

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS LUMBUNG?

On 23–25 August 2019, we – ruangrupa and the Artistic Team of documenta fifteen – met for the first time. This meeting was held at the foot of Mount Gede Pangrango in West Java. For three days and two nights, we embarked on working collectively while practicing nongkrong – Indonesian for “hanging out.” We discussed the concept and practice of lumbung as the starting point for documenta fifteen.



The Artistic Team at Tanakita, Sukabumi, Indonesia, 2019, photo by Indra Ameng

RUANGRUPA

The ruangrupa collective began as friendships among students at art schools in Jakarta and Yogyakarta during the mid-1990s. ruangrupa literally means “visual space,” and the group was started from scratch by discussing and brainstorming, mostly in the friends’ living rooms. Only after several projects and efforts to fundraise were they able, in 2000, to rent a small house and turn it into a formal space to assemble and work together.

Space was one of the main reasons for the establishment of ruangrupa.

ruangrupa has not been alone. Post-1998 and the fall of the authoritarian New Order regime that had ruled Indonesia for more than three decades, there have been numerous initiatives and collectives in Indonesia that have attempted to make art while supporting other artists, an approach that distinguishes them from previous generations of artist groups in Indonesia. Conversations have always been central in this process and domestic spaces have been continuously altered to become more public.

Working under conditions marked by a lack of government support, both in terms of funding and infrastructure, puts cultural initiatives in Indonesia in a vulnerable situation these days. Planning stable programs becomes more and more difficult. The biggest challenge, then, is how to create a platform for a sustainable artistic practice that answers to the increasingly rapid changes in society. Through making art collectively, ruangrupa are attempting to build a new model, one that takes into account the economy, social issues, culture, politics, working ethics, and collaboration as the next frontier. Only in this way can the separation between art and life truly be overcome, not only through representations of artwork, but through real, everyday practice working amidst society.

The model ruangrupa has developed in the last 20 years is an ecosystem of a collective living-working culture that is collaborative, mutual, and based on friendships. Organically and together, they have been sharing financial and material resources, as well as those in the forms of people, time, energy, and knowledge. The most valuable common wealth is their diverse approaches.

Five years ago ruangrupa, together with the collectives Serrum and Grafis Huru Hara, formed the collectively run space and school Gudskul, which can be described as a collective of collectives. Here, they first applied the concept of lumbung.

“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. Understood not only as a building but also as a way of working and living together, lumbung will be operational in the lead-up to documenta fifteen in 2022, and beyond.

LUMBUNG PRINCIPLE

lumbung is a proposal for self-initiated interdisciplinary collectives to sustain. It is where art meets social activism, management, and also various local networks. Firstly, to have a space, to understand what is happening in one’s surrounding environment, and respond to it. Secondly, to act to initiate something together within our context and localities.

This is an effort to answer a question: How could we build a space where art can live and contribute contextually to the surrounding communities? To ensure sustainability for this space, strategies should be developed and cultivated together, inspired by the lumbung sharing principle.

A space to meet and to get noisy – to then transform this noise to voice. By sharing our resources into one, we could share many and diverse stages, spotlights, and resonances to the voice.

THE PROCESS OF LUMBUNG MAKING

1

The Artistic Team of documenta fifteen in conversation with a group of organizations and collectives – the lumbung members – have developed a common pot of resources together. Each of the members contributes to this lumbung with their resource surpluses, such as people, time, space, food, money, knowledge, skill, care, and art.

2

The different collectives and organizations started to nongkrong months ago online and in Kassel in order to build trust.

3

They have built mechanisms for how to use and distribute the resources through meeting in assemblies, or majelises, and forming working groups around the economy and wellbeing of the lumbung.

4

The lumbung members create a surplus through the majelising and working groups, and this surplus is shared with others. The mechanisms and shared infrastructure created by the lumbung inter-lokal – the network of lumbung members – are shared with their own ecosystems as well as the group of lumbung artists (listed below) that the artistic team have invited.

LUMBUNG VALUES

As a starting point, a set of principles for lumbung organizations has been developed by ruangrupa and the other documenta fifteen Artistic Team members:

HUMOR

Humor constitutes an essential mechanism for joy and easing tensions in human communication. Humor is also a space for experimentation and improvisation with new ideas.

