest, Hungary), Trampoline House (Copenhagen, Denmark), and ZK/U – Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik (Berlin, Germany).

ruangrupa chose to work with these initiatives based on their inspirational models, their deep artistic practices rooted in local social structures, and their organizational and economic experimentations that go hand-in-hand with lumbung values.

Together, these lumbung members will develop long-term conversations in which the sharing of knowledge, solidarity, and resources will increase the wellbeing of each of their local practices and ecosystems. Over the next two years, these initial lumbung members will invite new members to join and share their tried-and-tested practices with each other, making the initiatives visible in various forms and modes of expression within the framework of documenta fifteen in Kassel and its relations to other locales.

Introducing the Artistic Team

It was our intention to begin by sharing roles, authorship, work, and ideas. We deem this diversity as abundance, a surplus we can start with. With this in mind, we dived deep into our past processes and reflected on our experience over the last twenty years.

In line with our paramount belief in friendship, we extended early invitations to our close allies. In time, they formed the Artistic Team of documenta fifteen. Some of them, like Gertrude Flentge, we have known as long as we have existed (even before ruangrupa was called ruangrupa) through school, residencies, network building, and artistic and curatorial projects. Through her vision, values, and compassion, Gertrude has played a vital role in the formation and relations between various initiatives in areas formerly known as the Global South. ruangrupa has worked previously with Gertrude on the programs RAIN and ArtsCollaboratory, and thus our collaboration with her for documenta fifteen came naturally.

Others, like Frederikke Hansen and Lara Khaldi, we have collaborated with on various occasions in different contexts. We have known Fred, one-half of the curatorial collective Kuratorisk Aktion, since the early 2000s through various exchanges between South and North, an uncommon connection in the contemporary visual art world that we successfully sustained throughout the years. On the other hand, Lara is a more recent collaborator, who came through our door in 2015 when she was visiting Jakarta with other young curators from the De Appel Curatorial Programme. Because Lara is based in Jerusalem, collaboration up until now was largely impossible, however while her previous works were far away geographically, they were close to ruangrupa in sensibility.

One of our ways of working is to spend time together with people and engage in continuous conversations, listening to and developing an intimacy with people and their particular context. The fact that only one member of ruangrupa had experienced a previous documenta exhibition and Kassel as a city, rendered us in need of connection points. It was crucial for us to learn from past experiences by collaborating with our newfound Kassel-based friends. Ayşe Güleç, through her involvement in previous editions of documenta, and her long commitment to activism work in Kassel communities, is a perfect fit. We saw Andrea Linnenkohl, with her long experience working with several documenta related institutions as well as past documenta exhibitions, as a necessary bridge between us and institutions within the city of Kassel and beyond. The involvement of these people as our Artistic Team makes it possible for us to engage, imagine, work hard, hang-out, and enjoy the journey of documenta fifteen.

ruruHaus: the living room for Kassel (and beyond)

“We could even sleep in the living room, and the kitchen will stand without recipes in our hands...”

—ruangrupa, 2020

ruruHaus as in “ruru” for ruangrupa and “Haus” as in the German word for “house,” is our long-term practice of working and building together. Building while respecting and understanding local cultural ecosystems of people, materials, and other living organisms.

ruruHaus is part of ruangrupa’s own history with nongkrong (Indonesian for gathering/hanging out), when private living rooms were converted into public spaces due to the political and social situations surrounding our early days. As a curatorial practice, ruruHaus stands for opening up spaces for gathering and sharing resources. It is a space for many things to cook, a way of gaining an understanding of the larger ecosystem of Kassel that can serve as an example for the wider platform documenta fifteen represents. ruruHaus will start small and grow slowly with time. A diversity of knowledge, skills, experiences, necessities, and values will be brought in and find balance here. ruruHaus is, in short, a laboratory and a kitchen, with a radio station to resonate a multiplicity of stories.

The ruruHaus’ hardware is the former Sportarena department store on Treppenstraße, Friedrichsplatz. It is the first documenta fifteen venue and can be seen as an embryo. Assemblies or majelis (as it’s called in Gudskul) will be the decision-making mechanism for a

larger body of programs and projects. The type of majelis practiced in the ruruHaus will be decided by the relationships catalyzed by its existence. In the ruruHaus, nongkrong, both physically and digitally, will be directly practiced and developed. The ruruHaus will absorb activities by and for lumbung-partners.

Instead of conceptual explanations, connections to Kassel's initiatives are currently being conducted in order to practice nongkrong, both physically and online. Within its capacity as an ecosystem for collective works, ruruHaus will invite communities/artists/collectives/students, etc., to participate in, activate, and capture the space together. reinaart vanhoe will be the first active member at the ruruHaus. reinaart has worked with ruangrupa for more than twenty years on different projects. Ruruhuis, Sonsbeek 2016, Arnhem, is one such project worth mentioning. He has also published several texts on our practice and on collectives in Indonesia.

COVID-19 rapidly changed ruruHaus' initial plans. To kick-off, the store windows of the ruruHaus will be activated by a responsive public-space project, followed by an upcoming program.

Visual identity of documenta fifteen

ruangrupa started from a friendship and student network among students of art schools, in Jakarta and Yogyakarta, during the mid 1990s. It then became an organization in 2000, couple of years after the fall of the 32 years New Order regime, which restricted the freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

From its inception, ruangrupa has dedicated its own space and resources to enabling young people to meet, share, experiment, and collaborate as a means of developing fresh ideas for the creation of contemporary art in the context of urban life in Jakarta. This principle of regarding young people as bearers of new world perspectives and different contemporary sensibilities has accompanied ruangrupa in all its activities and led, among other things, to the founding of the initiative Jakarta 32°C (2004–ongoing), which was established as a student's forum and biannual art event.

Against this background, ruangrupa invited students from Kassel and Jakarta to collaborate and take part in developing documenta fifteen's visual identity. From more than twenty submissions by individuals and groups, a jury composed of members of ruangrupa, documenta und Museum Fridericianum gGmbH, and documenta's Artistic Team selected two winning projects, one from Jakarta and one from Kassel. The teams submitted two very different concepts and each has been given the opportunity to pursue their own approach: The main visual identity of documenta fifteen will be developed by the Jakarta team, 4oo2, while the Kassel team, kmmn_practice, is given the opportunity to realize their concept of an open access platform for public participation in relation to certain aspects of the exhibition's visual design.

DOCUMENTA FIFTEEN

SEPTEMBER 25, 2022 Kassel

JUNE 18



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