GENEROSITY

lumbung can only thrive if the mindset of its members is generous. lumbung lives if everyone works towards sharing and collective wellbeing.

CURIOSITY

Curiosity is a real commitment to get to know the other and listen to what is different – to enjoy working with the unknown.

SUFFICIENCY

Members of lumbung can be small or big, young or old. What is important is that they feel sufficient in their core existence.

TRANSPARENCY

Building trust will be the most essential principle of lumbung. Trust cannot go without a certain degree of transparency.

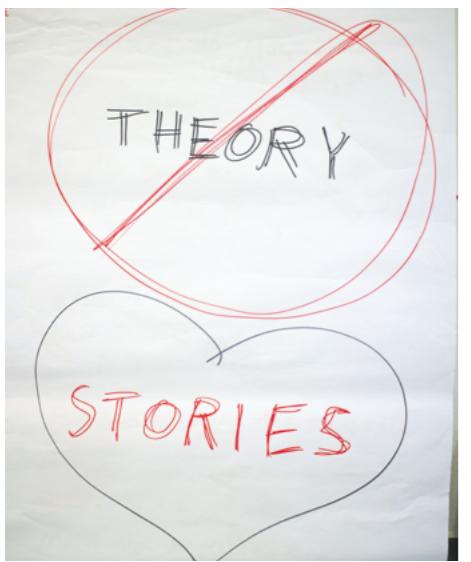
REGENERATION

The organization is in a constant reflection process in relation to its context. It seeks ways to adapt/re-invent/regenerate itself in response to and in relation to others in its surroundings (ecosystem). This concerns both the human as well as the non-human elements.

CHAPTER 2

ARTISTIC TEAM MAJELIS

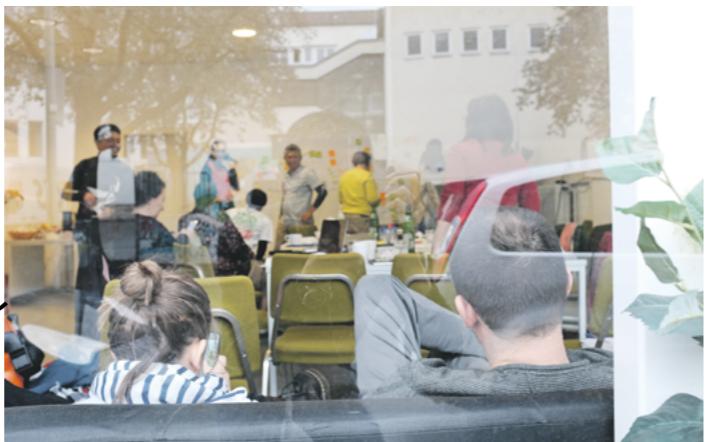
During the second majelis we discussed forms and ways of speaking within the lumbung, and cosmology became an important element that we return to again and again. Storytelling has multiple authors and layers, and a story can carry within it context, theory, experience; without creating hegemony and discipline, it can circulate and change.



Images of "harvests" - the documentation of gatherings in the form of texts, overviews, sketches, or drawings - during the meeting of the Artistic Team in Kassel, November 2019, photos by Verena Bornmann and Bellina Erby



When discussing documenta fifteen we spoke more about celebrating the lumbung idea instead of making events, because the celebration would bring about the experiences and processes of all artists and members of the lumbung organically.



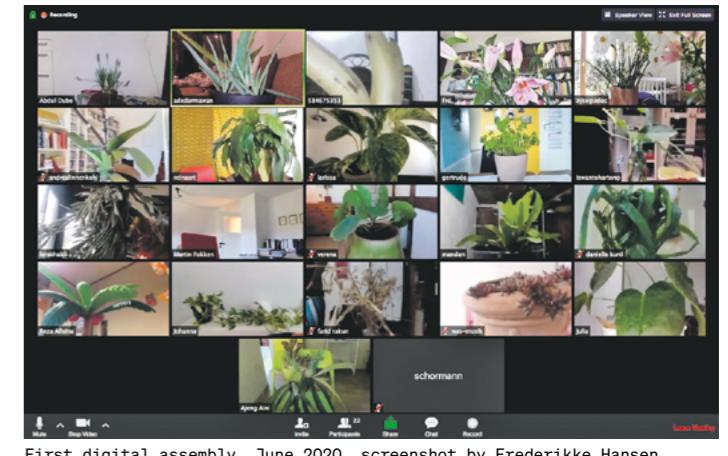
Second gathering (majelis) of the artistic team, Kassel, November 2019, photo by Indra Ameng

The second majelis of the Artistic Team was held in Kassel in November 2019. Little did we know it would be our last physical gathering for the next one and a half years. We were supposed to meet every three months in a lumbung member's location.

We ended the majelis in Kassel by speaking about how we would work together over the coming months. We agreed to follow basic work values: to trust each other, practice the right to do, that silence means agreement. We split into different working groups and agreed to meet online all together every month. We parted over dinner at the clubhouse of the football club FC Bosphorus in the north of Kassel.



Members of ruangrupa and the Artistic Team having dinner in Kassel, 2019, photo by Frederikke Hansen



First digital assembly, June 2020, screenshot by Frederikke Hansen

The Artistic Team was supposed to have the third majelis in Kassel in March 2020, but the Covid-19 pandemic had just started, and so we met on Zoom instead. Many of us had traveled extensively for research by that point, so some said it was a blessing in disguise and that it might be good to consider traveling less, both for the carbon footprint and self-care. We did not know then that we would not be able to meet physically again until June 2021.



Drawing by Abdul Dube as harvest during the Artistic Team's digital assembly in June 2020, courtesy documenta fifteen and Abdul Dube

We did speculate a lot about how the change from physical to digital would affect the outcome, not only of our own process in the Artistic Team, but also and especially in relation to building the lumbung between members who, unlike us, had never met and who were struggling to survive and keep doing what they were doing before the Covid-19 pandemic. lumbung is about keeping surplus and using it for future crises. Now, the crises had come before we anticipated, making lumbung building and resource sharing not only necessary but also extremely urgent. Our focus naturally shifted to the lumbung members and their immediate needs.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCING LUMBUNG INTER- LOKAL AND RURUHAUS



Digital lumbung meeting, October 2020, photo by Frederikke Hansen

FIRST LUMBUNG ASSEMBLY IN OKTOBER 2020

In the blink of an eye, October arrived. In preparation for documenta fifteen, all lumbung members gathered for a virtual assembly, where they introduced themselves and shared their stories, ideas, and preliminary projections for the next two or more years. On the screen you could see jovial, smiling faces.

On one of the on-screen squares was a couple whose hair was flying like on a windy beach. Tayeba and Mahbubur cheerfully told stories about their collective Britto Arts Trust from Dhaka, Bangladesh. The collective was established in 2002 and has been working extensively across several countries through workshops, residency programs, community based-projects, exhibitions, research, and archival practices.

Six thousand kilometers from Dhaka, we listened to stories from Wajukuu Art Project, a collective of visual artists working with a community in Nairobi. In the hands of Wajukuu, art becomes a way to reach out to the slum community. "We also created a library, but unfortunately it is no longer there because of the issue of space. In the future, we want to acquire land outside of Nairobi where we can do farming," said Ngugi of Wajukuu.

The process of building a lumbung network among different communities, in what is dubbed lumbung inter-lokal, started with fourteen lumbung members: Fondation Festival sur le Niger (Ségou, Mali), Gudskul (Jakarta, Indonesia), INLAND (various locations, Spain), Jatiwangi art Factory (Jatiwangi, Indonesia), Question of Funding (Ramallah, Palestine), Más Arte Más Acción (Nuquí, Chocó, Colombia), OFF-Biennale (Budapest, Hungary), Trampoline House (Copenhagen, Denmark), ZK/U – Center for Art and Urbanistics (Berlin, Germany), Britto Arts Trust (Dhaka, Bangladesh), Instituto de Artivismo Hannah Arendt (INSTAR, Havana, Cuba), Wajukuu Art Project (Nairobi, Kenya), Project Art Works (Hastings, UK), and FAFSWAG (Auckland, Aotearoa).

ruangrupa and the Artistic Team 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. Since 2020 they have been regularly meeting in assemblies to explore and discuss how to work together for documenta fifteen and beyond.

The following text is based on a harvest of the first lumbung assembly that happened online last year. "Harvest" means the documentation of meetings, which is prepared as minutes, sketches, or overviews and enables the traceability of the meeting. The text is written by Putra Hidayatullah, a writer and researcher from Aceh, Indonesia, who shared his experience when joining the assembly. You can find his complete harvest of the lumbung assembly online at documenta-fifteen.de/harvest-putra-lumbung-assembly.

This introduction was followed by another story from Jatiwangi art Factory (JaF), a collective based in West Java, Indonesia, a group of youths sitting together in the corner of the room. Some of them were musicians who kindly played music for relaxation and ice-breaking. "Together with lumbung we want to create a new development model for our future collaboration. We imagine having communal land and collective factories and bulog (storage), like lumbung but more institutional," they said.

From Jatiwangi we took another virtual trip to Germany, to have a conversation with ZK/U – Center for Art and Urbanistics, based in Berlin, Germany. Matze, one of the members of ZK/U, talked about their future plans. "ZK/U is developing ideas on sharing networks and resources beyond monetary logic. How can we live and work together differently, instead of being productive all the time? We are thinking of good sleep, hanging out, and combining various economic systems into the lumbung system," he said.

On the second day of the lumbung assembly the vibe was still the same. Cheerful faces from various parts of the Earth appeared on the screen. "We have a request, we have a Zoom performance," said Yazan, representing Question of Funding (QoF) from Palestine. "We are going to sing a song and you will sing after us, okay. Here we go!" For several years, QoF have been working on the issue of funding. "We are organizing a system that is different from what international aid wants us to do," said Fayrouz, member of QoF. "We are thinking of creating sustainable income so that the community will be independent from donors."

From Palestine, all lumbung members took a virtual journey to Denmark, home of Trampoline House, a self-governing institution based in Copenhagen that consists of artists and asylum seekers. "Europe is now becoming most dangerous in terms of migration. There are large numbers of asylum seekers. They are refugees leaving their own countries for various reasons like war, political conflicts, and so on. They are not allowed to work or to participate in educational programs." Through job training, counseling, creative workshops, and art exhibitions, Trampoline House gives them opportunities, with the ultimate goal of creating an alternative asylum system.

The next journey brought us to Colombia, where we had a conversation with Más Arte Más Acción (MAMA), a non-profit cultural foundation that generates critical thinking through art. "In order to create a movement, we need to have social and creative organization, to come together and work collectively. We are collecting a memory of what we have been doing, so that we can share our pedagogical process and make it available in many languages, in order to establish a connection between this struggle and other struggles."

"Are you guys ready?" The lyrics appeared on our screen, the music pounded delightfully in our ears, and everybody sang along to I Will Survive. That's how the third assembly started on October 23. Gudskul from Jakarta, Indonesia, took the first turn. They are an ecosystem and educational platform founded by three Jakarta-based collectives: ruangrupa, Serrum, and Grafis Huru Hara. Gudskul plans to create a so-called koperasi (Indonesian word for co-operation), organized by collectives, that will highlight the economic, social, and cultural relevance of co-operation in relation to creative collective practices.

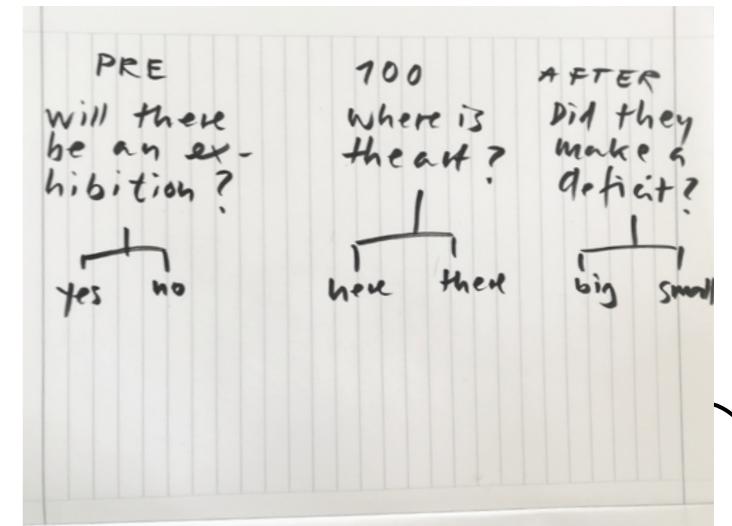
With a bit of dancing and smiles, the song became a bridge that took us to another part of the Earth, Spain, where we met with Fernando and friends from Inland, who have been working on farms and dairies in the countryside. "The idea is to create a self-managed infrastructure that can sustain collective projects." In addition, Inland is developing a nomadic infrastructure that links the city with the countryside.

Moving from Spain to Budapest, Hungary, we met with OFF-Biennale (OFF), a newly established biennial, whose third edition had to be postponed until next spring due to Covid-19. As a curatorial collective, OFF has been engaged with art education, rural knowledge, and ROMAMoMA, a contemporary art project that wants to give visibility to Roma and Romja, Hungary's largest ethnic minority. For documenta, OFF tries to find a connection between lumbung and their local concept, kalaka, which is also based on collective governance.

Five days later, the assembly continued. "We are delighted. We would like to share our story." Bright smiles were on the screens. They were Fondation Festival sur le Niger (FFSLN) from Ségou, Mali. This yearly festival has been one of the drivers of the cultural economy in their city of Ségou. Since 2012, Mali has been enduring security, political, and economic issues. "This pushes us to organize this event," said Attaher Maiga, who represented the collective. "We work on sharing Maaya, our system of values, which is about humans, sharing resources, and creating solidarity."

Finally, we heard about one of the venues for documenta fifteen, ruruHaus. "Since ruruHaus was started, we have been trying to activate this particular space," said Reza Afisina, one of the members of ruangrupa. Together with students from Kassel University they initiated a project called "art and urban development." Like a compilation of history, the project retraces the ways Kassel has grown since the first edition of documenta. They are also thinking of a method of shared economy in the form of a co-operative system engaging with the neighborhood. "We are working on building trust and friendship, not only creating a project in Kassel, but also thinking of how to make it sustain."

As the saying goes, time flies when you are having fun. Over the four days, we had truly rewarding conversations on collective work and plans of how to proceed with documenta fifteen.



Drawing by Frederikke Hansen, created during the first lumbung meeting, October 2020

CHAPTER 4

WHERE WE ARE NOW



Drawing of Daniella Fitria Praptono

TIME ZONES

AEST: Australian Eastern Standard Time
ART: Argentinian Time
AST: Atlantic Standard Time
BRT: Brasilia Time
BT: Baghdad Time
CAT: Central African Time
CET: Central European Time
CST: China Standard Time
EAT: East African Time
EET: Eastern European Time
EST: Eastern Standard Time
HKT: Hong Kong Time

ICT: Indochina Time
IST: India Standard Time
JST: Japan Standard Time
KST: Korean Standard Time
PHT: Philippine Time
SAST: South African Standard Time
TST: Taiwan Standard Time
UZT: Uzbekistan Time
WAT: West African Time
WET: Western European Time
WIB: Waktu Indonesia Barat (West Indonesian Time)
WT: Western Sahara Standard Time

This summer, members of the Artistic Team were able to meet in person in Kassel for the first time after one and a half years of communicating and collaborating only through digital platforms. At the same time, several lumbung members and lumbung artists that now had been invited to participate in documenta fifteen visited Kassel, met each other and many Kassel-based collectives. Furthermore, a decision was taken between the documenta und Museum Fridericianum gGmbH management, the board, and the Artistic Team to not postpone documenta fifteen despite the pandemic. Among many reasons for this, we feel we should be able to do it in a way that fits the given circumstances, and not wait for better times, given the uncertainty of when and for whom those times will come.

Part of our pre-pandemic plans has been to organize the processes of documenta fifteen through a frequent majelising, where all of us would meet in smaller and bigger constellations, in-person and online, at regular intervals. Given that live majelising has been difficult, we have bent these processes into "mini-majelis" for lumbung artists and frequent digital get-togethers and working groups for the 14 lumbung members.

The composition of the mini-majelises is significantly influenced by the different time zones in which the artists and collectives live. Within each more self-regulated mini-majelis, artists are getting to know each other better through projects, different ways of resource sharing and decision making. Working as collectives of collectives is being tried out in practice. In order to support this process, we followed the economy of the lumbung. Production budgets and seed money are distributed equally among the artists. In addition to this, each majelis group shares one common budget and makes financial decisions all together.

Arranged in the structure of their mini-majelis and with the respective timezones, the exhibiting lumbung artists are:

