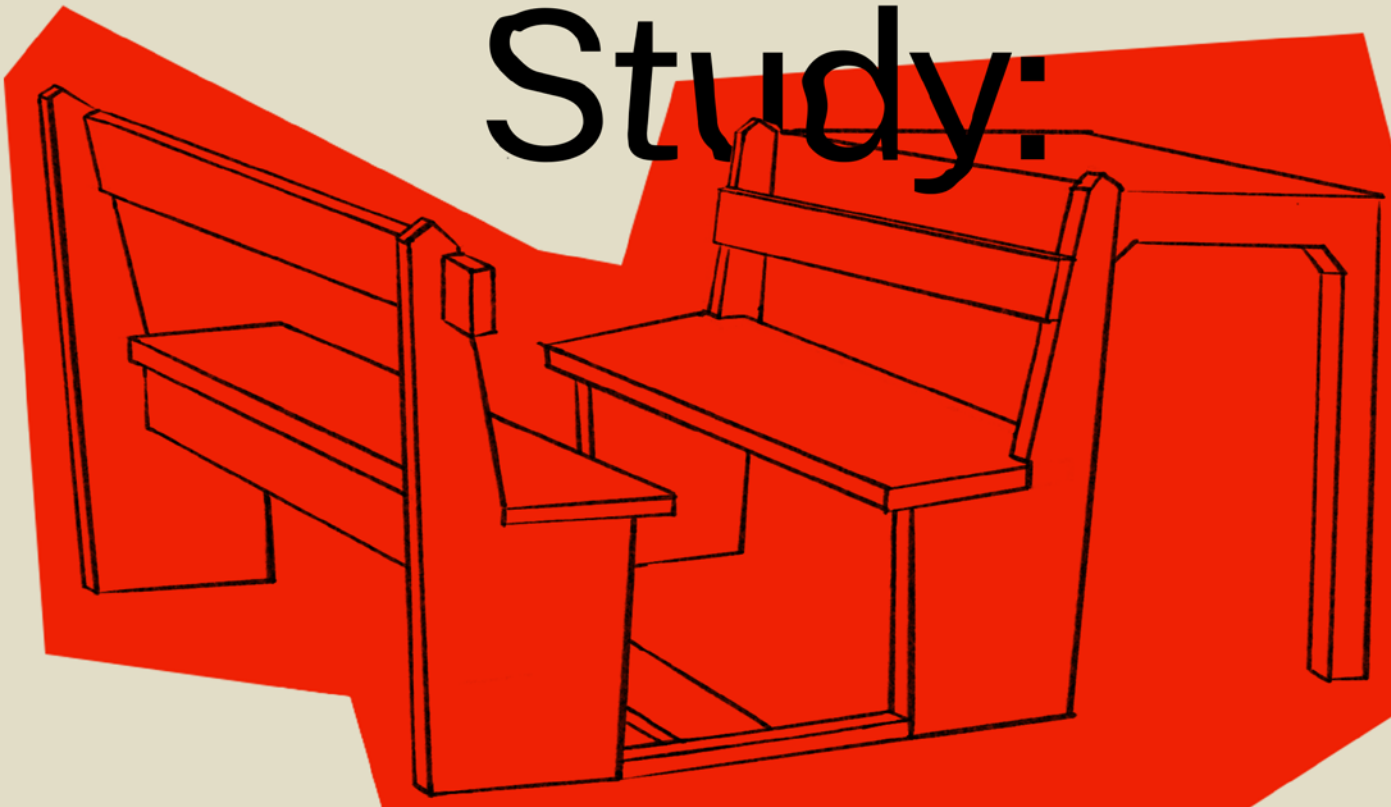
Tools for Radical Study:



A Collection of Manuals

KUNCI Study Forum & Collective

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Edited by KUNCI Study Forum & Collective

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Managing Editor
Sarrita Hunn

Copy Editor
Bonnie Begusch

Design & Illustration
Celcea Tifani
Tasia Loekito

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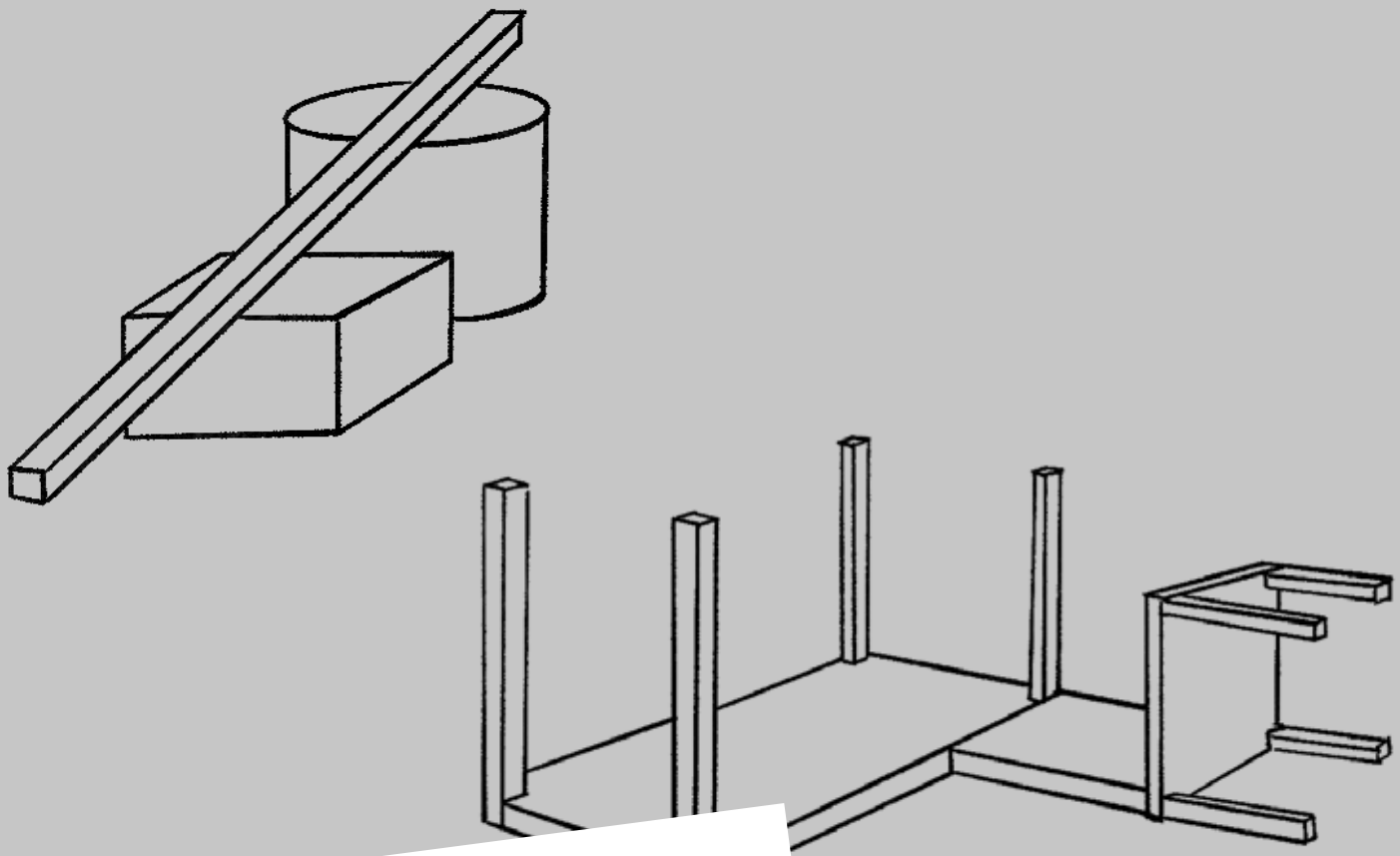
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KUNCI experiments with methods of producing and sharing knowledge through acts of studying together at the intersections between affective, manual, and intellectual labor. Since its founding in 1999 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, KUNCI has been continuously transformed its structure, ways, and medium of working.

kunci.or.id

Why Tools? Tools for the Damned, the Educational Turn, and Knowledge Production

Why do tools become the locus of conversation? readers of this publication may wonder. At least for those of us who reside amid the proliferation of collective practices in the Global South, this is particularly significant. Talking about and sharing tools means talking about and performing the redistribution of power—a power that is most likely derived through the process of knowledge accumulation. Talking about tools also means talking about things one finds in places like public kitchens, village meeting halls, slaughterhouses, and residential gardens—places where theory and its methods are rarely found, whether on the ground or in quotidian conversation.

Using the Indonesian political context as an example, the New Order[1] and its developmental ideology instilled uniformity. It is expected that we should say, "This tool caters to a particular purpose." The uniformity is entrenched in our heads. It dictates our understanding of what productivity means. Power relations determine what tools mean and what capacities they enable. The working of tools can be tied up with subordination. To refer to certain things, individuals, or organizations as "tools" is to assert that they are being oppressed. Here, oppression means the reduction of the agency of things, individuals, and organizations. Their capacities are defined by how they function to serve the purpose of the authorities. We talk about tools to reconsider what we mean by freedom, or scales of independence.

If you look at the constellation of artistic practice in the last two decades, attention to tools has gained relevance—at least in the midst of what is called the "educational turn," where the scope of the arts, including the curation process, "increasingly operates as an expanded educational praxis."[2] The idea of tools thus could be seen as a way of articulating the educational process. As a group of researchers experimenting with various methods in the form of a school, this wave gives rise to our curiosity—particularly regarding how the various initiatives and experiments carried out by the contributors to this publication can eschew some of the pitfalls mentioned by Marion von Osten and Eva Egermann in their book *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010) quoted above. What is known as an "educational turn" is very likely "displacing the real questions of knowledge economies and cognitive capitalism" and may be only a meta-theoretical stunt to perceive the learning process differently, while not changing the actual process itself.[3] Through our short survey, we are also curious whether this wave forms a historical continuity in one hemisphere—a continuity previously unknown and deemed novel from the binocular vision of those conquerors in the other half of the world where the collection of practices is imbued with a colonial dynamic.

Echoing Audre Lorde's forewarning long ago in "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," there is one thing we anticipate.[4] Publishing this compendium of tools is also a means of retracing the context—a provision to prevent the trap of reification by perceiving it merely as a tool that brings no positionality. Publishing the tool is also an effort to reflect on what we might have "dismissed" from our radar. The search for tools under the umbrella of pedagogical practices also talks about the possibility of community formation. A question that is still spinning in our minds is: Can dexterity in the use of tools and the effort to distribute tools equitably create a community that tries to deal with similar problems? Of course, this is with the awareness, as Lorde touched upon, that "without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression."[5] We are aware of the oppression experienced by our friends who are in precarious positions without any help from institutions. They are the ones who could define what is considered valid as a tool. Our simple effort to search for tools is also a way to accompany them and ask: Is it only institutions that can define and support the trajectory of their activities?

Who Owns Tools? On Commoning Tools and Maintaining Ethical Principles

This collective editorial has become a chance for us to revisit things that have helped shape the culture of our organization: the experience of learning together and the spirit of continuously questioning our own position in that shared experience. The first memory that came to mind concerned the School of Improper Education (SoIE), our regular program that has become our lifeline since 2016. SoIE emerged as a means to embrace the unknown and precarious, unlearn the productivity regime of schooling, and expand our vernacular vocabularies for studying. We perceive the school as a means to survive the ongoing uncertainties in the contemporary social and political situation through the act of studying together.[6]

Our practices in SoIE reverberate with our involvement in The Global (De)Centre (GDC), a platform that brings together a growing network of scholars from across the

world committed to producing new knowledge and using different epistemologies and methods. We have been meeting virtually on this platform on a regular basis for the past two years. In parallel with the process of KUNCI's collaboration with MARCH on this publication, the Arts and Pedagogy GDC working group is currently developing an online repository for decentering pedagogical tools.

On the one hand, the image that appears when we try to define tools through the frame of "schools" closely relates to material things; benches, desks, uniforms, and other formal classroom objects have become part of that process. On the other hand, the keyword "improper" leads us to define "education" far from materiality; a distance that allows us to treat the experience of learning or education not merely as a commodity, but as a way of commoning. This leads us to a question: How can a tool become a shared resource?

If tools are a common resource, ownership, access, and the tool's framework of care are ideally based on togetherness and justice. To achieve these goals, we may need a set of "ethical" conceptual proposals that are more supportive of the tool's nurturing function rather than its ruling function, which comes together with punitive consequences. In other words, we need a set of procedures that allows resources to be circulated while providing a spotlight on any elaboration of goodwill from its community of users. This is the meeting point between the good intentions of the creators and the accessors—good intentions that can trigger the commoning of tools by placing collective justice into consideration in the tool's creation phase while continuing to carry these objectives out in its utilization phase. When the dividing line between the "creator" and the access to tools becomes blurred, the perception or emphasis on the extractive nuances of the tools may also disappear. We believe that the existence of a space that upholds this kind of articulation can encourage new interpretations during each negotiation process every time the benefits of these tools circulate in a more constructive manner. For example, it can serve as a catalyst to work on making these tools' benefits more adaptive for everyone.

We think that in order to make the tools more adaptive, it is important to study the communication plots that are formed in that space of negotiation, including the thought process and collective response of the hands that touch these tools and the senses felt relevant by those hands. If feelings become a starting point, it means that there needs to be a more sensitive atmosphere that enables us to capture and place these feelings in an effort to reconstruct the tools. As mentioned above, consideration of these things deserves to be placed at the tool-creation stage and, of course, done together with the intention of maintaining these processes in a way that circulates its benefit; in other words, commoning the tools.

For this publication we have invited education practitioners from diverse learning spaces to share their tools, which have been developed through collective learning practices. Questions include: What kinds of strategies, tactics, and methods have been created, tested out, and developed to redistribute power in the learning relationships in these spaces? How could they be used to create and manage the condition of safe and democratic spaces to pose oppositional views? How can the goodwill of each person involved form the basis of a nurturing, ethical principle? What kind of space is able to capture and at the same time re-narrate—to make tools become more universal?

What Can Tools Do? Self-Defense and Bending Power Through Art and Education

The survival game is rigged. We often feel treated as mere pawns. We want to break free from linearity and stagnation. Obedience is our biggest enemy. Silence is impossible. To tool is to resist. We have invited the contributors to this publication

1. The New Order refers to the political period during Soeharto's presidency (1967–1998). The term signifies the military dictatorship, shrinking public space, and oppression of human rights and political and creative expression during the period. Today, the term serves as a reminder of how the New Order-oligarchy attitude lasts and continues to haunt subsequent political periods. According to Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy, the political and economic mission is best summed up through the production of slogans, neologisms, and acronyms throughout the period: "*dwifungsi* (the 'dual—i.e., military and political—functions' of the military), 'floating mass' (the passive role assigned to the rural population when it came to politics), '*monoloyalitas*' (the unswerving political loyalty that all state officials were required to give to the regime's Golkar party), 'accelerated modernisation', 'take-off' and the like." To learn more about how to contextualize the New Order within the Southeast Asian context, see Edward Aspinall and Gred Fealy, "Introduction," in *Soeharto's New Order and Its Legacy: Essays in Honour of Harold Crouch*, ed. Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy (Canberra: ANU Press, 2010), 5.

2. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, "Introduction," in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions/de Appel, 2010), 12.

3. Marion von Osten and Eva Egermann, "Twist and Shout: On Free Universities, Educational Reforms and Twists and Turns Inside and Outside the Art World," in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, 281.

4. Based on a speech given as part of a panel at the 1984 New York University Institute for the Humanities conference, Audre Lorde's subsequent essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" has been published in many different forms and contexts. See, for example, Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essay and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), 110–13.

5. See Lorde, 112.

6. For further reading about SoIE, see KUNCI Study Forum & Collective, "The School of Improper Education," *Critical Times 3*, no. 3 (December 2020): 566–78, https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-8662448, and *Letters: The classroom is burning, let's dream about a School of Improper Education* (Brooklyn: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2020).

to theorize their paths for self-defense. Tina M. Campt's conceptualization of quotidian practices of refusal as "creative" is useful here. According to Campt, such practices "[highlight] the tense relations between acts of flight and escape, and creative practices of refusal—nimble and strategic practices that undermine the categories of the dominant."[7] We define refusal as an ongoing attempt to build a kind of "bending power"—the power to bend certain matters, expanding them beyond their predefined capacities.

In line with the spirit of MARCH, the tools assembled here make this publication read more like as a manual rather than an academic journal. We are also aware that a compendium of tools has a form that is not much different from an exhibition. This propels us also to look for various tools within the pedagogical framework that could be used as "modes of resistance." As shown in the essay "Re- and Un-Defining Tools" by Feminist Search Tools, the discussion about tools leads to further discussion about the "disruptive mechanism" and how to address pressing questions. The contributors work in various existing and temporary spaces—classrooms, libraries and catalogs, migrant workers' communities, women's groups in villages, traditional art groups, Indigenous communities, and art institutions. Taken together, they represent spaces where a specific vision of futurity is shared, explored, and prefigured. The diverse character of these spaces allows the contributors to keep experimenting with redefining and subverting the meanings of tools. In doing so, they make active links and develop new bridges to what communities need.

How can you devise tactics to create a productive counter-institution without necessarily burning down an institution? Chen Yun's essay, "'51 Personae' and the Challenges of Institutionalized Art in China," offers a glimpse how this can be done through creating neighborhood-based practices using museum resources. Here, usefulness is not perceived as something that caters to the mainstream authorities and conventional productivity, and therefore a sense of community emerges in the process.

The notion of "working" serves as an important reminder to understand what tools can do. Tools are not perceived as objects to fix something. Rather, they emerge as verbs, or as a lubricant used to transform habitual practices into a more workable social environment. In Sanchayan Ghosh's essay, "Circl(e)ing Inside Out: Tools for Pedagogy as Art Practice," engaging in games is understood as a mechanism to circulate energy. In Al Maeishah's essay, "Walking in a Shifting Image," walking is seen as a means to inhabit, make space, and collect stories. Sima Ting Kuan Wu's practice, discussed in the essay "Let's Stand Together: Supporting Migrant Cultural Work in Taiwan," manifests in various acts of accompanying Indonesian migrant communities in Taiwan. These range from organizing migrant workers' literary competitions, cultural festivals, mobile libraries, and visual arts exhibitions to traditional dance, film, and writing workshops. Sima's recent work revolves around collecting migrant sounds and songs.

In both Sima's and Moelyono's practices, we observe nimbleness and agility. Questions around shared conflicts, histories, and solidarity propel such nimbleness. We also observe that the agility is driven by questions about the usefulness of art practices and how to be together. In Moelyono's work, discussed in the essay "A Praxis of Critical Consciousness in Rural Indonesia," an exploration of useful values culminates in pedagogy and community-organizing practices. Moelyono's roles keep transforming in the process: he is an artist, drawing teacher, activist, advocate, facilitator, friend, and neighbor. Attempts at ethical actions are woven together in the intricate relationship between the resourcefulness of the authorities and the limited resources of communities. Nothing is black and white; everything seems sticky.

The uniform character imposed by the national education authorities engenders stagnancy, alienation, and disconnection from the social environment. As Fawaz's article "Contextual Education and the Zeal of

7. Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 32.

Common Cause" elaborates, this often puts Indigenous communities in a more vulnerable position. Due to their remote position, they often cannot access basic necessities such as education. At the same time, globalization forces them to face cultural shocks that threaten their hunter-gatherer identities. The national school system tends to flatten the diverse realities of Indonesian communities instead of developing contextual pedagogical practices that attend to their situation. Through his work at the Sokola Institute, Fawaz asserts that providing basic literacy skills combined with listening to the daily struggles of participants might be effective in puncturing the existing school system. In this way, Indigenous communities strengthen and rediscover their sense of indigeneity.

How to Share Tools? Nurturing Friendship, Forming Communities, and Publishing Tools for the Commons

We treat KUNCI's editorial role in this publication as an opportunity to network and cross-reference our educational initiative, the School of Improper Education, with other initiatives and their publics. We understand cross-referencing as a framework to provide a grounded understanding of local study contexts while also engaging in the mobility and connection of people, ideas, tools, and institutions that, in turn, multiply the frame of references in each implicated study practice. Inhabiting the space of sharing and collectivity, this multiplication creates a commons-based production of knowledge rather than a centralized accumulation of intellectual property. All contributors to this publication offer alternative forms of studying that are fundamentally practiced as a mode of sharing and nurturing alternative publics or counterpublics.[8] Counterpublics are a radical form of commons as long as they are formed by a shared dissatisfaction with the dominant mode of schooling and advocate for the redistribution of the right and ability to think, study, and collectivize knowledge.

In his seminal thesis on "print capitalism," Benedict Anderson argues that imagined communities are formed through the proliferation of printing technologies, which maximize the circulation of languages, discourses, and an affective sense of national belonging.[9] Embracing print culture but at the same time resisting capitalism, our publication works toward sharing common tools and commoning a network of study communities. Publishing can be a soft infrastructure to facilitate the reproduction and redistribution of commons. Thus, for us, making a publication is not only about publishing something to show the world who we are and what we think—it is also about reaching out to people to create a community of study. It is a process as simple as forming a new friendship and as complicated as organizing a sustainable, trans-local network.

Indeed, we got to know the contributors to this publication from a growing, rhizomatic network of friendship between people who have invested their collective resources into the arts and education; a diverse range of self-organized groups, radical pedagogues, community activists, and artist-teachers. Since creating SoiE in 2016, the school has allowed us to both organize and attend forums, conferences, workshops, and residencies—different kinds of trans-local gatherings to learn critical educational practices from each other. These gatherings have lasted from one day to three months, but often the friendships and camaraderie remain longer. Our choice of contributors for this publication is not just based on our belief that their tools are valuable and worth sharing. It is also a way for us to follow up on the intensity of previous friendships and to consolidate shared intentions. As a small, self-organized group with precarious material conditions to actualize our ideas, we try to nurture deep networks of solidarity whenever there is a chance (energy, time, money, infrastructure, etc.). Not all contributors know each other. Thus, we also imagine this publication could serve

8. On counterpublics and the queerness of print culture, see Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2002).

9. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

as a platform to cross-fertilize emerging friendships—to ignite another possible route for future collaborative study.

Most close to our local context in Indonesia, Moelyono is an artist-teacher who, since the 1980s, has worked with communities impoverished by the developmentalist political regime. His spirit and way of teaching and studying have been affective and intellectual fuel for us to imagine a political relationship between arts and pedagogy inside and outside of Indonesian art and educational history. Meanwhile, the stories from Fawaz, a radical pedagogue working with Indigenous communities under the umbrella of the Sokola Institute (originally formed by Butet Manurung), reached us through his book *Seandainya Aku Bisa Menanam Angin* (If Only I Could Plant Winds, 2019). For KUNCI, whose struggles are mainly set against the urban context of Java Island, the chronicle of Fawaz's experience provides a window to reflect on how the modern educational system enforced under the hegemony of the Javanese elite's dominance in Indonesian culture and politics has colonized Indigenous peoples in the archipelago. More than that, the Sokola Institute's work can be politically located along the trajectories of decolonial activism enacted by Indigenous communities around the world.

We make new friends beyond our local reach through residency programs and opportunities to embark on short trips across the oceans (not without the guilt of adding to our carbon footprint). Artists' mobility programs have enabled us to expand the intellectual itineraries of our study journey. The enticing scent of what the Feminist Search Tools working group is currently cooking comes to us through our long relationship with Read-in, a self-organized group initiated in Utrecht, the Netherlands in 2010. KUNCI has shared a publication kitchen with Read-in through self-publishing activities such as *Uncommon Reading: A Glossary of Sticky Terms of and for the Commons*,[10] developed when we invited Read-in to do a residency in Yogyakarta in 2015, and a series of immaterial publications documented mycorrhizally online and co-edited with Display Distribute based out of Kowloon, Hong Kong, after our three-way collaboration at the Seoul Media City Biennale in 2018.[11]

In 2019, through a platform for exchange called Parliament of Schools held in Dessau, Germany, KUNCI members met, among others, with Al Maeishah, a group that creates an egalitarian learning environment to practice hospitality, neighboring, and communal learning as a radical political act. The notion of hospitality practiced by Al Maeishah within the threshold of domestic and public space really resonated with KUNCI's search for an ethics of care in collective study. Chen Yun also addresses care as a form of (de)institutionalizing within and against contemporary art museums and biennials, speaking from the gentrified ground of China's urban cultural centers. A KUNCI member connected with her through the Curatorial Practice in Asia residency program sponsored by Shanghai's Rockbund Art Museum, also in 2019. In her text, Chen Yun reflects on the idea of neighboring practice as an attempt to form an intimate public through the museum, thus promising a point of intersection with KUNCI's and Al Maeishah's practices, which aim at building an alternative form of institution based on long-term friendship instead of formal working contracts. In this way, we all seek strategies to sustain study as a practice of commoning within, against, and beyond hegemonic institutions.

As mentioned earlier, friendship emerges not only through the movement and meeting of people but also through print cultures. Indeed, books, zines, booklets, and other printed materials may have their own lives, creating affective ties between the writer and reader in organic and unexpected ways. In 2015, working together with Indonesian migrant workers/writers in Hong Kong and Para Site gallery, KUNCI initiated Klub Baca Selepas Kerja (Afterwork Reading Club) and published *Afterwork Readings*, a book in four languages (Indonesian, English, Tagalog, and Cantonese) consisting of poems and short stories around the act of reading,

10. Available at: https://read-in.info/sticky-terms/.

11. Available at: https://displaydistribute.com/mukluk/catalogue-03/.

12. Available at: https://www.para-site.art/publications/afterwork-readings/.

writing, and migrating.[12] The book was found by Sima Ting Kuan Wu, who has been working with Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan to form a similar reading group, having previously worked with the Taiwan Literature Award for Migrants (TLAM). Our exchange of knowledge, networks, and access has allowed KUNCI to learn about various narratives and modes of writing developed by migrant workers/writers who use literature as a vehicle to study collectively and to speak for themselves.

Finally, a story of a delayed friendship. In 2019, KUNCI was invited to "a self-organized gathering of unlearning" initiated by the Slow Institute within the school grounds of Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, India. Unfortunately, we were not able to secure funding to travel to Santiniketan at the time. However, the invitation sparked shared curiosities and connected us, albeit minimally—which, in turn, led us to invite Sanchayan Ghosh, one of the organizers of the gathering. The contemporary engagement to reactivate the historical tools of collective study in Santiniketan is particularly attractive to us given that KUNCI's current method of studying also attempts to reengage with the history of Taman Siswa, an anti-colonial school established in the 1920s during the Dutch colonization of Indonesia. Its founder, Ki Hajar Dewantara, envisioned Taman Siswa as a national form of consciousness-raising in the field of education. Interestingly, many historians have shown us that Dewantara's ideas were built not only through local values and philosophies but also through his cosmopolitan interaction with thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore, who is the central figure in the Santiniketan school. We embrace this historical cross-referencing process by including a 1954 text titled "Principles of Art Education in *Taman Siswa*," written by Sindoedarsono Soedjojono and Sindhusiswara, and translated by Pychita Julinanda.

These stories of friendship are fragments of the affective and intellectual network in which the School of Improper Education has taken part. We also learn from folks who are active in the Arts Schoolaboratory network and Another Roadmap School, to name a few. All of this is to say that these networks consist of many people with diverse trajectories of collective study, and there are so many educational tools out there beyond this present publication. Locating our practice within this wider network and friendship of alternative schools, we hope to make clear that there is definitely more to learn and more to common from the different possibilities of collective studying.

The Global (De)Centre

globaldecentre.org

The Global (De)Centre (GDC) is a platform that brings together a growing network of scholars from across the world committed to producing new knowledge and using different epistemologies and methods by working collaboratively with a broad range of partners.

Display Distribute

displaydistribute.com

Display Distribute is a now-and-again exhibition space, distribution service, thematic inquiry, and sometimes shop founded in Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Another Roadmap for Arts Education

another-roadmap.net

The international network Another Roadmap for Arts Education is an association of practitioners and researchers working toward art education as an engaged practice in museums, cultural institutions, educational centers, and grassroots organizations in twenty-two cities on four continents. Another Roadmap School, launched by the Another Roadmap network, aims to provide open spaces for trans-regional exchange and learning in arts education as an engaged practice committed to social change. The participating working groups of the Another Roadmap School carry out local practice and research projects and collaborate in thematic clusters.

Arts Schoolaboratory

Arts Schoolaboratory is an international collaborative of nine contemporary art institutions that focus on the pedagogical or "learnalogical" challenges imposed by their specific contexts. Arts Schoolaboratory's goal is to develop a highly adaptable open-source model for information-sharing that organizations can incorporate, modify, and improve based on their own needs. Participants include KUNCI Study Forum & Collective and ruangrupa (Yogyakarta, Indonesia), Al Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art (Jerusalem, Palestine), RAW Material Company (Dakar, Senegal), Platohedro and Casa Tres Patios (Medellín, Colombia), Cooperativa Cráter Invertido (Mexico City, Mexico), PICHA (Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo), and Ashkal Alwan (Beirut, Lebanon).

“51 Personae” and the Challenges of Institutionalized Art in China

Chen Yun

Chen Yun is project coordinator for West Heavens, winner of the First PSA Emerging Curators Program (2014), initiator and organizer of the Dinghaiqiao Mutual Aid Society (2015–2018), member of the curatorial board of the 11th Shanghai Biennale (2016–2017), and curator of "51 Personae," which is now a long-term art project. She was born and raised in Shanghai, where she is currently based.

1. Quoted from the West Bund website at: http://www.westbund.com/cn/index/NEWS-CENTER/3.html (author's translation).

I started working at UCCA Center for Contemporary Art in 2007, a crucial moment in retrospect, right before the Beijing Olympics. I worked as if I were a volunteer, not only because I didn't come from an arts background (except for having taken a course in cultural studies while studying communications in graduate school) but also because I was learning, testing things out, and even daydreaming while observing what was happening around me.

My two years at what was then the only international contemporary art institution in Beijing—and also in China—provided me with access to an emerging contemporary art audience. Back then, public education within an art museum was a new idea. I would browse the websites of major Western museums like Tate or MoMA to "learn" what public education "looked like" in terms of form and content. My foreign colleagues also provided me with suggestions. I copied some of the "Western" public programming formats (like film screenings, artist talks, children's workshops, etc.) while also creating something new, like a curatorial workshop with an open call. Since curating is not generally taught at universities, and since there are people like me who don't come from a formal arts background, I thought: Why not teach and learn curating in a public space—in this case, an art institution?

My years at UCCA coincided with the integration of a Western art practice in China at the threshold of a new wave of art's globalization. This process involved not only the question of how to curate and present art in a public domain (which has gained a very different meaning in the post-Olympic years) but also the education and management of art. I had been inspired by the 2000 and 2002 Shanghai Biennales, and now I was excited to stand on the other side of the room, giving guided tours and planning future programs. I was optimistic about the educational function of contemporary art through institutional programs. To me, art institutions were by nature platforms for "public education." In other words, I believe that art is not something that can be read, processed, shared, or illustrated easily, and it is far from enough to recite quotations from catalogs, especially to Chinese audiences.

However, the scene drastically shifted in the following years, after I left Beijing and moved back to my native city of Shanghai in 2009. The 2010 Shanghai Expo was in many ways a replay of the Olympics. One obvious manifestation of this was that, like in Beijing, for the first time, all store signage was standardized by the government using public funds as part of street beautification projects. Since then, this has become a common practice on the streets in a demonstration that the government is taking back its leading role when it comes to cultural representations and signifiers, determining what is and is not beautiful or acceptable. Rather than any major events related to the art world, it was exactly

this street-level replay of Beijing before 2008 that struck me most at the time. This fundamental structural transformation of governmentality is more relevant to my understanding of "the public" than any artwork.

Along with the Expo came the blossoming of international art fairs and the emergence of new museums in Shanghai. The slogan, "Let one hundred museums bloom," has not been an empty promise. The Expo took over a vast tract of industrial land inside the city and transformed it into real estate ready to be "enriched" with "content" that would add to the value of the land as it was further developed. Heavy industry has already moved to the outskirts, and the industrial areas need to drive revenue in some other way. Against this background, culture and art have become the "content" that can serve the purpose of regenerating the value of land in the most efficient way. The most successful case in this sense is the West Bund, a name that was coined in the post-industrial/post-Expo scene to correlate Shanghai with "Paris, New York, London, or Berlin, where a mother river (Huangpu River, in the case of Shanghai) runs through while the art museums and galleries dotting the river have witnessed, accompanied, and even inspired the development and changes of the city."[1]

In the same year as the 2010 Expo, I joined as an assistant for West Heavens. Initiated and sponsored by the independent curator Johnson Chang, this project initially took the form of a series of exchanges between India and China, ranging from visual art, urban studies, and independent cinema to artist residencies, exhibitions, and publications. West Heavens did not have a permanent space; it always partnered with different outside teams, whether museums, governments, universities, publishers, the press, or individuals. While institutional art programs were booming across China, I was very lucky to work as a coordinator linking our projects with different institutions. West Heavens itself is a non-institutional entity, and standing outside any institution as an individual project manager granted me a consistent position from which to observe their changes.

The beauty of West Heavens was that its curatorial programs were realized over a period of many years. Over time, the changes in institutions and the social atmosphere (including audiences and art practitioners) can indeed be felt and sensed. Art workers frequently move between institutions. Thus, institutions can quickly change because their features are determined by the staff, whose number is limited. By this time, I had realized it was not appropriate to imagine a Chinese art institution in the same way as its Western counterparts. It no longer made any practical sense to look to MoMA or Tate as role models, and they lost their aura. Through my exposure to neighbors like India through West Heavens, I became suspicious of my earlier vision of how art



and the public interact through art institutions. Shanghai is NOT going to be Paris, New York, London, or Berlin. It is no better and no worse. It just isn't comparable.

Institutions in China are much more fragile than the architecture they occupy. Like the rest of the world, arts administrators are generally underpaid, and the only way to survive is to remain fluid between different institutions—or to be born into a wealthy family. Factors that influence the operation of institutions and the realization of their goals include funding, policy, censorship from different levels of government, the requirements of the property owners, and the permanent pursuit of higher visitor numbers—as if this were to represent the productivity of the museum workers. In this context, public educational programs are finding ways to reach out to audiences and, indeed, both audience numbers and public program numbers are increasing.

Over the next decade, an increasing number of young art workers graduated from Western art schools and proper curatorial studies departments in Chinese art academies and joined the workforce. They speak and read English and are well-informed about Western art history and contemporary art. Many have interned in art galleries or museums in China or the West. I started visiting independent spaces run by artists or activists in Hong Kong (Woofer Ten[2] and the Viva Blue House), Taiwan (Losheng Preservation Movement[3] and Treasure Hill), Tokyo (Amateur Riot[4] and Irregular Rhythm Asylum), and Yogyakarta (Ruang Mes 56 and KUNCI). The organizational rules of these spaces and groups were very much related to the kinds of struggles and the social and political contexts against which they were running. Instead of continuing to reach for Western examples, I found these neighboring practices in Asia to be much more relevant models. One fundamental rule is that there is no single rule to follow. The methods of self-organizing are indeed multiple in the realm of art, and all routes have to be reinvented to correspond to shifting realities. Although different regions in Asia share certain values, every place has its own local context.

In 2015, inspired by a West Heavens workshop program I coordinated with architectural students from Mumbai and artists and designers in Shanghai, I started a site-specific art project based in a working-class neighborhood in the northeast of Shanghai. I called the project Dinghaiqiao Mutual Aid Society (DMAS). Working in Dinghaiqiao, I felt particularly motivated by the local community and the questions of *Why?* and *What?* Beyond connecting local residents in time and space, DMAS had no ultimate "goal" or "mission" because the role a group can take is not static. In other words, a goal only emerges when a group is moving toward a need. Thus, it was not about how the group was put together or how it functioned, but how its members interacted with other people in the group—often people they hardly knew before.

While the rest of the city was "blooming one hundred museums," DMAS was "blooming" in the "lower corner" part of Shanghai.[5] The first year's rent of a three-story private house was covered by the small exhibition budget I won as part of the first PSA (Power Station of Art) Emerging Curators Prize. By the end of 2016, DMAS had already conducted experimental exhibitions, workshops, and serious talks on urban culture, history, and planning (and its failure) in Shanghai.

At that time, Raqs Media Collective had recently been appointed chief curator of the 11th Shanghai Biennale. They proposed the idea of a series of off-site projects building on my work with Dinghaiqiao Mutual Aid Society. Thus, "51 Personae" was born—including fifty-one online and offline events during the seventeen weeks of the biennale. It took us a full eleven months to curate and prepare the project with another three months to realize it. As the exhibition text describes:

> Curated by chief curator Raqs Media Collective and executed by curatorial collegiate Chen Yun and the "51 Personae" Group of the Dinghaiqiao Mutual Aid Society, the project "51 Personae" explores the possibilities of everyday life and adds to the

2. "Woofer Ten was the first non-profit art organization exploring Social Practice art in Hong Kong, China, funded by Hong Kong Art Development Council from 2009 to 2013. It was based at Shanghai Street Artspace in Yau Ma Tei, an aging grassroots community and neighborhood. Formed by a group of like-minded artists, curators, critics, researchers and educators, Woofer Ten aimed at introducing a lively conception of contemporary art engaging the community." "Woofer Ten," Counterspace, accessed July 20, 2022, https://counterspace.zone/2020/09/08/woofer-ten/. For further information, see their website: http://wooferten.blogspot.com/.

3. "On the morning of December 3, 2008, the Losheng Preservation Movement—ever expanding since it began in 2002—set out to protest a joint proposal made in 1994 by Taiwanese state and local political forces to relocate the Xinzhuang metro depot to the Losheng Sanatorium site, which housed patients with Hansen's Disease, formerly known as leprosy. After numerous petitions, negotiations, demonstrations, and protests, the Losheng Preservation Movement still failed to change the government's decision to demolish more than 70 percent of the sanatorium." Chen Chieh-jen, "Dissenting Voices of the Unwashed, Disobedient, Noncitizens, and Exiles in their Own Homes," *e-flux* 81, April 2017, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/81/125145/dissenting-voices-of-the-unwashed-disobedient-noncitizens-and-exiles-in-their-own-homes/.

4. "Shiroto No Ran (Amateur Riot) is a group around activist Hajime MATSUMOTO, who runs a second hand electric store in Koenji against repressive measures enforced by the authorities. The shop is also a centre for demonstrations, for example against the Iraq war in 2007. In 2011 the group started the first anti-nuclear demonstrations in Tokyo." "Amateur Riot," Nippon Connection, https://2020.nipponconnection.com/en/film/769/amateur-riot. Film available at: https://youtu.be/QusM3nEgyQw.

5. Shanghai is traditionally divided into the upper and lower corner, with the upper corner being the former French Concessions and the lower corner consisting of working-class living areas. Most galleries and museums tend to be concentrated in the upper corner.

6. Quoted from the Biennial Foundation website at: https://www.biennialfoundation.org/2016/09/shanghai_biennale/.

biennale the poetry of life. Three programmes, each featuring a Shanghai "figure," will be presented in the city every week over the 17-week duration of the biennale. "51 Personae" includes a soldier-like baker, a young man determined to ride on all the buses in Shanghai, a high school student who has witnessed the growth and fall of the city, a 12-year old candy paper collection group and 3 movie poster painters, etc.[6]

"51 Personae" was not curated by one individual. My role was that of a facilitator, responsible for the project and making decisions when needed. The project was a collaborative one, with a team of more than ten DMAS friends (not "members" because DMAS was not a club or a formal artist group; these friends happened to be interested and were willing to donate time and effort to work on "51 Personae" both collectively and individually). Besides, the real curators of each event were the personae themselves. Sometimes these were individuals or collectives, sometimes a corner of the city, the shifting urban space of Shanghai, or an object like a film about laid-off workers in the first year of the millennium. Sometimes they made very detailed proposals, while sometimes they provided the infrastructure upon which something could be shared and felt through an arranged gathering. The foundation of "51 Personae" was the texture of each persona and its relations with urban space. Their interactions were neither positive nor passive in these site-specific events, and they were staged as the main characters of a story in which each participant (recruited via the biennale platform) also played a role.



Zhao Yannian's stencils of Lu Xun's A Madman's Diary *for "51 Personae" at Jingyunli no. 7, installed February 7, 2017.*



One of the "51 Personae" stories took place at Jingyunli no. 7. A lady named Ms. Cheng owned the three-story house there, but she was forced to leave because the government wanted to preserve the street for "public purpose" and her house was in the first row. Ms. Cheng was intimidated by the government-employed gangsters who came to set the deal and was unhappy with the compensation. Her proposal was to enlarge woodblock prints by artist Zhao Yannian of Lu Xun's *A Madman's Diary* on the exterior walls of her house in protest. These images were stenciled over a couple of days and gradually disappeared over the next three years when Ms. Cheng and her tenants were forcibly evicted. During this time, Ms. Cheng saw a mural appear on the street not far from her apartment. The mural wall had been built by the government to designate a fenced area that was being demolished for redevelopment. It was a nice painting by a young artist participating in an exhibition at Duolun Modern Art Museum, two hundred meters away. Understandably, Ms. Cheng asked, "Why is someone allowed to paint on a public wall while I am not allowed to do the same?"[7]

Many such moments recall my days in Dinghaiqiao and the experiences of the people I met there or have worked with over the past ten years. The decline of public space in Shanghai is increasingly obvious with the rise of public and private museums after 2018. Art continues to be used as a

7. Power Station of Art, Raqs Media Collective, and Chen Yun, eds., *Why Not Ask Again: 51 Personae in the 11th Shanghai Biennale* (Shanghai: China Academy of Art Press, 2016).



Zhao Yannian for "51 Personae" at Jingyunli no. 7, installed February 7, 2017.

medium to attract audiences and to increase the value of real estate for the sake of further development (in other words, to gentrify property before it is resold). This does not mean that museums do not present great works of art. The problem is that the museums that host these works are irrelevant or even working against the livelihoods of the people who visit—or those who may never visit, but live next door. If we ask about the fundamental question of rights—the right to choose the life one deserves, the right not to be deprived, the right to refuse a lucrative deal, the right to design one's own signage, the right to see art in non-real-estate establishments—the institutionalized ways of presenting art don't make sense anymore. Again, it is not about the good or bad of each exhibition or work of art within the walls of the museum, but the structural political economy of how an institutionalized museum mechanism is now working to deprive the rights of everyday people and help support an ideology that aims to replace these rights with consumerism (including consuming artworks of different kinds in different ways). If we see museums as infrastructure, this infrastructure is more focused on facilitating the producers of works rather than liberating the audience. And maybe the two sides are, in fact, one.

Another recent phenomenon is that the idea of the museum, along with the idea of public or socially-engaged art, is now pervading the domain



Zhao Yannian for "51 Personae" at Jingyunli no. 7, installed February 7, 2017.

of real estate. The notion of the "museums with no walls" means that any real estate property can host artworks in public without even calling itself a museum. It can be a fair, a playground, a garden, a mall, a neighborhood, anything. Thus, how can it be possible for resistance to make sense within this context?

Partly to meet this challenge and partly because rents are increasing in many districts of Shanghai, "51 Personae" shifted into a publication project. Publishing, or working with books, is not so different from working online in virtual space or offline in real space. Books serve as an in-between site. The responsibility and function of an editor is not so different from that of a curator. Instead of temporarily occupying a physical space, as a normal exhibition does, books travel to the places where readers are. The production of a book involves not only collaboration with the author, translator, and designer but also a conversation with the reader after the production process. The process never ends; the printed and bound paper continues to serve its purpose and travel to its readers, even when the project is finished. It enters into a hidden history where books are archives of the times and may serve the future in ways that we can hardly imagine today. Books can be reproduced and shared with contributors. Thus, they have the potential to be economically independent, outside of the dominant space-based economy. As we have learned from Western examples, art publishing need not be limited to artist books. It can be a communicative effort that is vivid and creative enough to allow for an opening up of space both within and outside the pages, extending a particular moment with a worthwhile duration.

West Heavens

westheavens.net

West Heavens is an integrated cross-cultural exchange program. It aims to untangle and compare the different paths of modernity taken by India and China, facilitate high-level communication between the two countries' intellectual and art circles, and promote interaction and exchange between the two countries through social thought and contemporary art.

Treasure Hill Artist Village

artistvillage.org

Treasure Hill Artist Village, located along the Xindian River in Taipei's Gongguan district, is situated in a historical milieu centered on Treasure Hill Temple, a municipal historical site, and extends to the surrounding settlement. Illegal shanties, erected mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, meander up the natural slope, haphazard and intricate, forming one of Taiwan's unique visual landmarks. In 2004, Treasure Hill Temple was formally registered as a historical building and preservation efforts began as part of a community revitalization program. At the end of 2006, the Taipei City Department of Cultural Affairs initiated renovations of this historical quarter, and Treasure Hill Artist Village officially opened on October 2, 2010. It is currently engaged in three major projects: historical community preservation work, an artist-in-residence program, and Treasure Hill Traveler's Hostel.

Viva Blue House

artistvillage.org

Viva Blue House seeks to become a showcase for excellence in people-led heritage conservation based on a revitalization program that contributes to community capacity-building and the establishment of an inclusive civil society.

Irregular Rhythm Asylum

ira.tokyo

Irregular Rhythm Asylum is an infoshop that opened in 2004. Keeping anarchism and DIY as its main themes, it carries publications, zines, and goods related to social movements and cultures of resistance and serves as a space for people directly involved, both in Japan and abroad, to gather. IRA also sometimes hosts events like exhibitions, film screenings, workshops, and parties.

Ruang MES 56

mes56.com

Ruang MES 56 is an artist collective working cooperatively with their communities and networks to manage a house for studios, a playground, education, and a place to live. Formed in 2002, this community focuses on the development of photography and contemporary art crossing over with other disciplines in critical and contextual approaches.

RAQS Media Collective

raqsmediacollective.net

Founded in 1992, Raqs Media Collective is based in New Delhi, India. Raqs Media Collective follows its self-declared imperative of “kinetic contemplation” to produce a trajectory that is restless in its forms and exacting in its procedures.

Circl(e)ing Inside Out:

Tools for Pedagogy as Art Practice

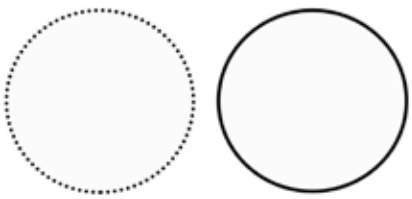
Sanchayan Ghosh

Sanchayan Ghosh is an artist pedagogue and works as an Associate Professor at Kala Bhavana (Institute of Fine Arts), Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan. He has been practicing site-specific art as a workshop-based collective community dialogue leading to numerous forms of public installations, pedagogical engagements, and self-organized initiatives in different parts of India and the world. His community-based projects have been supported by IFA Bangalore (2016) and Khoj, New Delhi (2014) and were awarded the Charles Wallace Trust Grant in 2003–04. Over the last twenty years, he has also worked with different performance forms from all over India. He participated in the Chennai Photo Biennale CPB III (2022), Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2012), and Dacca Biennale (2016). His work was included in the education project Under the Mango Tree and in the radio project of documenta 14 and has been associated with different pedagogy projects for FICA (New Delhi) and Five Million Incidents by Max Mueller (Bhavana, Kolkata, and SSAF, New Delhi). He has also been a curator of the Kochi-Muziris Students' Biennale (2018). Selected solo exhibitions include "Reversed Perspective: 3 Conjunctures" (2014) and "Sisyphus Effect," together with Experimenter, Kolkata (2010).

Game 01: Initiating the Circle Game–Toward a Temporary Community

Drawing a line between dots to form a circle with bodies by passing energy.

Rules: Do not give instructions to one another if anyone makes a mistake. Follow your own body and the responsibility to pass the energy you have received to the person standing next to you.



Initiating the Circle Game is conducted by a referee or a pedagogue. Form a circle with at least ten participants. Each participant stands as if they are dots to form a circle. Keep your right arm over the left arm of the person standing to your right and touch each other's palm. Keep your fingers straight, criss-crossing each other's palm at 90-degree angles. Keep your eyes closed. Once the referee touches the shoulder of any participant, they start the game. Hold the palm of the person standing to your right and fold your right-hand fingers tightly. Once your neighbor responds by holding your hand, release your fingers. Keep holding hands. As the person to your right receives the energy, they repeat the same action and transfer the energy to the next participant. The game ends once the energy passed by the right palm is received back in the left palm from the person standing to your left.



Initiating the Circle Game workshop for Under the Mango Tree—Ulterior Sites of Learning at documenta 14, Kassel, Germany, 2017. Photos: Anike Joyce Sadiq



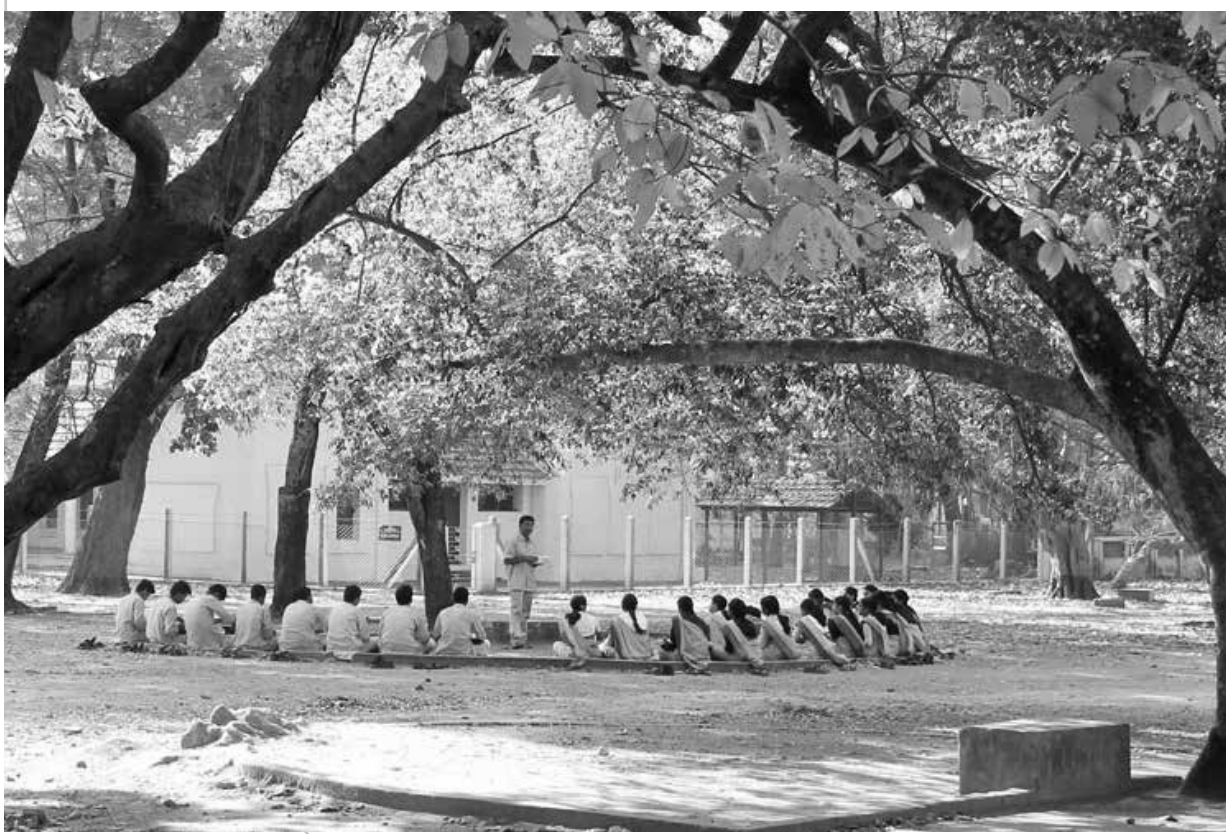


Initiating the Circle Game workshop for Under Tree—Ulterior Sites of Learning at documenta 14, Kassel, Germany, 2017.
Photo: Anike Joyce Sadiq





Initiating the Circle Game with a group of young students in a madrasa as part of "Incomplete Circles: Invisible Voices," Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kerala, India, 2012. Photo: Sanchayan Ghosh



Open-air circular class in the Patha Bhavana complex of Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India. Photo: Sanchayan Ghosh

Role of Pedagogy in Private-Public Interface

Art as a tool to engage in the public sphere has evolved from an anti-institutional strategy of the avant-garde to a more integrated conversive space with multiple stakeholders where the role of the institution is incorporated and acknowledged in the process of generating a shared space of social and cultural experience. In any process of sharing art as both an experience and a discourse, the role of pedagogy has emerged as a significant interface. Moreover, pedagogy can also create a dispersion of the self into a shared space of multiple ownership and transform ownership from individual authorship into multilayered, diverse relationships. Pedagogy has emerged as an interface between the public and the private role of institutions.

Pedagogy evolved from an autocratic, linear form of knowledge, power, and a system of control through the Victorian era to a participatory model of collective learning in the last one hundred years. It was used as a tool to control its colonial subjects in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries all around the Global South. Academicism in art institutes became a process to homogenize and transform local knowledge into practices and systems of technical information. Since the early twentieth century, different models emerged to reconstitute pedagogy as an interdisciplinary critical framework of practice that situates process as an interdependent framework for multiple disciplines. In other words, pedagogy emerged as a new form of praxis, an interface of history and phenomenon, performance, and presentation, and an individual and collective process of making and learning.

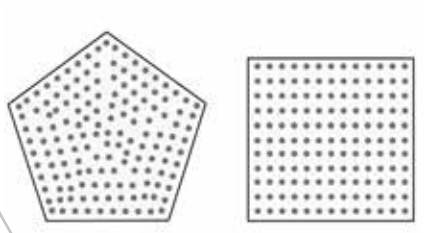
I am inspired by the Brahmacharya ashram in Santiniketan initiated by Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore in 1905, where he experimented with pedagogy as practice and explored it as an interface for transforming the relationship between the individual and the collective in the context of a specific location. As part of the pedagogy of living, making, and learning, he initiated multiple engagements with the neighboring landscape and environment. Engaging with and celebrating the change of seasons was one of the important tools to generate a reciprocal relation with the landscape and to create a community lifestyle in Santiniketan. Tagore tried to engage with education as a holistic way of life, whether through *Vriksharopan* (tree planting) as a process of collective engagement and learning with nature or by creating open-air circular classrooms under mango trees. Circling or creating different forms of circles as a way of learning together became a daily practice. The pedagogue, whom he called a guru, would learn together with the students in a shared space of cohabitation.

Pedagogy in this respect becomes an initiative to disperse individuality into a multilayered critical engagement of multiple dialogical situations of making and sharing. The notion of the collective is addressed as a convergence of voices to generate multiple temporary communities. Here, community is not a marginal entity but a cross section of people meeting temporarily in a specific site. The notion of authorship can be decentralized when it becomes a shared space of participatory dialogue, and the process becomes an interaction formed by dialogue. This can only be achieved when practice is dispersed into a shared moment of pedagogical reflections where there are moments of co-working and co-learning. Workshops—specifically, workshops as games—can provide the possibility of an uninhibited space of making, failing, and learning. In the absence of an outside spectator, the act of viewing becomes a reflective process in enabling the cohabitation of a space and exploring together while retaining the individual dialogical state of existence.

Game 02: Game of Dots— On the Impossibility of Coming Together

Rules: Do not cross each other. Do not come close to each other.

Clues: Individual dots can move to the opposite side only when the rest of the dots move together. Look for gaps all around. Look all around you. There can be gaps anywhere.



Take a closed space (a rectangular room) and invite participants to stand equidistant from each other and from the wall. The bodies need to be arranged in such a way that there is no free space between them. Now the referee asks the individual participants to move to the opposite corner from where they are standing without breaking the distance from each other.

Education in the ashrama is education for life at its fullest . . . from its very inception it has been my desire that children of our ashrama should show an eager curiosity in establishing contact with their immediate environment. I had wished that the teachers who joined the ashrama should likewise observe and seek and enquire and should be persons who would look beyond their textbooks and find joy in direct experience.

—Rabindranath Tagore,
"Ashrama Education"[1]

When Rabindranath Tagore initiated his Brahmacharya ashram in Santiniketan, he proposed a counter-model to the linear, frontal Victorian academic model that is situated in nature, or, to be more specific, the forest. Although he was inhabiting the Vedic tradition of the guru situated in a forest removed from the main center of social existence where the students would come to the guru's site of practice to learn and live together, he was also proposing a reconstruction of a similar environment from scratch in the small plot of land owned by his father, Debendranath Tagore. Debendranath Tagore was using this place for the purpose of meditation and practicing a newly formed spiritual community called the Brahma Samaj. Tagore initiated the idea of an alternative school in the form of an ashrama by drawing on references from earlier models of pedagogy—not necessarily reviving them, but following the spirit of the models to reengage in the new context of colonial rule. It also served as a countermovement to notions of education by initiating self-organized circles of intimate pedagogy. He proposed a site of living and working together, where learning is practiced as a daily engagement with nature and fellow students. Tagore introduced the guru beyond the traditional idea of the *guru-sishya* (teacher disciple) *parampara* (tradition). By situating a school in an arid landscape of red laterite soil from the neighboring land west of the Chota Nagpur Plateau, both the guru and the disciple had to work together to build the school. Although Tagore was proposing the model of *Tapovana* (forest) education, he was suggesting the idea of a forest school in a place where there is no forest. So, the school was literally built from scratch by planting trees and making houses. Thus, self-reliance and collective making were central to education. The space in which learning was situated was an active component of the conceptual base of the school and learning.

In Santiniketan, Tagore introduced the practice of walking as a collective tool to explore together. In different traditions of institutional practices, *padabraj parikrama* (exploring through walking) has been a tool to connect and explore through the body, especially in the Bhakti movement of medieval India. Many past scholar-practitioners have adopted walking and singing as devices to connect to people and share their ideas—as in *sankirtan* in the Baishnav tradition. The integrated form of singing derives from a tradition called *boitalik*, which is an imperial form of early morning singing to awaken kings. *Boitalik* was reengaged not only as an early morning activity of walking and singing by candlelight but also to commemorate any social or cultural activity that was celebrated in the ashrama life.

The community events of *Vriksharopan* (planting of trees) incorporated group dancing and singing processions while a small sapling to be planted was carried on a palanquin to a specific location. Students, faculty, and neighboring residents would join the dancing and singing procession to reach the destination to plant a tree. This process of walking and rejoicing was a regular tool in Santiniketan cultural practice to get people together and generate a collective sense of making and living. Every year, as a tribute to the great master, Nandalal Bose, on his birthday, students and faculty would gather for a *boitalik* in the early hours of December 3rd and make a *parikrama* (walk) around the campus. They would reach the master's house singing songs by Tagore and carrying lighted candles that would be placed in front of the building. The walk would end with eating sweets in the house provided by the late teacher's family members.

In a similar way, walking, visiting neighboring villages and landscapes, and learning about people and nature were a regular practice in the curriculum of Patha Bhavana, the informal school of the Brahmacharyashrama in Santiniketan, and also the fine arts institute Kala Bhavana, both founded in 1920.

In recent times, the curriculum of the painting department has expanded the study of landscape into a site-specific dialogue with particular land and its practices and ways of life. Students spend days

1. Excerpt from Rabindranath Tagore, "Ashrama Education," in *Introduction to Tagore* (Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati, 2016).

2. Excerpt from Rabindranath Tagore, "Letter No. 10 from Russia," in *Russiar Chithi* (Santiniketan: Visva-Bharati, 1960).

3. *Sankirtan:* A tradition of walking and singing emerged in sixteenth century Bengal under the leadership of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a spiritual leader of Baishnav religious thoughts, with Hare Krishna mantras and other songs, wherein the love between Radha and Krishna was symbolized as the love between one's soul and God.

4. Nadalal Bose was the first *Acharya* or the head of the fine arts faculty at Kala Bhavana in Santiniketan, which was founded in 1920.

Another means to learn from direct experience is to travel. You all will recollect I have been emphasising on the need of a travelling institution. India is such a huge country, it is so diverse in every aspect that it is difficult to understand it only from the gazetteers of Hunter. At one time walking by foot and going for a pilgrimage was a regular activity of the country, all the major pilgrims spread all over the country. Pilgrimage was the only means to experience these places. Just from an educational point of view if the students are taken to visit all over India for a period of five years their education will be complete.

—Rabindranath Tagore,
"Ashrama Education"

working together with the farmers, learning processes of engaging with the land and generating site-specific conversations about their processes, practices, and lifestyle. This results in on-site participation in daily activities on the land, learning directly from nature. Later, the participants share their dialogues as a blog online.[5]

Game 03: Walking Game

Part One: An internal game of walking as personal and collective recollection of the self, engaging with one's own body and mind as a site of cultural memory.

An enclosed, dimly lit room is selected; it can be a large hall or a combination of multiple interconnected rooms, but it must be a space that can be closed from inside. The referee starts the game by asking all the participants to follow their path, an individual path, in a closed room, and to remember the path they choose. Once every participant has decided on a path, one by one, all the participants start walking in their path. Each participant must try to follow their own path. The game continues until the referee says to stop.

While walking, the referee asks participants to recall memories of someone inspiring or influential that has changed their way of thinking. The referee asks them to try to understand more about this person by asking themselves about everything they know about him or her. The referee can also refer to the memory of a place, a space, or an event that has been extremely significant and delve into an introspective journey while everyone walks in their path. The game ends once the referee announces that it is coming to an end and asks participants if they feel they need to stop walking, lie down on the ground, and stay in that position with their eyes closed.

Rule: Do not talk to each other or instruct each other while walking. Try to respond to the words shared by the referee. Do not push or disturb the path of the other participants. Respect each person you meet on the way by stopping and waiting until the other passer-by crosses. Keep lying on the ground until all participants have finished their walk and decide to lie down.

Part Two: Walking as following the leader, sharing and listening to each other's point of view. Discuss anything that comes to mind.

Another version of the Walking Game starts with a similar process of following one's own path and walking together in an enclosed room or space. In this version, participants don't engage in internal introspection, but rather open a dialogue with each other about a specific issue or experience as they go through the process of Follow the Leader (see Game 04).

Follow the Leader Game is a game where one person in a group starts an action while others follow the leader. Once the leader decides to end their activity, the leader stops and someone else can become the leader by starting their own action. The process continues as a free platform of walking and sharing until everyone collectively decides to end the game.

Rule: Once somebody is sharing, the others repeat the leader's every single word in a murmur. Once the leader is finished, they say CHANGE and the whole group comes to FREEZE wherever they are. As soon as somebody decides to talk, others follow the next leader. But if there are one or more leaders who intend to lead, whoever the majority of the group follows will become the next leader. The other leaders will participate with the group, waiting for their turn.

Drawing as an Individual and Collective Engagement

Rabindranath Tagore engaged with modernity not as a break with the past, but as a reengagement with practices that are situated in a place and develop an individual conversation with it to emerge into new forms of individual and collective dialogues. Numerous local traditions were researched and reengaged by artists like Abanindranath Tagore and, later, under the supervision of Nandalal Bose and his fellow teachers like Gauri Bhanja, to explore frameworks of reconstruction. *Alpana* was one such tool explored in the curriculum of Kala Bhavana.

Alpana is a traditional single-line drawing technique used in Bengal households.[6] In Bengal, *alpana* is connected to harvesting rituals, and it is mostly employed to initiate a space for both social and religious rituals. Most of the drawings are made with rice paste mixed with water. Then the finger is used to directly apply the pigment to make marks on a coating on the floor made with a mix of *gobar* (cow dung) and clay. Most often, the drawing starts with a central circular form and then expands outward to denote a space within which the ritual will be initiated. In this case, the reach of the body determines the immediate stretch of the drawing and, accordingly, the drawing expands as the body moves in different directions. However, *alpana* can also take a more open-ended, traveling form as the drawing can start from any point on the ground and expand out into space in different directions. In the western part of Bengal and the plateau areas of Purulia and Jharkhand, the tradition features more of a splashing of pigments than a linear form of making a drawing.

In Santiniketan, *alpana* was explored both as a method of initiating space in traditional practice for different social events like *Halakarshan* (the initiation of the harvesting festival), *Vriksharopan* (tree planting festival), and the celebration of seasons like *Poush Utsav* (celebration of the winter), *Basanta Utsav* (celebration of the spring), or *Varsha Mangal* (celebration of the rain), as well as a collective form of working together and celebrating. *Alpana* was also explored as a framework for making pictorial designs for individual artworks, for murals, paper-based works, and compositions on textile for *batik, kalamkari,* and other forms of functional materials like garments and wooden furniture. Santiniketan visual culture reworked the ritualistic practice of *alpana* into a possible form for reinterpreting design from a temporary cultural form to a daily lifestyle-based practice, where the aesthetics evolved around deriving an overall system of life and living.

5. See, for example, Arpita Akhanda, *Dialogue Around Site-Specific Art Activity* (blog), http://sitespecificdialogue.blogspot.com.

6. Other versions of such floor-based drawings are *rangoli* in the north of India and *pongal* in the southern part of India.

The sky is full of the sun and the stars
The universe is full of life
Among all these I have found a place
And in wonder and amazement I sing.
The world is swayed
By eternity's rushing tide
Rising and falling
I have felt its tug in my blood
Racing through my veins
And in wonder and amazement I sing.

—"Akash Bhara Surya Tara,"
song lyrics by Rabindranath Tagore[7]



Alpana *in Kala Bhavana was introduced by Nandalal Bose. Derived from the ritualistic tradition of drawing on the floor with rice paste in Bengal, Bose transformed the practice into a conversation between natural forms, design, body, space, and individual and collective expression. Photos courtesy of Kala Bhavana, Nandan Museum, and a private collection.*





1. Excerpt from the song "Akash Bhara Surya Tara" written by Rabindranath Tagore and translated by Sri Kumud Biswas.

Circular classrooms were devised around mango and other trees in Santiniketan to reconfigure the practice of participatory learning—of sharing and exploring together. Open-air classrooms are situated in such a way that the teacher or guru is an integral part of the circle. Education in Santiniketan was a daily way of life that incorporated circularity both as an intimate situation of learning and also in relation to the larger context of the world that expanded into the universe.

Santiniketan uses an everyday, site-specific, close-up pedagogical engagement with a specific location and then reconfigures the site into an expanded field of a global network. University platforms like Visva-Bharati (which means "world in a nest") situate the self in the world, expanding it to an unbound spectrum of a cosmic reality in dialogue with, and transformed by, both a realist perspective and the nomadic transnational position of being in constant flux. In practice, Santiniketan went beyond the institutional framework and situated itself as an interface of a play of temporary rules that can be broken in order to reconfigure the game itself into a dynamic system of converging and diverging circles.



Performance of the Sound Game by members of the theater group Lokadharmi, Fort Kochi, as part of the public installation of the project "Incomplete Circles: Invisible Voices," Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kerala, India, 2012. Photo: Sanchayan Ghosh

The Other Circle

Similar to the pedagogical model of the circle as a form of learning together, an avant-garde theater director, Badal Sircar, introduced the idea of the circle as a tool to break away from the linear, one-point view of the proscenium stage, turning it into a democratic space of making, learning, and sharing. He incorporated the notion of the circle as a conglomeration of disjointed points—all in the same position of achievement and failure. This collective, ritualistic position of participation—where everybody participating is a performer and also, at the same time, a viewer—became the core of my interest in the game as a process of initiating individual/collective participation where rules are meant to be broken as much as followed.

Badal Sircar devised a new form of theater space as a "third theater" that intended to reverse the performer/viewer relationship as a shared space of collective experience. He developed numerous games of collaborative learning through holistically exploring 360-degree body engagement, thus allowing not only a forward and backward point of view of learning but also knowledge beyond the progressive idea of the development of space, body, and neighborhood. For Sircar, the rules of the game are tools for personal improvisation of unlearning and going beyond the rules. He created Initiating the Circle Game (see the beginning of this essay) as the initiation of a process where individual participants transform from standing as points in a circle to a line of bodies that transfer energy to complete the circle. In this game, the initiator plays the role of a referee only to introduce the rules of the game. There are no observers and everybody present at the site becomes a participant, engaging with the other players.

As a site-specific practitioner myself, I find pedagogy an important tool to engage in a diverse, multilayered community. The activities initiated in Santiniketan to propose, practice, and sustain community regeneration on a long-term basis and the short durational games introduced by Badal Sircar are tools to activate pedagogy as a reciprocal participatory practice. I am interested in generating games to activate temporary communities within the heterogeneous body of contemporary society and explore individual memories of collective coexistence and cohabitation. In this respect, I try to generate a workshop situation by drawing from the pedagogical orientation of Santiniketan's practices and exploring the possibility of games as new sites of temporary site-specific dialogues that facilitate intra- and inter-community engagement. These games are often inspired by Badal Sircar's workshop games and are frequently based on the recollection of memory through the exploration of space, body, sound, and text. Moreover, these games also engage with the notion of learning as a multilayered process of critical dialogue with a site. They incorporate the panoramic spectre of reverse perspective as an inclusive form of collective representation of multiplicity.

Game 04: Follow the Leader

Stand in a line facing in one direction. The person in the front becomes the leader. The leader can perform any action or sound with their body and the rest of the group should follow. Once the referee says CHANGE, the group stops and the leader goes behind the last person in the line. The next person in the front leads the group.

Rules: Take care that your actions are not too fast and that the changes are accessible to the group. Do not make too many abrupt changes. The leader takes responsibility for the group. The group also follows the leader to show solidarity. Follow the immediate person standing in front of you.



Follow the Leader Game as part of the sound workshop for "Incomplete Circles: Invisible Voices," Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kerala, India, 2012. Photo: Sanchayan Ghosh



Initiation of The Circle Walk with introductions by the participants, Under the Mango Tree—Ulterior Sites of Learning at documenta 14, Kassel, Germany, 2017. Photo: Anike Joyce Sadiqu

Under the Mango Tree: The Circle Walk

With Under the Mango Tree, an "aneducation" pedagogy program of documenta 14 in Kassel in 2017, I had the opportunity to start the first session of the two-day workshop process with a group of fifty participants from different parts of the world. Since Kassel was a more formal situation of meeting and exchange, I introduced The Circle Walk as an initial process for generating temporary community dialogues. I wanted to introduce the notion of making circles and pilgrimage as a form of practice for the collective process of exploring and learning. Pilgrimage is not about reaching a destination/shrine, but it is an act of walking together and working and learning in the process.

This time, the pilgrimage was to the different trees planted by Joseph Beuys together with the people of Kassel. Beuys planted 7,000 oak trees in Kassel between 1972 and 1977. So 2017 marked the thirty-year anniversary of Beuys's tree-planting project. In this gathering, we made a collective pilgrimage to the trees Beuys planted in the city and saw how they were surviving. We sat together, walked together, and shared and learned. The idea was also to explore the impossibility of a circle in a walk.

Circle Walk (excerpt)
by Sanchayan Ghosh

. . . It's a game with rules
we walked in a circle
impossibility of maintaining relationship
with neighbors, left and right
we walked in circle
it's a pilgrimage of walking together
reaching out to other Beuys trees
it's not about destination
it's not about discovery
it's about walking in a circle
exploring, engaging and learning
as we walk
traffic signal stood in our way
red to green
circle converge and remerge
we walk as dots in a circle
meandering road sliding down
dots cluster, squeeze across
circle melts like liquid forms
across old buildings

. . . new cluster of Beuys trees
backyard of fine arts school, Kassel
meandering path through the trees
circle of dots incorporate the trees
Mr. Volker recollects the planting
7,000 oak trees
growing in the city, changing demography
reconfiguring public spaces
removal and reinstalling
7,000 still incomplete
dots in circle reconcile
recollect memories of the walk
drawing graphite marks on paper
left on the ground
bodies as dots stood in circle
to draw a line
hands spread over hands
fingers straight, eyes closed
energy transfer
clenching the fingers of your neighbor
right to left or left to right
energy passes from one body to the other
expanding a line through, energy shifts
waiting to return to oneself
completion of the circle
drawing a line through dots
of unfamiliar hands
temporarily in a circle
to dissolve and disperse.





The Circle Walk as part of the aneducation program Under the Mango Tree — Ulterior Sites of Learning at documenta 14, Kassel, Germany, 2017. Photos: Anike Joyce Sadiqu

Under the Mango Tree:
A Self-Organized Gathering

The second part of Under the Mango Tree, "A Self-Organized Gathering" was held in 2020 in Santiniketan under the mango tree on the campus of Visva-Bharati. The program was co-curated by Sepake Angiama, Tara Lasrado, and myself. This time, participants were students from different art colleges and Kala Bhavana, the fine arts institute. Twelve experts from different parts of the world joined the workshop and explored pedagogy as a possible tool for collective engagement.



As a process of initiating and introducing the group, *alpana* was applied as a pedagogical tool to draw each participant's shadow under the sun as a way of registering each person inside the circle. First, a circular mud bed was created with the support and participation of three Santali women from the neighboring village, and a traditional technique of drawing with rice paste was demonstrated by a local artist, Rabi Biswas. One Santali woman, Sumati Hansda, explained the method for preparing the mud bed. This was followed by a drawing session where the shadows of individual participants generated a physical gesture that was traced by another participant—creating a mutual appreciation and participation in the process of collectively registering each other's presence as a temporary community in the workshop. The workshop continued for four days as the visiting experts shared their tools and their working methods with the group.





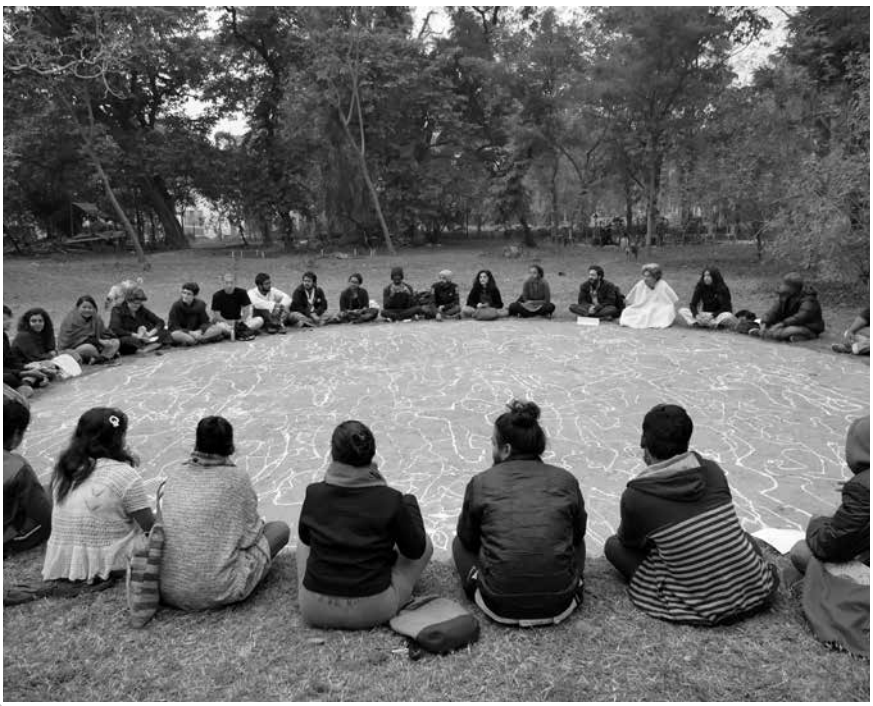




Under the Mango Tree: A Self-Organized Gathering, Malancha, Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India, 2020. Photos: Bobby Seyers, Shreyo Sengupta, and Ujjal Day.







Under the Mango Tree: A Self-Organized Gathering, Malancha, Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India, 2020.



Laying the circle with the indigenous technique of preparing a ground for everyday use, Under the Mango Tree: A Self-Organized Gathering, Malancha, Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India, 2020. Photos: Shreyo Sengupta

Game 05: Movement in Slow Motion (Understanding One's Own Body)

Stand in the form of an "A" with your feet spread on the ground. Focus on the center of your body and bend your knees as much as is comfortable. Shift your bodyweight to one leg and then slowly move your other leg in a circle along the ground. Continue for sometime, switching your legs. Then slowly add your hands in coordination with your legs and explore the space around you, to the side, above and below. Follow your body and shift your bodyweight; move slowly. Relax your stiff joints in the arms, elbows, and neck—let the body flow like water, melt on the floor, and shift your bodyweight to move more slowly. Close your eyes and try to move. Allow your body to transform into liquid and melt in contact with any obstacle. Keep moving as you meet other bodies and bodies melt into each other.





Movement in Slow Motion, a workshop game shared as part of Under the Mango Tree—Ulterior Sites of Learning, documenta 14, Kassel, Germany, 2017. Photos: Anike Joyce Sadiqu

Games as a Pedagogical Tool for Individual and Collective Learning and Making

In 2018, Lalit Kala Akademi invited me as a visiting artist to engage with the people of Port Blair, the capital city of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (the furthest union territory to the south of India, which became a strategic point of military control both during British rule and the present government in India). The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, originally inhabited by the Indigenous community of Jarwa and other tribes, have been a land of migrant communities who came from mainland India as jailed convicts during British rule. After the independence of India, when India was partitioned into Bangladesh and Pakistan, many immigrants from East Pakistan came to settle in Andaman. Later, when Bangladesh became independent, a third wave of migrants came again from Bangladesh to settle. Additionally, over the last fifty years, many people from the Indian mainland have migrated to Andaman to settle there for work and business. So, as a public engagement project, I wanted to explore the cultural memories of Port Blair's different migrant communities. In this respect, I interacted with a group of ten young local practitioners from varied disciplines through different games of collective research. This process extended to include the private memories of different communities in order to explore the state of cultural dialogue. The project intervened in the colonial strategy of study as an ethnographic tool and decolonized the process of learning as a reciprocal participatory reflection in an inter- and intra-community situation.

As an outsider in this context, I collaborated with the local participants to develop an interactive working process toward generating a public space around the coexistence of multiple cultural values. Finally, the different workshop processes of interaction and documentation were transformed into a multimedia installation in the public space of the Andaman Club, a historic architectural structure built during the British colonial rule.

In the process, the project explored the collective role of performance, performative memory, new media, and installation art practice to map and generate a public gesture. Moreover, with digital technology, archives became accessible as raw material and this paved the way for multilayered dialogue with the past and present. The process evolved around examining archival memory and the present state of the cultural and social memory of different migrant communities, exploring self-determination in the post-migration context of Port Blair, Andaman.

Game 06: Sculpture Game—Deconstructing the Image, Recalling Gesture as a Memory of an Action, Documenting as a Group

Rules: Every time a participant adds his or her gesture to the existing form, they must touch the existing bodies at any point. Once the gesture is fixed, they must remain still and close their eyes.

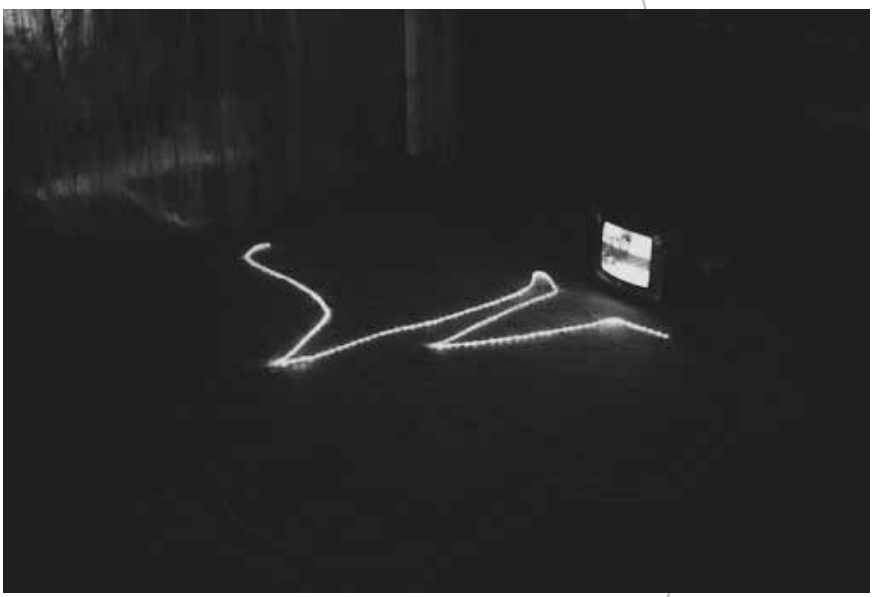
The group is divided into two parts. As one group engages with the game, the other observes. Individual participants have to imagine an action, recall a gesture closest to the action, and stand as a sculpture in space. A second member from the same group has to interpret the gesture and add, expand, or transform the idea posed by the first participant. In a similar way, the rest of the participants join one by one and expand the sculptural entity as a composite form with bodies. The formation is now left open for interpretation by the other group. After the observers make comments, individual bodies in the composite sculpture talk about their ideas regarding the image they have conceived. The process is repeated multiple times with individual members from each group having the opportunity to lead the formation of the sculpture independently.





Workshop-based interaction between participating members working toward a reciprocal sharing of individual memory, Andaman Club, Port Blair, India, 2018. Photos: Sanchayan Ghosh






ANDAMAN CLUB

Radicalizing Pedagogy as a Neo-Institutional Nomadic Conversation with Site, Collective Knowledge, and a Transforming Archive

Santiniketan proposes the possibility of a counter-pedagogical model of social and cultural engagement, generating a community that is always in flux. It imagines the possibility of a radical departure from the hierarchical development of industrial modernity, replacing it with a horizontal, rural idea of the modern that does not separate the individual from the location, but rejuvenates existing local practices into a dynamic, transforming social and cultural discourse from both an individual and a collective perspective. Santiniketan imagines the institution as a form of practice—situating the very form of the institution as a transit point between the private and the public. The idea of a conversive mode of pedagogy—internally and externally acknowledging and learning from the immediate environment and developing a lived aesthetics in relation to the local inhabitants—is a conscious effort to decolonize the notion of public culture into a self-organized practice of sustenance and transformation.

The project Aakil Aarsi (mirror of the mind), as it is referred to the Santali language, is a pedagogical conversation with the local tribal community living in small villages around the campus in Santiniketan. Rabindranath Tagore set up the school in Santiniketan as part of an arid laterite soil landscape cohabited by the local tribal communities, the Santals. Tagore always referred to a learning relationship with the community and a mutual, interdependent relationship between the emerging community in Santiniketan and the tribal communities living around it. Over the course of the last one hundred years, the two communities have coexisted with mutual sharing and the Santals have been instrumental in maintaining the campus and its everyday life. The first and second generations of university-educated Santali scholars have emerged. At the moment, there is a specific Santali language department in the university.

In recent times, the university policies have changed. Adopting the norms of a central university, the relationship between the campus and its neighbors has been formalized. The informal access of the campus by its neighbors—who cohabited the landscape as part of their everyday lives—has been disrupted and the landscape of Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati as a campus has been fragmented. The Santali community's access to the neighboring landscape has been cordoned off with walls.

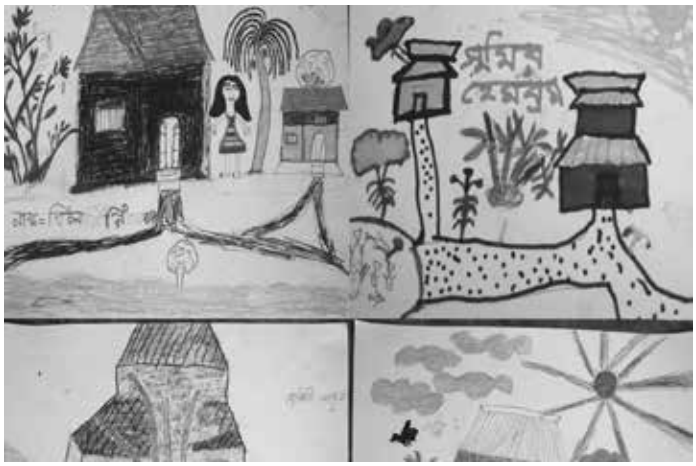
Aakil Aarsi tried to reclaim a reciprocity in the community through a working relationship of making together and exploring pedagogy as a tool to generate community engagement. A meeting with the Santali community members of Pearson Palli and Fuldanga village was developed in collaboration with Baidyanath Murmu (a prior student of Kala Bhavana). The idea of collecting dry bamboo leaves from the neighborhood and generating naturally made paper with the leaves was discussed and a series of community workshops were developed that included the production of a paper-making studio in the local club, the creation of mural drawings with local children mapping the transformation of their neighboring landscape, and then collectively learning how to transform dry bamboo leaves into natural fiber in order to make paper. Later, the community members of the two villages created a performance in the form of a procession and a public sharing of the process. This occurred as part of the Hul Festival, an annual Santali festival

to commemorate the contributions of the community to freedom and independence. The process was shared with both the university community and other Santali members from the neighboring villages who came to visit the festival.

Today, Santiniketan is still exploring institutional space as an active site of engaging with the transforming realities both inside and outside. It continues to engage with the institutional form as a dynamic site of public/private interface in the context of the changed global phenomenon of neoliberal strategies of homogenizing pedagogical tools and toward a standardized framework of knowledge and production. By including ongoing heritage practices and living traditions, Santiniketan proposes the institution as a dynamic form of public engagement, where pedagogy goes beyond the notion of teaching or educating. Instead, it is a holistic tool of social and cultural engagement—opening up the discourse of aesthetics as a lived experience of everyday life and existence.











Aakil Aarsi (mirror of the mind): A community-based dialogue on landscape with Santali community members of Pearson Palli and Fuldanga in the neighborhood of Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, together with Baidyanath Murmu (a prior student of Kala Bhavana), 2011.









Photo: COLLECTIE TROPENMUSEUM Onderwijzend personeel van het Nationaal Onderwijs Instituut Taman Siswo te Yogyakarta Java TMnr 10002264.


IIB

Principles of Art Education in Taman Siswa

by S. Soedjojono and Sindhusiswara

Translated by Pychita Julinanda

This document outlines the principles of art education practiced within *Taman Siswa*, an educational institution associated with the Javanese radical pedagogy movement that was established during the Dutch colonial occupation in Yogyakarta. Here we present the English translation of the document as a historical text and a model of a vision that developed a vernacular pedagogy rooted in a strong artistic and aesthetic sensibility.

The document was prepared by Sindoedarsono Soedjojono and Sindhusiswara. S. Soedjojono was a prominent painter who later became known as the father of Indonesian modern art. His works were also affiliated with the pioneers of artist collectives such as *Persatuan Ahli Gambar Indonesia* (Indonesian Illustrators Association), *Seniman Indonesia Muda* (Young Indonesian Artists) in the 1940s, and *Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* (Institute of People's Culture) in the 1950s and 1960s. Sindhusiswara was a teacher and advocate of *Taman Siswa*.

The document was published in 1954, a period when Indonesia was still in the early phase of nation-building. This explains the strong inclination to see art practice as an inherent part of the development of cultural identity. Traditional art was highly valued. The scope of art was wide, and it gave sufficient space to craft and various everyday skills. Art—making art, teaching art, and creating infrastructure for art education—was seen as a path to develop an identity filled with joy and a social environment with a strong sense of justice and respect. However, as the national education system has increasingly adjusted to the uniform and commercial nature of the development regime, these art and education principles have become marginalized.

Taman Siswa was founded by Ki Hajar Dewantara on July 3, 1922 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In its system, the educational levels are divided into:

1. *Taman Indrya*
equivalent to *Taman Kanak-Kanak* in the modern Indonesian education system, or preschool.

2. *Taman Muda*
equivalent to *Sekolah Dasar* in the modern Indonesian education system, or primary/elementary school.

3. *Taman Dewasa*
equivalent to *Sekolah Menengah Pertama* (SMP) in the modern Indonesian education system, or middle/junior high school.

4. *Taman Madya*
equivalent to *Sekolah Menengah Atas* (SMA) in the modern Indonesian education system, or high school.

5. *Taman Karya Madya*
equivalent to *Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan* (SMK) in the modern Indonesian education system, or vocational school.

6. *Taman Guru*
equivalent to university.

The school applies *sistem among*, from the Javanese word *mong* or *momong*, meaning "caring for children." The teaching methods are based on educational principles of care and dedication rooted in love. Teachers and educators are called *pamong*; their responsibility is to educate and care for the students with affection.

The first *Taman Siswa* founded by Ki Hajar Dewantara, and the headquarters of the institution, is named *Ibu Pawiyatan*. The central governing body of the association is named *Majelis Luhur*. The students have a student council in the school as well, named PPTS (*Persatuan Pelajar Taman Siswa*, or Student Council of *Taman Siswa*).

Principles of Art Education in *Taman Siswa*

Advice on Fine Arts
by S. Soedjojono and Sindhusiswara
Spokesperson: Sindhusiswara
Yogyakarta, April 21, 1954

Premises

1. Artistic sense is inherent in every individual. This artistic sense must be elevated. When a person shows strong potential in one of the art fields, the talent must be developed, nourished, strengthened, and refined.

Situation

2. The educational institutions [of *Taman Siswa*] have yet to attend to the matter closely, thus potentials were put to death due to errors in the education system.

Trials

3. Such errors must be curtailed or diminished with the presence of art education in the institutions. Educational institutions must present artistic ambience. Courses in educational institutions also comprise forms of fine arts, which include: painting (writing), carving (sculpting), chiseling, decorating in general, and, for women, handiworks as well as handicrafts. Art tools are those available and accessible around us.
4. To fill and be filled in the art ecosystem, cadres must be prepared in and for each institution. To qualify as an art educator (cadre) is to have courage, integrity, authenticity, probity, and veracity (beauty). The cadre is trained at the headquarters.

Scheme

5. Art educators have two qualities:

   A. GENERAL—Aside from the existing course and in addition to the art courses, any subject below that can be offered by the institution may be inserted into the curriculum with the provision of adequate time and tools. In essence, they are: teaching art (including the teaching environment), understanding art, doing art (creating).
   This builds from *Taman Indrya*'s (preschool in *Taman Siswa*'s educational system) three main principles: teaching, understanding, and doing art. It may be adjusted according to the three levels of class in the institution and based on its high-low class variations.

   B. SPECIALIZED—Related to skills (vocational). Aside from subjects taught in the class, free and communal exercise is provided to enhance and give more opportunities for students to stimulate their creative potency under the guidance of local experts.
6. With experience obtained from these art exercises, educational institutions specializing in art from the lowest grade to the highest grade are established.
7. Art education is designated for common people through demonstration, exhibition (exposition), and other methods.
8. A society consisting of artistic people will be "well-ordered and at peace," as each of its members is able to find pleasure in their environment and no one will disturb the other in the search for pleasure and joy.
9. A *sistem among* (nurturing system), based on previous experiences, can result in satisfactory outcomes and is adequate in providing encouragement and guidance for students to enter into the art environment.

Existing Prerequisites

10. Existing materials can be found at heritage sites such as temples and museums and from folk art practices created by both the royals and the commoners in the provinces.
11. All materials can be used for developing art education to advance and enrich our national characteristics distinct from other nations. To enliven national characteristics (soul), we must not be satisfied with only existing goods (artistic products) and must consider the circumstances/necessity of time and place.
12. Materials from foreign cultures can be used after deliberately adjusting them to our

needs and only if the aim is to enrich, expand, and elevate our culture.

13. Places for exercises: Both in general and vocational education, we may use spaces outside of the classroom, around the institution, or any outside surroundings.
14. Leadership or guidance: Before we can have cadres as stated in Point 4, we can seek help from local experts, in reference to *sistem among*, who can look after each of the students accordingly.
15. Artworks are made from accessible materials; they become beautiful, practical, tangible, and useful for everyday lives, health, and decorative purposes.

Minimum Plan

16. For general education: Defining general guidelines for art education. The general framework may be set upon deliberations based on contextual experiences of each branch [of *Taman Siswa*].
17. Assigning the plan to be executed by a committee. The cost would be fully covered by the Association [*Majelis Luhur*].
18. Each branch can start infusing art ambience into educational institutions and family households.
19. For vocational education: Both the headquarters and the branches are to seek talented students to be adequately taught and guided.
20. The headquarters will perform experiments and gather resources, using the Association's budget, that would be beneficial for the branches.
21. The headquarters will establish two permanent bodies using the Association's budget for the purposes of:
    A. Training cadres of art educators
    B. Experiments & resource gathering
22. Each branch and *Ibu Pawiyatan* [*Taman Siswa*'s first branch in Yogyakarta] will gather and train local talents, using the branch's budget.

Final Deliberation from *Taman Siswa* General Assembly on Art Education

May 13–18, 1954

Pronouncement No. 1

GENERAL GUIDELINES OF *TAMAN SISWA* ART EDUCATION

I. GENERAL

Art education is defined as educational practices aimed to educate and provide opportunities for students to develop their sense of aesthetics in accordance with their potentiality and in line with their direction in life so that each student may grow as an active, creative, aesthetic being with a firm sense of self.

II. METHODS

Methods of art education in accordance with *SISTEM AMONG*:

1. Providing opportunity and freedom (as implied in *Tut Wuri Handayani*[1]) for the students to enjoy and relish aesthetics, to find their potentiality, and to develop their sense of aesthetics in accordance with their potentiality and in line with their direction in life.
2. Cultivating opinions and initiatives of the students and providing opportunities to actualize them.
3. Fostering the students to cherish verity and authenticity.
4. Guiding the students to the understanding that even if aesthetics is universal, the embodiment of art must be rooted in its society as the cornerstone.

III. EFFORTS

1. Non-neglection of education of expression (children's play, singing, drawing, handicrafts, etc.) in the branches.
2. Activation of practices in the artistic field through PPTS (*Persatuan Pelajar Taman Siswa*, or Student Council of *Taman Siswa*)
3. Establishment and preservation of tight relations with artistic bodies and artists and providing spaces in institutions for them to conduct lectures, training, and discussions.
4. Formation of artistic bodies in each branch organized by *pamong*, students, and external enthusiasts.
5. Provision of all-encompassing art education in each branch that would gradually include every field of art.
6. Establishment of art *Taman Guru* and art laboratories.
7. Provision of art education and guidance in each artistic field by the Education Department of *Majelis Luhur* both directly and indirectly through responsible/related bodies.
8. Publication of monthly arts and culture education magazine or space in *PUSARA*[2] at the minimum.

Yogyakarta, May 16, 1954
Signed by *Permusyawaratan Pendidikan Kesenian Taman Siswa*
(Assemby on Art Education of *Taman Siswa*)

Pronouncement No. 2

PRINCIPLES OF DRAMATIC ARTS EDUCATION

1. Drama: Is an imitation that portrays an occasion/occurrence/situation
2. Dramatic arts: Methods of imitation of an occasion/occurrence/situation that presents an embodiment of a sense of aesthetics
3. Stages of dramatic arts according to stages of human life, both individual and collective, consist of:
   - Children's milieu
   - Teenagers' milieu
   - Adults' milieu
4. Dramatic arts taught in institutions include:
   - Children
   - Teenagers
5. Since childhood, a person has performed drama, albeit not in artistic frameworks/forms.
6. Aims: Dramatic arts education aims to cultivate and develop a sense of aesthetics of drama

and to guide the development of talent.

7. Dramatic arts are the most comprehensive form of art in relation to other branches of art. Therefore, dramatic arts education is very important for the development of a child's sense of aesthetics.
8. Implementation: Dramatic arts education may be implemented in all classes of all parts of institutions.
9. Resources of dramatic arts education:
   Stories of children's own experiences within and/or outside the institutions (storybooks, occurrences at school, etc.)
   Tools utilized are those accessible and available within the surroundings to achieve highest value.
10. Dramatic arts education may be implemented by all branches of *Taman Siswa* within any circumstances.

Yogyakarta, May 17, 1954
Signed by *Permusyawaratan Pendidikan Kesenian Taman Siswa*

Pronouncement No. 3

FUNDAMENTALS OF MOVEMENT ARTS

1. There are two types of [body] movements:
   - Reflexes (involuntary) movements
   - Coordinated (voluntary) movements
   Coordinated (voluntary) movements are divided into two based on their purpose:
   - Means of survival
   - Manifestations of the sense of aesthetics
2. Dance is rhythmical and harmonious movement.
3. Dance arts consist of:
   - Elementary dance arts (children's games)
   - Plastic-realistic dance arts (*dayung gondang*)
   - Semi-*gestyleerd* (stylized) dance arts (*Wanara, Ketoprak*)
   - Semi-*gestyleerd* (stylized) dance arts (*daja*-ballet)
   - Freestyle dance arts (*tayub-menoren*)
4. Dance art is ideal when it is accompanied by sound; therefore, it is also a form of traditional arts.
5. The development of the learning progress is dependent on the growth of the character, temperament, and nature of the dancer in their movement ability.
6. Throughout the nation, there are a variety of traditional dances that share similar characteristics.
7. The variety of traditional dances in each of their components is adequate in providing dance arts education.
8. Movement arts education starts from (local) traditional dance arts. As the student progresses into the next grade, they may study other traditional dances from other regions.
9. Movement arts education may start from *Taman Indrya* in its simplest form (children's games) and grow in difficulty as the students progress into the next grade.
10. In *Taman Indrya* up until *Taman Anak* Grade III, dance arts education may be provided in relation to the subjects learned in the grade.

A. Stages of Dance Arts Education:

1. In *Taman Indrya* up until *Taman Muda* Grade III, students are provided with lessons in simple dance arts and plastic-realistic dance arts.
2. In *Taman Muda* Grades IV and V, students are provided with lessons in semi-gestyleerd [partially stylized] dance arts [children's play].
3. Teenagers and adolescents are provided with lessons in semi-*gestyleerd*, then *gestyleerd* (stylized), and finally *sterk gestyleerd* (heavily stylized) dance arts.
4. Resources used: respective (local) traditional dances. When the students reach a certain age and/or grade, they may study other traditional dances.

B. *Pencak* Lessons

Majelis Luhur is to create a distinctive committee involving several experts of several *pencak* schools whose responsibilities are:

1. To determine which forms of *pencak (silat)* are taught in *Taman Siswa*.
2. Stages of *pencak* taught in each level/grade/age.

C. Interbranch Cooperation
To ease the implementation of dance arts education in *Taman Siswa*, branches are to exchange educators in cooperation with the nearest branch.

D. Schedule
When the book/guide by *Majelis Luhur* on movement arts education is available, the class schedule will alternate between physical education and movement arts.

E. Laboratory Test
Prior to its implementation in branches, classes of dance arts and *pencak silat* in each stage (refer to Points A and B) will be tested by the Laboratory.

F. Branch Progress Control and Monitoring
To grasp the progress of dance arts education in each branch, *Majelis Luhur* will conduct control and monitoring in the Regional Advisor Office.

G. Non-Pedagogic Dance Arts Education
1. *Taman Siswa* does not approve of non-pedagogic dance arts education.
2. Therefore, *Taman Siswa* takes a firm stance on which characteristics and methods of education are left to the discretion of each branch.
3. Endorsed methods by *Permusyawaratan Pendidikan Kesenian* (Assembly on Art Education):
- Each branch is to conduct dance arts classes according to methods upheld in *Taman Siswa* and to display real evidence of good practices.
- Each branch is to build and maintain relations with government institutions and arts institutions in order to contribute ideas endorsed and conducted in *Taman Siswa*.

H. [Dance Arts as] Subject
This year, dance arts is to be included in students' reports as a facultative subject.

Yogyakarta, May 17, 1954
Signed by *Permusyawaratan Pendidikan Kesenian Taman Siswa*

Pronouncement No. 4

LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERATURE EDUCATION

I. FUNDAMENTALS
1. General guidelines of *Taman Siswa* art education.
2. A sense of aesthetics is inherent within each individual.
3. Each individual is capable of perceiving and experiencing aesthetics within each of its manifestations, as long as factors of aesthetics are not overshadowed by other factors of life.
4. Art education must be directed to the embodiment of harmonious life, the harmony of *trisakti jiwa*.
5. Art education must start at *Taman Indrya*, in which it is a period of aesthetic [development].

II. OBJECTIVES
1. To develop and preserve the sense of aesthetics of language arts and literature.
2. To educate and provide opportunities in creating language arts and literature.
3. To provide educational balance to pedagogy aimed only to develop brain intelligence.

III. METHODS
1. Linguistic techniques requiring intellection, which often hinders the mind to generate a spontaneous sense of aesthetics, should be utilized to strengthen the ability and unfold the sense of aesthetics of language arts and literature.
2. Knowledge and proficiency of linguistics are utilized to pave the way for a sense of aesthetics of language arts and literature.
3. Language arts and literature education must not violate the spirit of the students' development in accordance with the essence of human life.
4. Language arts and literature must pay attention to factors of:
   - Age milieu
   - Spatial milieu
   - Contextual language of the era
5. Provision of language arts and literature education is not to be presented as preparation for exams.

IV. EFFORTS

A. Methodic and Didantic

1. A sense of aesthetics can only be nourished with forms of aesthetics. Therefore, language arts and literature education must be engaging for the students to be able to listen, read, and sense the assigned literature and to create on their own.
2. In accordance with Article III, Points 3 and 4, students of *Taman Indrya* and *Taman Muda* Grades I, II, and III are yet to be provided with foreign language arts and literature education that is not in their mother tongue, as it would hinder their development of a sense of aesthetics.
3. The education provided in *Taman Muda* is aimed to prepare the students for a more advanced language arts and literature education in *Taman Dewasa*.
4. The education provided in *Taman Dewasa* consists of advanced systematic language arts and literature education in accordance with Article II, Paragraphs 2 and 3, and Article III, Paragraph 5, in which students are to be introduced to aesthetic theories in language arts and literature.
5. The education provided in *Taman Guru* and *Taman Madya* consists of aesthetic theories in language arts and literature.
6. Paragraphs 4 and 5 apply to all parts (Exact Science, Cultural Science, and *Chusus*/Specific).

B. Other

1. Institutions must own a proper library, even if modest. It must be adequate for education.
2. Institutions are to allocate schedules for performances of dramatic arts, declamation, meetings and debates, etc.

Yogjakarta, May 17, 1954
Signed by *Permusyawaratan Pendidikan Kesenian Taman Siswa* in the Literature Arts Section Assembly

Pronouncement No. 5

GUIDELINES OF FINE ARTS EDUCATION IN *TAMAN SISWA*

I. DEFINITION

A. Fine arts as a branch of art is an embodiment of the sense of aesthetics materialized in form and space (two- and three-dimensional).
B. Fine arts include painting, writing, illustration, handicrafts, and handiworks.

II. BASIC PRINCIPAL

In acknowledgment of the sense of aesthetics and veracity inherent in every individual, which must be nourished in accordance with the visions and objectives of *Taman Siswa* and societal development.

III. OBJECTIVES

Fine arts education aims to educate students to perfect a sense of aesthetics and veracity with fine arts.

IV. EFFORTS

1. With *sistem among*, fine arts education is provided and conducted within and outside of the classroom by considering the students' talents.
2. Provision of human and material resources as well as an artist studio, and establishment of relations with artists and artistic bodies/institutions.
3. Provision of courses for fine arts educators by *Majelis Luhur*.
4. Allocation of schedule for fine arts exhibitions both in branches and headquarters.

DRAWING SYLLABUS AND EDUCATION PLAN IN *TAMAN SISWA* INSTITUTIONS

I. FREEHAND DRAWING:

A. Fantasy
B. Nature

II. FORMAL DRAWING:

A. Object (color composition, line,form)

B. Animals/plants
C. Human (proportion, anatomy)
D. Perspectives and projections,
related to engineering/sciences/disciplines

III. DECORATIVE DRAWING:

A. Studying national motifs
B. Exercising freestyle/specific *ontwerp* [design] (advertisement, illustration)

IV. LEARNING ABOUT FINE ARTS AND ITS RELATIONS TO OTHER DISCIPLINES

V. VISITING ARTISTIC OBJECTS IN GENERAL AND FINE ARTS OBJECTS IN PARTICULAR TO BE STUDIED AND ENJOYED.

ANNOTATION

To develop the integrated syllabus (complete in every aspect), research of these aspects is of importance:
A. Class schedule
B. Handbook for *pamong* (school custodians), and
C. Balance with writing class

1. Ki Hajar Dewantara coined the proverb *Ing ngarso sung tulodo, ing madyo mangun karso, tut wuri handayani*, translated as "(for those) in front should set an example, (for those) in the middle should raise the spirit, and (for those) behind should give encouragement," to describe his educational ideals. The final line, *Tut Wuri Handayani*, is used as the motto of the Indonesian Ministry of Education. For more information, see "Ki Hajar Dewantara," *Wikipedia*, last modified September 25, 2022 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ki_Hajar_Dewantara#Tut_Wuri_Handayani.

2. A magazine of education and culture founded by Ki Hajar Dewantara.
3. As described by the Indonesian dictionary, *pencak* is the performance (ability) of self-defense by parrying and dodging. *Pencak* is more commonly known as *pencak silat*, Indonesian traditional martial arts.
4. An education concept by Ki Hajar Dewantara, literally translated as "trinity of the soul." It consists of *Cipta, Rasa,* and *Karsa*, which respectively relate to the mind, heart, and will.

SYLLABUS PLAN

Handiworks (and handicrafts) in *Taman Siswa*
Schedule of the Week, À 40 Minutes

Taman Indrya		*Taman Anak*		*Taman Muda*		*Taman Dewasa*		*Taman Madya*		*Taman Guru Indrya*		*Taman Guru*	
Grade I	(12)	Grade I Grade II Grade III	(2) (2) (2)	Grade IV Grade V Grade VI	(2) (2) (2)	Grade I Grade II Grade IIIa Grade IIIb	(2) (2) (2) (2)	Grade Ia Grade Ib Grade IIa Grade IIb Grade IIIa Grade IIIb	(1) (1) (1) (1) (1) (1)	Grade I Grade II Grade III	(4) (4) (4)	Grade Ib Grade I Grade II Grade III	(4) (2) (2) —

Materials: simple and accessible resources within the surroundings (school and home)

SCHOOL	WORKS	MATERIALS
Taman Indrya	a. Building	Toolbox *(bouwdoos),* matches
	b. Sticking	Simple colored paper, mosaic
	c. Cutting, tearing, folding	Simple colored paper, mosaic
	d. Poking *(prikken)*	Paper, rope/string, fruits, flowers
	e. Weaving	Paper, bamboo, leaves
	f. Sculpting *(boetseren)*	Clay
	g. Gardening	
Taman Anak Grade I	a. Cutting	Paper, rope/string, bamboo, fruits, flowers, etc., lightweight materials
	b. Tearing	Paper, rope/string, bamboo, fruits, flowers, etc., lightweight materials
	c. Sticking	
	d. Weaving	
	e. Folding	
	f. Sculpting	Clay
	g. Gardening	
Taman Anak Grade II	Continuing lessons from Grade I, with responsibilities of cleaning the classroom and the house	Thin cardboard
Taman Anak Grade III	Continuing lessons from Grade II, with the addition of creating playthings and painting (coloring)	Thicker cardboard
	Basic *songket*[5] for girls	

Taman Anak Grade IV	Continuing lessons from Grade III, with the addition of everyday essentials in relation to class subjects	Shell, wooden box of fruits
	Girls to advance their lessons from Grade III (creating tablecloths)	Mori[6] cloth, etc.
Taman Anak Grade V	Continuing lessons from Grade IV, with the addition of spinning, basic bookbinding	Glass, fibers, etc.
	For girls: addition of simple household chores (cooking, cleaning the floors)	
Taman Anak Grade VI	Continuing lessons from Grade V, with the addition of handiworks with plywood and preparations for skills useful in societal life	Plywood
	For girls: continuing lessons from Grade V	
Taman Dewasa Grade I	Continuing and expanding lessons from *Taman Muda*. Creating learning tools from accessible materials, e.g. wooden ruler from bamboo (plywood), smooth carton. Building simple mockups.	
	Girls: basic sewing (seams), sewing buttons (buttonholes), expanding lessons from *Taman Muda* on household ornaments (*fraaiehandwerken* [beautiful *handicrafts*], *batik*[7])	
Taman Dewasa Grade II	Continuing lessons from Grade I, with the addition of simple, essential tools from accessible materials, e.g. album (book cover), envelopes, etc.	
	Chiseling wood, leather, carvings	
	Girls: expanding lessons from Grade I	
Taman Dewasa Grade III	Continuing lessons from Grades I and II, with the addition of simple ornaments, e.g. lampshade, brooch, badge, images on glass, boxes, etc.	
	Creating simple tools related to other subjects, e.g. brushes, pencils, etc.	
	Girls: expanding lessons from Grade II, e.g. cooking, baking	
Taman Madya	Expanding lessons from *Taman Dewasa* Grades I to III in each of its parts	
	Girls to expand lessons, with the addition of simple babysitting	
Taman Guru	Lessons given in *Taman Guru* are, in general, lessons to be taught to students of *Taman Indrya, Anak, Muda,* and *Dewasa*, as well as provisions of their own life	
	Girls to expand previous lessons.	
Grade I	Continuing lessons from *Taman Dewasa*, with the addition of basic patterns, sewing one's own cloth	
Grade II	Continuing lessons from Grade I. Sewing varieties of samples (fragments) of lingerie (underwear), baby clothing. Patching and fixing	
Grade III	Continuing lessons from Grade I with numerous additions, such as sewing clothes for kids and adults	

5. Traditional clothing and/or methods of weaving cloth
6. Unbleached plain cloth used for *batik*, shrouds, etc.
7. Traditional method of wax-resistant dye applied to cloth to create patterns.

ANNOTATION

Fraaiehandwerken is given throughout *Taman Anak* and *Taman Muda*.
Lessons in *Taman Dewasa* perfect the (basic) lessons from *Taman Muda.*
Taman Guru is provided with *Fraaie* (beautiful) and *Nuttigehandwerken* (useful handicrafts).

ADDITIONAL

A. To perfect the handiwork lessons, each institution has a workspace as well as a storage space to keep tools and projects.
B. To alleviate difficulties faced by *pamong*, an annual meeting (forum) will be held.
C. There will be a central annual exhibition to expand and extend related knowledge.

Yogyakarta, May 17, 1954
Signed by *Permusyawaratan Pendidikan Kesenian Taman Siswa* in the Fine Arts Section Assembly

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Pronouncement No. 6

FUNDAMENTALS OF SOUND ARTS

I. DEFINITION

Sound arts education is defined as efforts of education to develop a sense of aesthetics in sound arts.

II. OBJECTIVES

To nourish and cultivate a sense of musicality, proficiency, and understanding, as well as to guide the development of talent.

III. CLASSIFICATION/RESOURCES

Sound arts education is divided into:
A. Traditional sound arts (of native origins or other origins)
B. National (Indonesian) sound arts
C. Foreign sound arts
Each is divided into:
A. Vocal
B. Instrumental

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

Sound arts education is provided:
A. Throughout each year of education (*Taman Indrya, Taman Muda, Taman Dewasa, Taman Madya, Taman Guru, Taman Guru Indrya*) in accordance with its level.
B. As a subject of study, vocal arts take precedence, while instrumental arts are provided in or outside the class.
C. Sound arts education in *Taman Indrya* starts with one's own traditional songs. As students progress into the next grade, they will gradually be taught other traditional songs, national (Indonesian) songs, and foreign songs.

V. METHODS

To achieve the objectives (Article 2), each locality is to determine and utilize the most suitable method respectively (e.g. *Sariswara*[8] in Java).

VI. EQUIPMENT AND INSTRUMENTS

Equipment for instrumental sound arts education is not limited to common instruments (*gamelan,*[9] piano, *kolintang,*[10] etc.), but also includes simpler instruments (bamboo pipe, *angklung,*[11] *terbang,*[12] etc.).

VII. EFFORTS

A. Providing sound arts courses to expand the sound arts *pamong*'s knowledge
B. Providing more guidebooks for sound arts *pamong* (both vocal and instrumental)
C. Compiling traditional songs
D. Reviewing *Taman Siswa*'s songs
E. Conducting the "3 DJULI"[13] song

Yogyakarta, May 17, 1954
Signed by *Permusyawaratan Pendidikan Kesenian Taman Siswa* in the Sound Arts Section Assembly

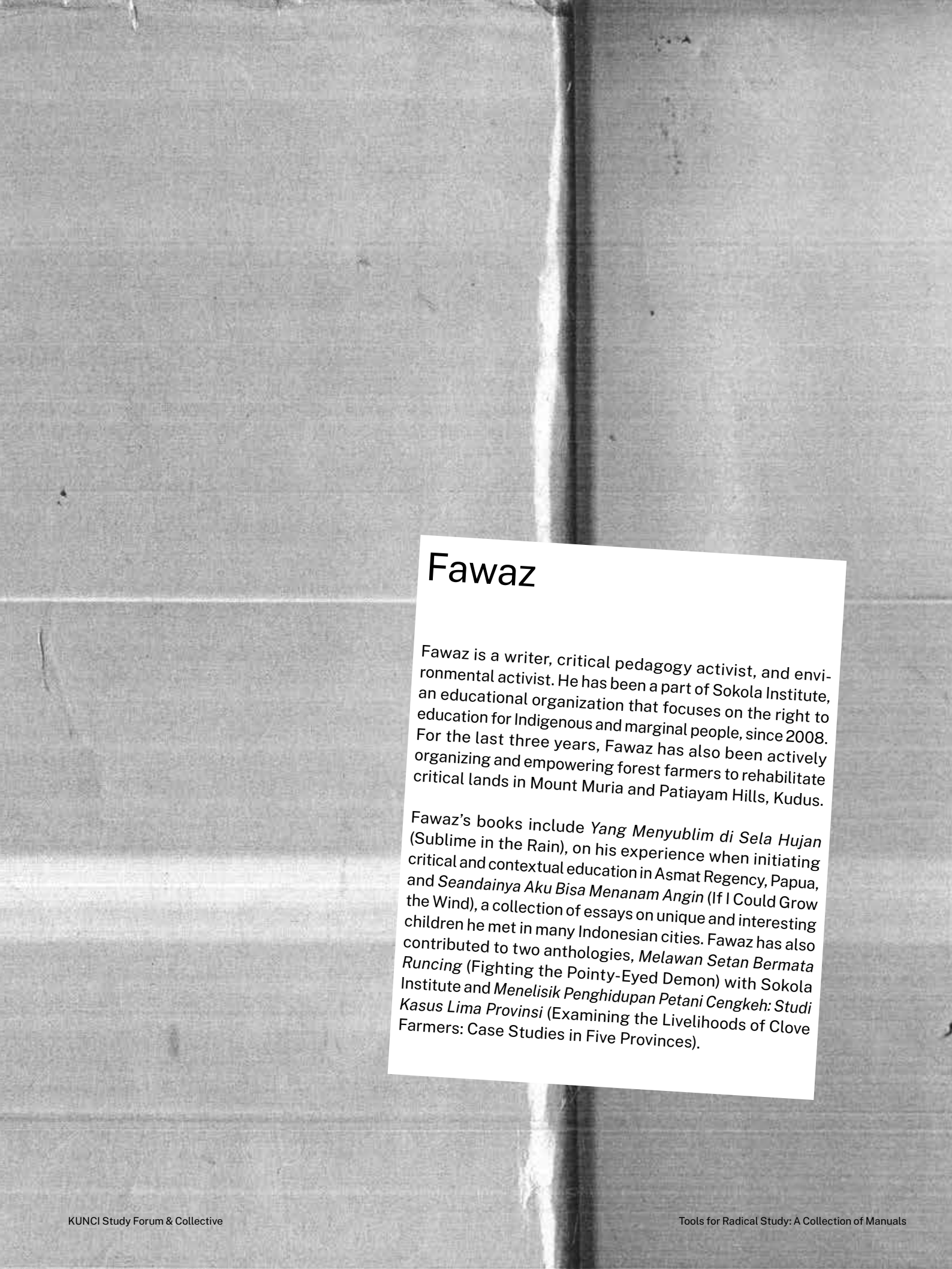
8. Method of education founded by Ki Hajar Dewantara, conducted by educating children through art to familiarize them with all beauty/aesthetics and its subtleties by combining the experiences of all the senses.

9. Traditional Javanese, Sundanese, and/or Balinese ensemble music.
10. Traditional Minahasan percussion instrument.
11. Traditional Sundanese instrument made of bamboo tubes.
12. Or *Rebana*, a type of tambourine.
13. Hymn of *Taman Siswa.*

Contextual Education and the Zeal of Common Cause:

The Applied Literacy Program at Sokola Asmat

Translated by Pychita Julinanda



Fawaz

Fawaz is a writer, critical pedagogy activist, and environmental activist. He has been a part of Sokola Institute, an educational organization that focuses on the right to education for Indigenous and marginal people, since 2008. For the last three years, Fawaz has also been actively organizing and empowering forest farmers to rehabilitate critical lands in Mount Muria and Patiayam Hills, Kudus.

Fawaz's books include *Yang Menyublim di Sela Hujan* (Sublime in the Rain), on his experience when initiating critical and contextual education in Asmat Regency, Papua, and *Seandainya Aku Bisa Menanam Angin* (If I Could Grow the Wind), a collection of essays on unique and interesting children he met in many Indonesian cities. Fawaz has also contributed to two anthologies, *Melawan Setan Bermata Runcing* (Fighting the Pointy-Eyed Demon) with Sokola Institute and *Menelisik Penghidupan Petani Cengkeh: Studi Kasus Lima Provinsi* (Examining the Livelihoods of Clove Farmers: Case Studies in Five Provinces).

The Indonesian education system must be designed according to the interests of the people and the nation, the interests of cultural and social life in the broadest sense. Therefore, we must acknowledge the diversity in talent and living conditions among students [in accordance with the context of the areas of agriculture, trade, etc.]. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate diversification strategies to optimize the benefits for students, as well as for society and the nation.

—Ki Hajar Dewantara



Photo: Fawaz

There are three vital points that I would like to highlight from this statement by Ki Hajar Dewantara, a figure widely known as the Father of Indonesian Education: the need for an education system in accordance with the people's interests, the diverse abilities and backgrounds of students, and the diversification of learning materials to optimize benefits. Each point is aligned to the interests of the people and the nation. Based on the statement, the education system must contextually adapt to the social, economic, and geographical backgrounds of the students and favor the interests of the people at large and the nation. But has the national education system been implemented in accordance with what was imagined by Ki Hajar Dewantara?

More than half a century after Dewantara's statement, the national education system has gone in the complete opposite direction. Contrary to being contextual, the system is uniform and resistant to vital adjustments needed to align with the social, economic, and geographical context of students. This uniformity is designed with Jakarta as the center and then implemented throughout the nation—from the attire to the hours of study to the subjects and the exam questions. But what is more concerning is that the national education system is attempting to mold the thoughts and hearts of students in compliance with the authoritative will of Jakarta. What Ki Hajar Dewantara envisaged has turned into mere jargon, buried under the uniformity imposed by the authorities.

This essay is an attempt to illustrate the literacy programs run by the Sokola Institute, an educational institution providing education rights for Indigenous peoples and marginalized communities in Indonesia that have long been neglected by the state-sponsored uniformity of the education system.[1] The programs run by the Sokola Institute are

1. Sokola is the first non-profit organization in Indonesia that focuses on education for Indigenous peoples and other marginal groups. Established in 2003 by five education practitioners and community facilitators, Sokola develops contextual and culturally sensitive methods and approaches in order to help Indigenous peoples cope with changes and defend rights over their culture and habitat. More information at: https://www.sokola.org.

2. Sokola Rimba, or Jungle School, is a literacy program for the Orang Rimba, a nomadic tribe that inhabits the Bukit Duabelas Forest area. More information at: https://www.sokola.org/program/sokola-rimba.

3. In 2013, Sokola collaborated with the Diocese of Agats to organize a literacy program for children and adolescents in Kampung Mumugu Batas Batu. This program involved ninety-two learning participants who are now literate and can apply their literacy skills in their daily lives. More information at: https://www.sokola.org/program/sokola-asmat.

Photo: Fawaz



designed to surmount this uniformity by providing contextual education services that are tailored to cultural and economic backgrounds as well as the geographical conditions of students. Through basic literacy, applied literacy, community organizing, and advocacy, the Sokola Institute attempts to dismantle the formal education system within classrooms. These programs not only try to abolish the "rooms" where the teaching takes place but also the "structures" that divide formal learning into grades (Grade 1, 2, etc.) and stages like elementary, middle, and high school.

The Not-So-High-Way to Mumugu Batas Batu

A boat made of fiberglass, five meters long and one and a half wide, rested on a wooden pier in Mumugu Batas Batu Village, Sawaerma District, Asmat Regency, Papua. The sun was almost set as the dark of the night started to settle in the sky. Apart from the meandering river, the view offered only rows of trees in the dense forest. Besides Habibi, a fellow volunteer of Sokola Rimba,[2] and myself, the boat carried six other passengers—workers from Lembata, East Nusa Tenggara, as well as a helmsman and a navigator.

From Agats, the capital of Asmat Regency, the only way to reach Mumugu Batas Batu is by river. A Trans-Papua Highway road from Kenyam, the capital of Nduga Regency, has been connected to Mumugu Batas Batu since 2009. Because their land had been occupied for the Trans-Papua Highway, the customary landowners and chiefs of the tributary river areas around Mumugu Batas Batu migrated into the village. In support of the highway, a river port was built in Mumugu Batas Batu. These two major development projects brought about many changes within the physical, social, economic, and cultural landscape as immigrants, consumer goods, and new cultures started to flow into the village. But the people of the village did not necessarily adapt to the changes that occurred and the contact with the outside world.

Most of the village's population was illiterate (more than 90 percent of 382 people/105 households) and is still unfamiliar with many things introduced along with the development project. The market economy and the circulation of money were unfamiliar concepts; transactions of the land and compensation for land use were a rather recent phenomenon. These and other unaccustomed matters placed the people of Mumugu Batas Batu into a vulnerable and disadvantaged position. This led the Sokola Institute to recognize the importance of contextual education—an education that enables the Indigenous community to face their problems and sharpen their experiences. The starting point to implement contextual education was to introduce the skills of reading, writing, and numeracy, or what is often labeled as basic literacy, followed by applied literacy, community organizing, and advocacy.

We had traveled a total of thirteen days from Agats. We hurried off the boat to the wooden pier as the sky was nearly dark. From the pier, we followed a wooden path with gaping holes in several spots, causing some of us to sink into the deep mud. From a distance, I faintly saw a shiny roof: our destination, Mumugu Batas Batu Village Hall.

This was my first time setting foot in Mumugu Batas Batu and in Papua on the whole. A year prior, Habibi had first visited the village with several other Sokola Institute members to start an education program, Sokola Asmat.[3] A few months before, Sokola Institute organizers Dodi and Oceu conducted an education assessment in Asmat Regency and decided to choose Mumugu Batas Batu as the site for the new program.

A boy of about five or six years of age came up to me as I sat in the hall taking off my muddy shoes. The boy smiled. With no introduction, no handshake, he asked, "Are you the new teacher here?" I came to Mumugu Batas Batu as part of the team to continue Sokola Asmat. We were going to start the applied literacy program for those who had completed basic lessons the previous year.

Contextuality Matters? Why and How?

I was absorbed in my own racing thoughts, constructing images of Mumugu Batas Batu and the Asmat Tribe in my head. I had equipped myself with two main resources prior to my arrival: oral stories from the Sokola Institute team that had visited and lived in Mumugu Batas Batu, and assessment reports by the Sokola Institute team as well as monthly reports by the Sokola Asmat volunteers the year before. Based on these two resources, we developed the general framework of the applied literacy program.

One of the images constructed in my head was of a boy of about the same age as the one who came up to me at the village hall. The boy was in pain. His parents took him to the village health center. Hopeful of the boy's recovery, the parents were heartbroken to witness their son's death from a drug overdose.

I had heard this story from the Sokola Institute assessment team. Less than a month before the team's arrival, a child had died of a drug overdose. It happened because the parents misunderstood the doctor's instructions. The instructions were to give the medicine to the child three times a day, one tablet at a time, for three consecutive

days. The correct dose would improve the child's health on the third day. However, the parents improvised. They thought, "Ah, why must my poor sick child wait three days to recover? The pills should be consumed all at once to make the recovery faster."

This sad incident was one reason behind the immediate importance of educational intervention in Mumugu Batas Batu, particularly through applied literacy. The program's main target was the application of basic literacy skills in everyday life and in dealing with contextual obstacles faced by the community, and the ability to use these skills as tools to resolve disputes.

The Sokola Institute's applied literacy program is a means to achieve contextual educational goals that benefit participants and their communities. Contextual education has to adapt to the everyday life and environment of the location of the program. Moreover, the benefits of education must directly impact and be experienced by students as well as their community in a wider context. Basic literacy, followed by applied literacy, is the standard of each educational program run by the Sokola Institute. The curriculum and teaching materials of applied literacy are designed to adapt to the current conditions of the local community. They are prepared based on findings in the field and are designed in collaboration with local participants.

Examining Circumstances, Identifying Common Issues

I spent the first two weeks after my arrival at Mumugu Batas Batu with Habibi, preparing the curriculum and teaching materials for applied literacy while beginning to provide basic literacy materials to all Sokola Asmat students. Apart from teaching basic literacy, we used the spare time within those two weeks to group students based on their abilities and to meet with the tribal chiefs and other traditional leaders, priests and nuns, parents and community leaders, and, of course, with the students participating in the applied literacy program.

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) were regularly conducted in the early weeks. In addition, we observed the environment to gather knowledge that might be overlooked during interviews and FGDs.

In the living room of the priests' and nuns' dormitory, Habibi and I sat in a circle on chairs made of ironwood with Pastor Hendrik and four nuns serving in Mumugu Batas Batu Village. It was our second night in the village. We had a conversation over hot coffee and bread. The sounds of animals calling to each other filled the night air in the distance.

After introducing ourselves, Habibi and I were mostly silent. We were there to listen to what the nuns and Pastor Hendrik told us. The decision to seek information from Pastor Hendrik and the nuns was quite strategic in developing the curriculum and teaching materials for Sokola Asmat's applied literacy program. The nuns described a lack of teachers and educational facilities, low parental awareness of the importance of education, and daily tasks that could be seen as interfering with children's learning activities, such as helping parents collect food by going to the forest and erecting bivouacs—a task that required having to stay for days, which meant taking leave from learning activities back in the village.

As Pastor Hendrik explained, cultural shock had strongly affected the community that had been living its daily life hunting and gathering when the market economy system (along with waves of capital) was introduced to the village. The market economy penetrated deeply into the village and changed the dynamics of daily life, geographical order, as well as the social landscape. It started from the abundance of ironwood in Mumugu Batas Batu, whose lucrative potential was spotted by the big capital business owners who invited



Photo: Fawaz

Photo: Fawaz



themselves into the village to generate profit. As there was such a large influx of loggers, development projects like the Trans-Papua Highway and the river port soon followed to accommodate the business. The loggers were followed by construction workers. Other migrants came to open stalls, providing for the needs of the workers. The highway and the port further widened the entrance to the village.

Prior to the port and the highway, essential goods had been distributed to the nearby Nduga Regency by air using small pioneer aircraft with a fairly limited load. This had caused a surge in shipping costs and the prices of essential goods. When the Mumugu Batas Batu port was finally open, goods were shipped by sea and river to Mumugu port, and then by land with large trucks via the Trans-Papua Highway to Kenyam. Like it or not, the people of Mumugu Batas Batu had to accept and deal with these sudden changes. They slowly involved themselves in the new economic wheels revolving in their village while continuing their lives as hunter-gatherers, as they had on for hundreds of years.

From this point on, new problems started to seep into the Asmat community of Mumugu Batas Batu. Cultural shocks occurred in the land and forests overgrown with ironwood trees and in the village, port, stalls, and every corner where residents interacted with migrants. Asymmetrical transactions harmful to the Indigenous people started to dominate village life through the commodification of land (selling and renting), paid labor in the port, and trade transactions at kiosks. And yet, these changes were starting to push some of the natives away from gathering food from available sources in nature. The option of working at the port or as a manual laborer for the Trans-Papua Highway construction became increasingly tempting as a means of making quick cash to afford rice or sago at the stalls—compared to sago milling and hunting, which would take much longer.

There was a massive, gaping chasm separating the hunter-gatherer life from the new lifestyle centered on the market economy and money transactions. Applied literacy was needed to function as a bridge between the two. This bridge would help the village community not to completely abandon their customs. It would reinforce their local identity while they faced the problems and issues that had come into their village along with the capital economy. "The change has come, seeping all the way into the roots of Mumugu Batas Batu. It's impossible to refuse. The only way is to face it. What now has to be envisaged is how these changes won't exclude the local residents and position them as spectators or keep them from their traditions and customs. The point is, they must be sovereign in their own land, not the dispossessed loser," said Pastor Hendrik.

At the end of our conversation, we agreed on three important points that have been the spirit of each of Sokola Institute's applied literacy programs. Applied literacy must be able to: (1) help communities solve problems and issues they face daily, (2) strengthen local identities, and (3) help fight for community rights (advocacy). We had full agreement on the first and third points. There was a slight difference of opinion on the second point. One nun thought that children gathering food from the forest interfered with the rhythm of learning at Sokola Asmat, while we did not see it that way. The lifestyle of gathering could be an essential lesson for the children in strengthening their local identity. Learning how to survive from an early age by being directly involved in hunting and gathering was a principal skill for them. Therefore, Habibi and I decided that the involvement of children in food-gathering activities was a mandatory lesson, not an obstacle to teaching and learning activities.

Early the next day, in a 100-by-5-meter house commonly called a *Jew* or *Rumah Panjang* (longhouse), Habibi and I held a meeting with tribal chiefs, traditional officials, village heads, and most of the parents. The materials of the *jew* construction were from the surrounding nature of Mumugu Batas Batu: pillars of ironwood, floors and walls of bark, roof of *rumbia* (sago palm) or wild pandan leaves available in the forest. Rattan rods held the structure together. These materials kept the air inside the *jew* cool all day.

"The kids want to go to school; they are eager to go to school. We also want our children to go to school, to be able to read, write, and count. But our main problem is that none of the teachers want to stay here for long," said Menja, the chieftain.

The Asmat District Government, through the Education and Sports Office, had indeed built a school building two or three years prior to the arrival of the Sokola Institute team. Unfortunately, the building had mostly been empty as there had been no teachers willing to work. Meanwhile, there were almost 150 children in Mumugu Batas Batu whose rights to educational services from the state deserved to be met.

"What we really hope is that there will be a teacher who wants to stay for a long time, even just one person. We are not asking for much," pleaded Menja. The entire audience agreed.

The conversation went on to discuss the problems faced by the villagers. Broadly speaking, the issues that came up were similar to what Pastor Hendrik had told us the previous night. Mapping the issues with the villagers and participants as well as in-depth discussions with community leaders and representatives on pressing needs were the main framework for the preparation of the applied literacy

teaching material. Through such participatory methods, the Sokola Institute adapts its teaching materials to the local, pressing needs of each site. In other words, the applied literacy program is always designed to be contextual, adjusting to the site where it takes place.

Developing Contextual Learning Materials

Mumugu Batas Batu Village is elongated and winds from northeast to southwest following the Pomats River, which originates in the Central Mountains of Papua and ends in Flamingo Bay, Asmat Regency. At the far end of the village stands a school building and a teacher's house. Then there is a village hall, a dormitory for priests and nuns, a church, a health center, and a line of stalls that marks migrant settlements. The port stands at the other end of the river.

Habibi helped me accustom myself with Mumugu Batas Batu; its geographical conditions as well as its residents, who consist of Indigenous people, migrants from Papua, and migrants from outside Papua. Morning to noon, sometimes even into the night, in the early days of our arrival at Mumugu Batas Batu, Habibi invited me to visit strategic sites in the village and to meet influential people, seeking information to support the program.

Often it was not just the two of us. Sometimes we were joined by teenagers and adults who would be participating in the program. We visited the health center to see the doctors and nurses on duty. We visited the priest and nun dormitories and the *jew* a few more times after the FGD. We visited the stalls to observe the economic transactions, as well as the port, observing the loading and unloading process and talking with Swabra,[4] a respected figure in the village, whose house was not far from there.

Habibi and I summarized the information we gathered into five major subject areas that would be handed down as teaching materials: the forests, the port, the stalls, the customs and church, and health. Each area would focus on two competencies in applied reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Then we arranged the forms of learning activities. This might be called a syllabus or curriculum, but, in essence, the structure is derived from problems and issues faced by the community.

The curriculum of applied literacy that we compiled based on findings at the site was then presented to the elders, parents, community leaders, priests and nuns, and participants studying at Sokola Asmat. We only compiled the teaching plan—whether it would be approved was absolutely the community's decision. Once it was decided, we then arranged the schedule through discussion and deliberation

4. A retired policeman from Biak who had been on duty in Asmat since 1985 and had been adopted by an elder of Mumugu Batas Batu in tribal customary adoption

5. Translator's note: Even if the announcement was in Indonesian, the writing could be read in a Papuan dialect with Papuan speech gesture and sentence structure.

6. Translator's note: As opposed to a bathroom.

to reach a mutual agreement.

Two weeks after Habibi and I arrived, a traditional celebration was held; the Spirit Mask Celebration, usually held for a whole week to pay respect to the deceased and symbolize the delivery of their spirits to the next world, a transitional place before going to heaven, called *safan* in the Asmat language.

"Sir, as there is a traditional celebration, do we still go to school or would it be a day off?" asked Titus Taima, a nineteen-year-old student of Sokola Asmat.

"We discussed this already. If there's a celebration, what about school? Do you remember?" I asked in response.

"Yes I do. It's a day off, we should go to the celebration."

"That's it!"

Photo: Fawaz



Navigating Applied Literacy in Mumugu Batas Batu

I still really like physics and math. However, in the second year of high school, the fun of learning these subjects was disrupted due to the demands of a formal school curriculum focused on memorization. Conversely, what I enjoy about math and physics are the applied practices and experiments conducted with examples of everyday events. I felt a wide gap between these subjects and everyday life. I didn't know how memorizing the distance of the Earth to the sun, the distance of the Earth to other planets, and the distance of the planets to the sun would benefit my daily life. I also didn't know why I should learn how many numbers were behind a decimal point or how to multiply integrals to infinity for the sake of my life at home and in the wider environment. Would these lessons help when I encountered problems in my daily life, both personal problems and problems within my community? I didn't think so. Why are the subjects studied at school still kept at such a distance from everyday life?

Many students feel like school has become an unpleasant chore. Abstract assignments, confusing subjects, and uniformities demanding more competition than cooperation are some of the reasons. When I was in school, I was one of those students. At that time, we were happiest when school was out of session, whether it was weekends off, major holidays, or semester breaks. During school time, we would be happy if there was a teachers' meeting so that school would be canceled. I was also happy during P. E., when I could play football with friends.

Schools that are fun, happy, and make students enthusiastic are hard to find in today's formal institutions. Not to mention the intimidating tuition for most high-end, international, or alternative schools. I wonder why and when school became so frightening.

School should be fun; it should spark the interest and enthusiasm of students. And above all, the knowledge taught should be useful for everyday life. Students should be able to use it as a tool to help deal with problems they face in their communities. Competitions that require a winner or loser must be abolished in the education system. Educational processes must accommodate cooperation among learners.

Initially, of the 147 children registered in Mumugu Batas Batu Village entitled to educational services, 96 had participated in Sokola Asmat. More than 60 of them regularly participate in learning. Precisely 19 people participated in the applied literacy program. They were teenagers and adults. Over time, the number of participants in this program increased. At the end of the program, when I had to return to Yogyakarta, there were no less than 37 participants. We were permitted to use the school building consisting of two eight-by-six-meter classrooms built by the local government. We made use of this facility, although rarely. In addition to the two classrooms, we also studied in several other places: the village hall, *jew*, health center, wooden pier, stalls, riverbank, roadside, port, and some of the villagers' houses. Sometimes we also went to the forest and sago woodland.

Usually, we chose our site based on the theme we had agreed to study. When we agreed to study something to do with the forest, we made the dense forest of Mumugu Batas Batu our classroom. When we were to study something to do with the port, we all rushed there on foot or hitchhiked on the trucks of construction workers passing by. In this way, the learning material adjusted as much as possible to the learning site.

On the wooden planks of the pier above the water's surface, Sempa Pui, Michael Nemese, Daniel Ariopok, Yosepha Toraisop, David Menja, Titus Taima, and some other children took turns reading the stories they had written about their daily experiences: the process of *pangkur sagu* (harvesting sago), hunting and setting snares, and doing activities at the port. We had a discussion after everyone had read their writing. The discussion was in Indonesian, but occasionally students slipped into their local language, especially when they got into a debate. Fortunately, almost all of the children were quite fluent in Indonesian and were able to translate for me when the others spoke in the local language.

The Sokola Institute had contextualized education within the community since its basic literacy programs, which sometimes used examples of words from local languages as an introduction to reading and writing. Sokola Rimba, Sokola Kajang, and Sokola Kaki Gunung, Jember used local languages in their learning processes, only occasionally using Indonesian. Meanwhile, Sokola Asmat did not introduce its learning materials through the local language because of the complexity of the context. Three different regional languages are spoken in the village. One is the mother tongue of Indigenous Mumugu from the Wiptiu family, and one is the language spoken by migrants from the Sawaerma District, Asmat Regency. Even though Sawaerma and Mumugu belong to the same district (Sawaerma) and the same tribe (Asmat), they speak different languages and don't really understand each other. Finally, the language spoken by migrants from the mountains is used by a small number of Nduga Tribe students. Even if volunteers were to learn the languages, I didn't think we were capable of deciding which one to prioritize. After all, learning just one language was hard already, let alone three. Fortunately, volunteers are fluent in Indonesian.

Besides writing and reading, numeracy was also popular with students: addition, subtraction, multiplication, and especially division. They loved learning to calculate volume, area, and length, and to measure weight on a scale, especially if the lessons were hands-on practice in the forest, the stalls, the port, and other places.

At the end of each month, I conducted an evaluation by interviewing and directly monitoring the students' activities in the applied literacy class. More often than not, I did casual interviews while walking to the stalls, health center, port, forest, and around villages. I also did an evaluation of the program by asking for criticism and suggestions as well as direct responses from the villagers regarding our work in Sokola Asmat.

Michael Nemese, who was about eighteen years old at the time, told me that he and Sempa Pui and Natalis Bewer had already started working to schedule the workers at the port. They also regulated the distribution of wages to workers. A month after studying applied literacy at Sokola Asmat, news spread from the port that the payment of transportation costs had been smooth and fair; there were no more fraudulent payments.

Shortly after studying applied literacy, Titus Taima started working at the health center, where he cleaned, helped to provide counseling, and used the local language to inform villagers about the rules for consuming medicines. Titus also lived in the health center and was provided with a room. When I visited the health center and went into the bathroom, there was an announcement in handwriting, a reminder to boil the water before consumption to prevent diarrhea. The announcement was written in Indonesian in a simple, entertaining, and distinctively Papuan.[5] This was what Titus wrote:

"Tulisan dari Titus: Jangan kamu minum di dalam kamar. Mandi bisa mandi, jangan minum itu bukan kamar minum. Kalau mau minum ada di depan tempat air minum. Itu saja maaf jangan sampai dapat sakit. Terima kasih."

"From Titus: Don't you drink the water inside. You can take a bath, but you can't drink. This is not a drinking room.[6] If you need a drink, go grab it at the water dispenser. That's it, sorry. Please don't get sick. Thank you."

Titus wrote the note when many residents in Mumugu Batas Batu caught diarrhea. Besides writing announcements, he also went around the village to spread the information.

Tadius Dimak (fifteen years old) and Vicktor (seventeen years old) worked at one of the stalls, helping to provide customers with goods, measuring them on the scales, and informing customers about the prices of the items. Yosepha Toraisop routinely helped the nuns with their activities and was trusted to shop for necessities for several events, plant crops, cook, and conduct other activities at the church. David Menja (twenty-two years old) made a board from plywood on which he wrote "Not For Sale" and placed it on strategic land not far from the border of Asmat Regency and Nduga Regency.

Other children told me that they were finally entrusted by their parents to carry out simple transactions at the stalls. This kind of swift development was present once again in the next monthly evaluation, which included not only the students but also parents, elders, community leaders, priests, and nuns. They provided explanations of the evaluations and input as well as criticisms related to the progress of the applied literacy program.

On Sundays, I often went to the church to attend the mass. I wanted to observe the activities of the villagers and especially the Sokola Asmat students in church. While visiting, I saw that there were moments when two people took turns at the lectern: one to read the Bible verse and the other to read the prayers in the General Intercessions. But the number of people taking turns were limited. I had two assumptions. The first was that the limited number of people was related to problems of confidence and the ability to read texts. The second was that only selected people were allowed to read. Pastor Hendrik confirmed my first assumption.

I thought this would be a good opportunity for students of Sokola Asmat to read the Bible verses and prayers at mass. Pastor Hendrik and I then agreed that the students would be rotated by two each week to read at the lectern. I was given full responsibility for selecting and scheduling students. I brought my discussion with Pastor Hendrik to a meeting with students at the teacher's house after class. We agreed on a weekly schedule and a schedule of additional lessons outside learning hours to practice reading Bible verses and prayers. After that, the students took turns reading at mass every week.

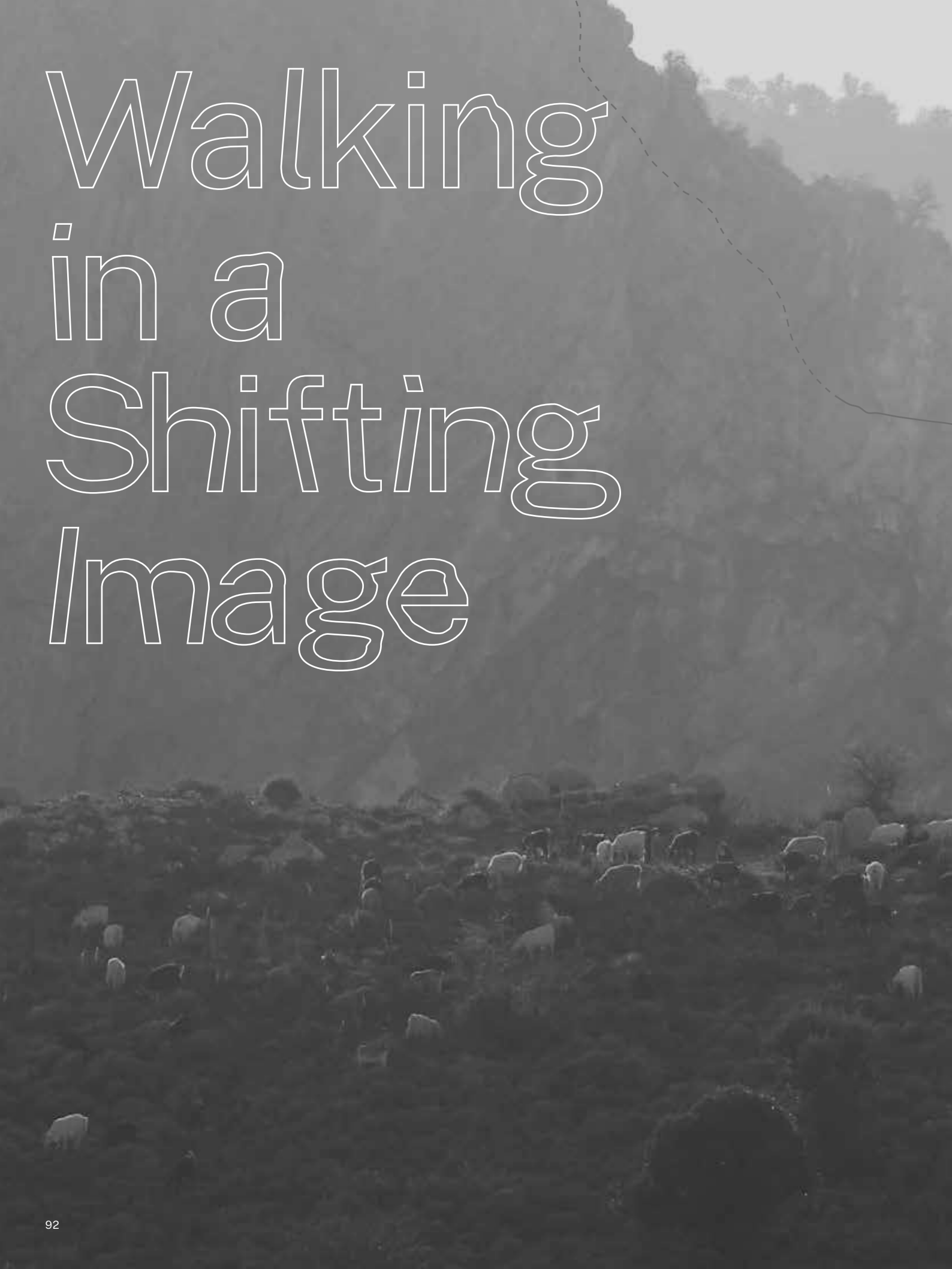
When the program finally ended and the Sokola Institute team said goodbye to the villagers, the moment was quite emotional. It was after Sunday mass. The church was busier than usual. Some villagers said that they truly believed the program was effective and contextual and would help them deal with the problems they faced. But they had no idea that the process would be so fast. Of course, it couldn't solve all their problems. However, the many changes that directly impacted the community should be celebrated with gratitude, as everything was designed in cooperation from the very beginning, implemented collectively, and jointly monitored and evaluated by all those involved in Mumugu Batas Batu.



Photo: Fawaz



Walking in a Shifting Image





Al Maeishah

Al Maeishah ("the living" in Arabic) is a communal learning environment in which participants explore and practice neighboring and hospitality as radical political acts. It creates temporary and critical platforms by engaging in conversation with people of similar social and political urgencies. Al Maeishah tackles these urgencies—related to displacement, diaspora, citizenship—with the imagination of a future beyond borders and an understanding of the challenges in prompting the common.

viewalmaisha.org

Collective Dictionary

campusincamps.ps

Collective Dictionary is a series of publications containing definitions of concepts inspired by our background in Campus in Camps (2012–2016). Collective Dictionary originally considered fundamental terms for the understanding of the contemporary condition of Palestinian refugee camps. As we played an essential role in its conception and evolution, Al Maeishah now uses the Collective Dictionary as a broader tool to manifest a form of collaborative knowledge springing from the journeys. During each experience, participants choose a concept to highlight and collectively assemble personal reflections.

Office of Displaced Designers (ODD)

displaceddesigners.org

The Office of Displaced Designers (ODD) is a collaborative platform for skill-sharing and the coproduction of knowledge for designers who have been displaced and/or marginalized, and local host communities. ODD supports interdisciplinary projects related to and/or impacting the built environment, protection issues, social cohesion, cultural understanding, or integration.

Al Maeishah is organized by Isshaq Al-Barbary, Elena Isayev, and Diego Segatto. The following conversation took place between Elena Isayev and Diego Segatto in autumn 2021.

DIEGO

Looking at Al Maeishah[1] in practice, there are two aspects that make the term "pedagogy" doubtful to me. The first skepticism is about "teaching" and the second one concerns the employment of a "methodology." Quite programmatically, the name Al Maeishah suggests a different outlook. In Arabic, the meaning of Al Maeishah is *the living process*. This vague openness allowed us—a small group of three friends randomly meeting—to leave the doors of thinking and practicing to embrace any radical intuition or move that could bring us together, in our different specificities, to make a learning experience happen.

Our keystone of *communal learning* deploys a proposal, a way of doing, based on a processual and unrushed reciprocal fulfillment rather than on a systematic closed procedure. In the end, what we seek is to connect with other people to tackle the urgencies related to displacement, diaspora, and citizenship, while focusing the gatherings on topics based on the interests of the participants, who are the conveyors of personal experiences and perspectives. We have always valued the meshwork of relations and stories woven into every conversation as a possibility to defy identification based on nationality, citizenship, or privileges imprisoning people through biased and preconceived ideas. I personally see the *meshwork* of stories as a "pluri-versed" perspective made of different *points of view*, which are the outcome of our encounters, enabling us to challenge even the perception of the nation-state.

How does it start? We look for *inviting situations* that give us the possibility to converge. With this publication, KUNCI opened up for us the possibility to do so through the act of writing. I would love it if the readers could join us in a brief *walk together*. Through this imaginary walk, we can collapse the distances for a moment and make some considerations around such primordial yet enriching practice in motion.

ELENA

The kind of walking we draw on in Al Maeishah is a way of making place, "a collection of stories so far," as Doreen Massey describes it.[2] Place is a cultural system that positions people in the world. At any given moment, it is the creation of multiple imaginaries, as well as the culmination of a shared understanding. Simultaneously a pause in motion and a juncture, it is changeable and, as shown by Pierre Bourdieu, forever reconstructed through practice.[3] It also changes us, "not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as many would have it) but through the *practicing* of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us."[4] Walking is a form of such practice through inscription in time and a tracing in space through movement, which leaves a part of yourself there, while reciprocally *place* and that moment embeds itself into your being.

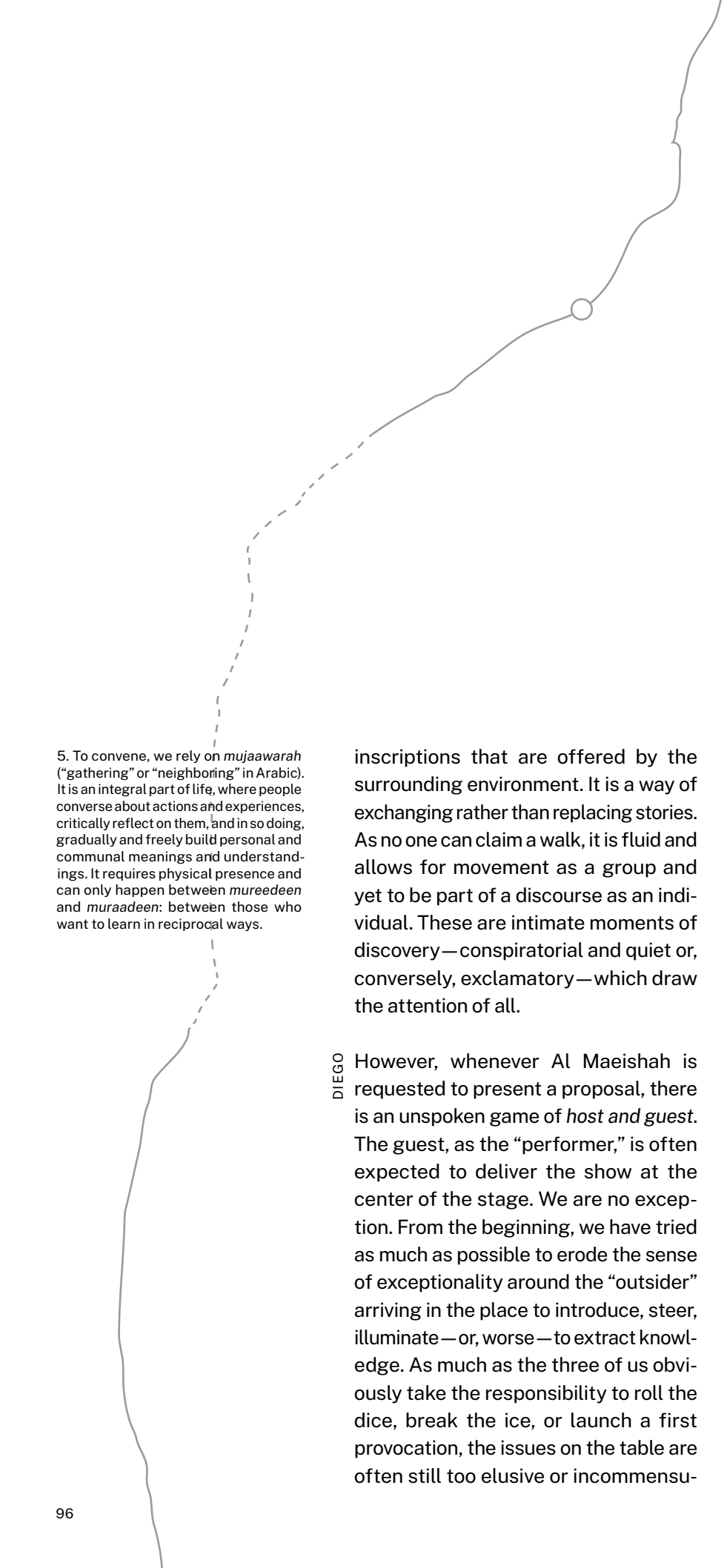
Walking here is not only intended as the act of moving one leg in front of the other over a solid surface, but can equally be performed using wheelchairs, small oared boats, snowshoes—any way that we propel ourselves through the land or seascape using human energy at a gentle pace that allows for moments of sharing, joint reflection, and pause en route. It is through these acts that we seek the possibility of moments for collective learning and the exchange of knowledge and experience, by allowing for the chance encounter and the emergence or disappearance of preceding

1. We use diverse spellings of the Arabic term: *Al Maeishah*, in narration, and *Al Maisha*, in short form.

2. Doreen Massey, "The Conceptualization of Place," in *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization*, ed. Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 45–85.

3. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

4. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 154.



inscriptions that are offered by the surrounding environment. It is a way of exchanging rather than replacing stories. As no one can claim a walk, it is fluid and allows for movement as a group and yet to be part of a discourse as an individual. These are intimate moments of discovery—conspiratorial and quiet or, conversely, exclamatory—which draw the attention of all.

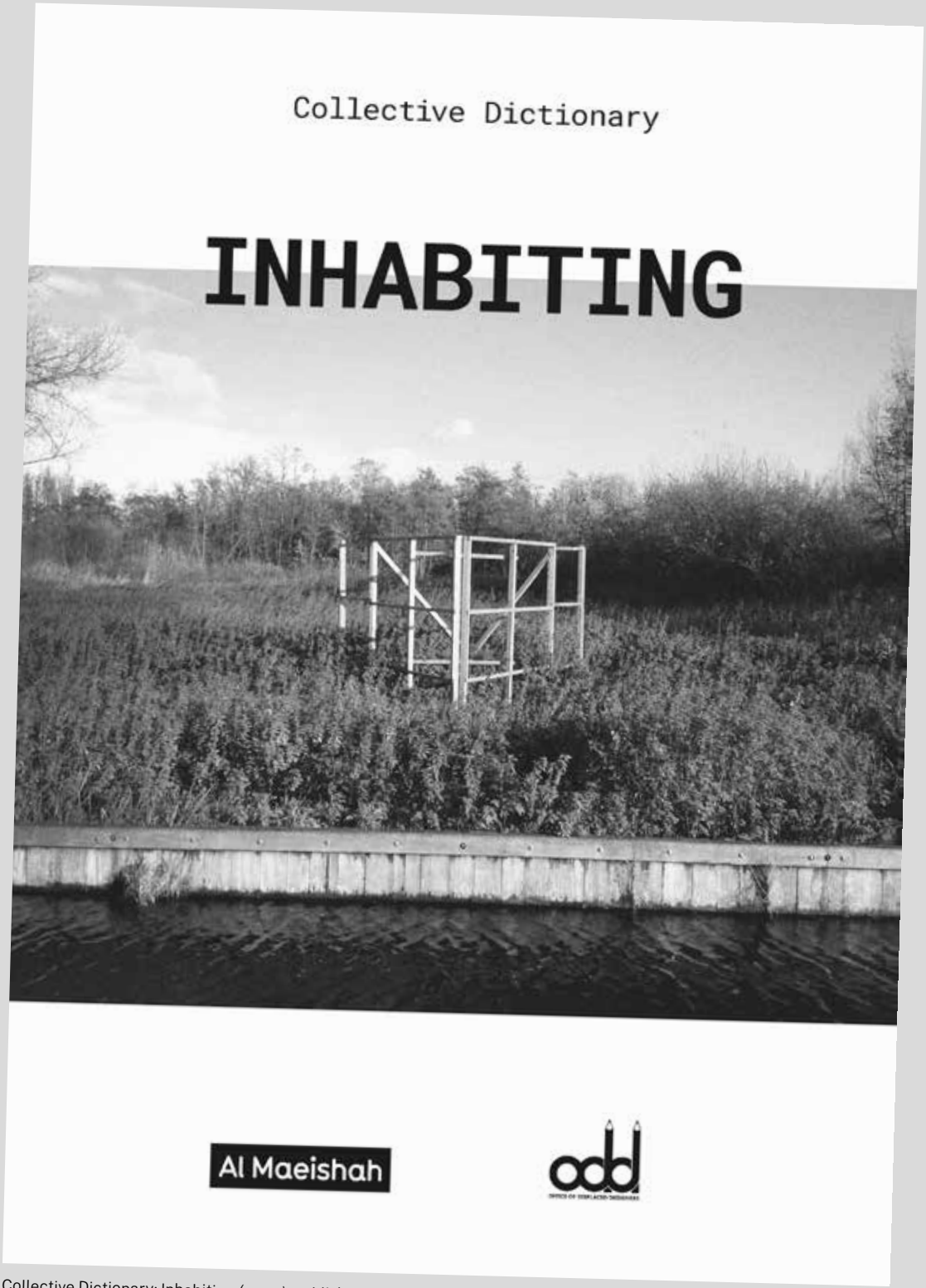
DIEGO

However, whenever Al Maeishah is requested to present a proposal, there is an unspoken game of *host and guest*. The guest, as the "performer," is often expected to deliver the show at the center of the stage. We are no exception. From the beginning, we have tried as much as possible to erode the sense of exceptionality around the "outsider" arriving in the place to introduce, steer, illuminate—or, worse—to extract knowledge. As much as the three of us obviously take the responsibility to roll the dice, break the ice, or launch a first provocation, the issues on the table are often still too elusive or incommensurable to land in a fluent conversation. Sometimes silence fills—or empties—the room for minutes and, honestly, I find that *state of suspense* quite generative toward expressing and freeing disbelief or doubts. But again, in order to be participants of the experience—in the sense of *mujaawarah*[5]—we quickly invite those participants to take a collective walk outside and transform suspense into something else.

ELENA

The elasticity of the method and its informality is not conducive to hierarchies, even if someone emerges as a guide—that role becomes shared and exchanged as stories come to the fore along the route, which is cumulatively prescribed by the walkers, the landscape, and the stories. In this way, it allows for the suspension of expectation and disbelief. The drifting, which the walk with others encourages, allows for a kind of mental and social freedom from discussion of large, complex, and pressing subjects by focusing on what surrounds you.

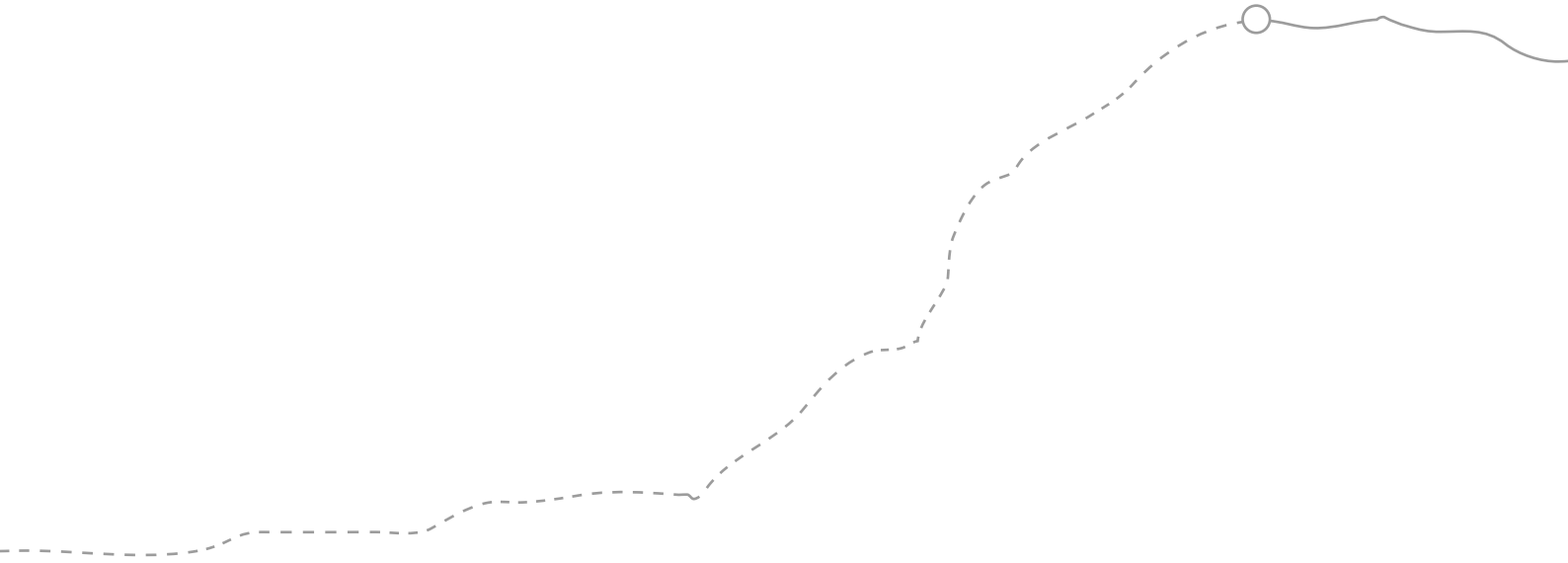
5. To convene, we rely on *mujaawarah* ("gathering" or "neighboring" in Arabic). It is an integral part of life, where people converse about actions and experiences, critically reflect on them, and in so doing, gradually and freely build personal and communal meanings and understandings. It requires physical presence and can only happen between *mureedeen* and *muraadeen*: between those who want to learn in reciprocal ways.



Collective Dictionary: Inhabiting *(cover), published by Al Maeishah with Office of Displaced Designers, 2018. Photo: Diego Segatto. Available at: https://viewalmaisha.org/collective-dictionary-inhabiting.*

To better understand, I can specifically recall the Collective Dictionary entitled *Xenia* (2017),[6] a booklet that resulted from a collaboration between the Campus in Camps program and the Ancient Journeys and Migrants course at the University of Exeter, where Tom Murrie's contribution was inspired by a section from Cicero's *De Legibus (On the Laws)*. In Cicero's work, an imaginary discussion takes place between Cicero, his brother Quintus Tullius, and their friend Titus Pomponius Atticus as they walk through his family estate. Tom's "Moving Places: Modern Dialogue" and "Moving Places: Ancient Dialogue" were engendered by our collective coast walk from Branscombe to Beer (Devon, UK). They express how participants connected past and present through a brilliant game of mirrors, redefining an experience of their own by challenging multiple dimensions: the proximity with unknown people, the pleasures and fatigue of the crossing, getting inspired by nature and communality, enhancing self-consciousness, or expanding the view, to name a few. In doing so, I fully perceived how the *school*—meaning the institution—was reshaped for a few days into a *school of people*—meaning a group of living organisms orchestrating their movements to *synchronize*.

Being in Lesvos, Greece[7] was quite a different journey. Invited by the Office of Displaced Designers (ODD) to contribute to an "alternative" atlas of the island, we found ourselves in a deeply discouraging situation where we touched with our bodies the narrative of Fortress Europe and the sickness it spreads. It was only once the group of participants was formed (from the Moria and Kara Tepe camps) and we asked ODD to guide us on a few walks that all of us together could surprise ourselves through sharing personal stories and perceptions of the environment (natural and human). The challenges and chances of inhabiting Lesvos were hiding behind that same *synchrony* missing between Europe, Greece, the world, and the ravaged countries from which the refugees escaped. The two walks created a *space-time* to talk freely and live outside of the institutional framework or humanitarian aim, also gifting people with some long-lasting friendships. Personally, I think that for the three of us, it was also a moment of trauma that we didn't discover without some injuries. I mean, to connect with such a peculiar *space-time*, in place and not from our safe homes, demands *a lot of bending* . . . that space-time has so much gravity to bend your perceptions and feelings, if you allow me to use a "psycho-scientific" expression.



ELENA

The richness, excitement, and challenge, as well as pain, that can come from such practices of placemaking—a walk, which has its risks—was summarized in the Collective Dictionary volume *Inhabiting* (2018), written with the Office of Displaced Designers, which is a collection of findings following a series of such walks that we inhabited together during our time in and around Mytilene on the island of Lesvos.

We were fortunate to have a guide, Hassan Tabsho, for one of these walks, who generously offered to share the route he took when going between Moria camp and Mytilene city. It took in histories, vistas, and winds, informing our thinking about what it meant to inhabit. Hassan's words, which became the essay "Changing Impossibility," were in response to the view in this image.[8]

6. Available at: http://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/xenia/.

7. Also spelled Lesbos, Lesvos is a Greek island located in the northeastern Aegean Sea.

8. Hassan Tabsho, "Changing Impossibility," with photographs by Aref Husseini and Enayat Foladi, in *Inhabiting: A Collective Dictionary*, a 2018 publication by Al Maeishah with the Office of Displaced Designers, available at: https://viewalmaisha.org/ghorfat/lesvos-2/.

The scenery around us.
The surprise—not a scene in a museum
but in real life
taking the best view on the hill.
Can this scene cause more damage to people
who have already been exposed
to war or other suffering?
These remains could still benefit.
But not here.
Maybe inside a museum
or special place for them.
So that the story—not forgotten
helps to remove it from real life.

These tellings speak of difficult, unresolved, or displaced pasts and their caretakers. They expose how stories live in landscapes, are vocalized, materialized, intertwine, and impact everyday life. They foreground the potential for archival practices to provide shared custodianship, spaces for dialogue and multiple narratives. They ask: Whose story will continue to be told? How will it be told? And who is silenced?

Such moments of tellings, confrontations, and building on each other's point of view, forming a meshwork, become a form of collective learning in its broadest sense, embedded in interactions. The Chinese-American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's formulation that "if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place."[9]

This brings me to look at the *shifting image*, a sort of device to mobilize imagery that we adopted for the three journeys (so far) as one unique image from a past that is simultaneously recalled, bent, distorted, and redefined by the place of arrival (that we temporarily named the *biosphere*, lacking better jargon). The *shifting image* operates as a "portal" triggering possibilities and impossibilities, where the possibility

9. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6



A walk on the Devon Coast, cover image of Xenia, *Campus in Camps, 2017. Photo: Elena Isayev*







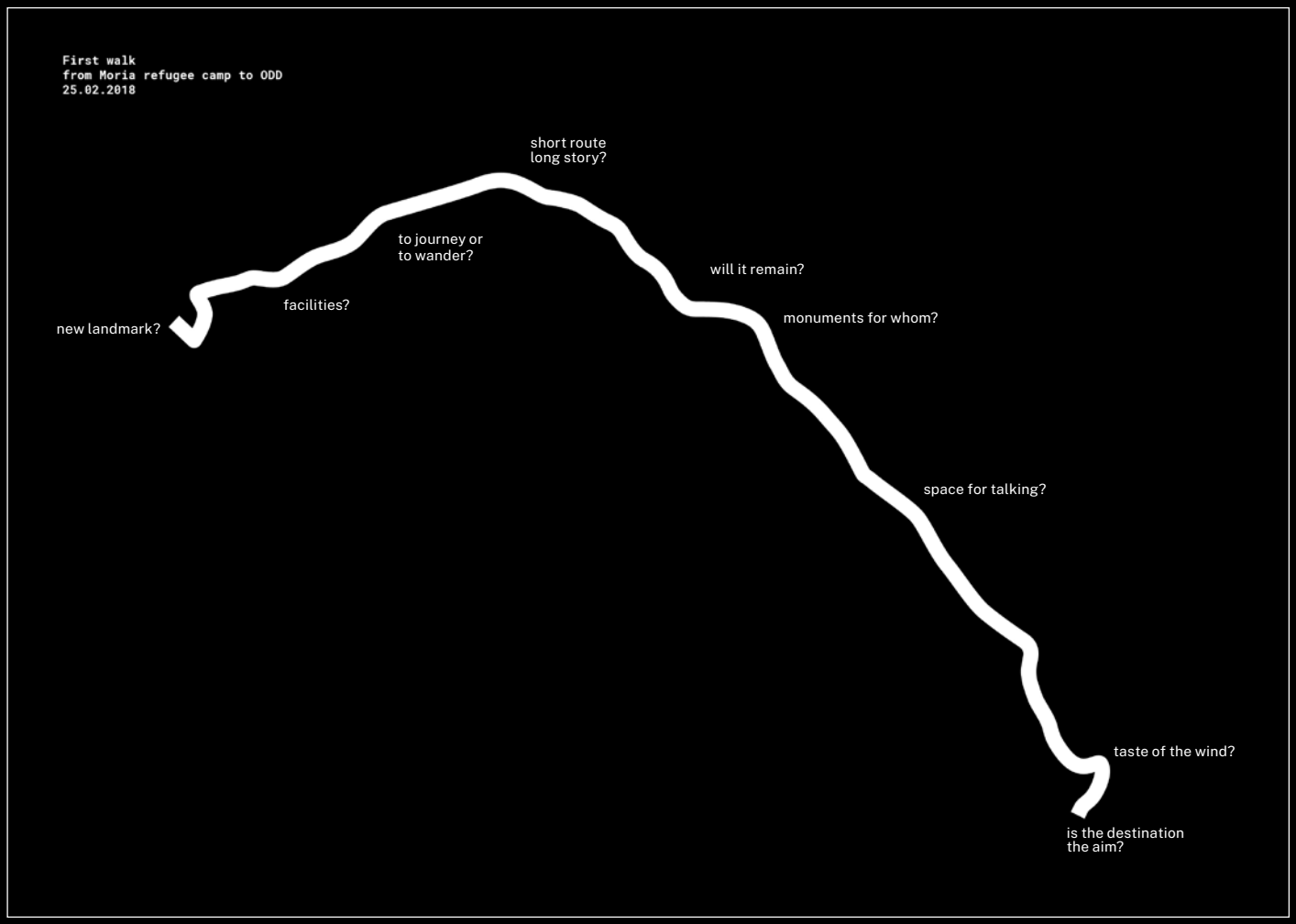
Inhabiting (first walk) with Hassan Tabsho, Mytilene, Lesvos, 2018. Photo: Enayat Foladi

stands in the existing connection among the natural environments, and the impossibility emerges from the human experience we (pretend to) evoke or recall. It is uncanny how from Palestine to Lesvos, every image holds something of the previous ones, in a way—from a Bedouin village as seen from far away through the desert and a neglected nomadic settlement in the synaesthetic Sardinian space to an ephemeral structure alongside the well-organized Dutch canals. It seems as if, step by step, we tried to erode rather than interpret the anthropic presence in favor of the habitat and free movement. Considering Al Maeishah's premise, it comes full circle.

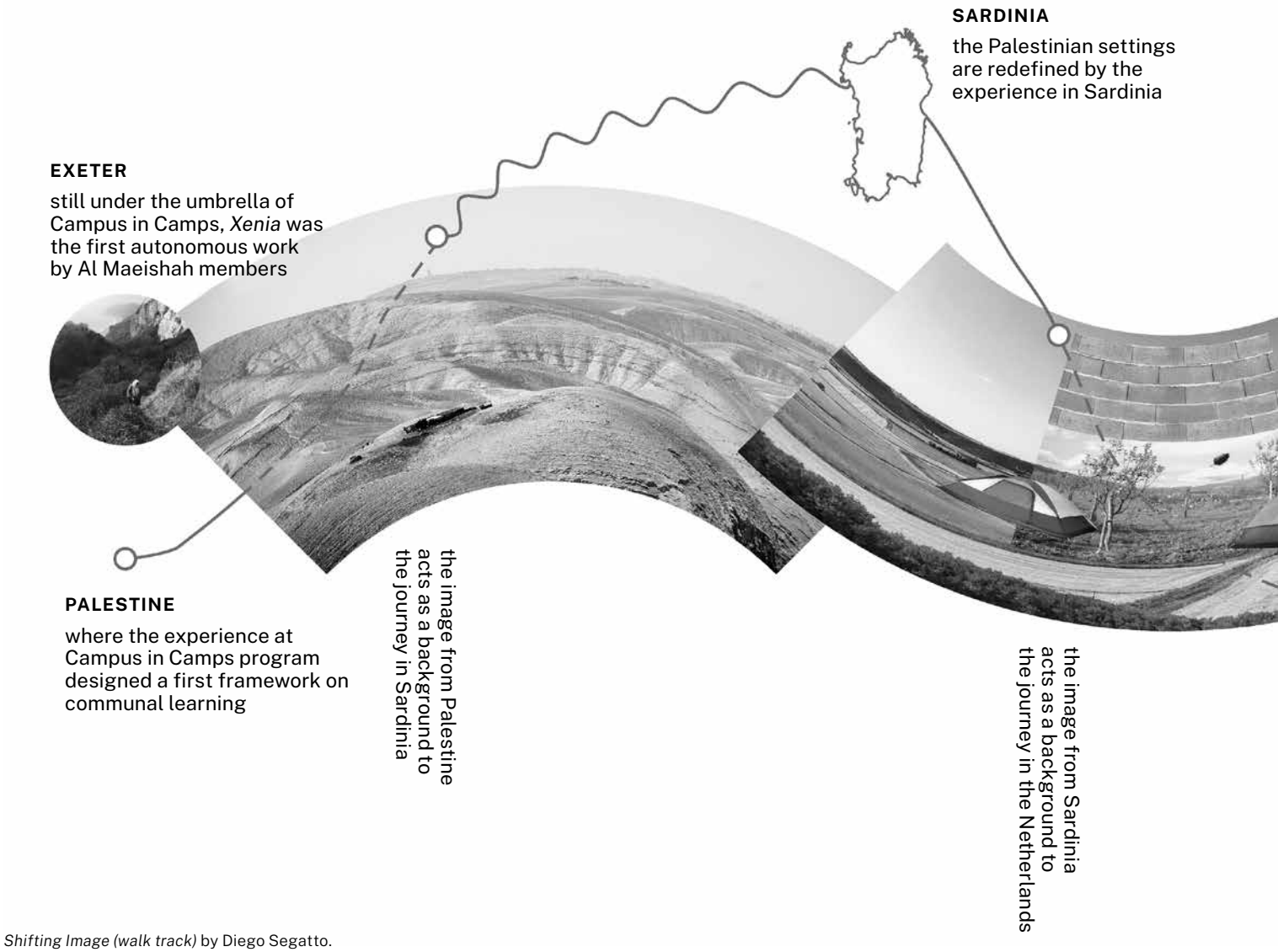
ELENA

It is a kind of reprieve; talking about the walk, which allows difficult subjects to be addressed indirectly with new perspectives, through the *shifting image*.

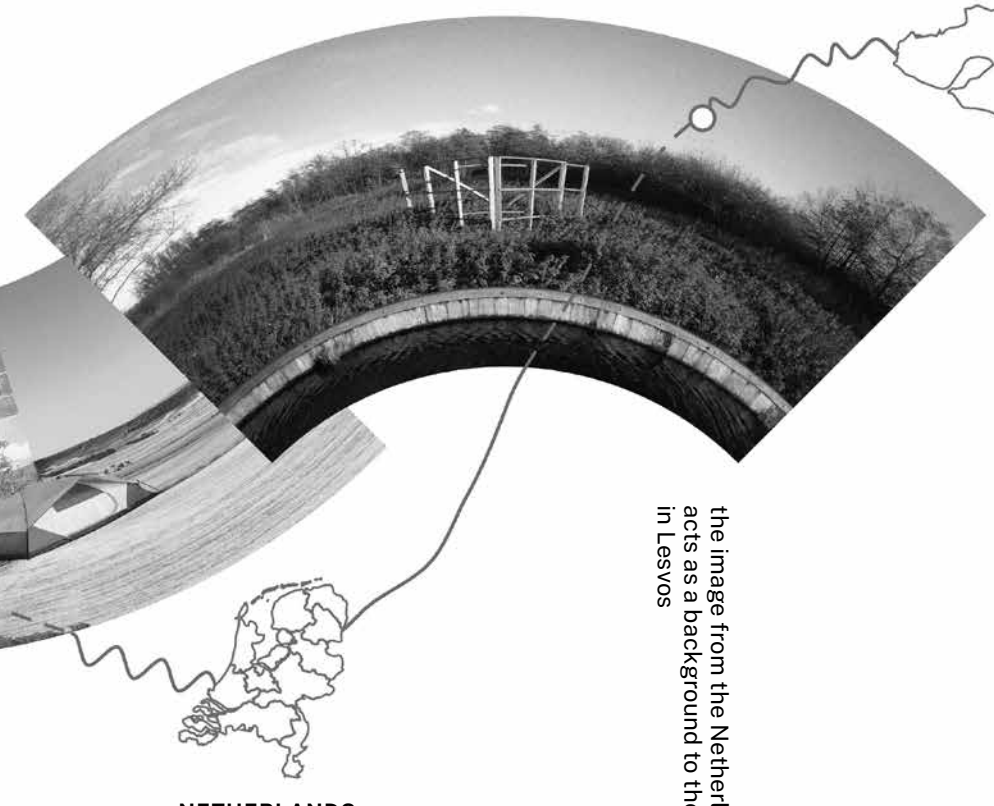
Inhabiting (first walk track) with the Office of Displaced Designers, 2018. Image: Diego Segatto



DIEGO Hence, I've never seen the *shifting image* as a tool (much less *walking* or *assembling*), but rather like old tricks—you know they work, in some way, but you don't really know precisely how they will work or how to control them exactly. Because the rules of the game are declared at the very beginning, an *atmosphere* is set up. This is nothing new really, like the vast literature about "rituals" or the slippery chapter of "participation." I think the kind of erratic chemistry we hold and bring, though, makes the real difference. Our experience shows that the *shifting image* didn't work very well for the few one-day "workshops" we ran so far, while it made a difference for residential programs lasting at least a week. Perhaps there need to be multiple conversations to build trust in order to walk together time and again, to ease into the exploratory space. If the charm of it is appealing enough for the participants, then we want everyone to feel legitimized in articulating their views and considering the others, where the main benefit is to stare at a broader color wheel of reality and build a new chemistry, a new realm of mutual exchange, and, even temporarily, a new basis of coexistence.



Shifting Image (walk track) by Diego Segatto.



LESVOS

the Dutch settings
are redefined by the experience
in Lesvos

which framework is propelled
by walking in the island

the image from the Netherlands
acts as a background to the journey
in Lesvos

NETHERLANDS

the Sardinian settings
are redefined by the experience
in the Netherlands

A Praxis of Critical Consciousness in Rural Indonesia



Translated by Pychita Julinanda



Moelyono

Moelyono is an artist and community education activist. Moelyono's works are situated between contemporary art, critical pedagogy, activism, and community empowerment. Starting in the 1980s, his work traverses the complexities of different social and political periods and emphasizes village and rural environments as the main sites of cultural production, as spaces to pose critical questions about what it means to make art and how art can be utilized as a tool for collective awareness.

Selected works include *Kesenian Unit Desa* (Village Art Unit, 1985), *Pak Moel Guru Nggambar* (Pak Moel the Drawing Teacher, 2007), *Bara Nyala Tanah Papua* (The Cracking Fire of the Papuan Land, 2016), and *Amok Tanah Jawa* (Amok in the Java Land, 2018). Moelyono received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Biennale Jogja (2012) and an *Anugrah Seni* (Art Award) from the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture (2014).

This essay archives my praxis in five villages. While my initial work in Teluk Brumbun ultimately failed, I learned that praxis needed networks. Through developing collectively initiated networks such as *Jaringan Kesenian Rakyat* (People's Cultural Network), referred to as *Jaker*, I later found opportunities to cooperate with NGOs working on issues around media literacy who have already secured logistical needs and established networks of infrastructure to several islands.

1986: Teluk Brumbun

Immediate needs met by locals
using available resources.

The year was 1986; I was walking alone along the path stretching through a teak forest in the marble hills of the Besole Region toward Teluk Brumbun, a secluded bay in the South Sea of the Indian Ocean. Once I reached the *Bukit* (hill) Punthuk Sumurup, I met and walked with a husband and wife who were fish traders. As a custom common in rural areas, we greeted each other, and the wife asked my name and where I came from.

"Moelyono, *Bu* (ma'am), from Tulungagung.
If I may ask, how about you?"
"I'm Tukiran. This is my wife Leginah. What
do you do [for a living], *Mas* (mister)?"
I answered offhandedly, "I teach drawing."

Once I arrived on the other side of *Bukit* Tumpak Loban, a safari-suited figure immediately shook my hand and took me to an elementary school classroom. He said, "Thank you *Pak* (Mr.) Moel for coming down here to teach the kids drawing. *Bu* Leginah told me."

Oh dear . . . I walked into the classroom quite confused. The safari-suited figure was *Pak* Katiran, headmaster and sole teacher of the elementary school, who taught twenty-three students that were divided into three classes in Ngrejo Village.[1] *Pak* Katiran introduced me to the students as the new drawing teacher, and I was left alone in the classroom as he walked away to teach another class.



1. Ngrejo Village is located in Teluk Brumbun, a secluded bay community in Tanggunggunung District, Tulungagung Regency, consisting of thirty-four households including twenty-six men, thirty-two women, eighteen boys, and seventeen girls living in thatched-roof houses with woven bamboo walls





Standing in front of ten kids aged five to seven (a mix of first and second grade) wearing well-worn clothes and barefoot, all looking at me, I drew a fish on the board with chalk and asked the kids to draw. All stayed still with hands crossed on their desks while on the other side of the woven-wire partitioned window, the curious faces of the local fishers were eager to take a peek at the rumored new teacher. I was flustered.

All of a sudden, a student shouted: "*Pak*, let's draw at the beach, in the sand!" The kids all dashed out of the classroom and headed to the beach, where they began drawing in the sand using their own fingers and heels, twigs, shells, coral, rocks—anything they could pick up to draw fish, birds, flowers, boats, houses, hills, or random doodles. The scene was lively; the kids were running around and diving into the water. All the girls and boys were wet and laughing gleefully. I was left sitting alone, watching the kids in their jovial spirits.

I did not teach the kids a drawing lesson that day. It was the kids who taught me how to "draw" with such delight and enjoyment, using any available resource around them.


MANDOR
DIRAMPAS
MIKUL KAYU



1999: Kebonsari Village

Reviving local arts.

In 1999, Plan International was implementing the Child Center Community Development (CCCD) Program in Pacitan Regency for kids ages six to seventeen years old. The program utilized the potential of local arts as a medium to gather and organize for children's rights issues in rural areas, and it was the first time I worked with an NGO.[2] Upon arriving at Kebonsari Village (Punung District, Pacitan Regency), I met *Pak* Suyono, the village head, to communicate our objectives in engaging with children, youths, and residents through art. In the corner of the room lay a piled-up set for *gamelan*,[3] seemingly untouched for quite a long time. I asked *Pak* Suyono if that was true, and he explained that the locals had their hands too full working in traditional gold mines at the village hill as well as farming in the fields. But there was a time when the mines were not a dominating presence, when the locals would gather for *karawitan* (a form of musical art that uses *gamelan*) and each *dusun* (village district) had a *sinden* (female singer).

During the program, we stayed in the village at *Pak* Marto's house, Head of *Dusun* Kayen. Every morning between six and seven, breakfast was held in a spacious kitchen with a wood stove, wood chairs, and a long wood dining table. The kitchen door faced a shortcut path usually taken by the farmers going to the fields early in the morning. As a habit built out of the communal culture in Kebonsari Village, farmers (both men and women) who passed in front of the door were greeted and invited in to chat over breakfast or a cup of hot coffee.

One day, I brought up the *gamelan* in *Pak* Suyono's house over breakfast, to see if perhaps it could still be played. Later, when some of the village residents came by, *Pak* Suyono said they could try to play it. The *gamelan* was then brought to *Pak* Marto's house for cleaning and repainting, and the local villagers—many of whom apparently had the skills for *karawitan* (a practice of classical *gamelan* music and performance)—started to play there. At night, after working in the fields, the residents started to practice *karawitan* regularly, with some of the women joining as *sinden*. The nights in the hills of *Dusun* Kayen were filled with the euphony of *karawitan* after years of its absence as the wind carried the sound to the moonlit sky.

On breaks and after practice, we casually chatted and joked around over coffee, ginger tea, sweet potato snacks, and boiled peanuts. The residents seemed to have already mastered *karawitan* to some degree; all that was needed was to bring in the *gendang* drum players. When I asked the villagers where they learned *karawitan*, they enthusiastically explained that before the *Gestapu*,[4] Kebonsari Village was a center of agriculture. There were associations for artistic practices in the five *dusuns,* complete with equipment and respected figures or elders.

In *Dusun* Ngasem, *Pak* Sujar was the leader for *tetek*, music made from *kentongan ronda* (a clapper stick made of bamboo), whose group had five male members. *Pak* Sarimo performed *karawitan* with his wife, Ibu Tumirah, as *sinden*. In *Dusun* Trosobo, *Pak* Kateni was an *Ogleng* dancer[5] and played the character Hanoman in popular renditions of *Sendratari Hanoman Obong*, a traditional musical theater production (*sendratari*) featuring folklore of the protagonist Hanoman, a Hindu god in a white monkey form.

Located at the top of the hill, *Dusun* Kebonagung had a *sholawatan* (Islamic prayer songs) group consisting of a few women and *Pak* Sumaryono, a *gendang* player. There was also *Pak* Sukat, another *Ogleng* dancer, as well as three *dalang*

2. Plan International has been working to advance children's rights and equality for girls in Indonesia since 1969 and officially transformed into a national foundation called Yayasan Plan International Indonesia in 2017. More information at: https://plan-international.org/indonesia.

3. *Gamelan* is a traditional ensemble music of the Javanese, Sundanese, and Balinese peoples of Indonesia, made up predominantly of percussive instruments.

4. *Gestapu* is an acronym for *Gerakan September Tiga Puluh* (Thirtieth of September Movement), a state-sponsored mass massacre targeting communists and their affiliates in 1965.

5. *Kethek Ogleng* is a dance performance in which the players imitate movements of monkeys. The dance is accompanied by *gamelan* or *gancaran pancer* music, which sounds more or less like "ogleng, ogleng, ogleng."



wayang kulit (traditional Javanese puppeteers). In *Dusun* Kayen, five different women played *Gejlok Lesung*, a form of traditional music using rice pounders (*lesung*), and *Mbah*[6] Tukiman organized a *sholawatan* group.

Dusun Krajan was the center of Kebonsari Village. This was mainly based on the grave of *Danyang Singo Barong*,[7] which was thought to be the center of mystical power for *Dadak Reog*[8] dancers to conduct the *Pulung* ritual (based on supernatural powers that "possess" the performers of *Dadak Reog*). *Dusun* Krajan had the most artistic associations and practitioners: *Pak* Sukir and *Pak* Tusiman in *karawitan*, *Mbah* Badut as *Ogleng* dancer, the *sholawatan* group under *Mbah* Kadirin, *Mbah* Wagimin as *dalang wayang kulit*, who also mastered and taught *Gambyongan* (a traditional dance) with *Mbah* Pardi as a mesmerizingly elegant *Barong* and *kucing* (cat) performer.

Mbah Sogi recounted, "When *wayang wong*[9] was performed in the village, I always played the role of Semar. My artistic group was a part of the LKN [*Lembaga Kebudayaan Nasional* (National Cultural Institute)] under the PNI [*Partai Nasional Indonesia* (National Party of Indonesia)]. Meanwhile, most artistic practices in *Dusun* Krajan were under LEKRA [*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* (Institute of People's Culture)] of the Communist Party." *Mbah* Sogi continued, "Those figures and members doing artistic practices in the village were wiped out as they were accused of repeatedly singing *Genjer-Genjer*[10]—however, the song had been around ever since I was little, a long time before *Gestapu* happened."

As *Mbah* Sogi finished, all eyes were on *Mbah* Pardi, a respected elder in *Dusun* Krajan. Sensing that he was asked to tell a story, *Mbah* Pardi tried to put his thoughts into words. "Well, I had indeed pioneered *jaranan*[11] and *ketoprak*[12] since 1952; they were my ventures. In 1954, I bought equipment for *ketoprak* along with *kelir*[13] paintings. Well, tough luck, *Gestok*[14] hit us all, and most of our activities were seen as a part of the Communist Party. I stopped doing them for a while out of fear . . . 'cause they'd think we were part of the Communist groupies, the Communist Party, and LEKRA . . . ha ha ha ha . . . I was even captured and attacked by twelve soldiers, all my *kelir* and *jaranan* confiscated.



They interrogated me, 'Are you [part of] LEKRA?' Gosh, I didn't know anything; I didn't understand: What was a LEKRA? Back then, if there was a meeting, I always came, whether it was [held by] *Banteng*[15] or the Communist Party, but I was never an official member. I just followed along. They said every [political] party was good anyway. Yet I was dragged into it even if I wasn't a part of it. My senior, the head of my *jaranan* group, was, indeed, a part of PKI. There were six people captured, taken to Punung District and killed."

The six people taken to Punung, according to the locals who were also part of the conversation, were the teachers Sarnen, Bonyamin, Sokarto, Mandoko, Paijo, and Gimin. *Pak* Sarnen was a teacher in *Sekolah Rakyat* (SR)[16] Kebonsari. He was neat, tidy, charming, sympathetic—a true charismatic educator that the people respected and adored. He was good at painting, composing and singing *gending* and *tetembangan*,[17] and he was also the head of the *ketoprak* group whose show the villagers loved. As the locals recounted, the executioner was a fan of *Pak* Sarnen and asked him to sing *Dandanggula* (a type of *tembang* that sings of sweet [*gula* means sugar], beautiful things, such as dreams and hopes) before he was executed.

That August in 1999, many of the residents—adults, teenagers, and kids—in five *dusuns* were seen to start playing *jaranan*, *Dadak Reog*, singing *tetembangan* with *karawitan*. *Mbah* Jumirah, whose ID is stamped red due to being involved in *Genjer-Genjer* dance when she was young, seemed to be delighted to teach the children *Gejlok Lesung*.

6. An honorific to address elderly people in Javanese.

7. *Danyang*: spirit; *Singo Barong*: a tiger-peacock spirit, one of the characters in *Reog*.

8. A massive tiger-peacock mask for *Reog* performance.

9. Javanese traditional theatrical show performing stories of *Wayang*, or *Wayang* with persons performing the story (instead of a puppeteer controlling *Wayang* puppets).

10. A song composed by a Banyuwangi artist, at the time heavily associated with *Gerwani*, a women's movement organization with close ties to the Communist Party.

11. A Javanese traditional dance that represents soldiers riding a horse, using a horse "doll" made from woven bamboo.

12. A Javanese traditional theatrical show.

13. Painted drapery used as a backdrop for traditional shows.

14. An abbreviation for *Gerakan Satu (1) Oktober*, another reference to *Gestapu*.

15. Nickname for *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (National Party of Indonesia) or PNI, whose symbol is a bull (*banteng*).

16. An old term for public school derived from the colonial era (*volkschool* in the Dutch colonial era, *Kakomin Gakkō* in the Japanese colonial era).

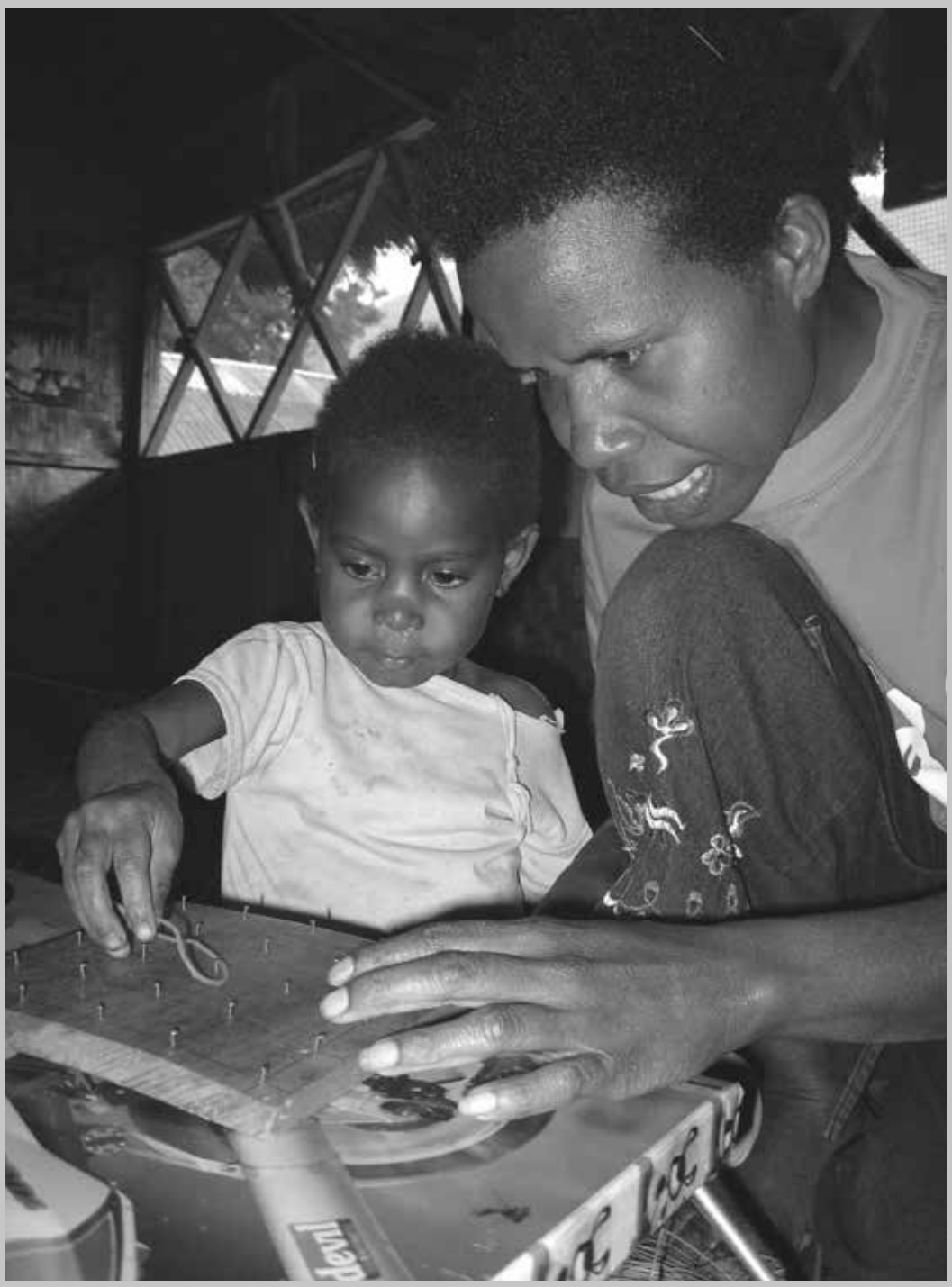
17. Types of traditional songs.





2005: Wamena

The spirit of education within the everyday.



A girl was jumping on her toe over four *lokops*[18] moved by two boys and two girls while fifteen kids aged four to six sitting in a circle sang the song *Yero-Yeropi* in a room at *Taman Pena Emas*, a kindergarten in Hepuba Village, Assolokobal District, Wamena.

After the kids were done playing, Yuli Ance, a twenty-nine-year-old woman, asked them, "What's the name of the game we were just playing?" and the kids answered in unison, *Yero-Yeropi*!

Ance asked once more, "What were we jumping over?" and the kids answered, "*Lokops*!" Ance invited the kids to count along, "How many *lokops* did we use? Let's count!" and the kids counted, "One, two, three, four!" "How many *lokops*?" "Four!" "Good job! Let's sing *Yero-Yeropi* once again!"

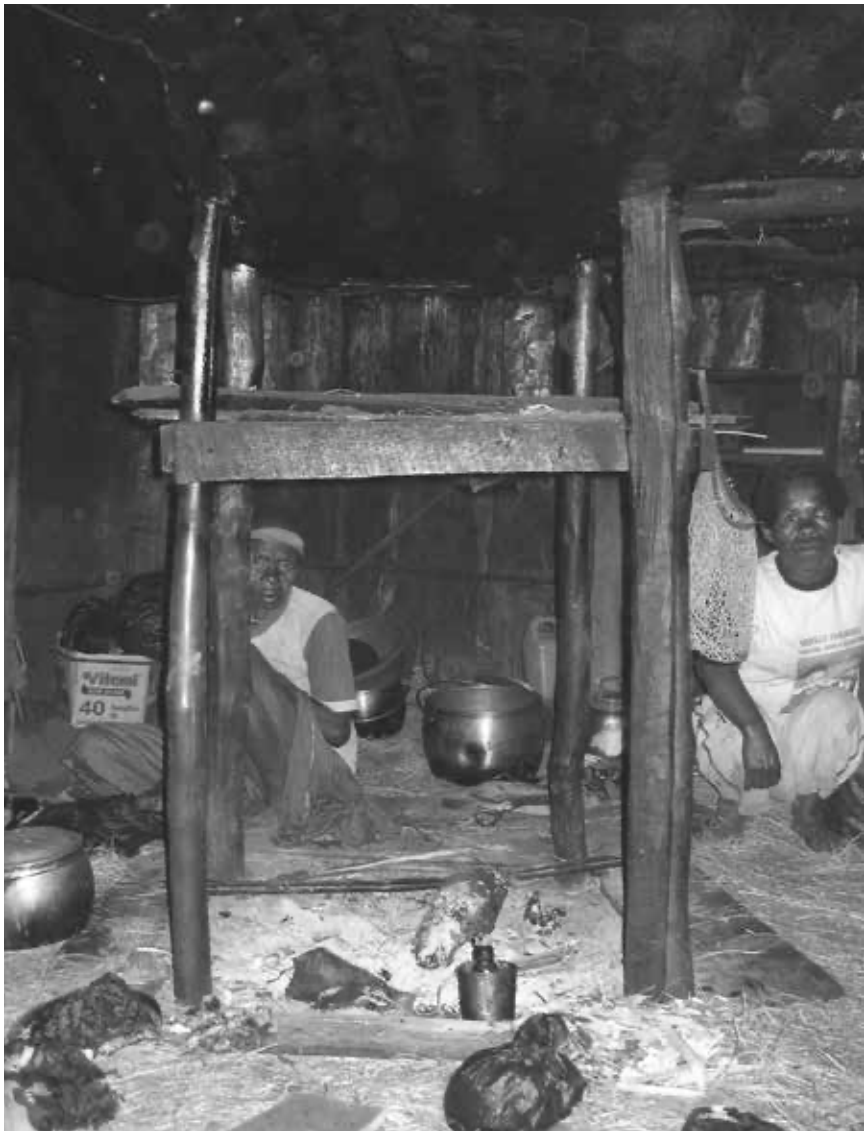
Yero yeropi
Minkayu-kayu apik
Upu Lesani
Wema pike-pike
Isaima lima ratu

Ance got her start teaching in middle school by giving Bible lessons on Sundays. She then studied at a Bible school in Batu City, East Java, finished her diploma, returned to Wamena, established a home church, and became a young pastor under the Pentecostal Church in Indonesia (*Gereja Pantekosta di Indonesia*, GPdI). She planted *hipere*, a local type of sweet potato, on the side.

For Ance, teaching is an act of service to deliver God's commandments to children from an early age, providing them with education so that they can develop the skills and capabilities they need to grow. Witnessing the reality of young children in her village dropping out of primary and middle school and resorting to alcoholism motivated Ance to teach—especially seeing how the young girls who dropped out lost opportunities and respect in their families and society. Ance believes that girls and women have to do and create something, that God created them with a purpose—even though, in reality, empowering women is not so easy. Upon having prayed to God, Ance believed it to be her calling to tend to children. She sees it as her purpose to care for children as a way for God to reach out to them. Her sense of duty, care, and service was inspired by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who cared for neglected children—an act of service that caused her to fall ill. An act of service requires a sacrifice, after all. Ance has stated that Jesus died for his people, and Mother Teresa was willing to follow his steps.

Ance was one of seven participants in a syllabus training workshop offered by the Wahana Visi Indonesia (WVI) Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) program to stimulate children's potential in the "golden age" of development (infancy to six years old), which I facilitated. Unlike an official tutor at the center, Ance was not remunerated for committing to the module three times a week. As the program went on, Ance thrived as an organic facilitator who advanced the community and empowered families through her educational work, turning her home into *Taman Bermain Anak Usia Emas*, or Kindergarten for Children in the Golden Age.

18. A *lokop* is a long tube of bamboo used as a tool for play. In this *Yero-Yeropi* game, participants need four *lokops*. To play the game, the *lokops* are placed on the floor and arranged diagonally. Four people open and close the tubes synchronically while one person attempts to jump into the open space formed between them. *Lokop* also designates a wind instrument played by blowing air with the mouth while simultaneously vibrating the instrument with the hands.









2011: Alor

An educator's spirit on a remote island



Alor is an archipelago located at the eastern end of the East Nusa Tenggara, directly adjacent to Timor Leste in the south. With the staff of Wahana Visi Indonesia (WVI) in Alor, I facilitated the ECCD program in *Dusun* Retta, Pura Selatan Village. The location was selected because of the low gross enrollment rate of early childhood education in Alor Regency, and *Dusun* Retta was the farthest village from Alor Island and the most difficult to access. It had no electricity, no cell phone signal, and very little clean water.

We departed with seventeen WVI staff members and training participants from a pier on Alor Island by small motorboat heading to Pura Selatan Island, which took about one hour. When the boat started to move, the driver informed me that boats could travel to Pura Island before 2 p.m. However, after 3 p.m. there would be a strong current under the sea. The boat cruised along the coast to reach the pier of *Dusun* Howo, where we were picked up by several villagers who greeted us with smiles while helping us jump off

the boat as it was moving around due to the waves. Then we walked on a path made of cast cement blocks that went sharply uphill. The residents who kindly and enthusiastically helped carry our things walked past me while I was panting for breath under the hot beach sun. I had to take two breaks while walking uphill to the house of the Retta I Primary School Principal, *Pak* Policarpus Besituba.

While resting and enjoying warm drinks and snacks, we chatted casually with *Pak* Policarpus Besituba, who explained that in *Dusun* Howo there was a modest classroom, equivalent to kindergarten. It had been established by *Pak* Menahem in his own house, and the graduates proved to have a great comprehension of school materials when they entered primary school. Unfortunately, many parents had no time to take their children to preschool because they had to go to the sea. Everyone was hopeful that in the future, an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program in the village would be able to improve the quality of teachers and teaching materials.

After we had conversed for a while, we went to *Pak* Menahem's house. To get there we had to take many uphill roads. On our way, we passed a house where a wedding party was being held. We could see the women cooking and a man was carrying a bottle of *sopi* (a local drink) and offering it to everybody. From the crowd, *Pak* Menahem's pregnant wife appeared. She proceeded to take us to her house and told us that *Pak* Menahem was on his way to Pura Island from Kupang.

As soon as he arrived, *Pak* Menahem seemed very enthusiastic about discussing the issue of children's education. He had a three-by-three-meter room in his house with walls of brick and woven forest bamboo and a roof and floor of tin. This room was used as a modest classroom for ECCE activities as well as *Posyandu*[19] "Gominua," initiated in 2009. Every quarter, *Pak* Menahem wrote a report of his ECCE activities and then went by foot, motorboat, and *angkot* (public transport in Indonesia similar to a taxibus) to Alor to submit the report to the WVI office, the Out-of-School Education staff, the Social Service, and the Head of the Alor District Technical Implementation Unit. Until 2011, there were forty-two active students divided into two classes (A and B) taught by *Pak* Menahem and *Pak* Besituba along with four young women aged seventeen to twenty.

Classes were held every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, with a monthly cost of 2,000 rupiahs (US $0.14 per 2022). At monthly parent-teacher conferences, several complaints were made about the cost—since primary school was free, parents questioned why a more informal early education charged a fee. They also voiced concerns about the children's age. The parents thought their little kids could not go to class on their own yet, unlike seven-year-old primary schoolers who were considerably more independent and could manage on their own while their parents went to the sea. The parents also asked for school uniforms. According to *Pak* Menahem, the management and teaching staff were still working voluntarily; they did not yet have the funds to pay the staff a decent salary and provide food for the students. Not to mention that two teachers had decided to go to Alor to work.

In the prior year, *Pak* Menahem had submitted a proposal for implementing an early education program to the Out-of-School Education Division of the Education Office, and in 2011, he received an answer from the East Nusa Tenggara Regional Education Office that they would provide 23 million rupiahs for game-based learning tools as well as incentives for caretakers. After that, the Retta Village Government applied for National Community Empowerment Program funds in 2012 to construct a building for the kindergarten-level early education program near the church, an upgrade from the teacher's house. The church supported the construction as well as the education program. *Pak* Menahem was then invited to Kupang to participate in an early childhood teaching skills development program using origami materials. He borrowed the fee for this training (around one million rupiahs) from the Out-of-School Education Division.

19. An abbreviation for *Pos Pelayanan Terpadu* or Integrated Healthcare Service, a small healthcare office whose activities are carried out by and for the community under the guidance of healthcare workers.







Most of the residents of Retta Village were able to weave *Bubu*, a fishing tool made of bamboo, and to make local bag crafts. These skills were valuable in creating game-based learning tools with local contexts and materials. The women were also skillful in cooking a variety of dishes for the children's meals. After four days of staying in Retta Village for training, we left for Alor a bit late, at around 3 p.m., because the participants and the NGO team had to say goodbye to the residents who had brought corn, chicken, and even piglets as gifts. On the way downhill, we passed primary schoolers walking uphill carrying one or two jerry cans of fresh water for drinking and cooking on the tops of their heads.

We arrived at the pier around 4 p.m. We could see the owner of the motorboat waiting with an annoyed expression on his face. He muttered that the underwater currents were already on the move since it was already past 2 p.m. I could see that the current was quite strong. Even though the motorboat was running, it felt like it wasn't moving. We made our way along the outskirts of the small islands, not daring to pass through the middle of the sea, where we would be twisted and sucked down under. The sky was starting to get dark. We could only hear the sound of the boat's engine and the rush of the current. The passengers were afraid to move even an inch; we were completely motionless. The motorboat drifted along the outskirts of small islands for almost two hours. Finally, the Alor Pier could be seen from a distance. At 6 p.m., the motorboat managed to dock. The entire journey was filled with dread.

In the *angkot* on the way to the NGO office, we talked about *Pak* Menahem's high-spirited propensity, as evidenced through his actions: motivating residents to send their children to school, inviting girls to volunteer as teachers, providing his house as a classroom, managing affairs related to permits and assistance requests by going to Alor and even Kupang, all while taking care of his family.

A month later, after I returned to Java, I received a call from *Pak* Menahem. I picked up the phone immediately, imagining his efforts to make the call: he must have had to climb the hilltop of Pura Island that faced Alor Island to get the signal. After we shared updates on our families along with some jokes, *Pak* Menahem asked about teaching modules, game-based learning tools, and ways to manage formal letters to the Education Office in Alor. In July 2021, Vonny Asafa, a former WVI staff member in Alor, informed me via WhatsApp that *Pak* Menahem died of a heart attack, leaving a wife and two young children. Oh dear, I hope the early education program in Dusun Retta, Pura Island will still keep going …

2013: Pawis Hilir Village

Using local culture as an entry point for organizing villagers.



I arrived with two team members in Landak Regency, West Kalimantan, to meet the program manager of WVI Landak and the core team for the Holistic ECCD program. The program manager suggested that since the Holistic ECCD program simultaneously involved various institutions, a tactical first step would be to gain support from district and subdistrict bureaucrats down to the village government level.

WVI requested a letter of activity permit at the *Bunda PAUD*[20] District Office along with invitations to attend an event that the WVI program manager called the "Open Mind" Holistic PAUD pilot program. The event was attended by the head of *Bunda PAUD* Regency, Early Childhood Education Teachers Association staff, PKK[21] members, the Head of Education Office, Out-of-School Division staff, subdistrict and village heads from Ngabang and Jelimpo, as well as prospective teachers. *Bunda PAUD* and the Head of Education Office supported the program, and once the pilot was finished, they would help to replicate it in several villages. The District and Village Governments were prepared to provide any support needed to carry out the activities.

At the next meeting, our team discussed where we would implement the Holistic ECCD pilot program, provided that the village: (1) did not yet have an ECCE preschool, (2) had many children up to five years of age, (3) the average education level of villagers was elementary and junior high school.[22] Based on the data of several villages in the WVI mentoring area, we went with Pawis Village, Jelimpo District, Landak Regency, West Kalimantan as our choice.

My team and I were escorted by a WVI staff member. We arrived in Pawis Village in the late afternoon and stayed at the former village head's house, which we turned into our station. After dinner, we talked with the former village head and his wife (the village secretary), as well as several women who were prospective trainees, discussing preparations for the next day's meeting with the residents.

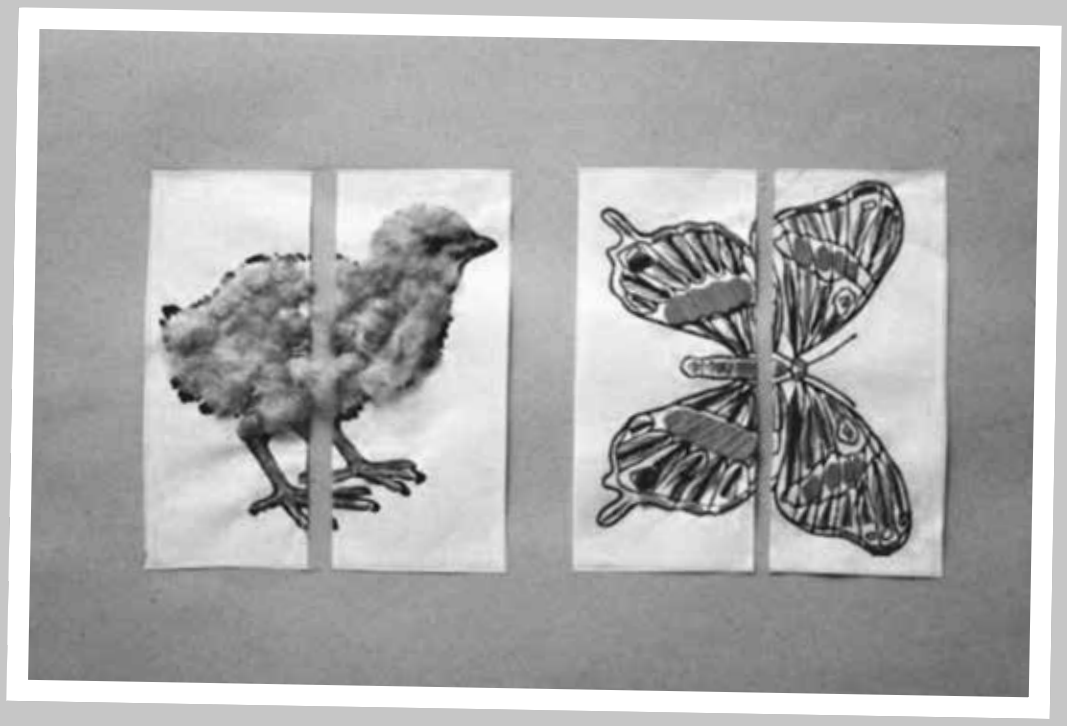
At the first meeting, we discussed the plan to establish a Holistic ECCD program. The meeting was attended by parents of children between the ages of three to five, prospective ECCE teachers, the village head candidate, elementary school teachers, members of local communities, the village government

20. Title given to female heads of regional executive government (major, regent, etc.) as the main drivers in fostering early childhood education, care, and development.

21. *Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (Family Welfare Program), a community organization consisting of women whose programs contribute to the development agenda.

22. During the New Order era in the 1970s, when school exams were introduced, village schools rejected them with the view that exams were a means of colonizing the people. Test results showed that many children did not pass the exams.







staff, PKK members, *Posyandu* staff, religious leaders, elders, community leaders, and farmers, with the acting village head as chair. The main topic discussed was the importance of children's "golden age" as the period of substantial growth and development, including right brain (affective skills), left brain (cognitive skills), motor skills, sensory skills, and mental development. A Holistic ECCD program was established with the village government and residents, using the former public health center, which was no longer in use. The participants received training in game-based learning, daily activity planning, and ECCD management. This training was divided into two classes utilizing games, toys, songs, dances, stories, and folklore drawing from the local context and culture.

The participants mapped the practices of local culture particular to the village. Several insights emerged from these conversations. The traditional art of *Ngotong* had stopped because all instruments such as gongs, strings, percussion, and skulls from the defeated tribal leaders had been burned during tribal wars in 1977. The art of *Benasar* wood carving with Dayak motifs was still around, and some residents still wove bamboo for kitchen utensils, hats, and baskets to carry rice, firewood, rubber, and palm oil. The art of *Bapua* was still performed as a rite of grace for the harvest by a spell shaman, *Pak* Jawas. The art of weaving bark had been discontinued because there was only one large *Tapak* or *Karas* tree left, guarded by only one forest shaman, *Pak* Senong. Large areas of the forest had been demolished for palm oil plantations surrounding the village.

The first meeting with teachers, village youth leaders, the *Dusun* head, and the guardians of the students (the majority of whom were young mothers) focused on several important things, including the active role of guardians when dropping off their children. Guardians were also provided with the module, a description of game-based learning tools, and the daily activity plan so that they could understand the subject matter and prepare their children at home for the next week's material. This was possible since the module was simple, the game-based learning tools were made from local materials, and the daily activity plan was only for three days. Guardians were also expected to be active in joint outings and celebrations such as carnivals, exhibitions, performances, and competitions.

The students only went to school for three days a week because most of the teachers were housewives who were responsible for taking care of their children, cooking, cleaning the house, as well as working in the fields. Teachers worked voluntarily and students attended the school at a low cost. Therefore, guardians were expected to play an active role in their children's learning experience. The students were limited to fifteen children as the teachers were still in the process of learning and mastering the module, the game-based learning tools, and daily activity planning. If within one semester the teachers had mastered the training material, they could open a new class to admit fifteen more students. The program was called Holistic ECCD because it encompassed not only formal education but every aspect of early childhood care and development, including nutrition and health and education services. Therefore, the ECCD program involved teachers, *Posyandu* caregivers, PKK members, guardians, and villagers with cooking and traditional skills. Game-based learning tools were made by those with sewing, weaving, and crafting skills. The students' guardians were involved in gardening, outings, and celebration days.

The training program lasted one month. Four caregivers mastered the module, the game-based learning tools, and daily activity planning, and were ready to teach fifteen children between the ages of three and five in preschool. Fifteen guardians were actively involved in cooking, crafting game-based learning tools, and reviving local culture. The preschool management structure was established, involving village heads, PKK members, *Posyandu* staff, teachers, guardians, church institutions, religious leaders, elders, and villagers who had mastered local culture.

The planning for the inauguration of the Holistic ECCD pilot project intensified after Yayasan Kelola joined the collaboration. Another meeting was held in Pawis Hilir Village, which was attended by the village head, ECCD management, WVI, and our team to plan the schedule for the inauguration, which coincided with the inauguration of the village head. The series of events consisted of the Pawis Hilir Village traditional rice harvest ritual *Gawai Padi*, the traditional sacred music performance *Baganak*, and the *Titiangtu* ritual, where villagers walk together from the Elder's house to the river to bathe. On the last day, a thanksgiving event would be held for the newly elected village head.

A week later, the Pawis Village Holistic ECCD "*Tunas Mekar*" was inaugurated by the Deputy Regent of Landak. The event included exhibitions relating to the local curriculum and game-based learning modules, crafts, and local snacks, as well as performances of local children's songs, traditional dance and music, a children's theater show, a carnival of traditional clothes, and local toys.

Fifteen days after the inauguration, the Governor of West Kalimantan unexpectedly came to visit Pawis Village. A few months later, he released funds to complete the construction of a village road, primary and middle school buildings, as well as water and toilet facilities.

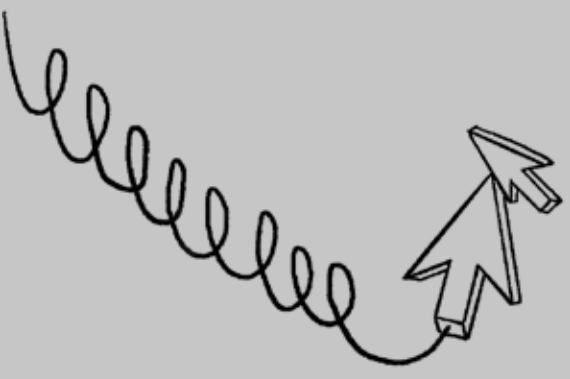
Re-, Un-Defining Tools:

Exploring intersectional approaches to digital search tools in library catalogs

Feminist Search Tools working group

The Feminist Search Tools (FST) working group studies the power structures that library search engines reproduce and offers an intersectional lens to (computational) search mechanisms to inquire how marginalized voices within libraries and archives become more easily accessible and searchable. While the initial FST study process started in the context of the Utrecht University Library, it has revolved at a later stage around the catalog of the IHLIA LGBTI Heritage Collection in Amsterdam.

The composition of the Feminist Search Tools working group has changed throughout the project. While Sven Engels, Anja Groten, Annette Krauss, and Laura Pardo initiated the early version of the FST project, Angeliki Diakrousi, Alice Strete, and Ola Hassanain later joined the process and worked on problematizing the "visualization tool" during the Digital Methods Initiative Summer School in 2019.[1] The Feminist Search Tools working group currently consists of Read-in (Sven Engels, Annette Krauss, and Laura Pardo, with Ying Que), Hackers & Designers (Anja Groten, André Fincato, Heerko van der Kooij, and formerly James Bryan Graves), Ola Hassanain, Angeliki Diakrousi, and Alice Strete.



The following audio-recorded conversation took place on February 17, 2021 among members of the Feminist Search Tools working group Angeliki Diakrousi, Sven Engels, Anja Groten, Ola Hassanin, Annette Krauss, Laura Pardo, and Alice Strete. The conversation was transcribed by Anja Groten and collectively edited by the members of the conversation.

The first part of the conversation focuses on different motivations and contexts that informed the Feminist Search Tools project alongside reflections on modes of working together.[2] Later, this conversation zooms in on the "tools" of the Feminist Search Tools project, its situatedness and processual character, and different (mis) understandings around the term. During our ongoing collaboration, tools have taken different shapes and forms, yet have never really solidified in such a way that they could easily be applied to contexts other than those for which they were developed.[3] Instead, we have attended to the tool-making or tool-imagining process, which gives space to complexifying and expanding our understanding of tools (digital and otherwise) and their implications for specific contexts.

1. Further information on the Digital Methods Initiative Summer School 2019 can be found at: https://wiki.digitalmethods.net/Dmi/SummerSchool2019.

2. For more infromation on modes of working together, see "Doing and Undoing Relationships" on the Feminist Search Tools website at: https://feministsearchtools.nl/.

3. For more details, see "Teaching the Radical Catalogue: Session 4," recorded conversation, https://syllabus.radicalcatalogue.net/session4.html, and Lucie Kolb and Eva Weinmayr, "Why are the authors of the books I read so white, so male, so Eurocentric?," *Fabrikzeitung*, December 17, 2021, https://www.fabrikzeitung.ch/why-are-the-authors-of-the-books-i-read-so-white-so-male-so-eurocentric-a-conversation-with-feminist-search-tools-group/#/.

4. For more information see https://read-in.info/bookshelf-research/.

5. Kolb and Weinmayr, "Why are the authors of the books I read so white, so male, so Eurocentric?."

Tools as "Modes of Address" and "Digital Study Objects"

ANJA Considering that we all had very different encounters and experiences with the tools created throughout the Feminist Search Tools working group, I propose to start our conversation with an open question: What were everyone's initial expectations about working on a digital tool, and how have these expectations been met or perhaps changed over time?

ANNETTE I still remember how some of us in Read-in got interested in the term "tool," and more specifically, "digital tool," through the question of scale. During our previous project, Bookshelf Research, we physically spent quite some time in small, grassroots libraries studying the categorizations of publications. For me, Bookshelf Research was therefore actually already a tool. By literally passing every single item of the library through our hands, one after the other, we got acquainted with the library and tried to figure out the different categories—such as publishers, languages, the gender of authors, and the materiality and contents of books, resulting in a statistical breakdown of inclusions and omissions. For instance, we looked at the Grand Domestic Revolution Library of Casco Art Institute, which holds around three hundred books.[4] The digital dimension of the tool became more explicit when we shifted our attention to the Utrecht University Library. As the library holds three million books, a contextual counting exercise in the physical space was no longer possible in the same way. What has remained throughout is the desire to challenge the coloniality of modern knowledge production that we attempted to address in the question: *Why are the authors of the books I read so white, so male, so Eurocentric?*[5]



Bookshelf Research by Read-in at the Van Abbemuseum archive (2012).

ANJA You referred to Bookshelf Research as a tool. What do you mean by that? Do you regard "tool" as a synonym for "method"?

ANNETTE I rather see "tool" here as a *mode of address*—or a set of search mechanisms, or maybe even principles. I think it has to do with my disbelief in the possibility of transferring methods from one context to another without doing harm. A mode of address proposes something that a method has difficulties attending to—namely, situatedness and context-specificity.[6]

SVEN I think, for me, at some point I had started equating tools with "digital tools" in my head. This created a disconnect for me because I felt I wasn't that easily able to access what those tools do. At the same time, the notion of the tool as a "digital object"—an interface—also came with the expectation of the usability of the tool. This also brings up the question of "use for what" and for "whom"? For instance, the expectation that a tool should also produce some form of result was put into question. Thinking about the tool as a digital *study* object creates room to explore these and other questions and what the tool actually does.

ANJA The idea of a tool as an enhancement, something that's supposed to make our processes easier—processes that would happen anyway—that might have also been causing some confusion around the project, don't you think? Interesting and important confusions and, again, also expectations.

LAURA When we started talking about *tools* rather than *the tool*, my perception and expectations changed. From the beginning, when we were talking about the FST project—for instance, during our first conversation with Atria—we had questions like: Is the tool going to work? There has indeed been a certain expectation of the tool to produce a result or a solution to a problem. The fact that we would make a digital tool made me especially scared and cautious. In my understanding of digital tools, they tend to be binary: it's either this or the other. Everything in between gets lost. Realizing there is not just one tool but different modes within which you can ask questions, moving the tool to the same level as the conversations we have was a very important part of the process—to realize there is not just THE tool.

SVEN When you talk about the things that get lost, do you refer to the decisions made that factor into a tool, or are you referring to the conversations that are part of the tool-making process that might no longer be visible?

LAURA It's both. We always say that moments like this—our conversations—are so valuable and important. When you have a product, a finished search interface, for example, those conversational elements can get lost. I think it is great that we bring the conversations, pieces of audio, or images together on our project website. But when making some kind of tool, you also need to come up with solutions to problems, right?

ANGELIKI From listening to your thoughts, I want to return to how scale played a role for you in the beginning. When the database becomes so big that somehow you can't relate to it anymore as a human, it exceeds your understanding and therefore challenges matters of trust. I also like the idea of the conversational tool because it means the tool can be scaled down and become part of the conversation and doesn't have to give a solution to a problem. In conversation with the tool, we can address issues that we otherwise don't know how to solve. If we don't know how to solve things, how would a tool solve

6. From a slightly different but related perspective, see the discussion of Dagmar Bosma and Tomi Hilsee on mode versus method in "Gathering amidst the ruins: on the potential of assembly within the context of art institutions" (symposium, Casco Art Institute, Utrecht, the Netherlands, October 27, 2021), https://casco.art/activity/gathering-amidst-the-ruins-on-the-potential-of-assembly-within-the-context-of-art-institutions/.

them? The tool is our medium in a way. I am interested in finding more of these bridges to make the tool a conversational tool.

ANNETTE

I have grappled with the role of scaling throughout, being attracted and appalled by it. This is what I tried to point at above with *modes of address*. The work of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing could be interesting here, when she refers to scaling as a rigid abstraction process.[7] She criticizes science and modern knowledge production for their obsession with scalability. She describes scalability as the desire to change scales—expanding a particular area of research or production without paying attention to the changing contexts. This has provoked many forms of colonial violence because scalability avoids contextualization and situatedness in order to function smoothly and therefore ties in with an extractivist logic. I believe by means of conversations we attempt to bring back context and situatedness. Conversations ground us.

LAURA

Isn't our struggle with addressing the question of gender (and also race, class, sexuality, disability) in our first prototype, a digital interface that engages with the records of the Utrecht University Library, an example in this direction?[8] We are working with a big database and have to find solutions to address certain questions. And by choosing a specific solution, many other modes are not chosen, and we know these choices also lead to misrepresentation.

I remember we were looking for the gender of the authors at the beginning of the project, approaching it by looking at the dataset of Wikidata.[9] I think at that point I expected that the information would be available for us and we just needed to find it and figure out how to use it. But then I realized I had to adapt my expectations about how to extract insights from moving around the database, which was not obvious to me from the beginning.

ALICE

The biggest clash in that regard for me was when we tried out the Gender API.[10] It attributes gender on the basis of names and the frequency a name is used for a particular gender online. Not only does this lead to faulty results, but it also disregards self-identification, which is so central to gender identification. This definitely forced us to rethink how gender could be identified in different ways and with different tools that also take self-identification into consideration.

When I joined the project, I asked questions that derived from a specific concern about the classifications we would be using and how the tool would filter certain searches. My concern was that the tool would take us from one way of classifying to another. When you look for "knowledge," at least from my perspective, you have to take a level of caution. These general classifications are out there and while you do not adhere to them or abide by them, they are there. I had a brief conversation with Annette about the tool having to change over time. To make a point, I used the example of the Neufert architectural catalog, which has become a guideline for international standardization of the estimation of distances around architectural things.[11] If you want to design a table, you have all these ranges to estimate with: distances, heights, etc. So basically, whatever comes out of architectural design goes through, or operates within, a fixed framework. Anyway, my question is whether the tool-building has its own space, or whether it builds upon the categories and classifications that the libraries are using. The interesting thing about the Neufert catalog is that it gets updated every year or every other year. It's pushed back into the design world as a new edition every time, as something that is regenerating. So how does a search tool respond to something that is constantly changing?

ANNETTE

I understood the Neufert catalog more as a standardization tool and normative rules comparable to the library classifications developed by the Library of Congress. However, you actually stress its flexibility.

OLA

The tool has to cater to that constant change. My suspicion was about whether we can have more diverse or inclusive ways of using or finding references and books, and what informs such a process, basically? If we have something like the Neufert catalog already set up in the libraries, how does the tool respond to that, and how does it regenerate?

ANJA

When you refer to changeability and the challenge of correcting systems of categorization, I have to think of Emily Drabinski's text "Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction," which also inspired Eva Weinmeyr and Lucie Kolb's research project on "Teaching the Radical Catalog."[12] Drabinski discusses practices of knowledge organization from a queer perspective and problematizes the notion that

classification can ever be corrected. According to Drabinski, there needs to be a sustained critical awareness and ways of teaching catalogs as complex and biased texts.[13] I remember the Unbound Library work session organized by Constant in 2020, during which Anita and Martino [Morandi], who are self-taught librarians working at the Rietveld and Sandberg Library, presented their library search tool, which allowed the users of the library catalog to suggest new categories.[14] Thus, as someone searching in the catalog, one can also make suggestions for modifications of the cataloging system itself. The librarians would then review and apply or reject the suggestions. Their idea was to organize discussions and workshops with students and teaching staff around such suggestions. It is quite exciting to think about the changeable catalog becoming dialogic in that way.

ALICE There is a big difference between using an existing search tool—into which you have less insight—and making something from scratch, so to speak, that integrates conversation at every step. I appreciate the possibility to pay attention to the decisions that are being made in the different phases of the process.

SVEN I wonder to what extent the idea to build something from scratch is even possible or desirable. It often feels like projects are trying to come up with something new and innovative instead of acknowledging the work done before by others and embracing the practice of building on and complexifying what already exists. I feel it's definitely also a trap we've been very aware of ourselves, and that we attempted to focus on the latter while making room for different perspectives and questions.

ANNETTE I understand Alice's comment more in terms of a search interface as a black box. And indeed, we have built upon so many existing tools, like the Atria Women's Thesaurus, the Homosaurus of IHLIA, and all the references that Anja mentioned. There are loads of tools or experiments of tooling that we have struggled with.[15]

7. See, for example, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2015).

8. The first prototype experiments with a search field in which the user can type a search term. The search takes place within a selection of the records of works published between 2006 and 2016. The choice is made by the FST working group and is based on a number of MARC 21 fields. MARC 21 (an abbreviation for machine-readable cataloging) is an international standard administered by the Library of Congress; it is a set of digital formats used to describe items that are cataloged in the context of a library, such as the Utrecht University Library.

9. The Utrecht University Library could not provide access to information regarding the gender of an author. We therefore decided to link our dataset to Wikidata, which provides information about an author's gender. The first version of the FST compared both datasets based on the name of an author and attributed the gender according to Wikidata.

10. If the comparison to Wikidata did not yield a result, the algorithm would identify the gender of an author based on the so-called Gender API, a commercial application that assigns the binary gender categories (female/male) based on names. The Gender API is usually implemented in commercial websites in order to optimize customer experiences (female-identified people see search results that are relevant for their gender category as defined by the company). The Gender API brought about many issues, one of which is that it excludes non-binary gender categories. Another issue is that the Gender API is a closed-source technology. The Gender API is a black box technology made for marketing purposes. Thus, we were incapable of reconstructing exactly how the program determines and applies gender categories.

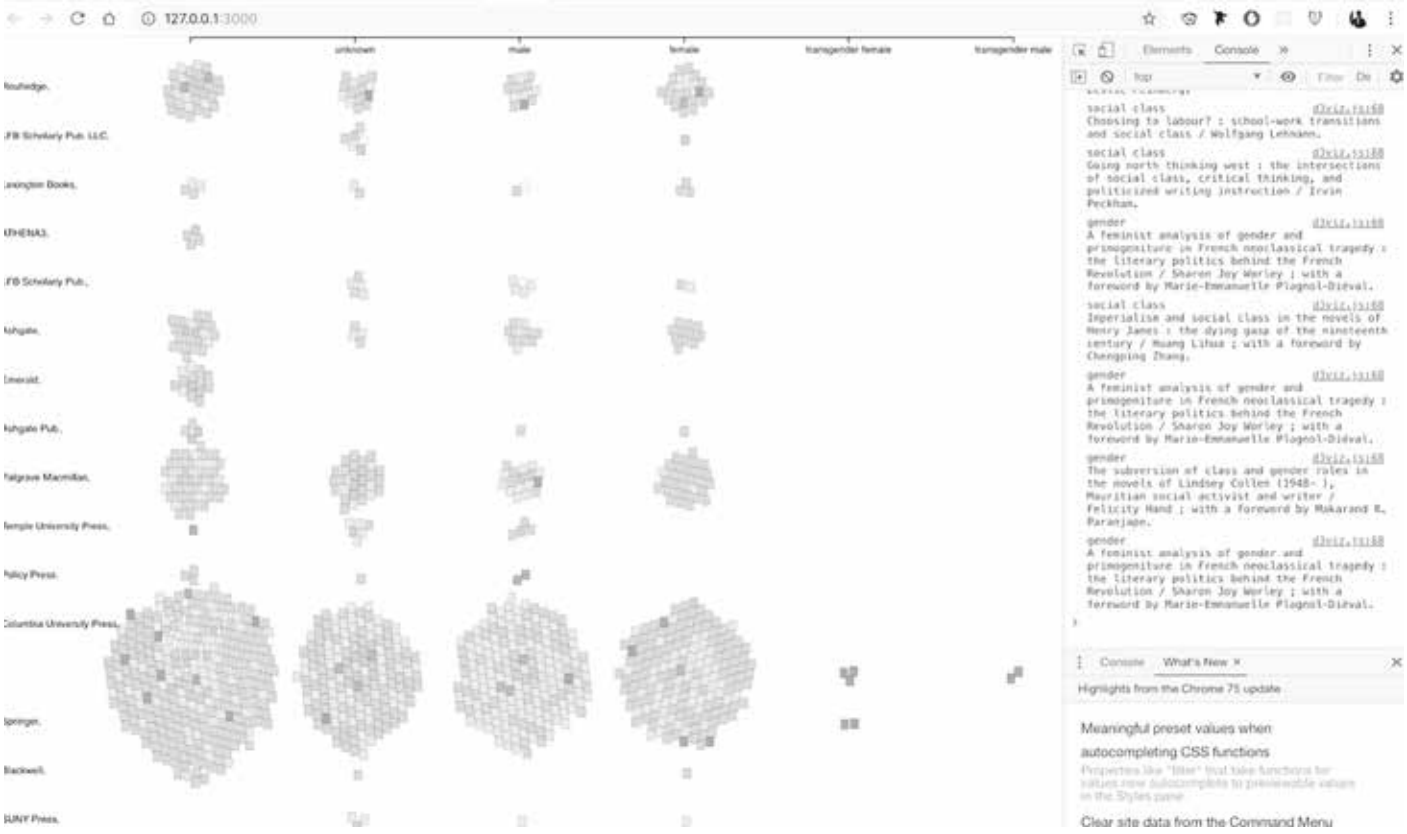
11. See Ernst Neufert, *Architects' Data*, trans. David Sturge and Nifel J. Luhman, 5th ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2019).

12. As one central element of this project, the exhibition *Reading the Library* focuses on feminist and decolonial approaches to systems of ordering knowledge. More information at: sitterwerk.ch/En/Event/611.

13. Emily Drabinski, "Queering the Catalog: Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction," *The Library Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (April 2013): 94–111.

14. Unbound Libraries was a worksession organized by Constant around digital libraries and tools for the organization of knowledge that took place online from May 31 to June 5, 2020. More information at: constantvzw.org/site/-Unbound-Libraries,224-.html.

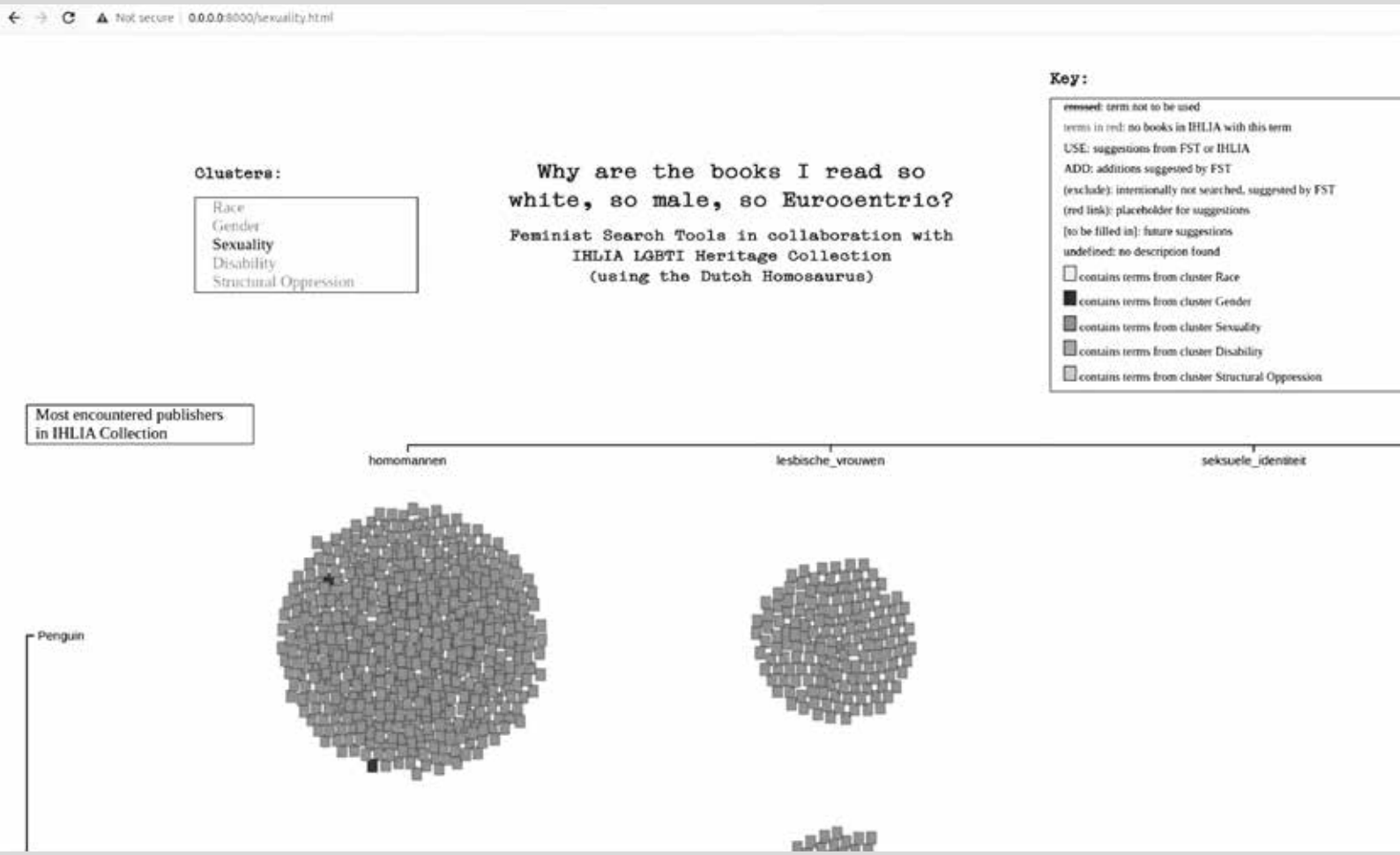
15. For example, see the Feminist Search Assistant (https://fst.hackersanddesigners.nl/) and FST meetups (https://read-in.info/fst-meet-ups/).



Screenshot Visualization Tool (version 1), based on the first prototype with Utrecht University Library; developed in collaboration with DensityDesign during the Digital Methods Summer School, Amsterdam (2019).



Paper prototyping. Photo: Feminist Search Tools working group.



Screenshot of FST Visualization Tool (version 2), based on the IHLIA catalog and the Homosaurus, 2020. The question "Why are the books I read so white, so male, so Eurocentric?" is central at the top. Selected are five clusters on the top left: Race, Gender, Sexuality, Disability, and Structural Oppression. The x-axis is composed of a selection of Homosaurus terms linked to a certain cluster. The y-axis depicts the twenty most common publishers in the IHLIA Heritage Collection catalog.

Where Does the Agency Lie within the Tool?

ALICE When it comes to user interfaces, we are so used to smooth interface designs that feel like "magic," like filling in a search window in Google, for instance. You just type something and you don't know what is happening in the backend. It just shows you the result. I was always hoping that we would do the opposite of this, or something other than that. There is a lack of agency I experience with digital tools. With analog tools, I don't have that feeling. I have a hammer, and I know how a hammer works. I am somehow much more frustrated as a user of digital tools. I don't know how to break that distance with such tools. I think we were trying to close that gap, but it still feels unattainable at times.

ANJA This reminds me of a subsection in our previous conversation that I wanted to speak more about. The section "Understanding one's own tools"[16] and the implication of ownership over a tool. Even though they are often hidden, don't our tools in a way also own us? And also, when we think about tools—for instance, software—we often think about them as separate from us. There is an alleged separation between the tool builder, the tool, and the tool user. I found it so interesting in our process—as much friction as it brought, it became very clear how a tool is actually not so separate from us. Every conversation was informed by the tool and, in turn, shaped the tool. But also we, as a group, were shaped by its coming into being, and also constantly confronted with our expectations of our tool relationship.

ANGELIKI I wonder how the code could also become part of this conversation. For instance, the ways we categorized the material in the code. Thinking about the code and realizing that creating intersectional axes practically meant we had to bring everything inside the same place.[17] Everything had to become one script. To be able to create the different axes, we connected the different terms in that script. The way we categorized the code, the file, and the scripts should also be part of that conversation. Because the code is also built on binaries and structures and is written in ways that make it difficult to complexify. It's actually difficult to find possibilities to make a split. We are not professional software developers. We just happen to know a bit of coding. We are learning through this process. I am sure the tool can be much more innovative in the way it is structured. It also needs a deep knowledge of the initial library tool. But yeah, this was an interesting process. I would actually like to see this conversation and the learning process reflected more visibly in the tool.

ANNETTE Which brings us back to the "conversation tool." All these conversations and encounters are so necessary because the digital tool itself makes them so invisible in a way.

ANJA But how could they become more visible? These conversations indeed became a useful "tool" for our process as they offered us committed moments of collective reflection. On the Doing and Undoing Relationships project website, the conversation became quite important both as a narration of the website and as a navigation. But what happens after the conversation? The idea of releasing and handing out the digital tool still seems to be a difficult subject for us. The way we go about the release is by making the process available and hyper-contextualizing it. There have always been specific people, specific organizations that we engaged with, and, to a certain extent, we also depend on them moving forward. Don't you think there is a danger of these conversations among us

16. See "Doing and Undoing Relationships."

17. Feminist Search Tools is based on an understanding of feminism as intersectional. The 2016 *Let's Do Diversity* report by the University of Amsterdam Diversity Commission eloquently summarizes what intersectionality is about, introducing it as "a perspective that allows us to see how various forms of discrimination cannot be seen as separate, but need to be understood in relation to each other. Being a woman influences how someone experiences being white; being LGBT and from a working-class background means one encounters different situations than a white middle-class gay man. Practicing intersectionality means that we avoid the tendency to separate the axes of difference that shape society, institutions and ourselves" (10). See the full report at: https://archive.org/details/diversity-commission-report-2016/page/n1/mode/2up.

ANJA becoming too self-referential? In a way, we publish and release the tools through these conversations and other forms of activation such as the meetups. But how do we make sure that Feminist Search Tools contributes or feeds back into the communities it is inspired by?

ANNETTE It reminds me how the practice of situating often resembles self-referentiality because it requires a slowing down of processes and the need for revisiting one's own practices and argumentations.

SVEN The conversations are maybe more part of the background in the digital tool itself. If we think, for instance, of the website and the project itself, we try to bring them more to the foreground. It's something to keep in mind again and again how central these questions are to the project itself.

Exploring Intersectional Search as a Way to Move Beyond Identity Politics

ANJA We have clarified that we understood feminism as intersectional; "avoiding the tendency to separate the axes of difference that shape society, institutions and ourselves."[18] With the last iteration of the tool, we tried to literally intersect groups and axes of categorization, but at the same time also created new kinds of separations in order to make certain things legible and others not. How are those separations in fact feminist separations? And in what ways did the tool perhaps share our understanding of feminism?

SVEN Annette and I had a conversation with Lieke Hettinga, a PhD researcher working at the intersection of trans and disability visual politics and poetics of the body, about the Visualization Tool focusing on the IHLIA Heritage Collection [see previous image]. Lieke had questioned to what extent when using the clusters of gender, race, sexuality, etc. we are just reinstating identity politics, and to what extent we are able to move beyond these categories. By looking at categories separately but also trying to find connections between them, this reminded me of the underlying tension of this project, us needing to name different categories relating to identity in our question "Why are the books I read so white, so male, so Eurocentric?" while desiring to move beyond them. These conversations and tensions have been an important part of the process but aren't necessarily so visible in the tool as it is right now. How can we show such tensions and struggles that we come across while approaching a tool like this, make them accessible to people engaging with the tool, and have them be part of the conversation about it?

ANGELIKI I am thinking about the notion of an introverted process. I think it is important to include the people this tool refers to, but maybe not always so intensively. And perhaps people don't have to understand it completely. It's good that it's clear that when we say "tool" we aren't speaking about a tool that gives solutions to problems. For me, it's important that people understand the conversational process and that they should be part of it—and that they will also affect the tool. How can we open up a reflection of this process? How can we engage more people in this process? Maybe it's through workshops or small conversations or a broadcast? To me, this relates to feminist practice—that the tool is applied in different layers. Not only in how you make the actual tool but also how you communicate about it; how you do things and take care of the technical but also the social aspects.

Use-Value and Usability

SVEN I had to think of the metaphor that Ola brought up earlier: the tool as a disruptive mechanism of "throwing stones into a wheel," which nicely translates to the tool existing in power structures. But at the same time, I do have to admit there is also a desire around usability of our tool, which for me stems from wanting to find queer literature. I want to be able to find that identification in the material I am looking for, and I still find

it very frustrating not to be able to find that within mainstream media outlets or libraries. So, I think we should also not so easily do away with these hopes and desires that come with the use-value of a tool. There are a lot of desires and hopes around that! I think it is also interesting to think through both. We can, of course, be critical about the efficiency and usability of a tool. But at the same time, we need to understand where that desire is coming from—wanting the tool to function and providing something to someone engaging with it as well.

OLA The desire to actually find something cannot be separated from the rest of the commentary we made in terms of the efficiency of the tool, as you said. That's the issue. When a tool is used, it creates issues as it is being used. The desire and everything you just said are not isolated things. I think that's not hard to imagine but maybe hard to articulate—in terms of how we imagine the functionality of the tool, or how it operates within the library.

ALICE Would this be an argument against the usability of such a tool?

OLA No, this is not an argument against usability, but against the fact that we think it's not something neutral and separate. That is part of the problem. It creates and perpetuates the same issue because the tool is already something that gives analytics to the bigger body of the library. And through that, patterns are formed. And the interface responds to that. So, we are caught in an enclosure of this desire that is already informed by how the knowledge is institutionalized or how that knowledge is classified. So, I think there has to be awareness of that.

ANGELIKI The way that I envision it, it's not going to be a "beautiful" interface that is easy-going. It will show the fragments of learning that went into it.

ANJA Yes, the tool also demands a certain level of involvement, care, and commitment. It is perhaps not thought about as something that can be finished, standing on its own, but as something that is never resolved and needs continued engagement—a practice.

ANNETTE For me, it ties back to the attitude toward the tool—toward this black box. I don't believe we can ever have a complete understanding of any tool. But we can strive for a certain kind of literacy that supports both a questioning attitude and is dedicated to the quest for social justice. This might be crucial in order to address the complicities of the modern project of education that libraries are embedded in.

18. See "Doing and Undoing Relationships."

Tools

Collaborators/organizations

Feminist Search Tools

feministsearchtools.nl

Feminist Search Tools is an ongoing artistic research project that explores different ways of engaging with the items of digital library catalogs and their systems of categorization. The project attempts to stir conversations around the inclusion and exclusion mechanisms that are inherent to current Western knowledge economies.

IHLIA LGBTI Heritage Collection

ihlia.nl/en

IHLIA is an independent organization located in OBA Oosterdok in Amsterdam. IHLIA is continuously involved in collecting information about the LGBTI community and making it accessible.

Read-in

read-in.info

Read-in is a self-organized collective that experiments with the political, material, and physical implications of collective reading and the situatedness of any kind of reading activity.

Hackers & Designers

hackersanddesigners.nl

Hackers & Designers is a non-profit workshop initiative organizing activities at the intersection of technology, design, and art. By creating shared moments of hands-on learning, H&D stimulates collaboration across disciplines, technological literacy, and different levels of expertise.

Casco Art Institute – Working for the Commons

casco.art

Casco Art Institute – Working for the Commons is an experimental platform where art invites a new vision of society. Art and the Commons are two key practices, as both tools and visions for better ways of living together.

Digital Methods Initiative

ihlia.nl/en

The Digital Methods Initiative (DMI) is one of Europe's leading Internet Studies research groups. Composed of new media researchers and PhD candidates, it designs methods and tools for repurposing online devices and platforms (such as Twitter, Facebook, and Google) for research into social and political issues.

Bookshelf Research

read-in.info/bookshelf-research/

Bookshelf Research proposes counting exercises for specific private or public libraries and bookshelves according to categories such as gender, nationality, and materiality, resulting in reflections and conversations about statistical breakdowns of inclusions and omissions.

Atria: Institute on gender equality and women's history

atria.nl

Atria: Institute on gender equality and women's history collects, manages, and shares the heritage of women and, on the basis of research and facts, promotes equal treatment of women and men in all their diversity.

Reading the Library

sitterwerk.ch/En/Event/611

An exhibition on feminist and decolonial approaches to systems of ordering knowledge.

Teaching the Radical Catalogue: A Syllabus 2021–22

syllabus.radicalcatalogue.net

Eva Weinmayr (UK) and Lucie Kolb (CH) developed a syllabus that instigates discovery and learning within an educational context. This syllabus aims to reveal the socially and historically produced orders and hierarchies that underlie library catalogs.

Constant

constantvzw.org
constantvzw.org/site/-Unbound-Libraries,224-.html

Constant is a non-profit, artist-run organization based in Brussels since 1997 and active in the fields of art, media, and technology. Constant develops, investigates, and experiments. Constant departs from feminisms, copyleft, free/libre and open source software. Unbound Libraries was a Constant worksession around digital libraries and tools for the organization of knowledge that took place online from May 31 to June 5, 2020.

Infrastructural Manœuvres in the Library

catalogue.rietveldacademie.nl/about.html

Infrastructural Manœuvres is an ongoing project of the Rietveld and Sandberg Library; its aim is to foreground the role and possibilities of a library's technical infrastructure, opening it up to reflection and experimentation.

Let's Stand Together:

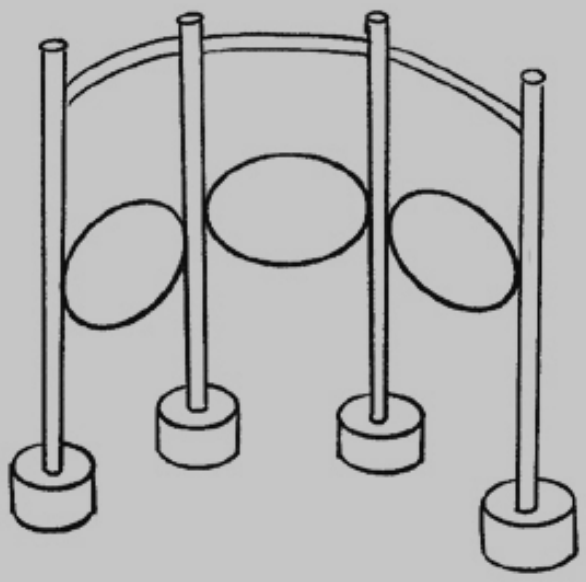
Supporting Migrant Cultural Work in Taiwan

Translated by Emily S.J. Lee

Sima Ting Kuan Wu

Sima Ting Kuan Wu is a cultural worker living in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. He graduated from the Department of Advertising at National Chengchi University. Wu's work focuses on the Malay Islands, specifically on the art practices of Indonesian migrant workers. Through fieldwork, archival research, and artistic collaborations, he explores the historical facts behind labor/migration and attempts to develop multivocal and border-crossing narratives.

Wu is the coordinator of the Trans/Voices Project: Indonesia–Taiwan (2019) and Sketching Singapore—Literary Exchange and Writing Project (2020). He published the project collection *Sketching Singapore* and also coordinated the publication of two Southeast Asian literary works, *Ghost Ship* (2016) by Sunlie Alexander Thomas and *Malay Sketch* (2020) by Alfian Sa'at.



From the Indomie selling in convenience stores to the expanding international remittance and logistics services, migrant workers from Southeast Asia represent a significant presence in Taiwan.[1] Taiwan first introduced foreigners into the workforce in 1989. However, public understanding of migrant workers remains limited. Incidents of discrimination and targeted violence and abuse against migrant workers are reported regularly. Migrant workers are often portrayed in the media in Taiwan as pitiful or hateful. There have been many attempts from social sectors to reverse the negative view of migrant workers, but the proposals are often based on sensationalism. While I am not against such emotional instigation, I believe that there is more to explore behind these emotionally loaded impressions. Putting aside the discussion of labor rights, we need to recognize that migrant workers are individuals and that a person's existence is inseparable from culture. How should I communicate with the public about migration issues? How can I develop more insights into the topic of migrant workers' conditions? For me, these have become subjects that require ongoing dialogue.

Yuli Riswati is a former foreign domestic helper as well as a citizen journalist and active participant in human rights organizations during her leisure time. After being deported to Indonesia at the end of the Hong Kong anti-extradition movement, Riswati transformed her experience of being detained in Hong Kong's Castle Peak Bay Immigration Centre (CIC) into a short essay called "1672."[2] The title represents Riswati's serial number during her four-week detention. Another migrant worker, Erwiana Sulistyaningsih, who became the focus of international news due to long-term abuse by her employer, also translated her experience into a literary work, "Adelina, Your Pain is Also My Pain" (*Adelina, deritamu adalah deritaku jua*). Since moving back to Indonesia, both Riswati and Sulistyaningsih have devoted themselves to labor movements and human rights work. These two internationally known figures illustrate the importance of political enlightenment for migrant workers. However, such cases are rarely seen in Taiwan despite many local NGOs working on issues related to migrant rights.

Taiwan's official Foreign Workers' Cultural Festival was introduced in 2001. It was the first large-scale cultural event organized specifically for migrant workers. To set an example, the festival's first edition was held in the capital city, Taipei. Since then, various county and city governments have cooperated with local organizations and have held their own "cultural festivals" and "cultural carnivals." These activities are planned not only to entertain migrant workers but also to promote multiculturalism—one of the strategies used by the Taiwanese government to build a new nationalistic structure. Previously, I worked with the National Taiwan Museum to hold four similar large-scale cultural events on Indonesia's Independence Day. I have no interest in being part of the new nationalist construction plan, and I do not consider myself a representative of any nation. What I tried to do was work with migrant workers by looking at the National Taiwan Museum as a part of colonial heritage and focusing on developing interactions with this historical space. We understood the museum as an important construction for the colonizers to display their authority. So we arranged the folk dance *Reog*, performed by migrant workers from Ponorogo Regency, East Java, to emphasize *Reog*'s image of resisting authoritarianism. My intention was to encourage migrant workers to speak for themselves through artistic performances rather than passively become an exhibit dominated by corporations and the nation-state.

Admittedly, I cannot deny that a performative stage in a foreign land is an occasion for migrant workers to demonstrate their own nationalism. However, I have also seen many migrant workers using their performative tools on stage to express their desire for independence. For example, at an Indonesian traditional clothing catwalk show during the 2019 festival edition, migrant workers inserted a revolutionary drama into the commercial performance. The theater piece illustrates how people resisted colonization and were able to express their own culture after gaining independence. In addition, the migrant workers' theatrical troupe Tresno Budoyo adapted "Malin Kundang"—a folktale circulated in the Malay Islands—into a migrant workers' version to remind fellow migrants not to forget their homeland. Umi Sugiharti, a prolific migrant writer, also chose to present his poem "Ksatria Pancasila" on the festival stage. It is impossible to detail the creations and performances of every Indonesian migrant worker during my tenure as festival coordinator. However, one question I always tried to pass on to migrant workers was, "What is independence for you?"

In 2019, my partners and I led a workshop with visual artist Deden Bulqini in a placement center in Taoyuan. There we met Tony Sarwono, a migrant worker whose early passion for practicing abstract painting had been strongly discouraged due to the high-pressure labor environment in Taiwan. After finishing the exhibition in Taipei with Bulqini, I invited Sarwono to help make posters for Indonesia's Independence Day. Sarwono used black paint as his main base and created *Feeling of Freedom (Sensasi Kebebasan)*.

He explained: "The painting expresses my longing to be free from the darkness." Shortly after completing this work, Sarwono was beaten up by his employer and decided to escape from the factory and, as a consequence, became a missing migrant worker. Independence means self-expression; independence is remembering your roots; independence is battling; independence is seeking emancipation from oppression.

Through working with the Taiwan Literature Award for Migrants (TLAM) from 2015 to 2019, I met many migrant writers. Although I have now left the organizing team, I continue to interact closely with Indonesian migrant writers. In fact, the literary creations of the migrant workers became the starting point for me to explore the artistic and cultural practices of Indonesian migrant workers more broadly. When I first began to promote migrant literature, I faced a lot of questioning by those both within and outside of the organization. Despite my efforts, and those of many others, institutions are often perplexed by migrant workers' literature. Some question, for instance, whether migrant literature—which requires translation to be read by the Taiwanese—can be compared with the literature of other Taiwanese ethnic groups. When I gave a lecture to introduce Indonesian migrant literature in Yogyakarta a few years ago, a local left-wing writer used the word "dirty" (*jorok*) to describe the work. I am not surprised by the defensive mentality of literary elites, and that migrant workers' approach to writing in an allegedly "testimonial" style may only be seen as an amateur pastime. After all, the status of most workers will not change because of their literary creations.

Nowadays, it is difficult to find Chinese-translated works from migrant workers in Taiwan. If readers have the chance to read the poems or essays included in the aforementioned literary awards, it is not difficult to discover similar patterns or forms, such as depictions of suffering or religious salvation. It is possible that authors might have perpetuated certain clichés to fit the preferences of these competitions. However, it is not contradictory to believe that this literature also reflects the collective experience of migrant workers. Based on my practice and research in the field of migrant literature, a few partners and I initiated the Trans/Voices Project (TVP) in 2019, hoping to focus more on the artistic and cultural practices of migrant workers as well as their movement and labor narratives.

In the first year of TVP, three groups of artists from Bandung came to Taiwan to work with migrant workers through video and visual arts. These artists also conducted ethnographic research on literature, music, dance, and drama. This year-long project opened up my understanding, which had previously been confined within

1. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, there were more than 277,000 Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan, accounting for 38.9 percent of all foreign workers. Among these foreign workers, almost 200,000 of them are caregivers. These figures do not include more than 10,000 offshore crew members working on fishing vessels. This number accounts for 35.65 percent of all foreign workers. See the Ministry of Labor website, available at: https://statfy.mol.gov.tw/index12.aspx.

2. Available in Chinese here: https://opinion.cw.com.tw/blog/profile/441/article/10090

the frame of literary works. The project also prompted my partners and I to realize two other projects, "Writing/Creating Project with Migrant Workers: Body Narratives Inside/Outside the Epidemic" (*Mencipta/ Menulis Bersama Pekerja Migran-Dialog Bahasa Tubuh Dalam / Luar Pandemik*) in 2020 and "Sound of Work: Collection and Scene Writing of Indonesian Migrant Songs" (*Nyanyian Di Perantauan—Kumpulan Lirik Lagu Pekerja Migran Indonesia and Laporan Skena Musik di Taiwan*) in 2021.

The suffering of migrant workers—such as poverty, migration, and inhumane labor conditions—portrayed in literature and performance, triggered my reflection on how migrant workers respond to the reality in which they live through bodily actions, such as forms of resistance, asceticism, and sacrifice. In 2021, when Covid-19 was raging around the world, my partners and I organized a human rights walking tour for Indonesian migrant workers engaged in amateur performances in Taipei. We used public bicycles and experienced many locations with stories of individuals and groups whose freedom had been violated in the modern historical development of Taiwan. The literary creations of the migrant workers are provided as supplements to the tour to generate discussion about why and how people risk making their voices heard in the silenced age. Nowadays, most foreign caregivers in Taiwan only take one day off every one to three months, and the average hourly salary is only 23.6 yuan (equivalent to US $0.85). Essentially, our hope in organizing this walking tour was that migrant workers would reflect on their situation and take their reflections back to their own stage.

Singing Our Origins: Responses to Reality and Conversations on Histories

In recent years, we have also tried to bring the discussion of transnational migratory labor back to the migrant workers' home countries through their diligent writings. These works include "Song of the Waves" (*Nyanyian Ombak*) by Justto Lasoo in 2016, "Elegy Ambarwati" (*Elegi Ambarwati*) and "Weaving Fate" (*Merajut Takdir*) by Etik Purwani in 2019 and 2020, and "Sri Pon and Fairy Tales that Might Be Wrong" (*Sri Pon dan Dongeng yang Mungkin Salah*) published in 2020 by Sri Lestari. These literary works show how difficult it is for Indonesian villages to reverse the migration route after the disintegration of the authoritarian regime and the emergence of the New Order.[3]

At the end of 2019, TVP and several collaborating artists visited a village in the Banyumas mountain area in Central Java. Through the mediation of migrant worker friends, we organized a film and writing workshop. The mountain area was once recognized as the country's leading clove producer. The land in the area was acquired for a very low price during the New Order era by consortiums closely connected with the government. As a consequence, farmers had to migrate because they could not survive on their own land. Today, about 80 percent of the residents of this area are from overseas. Many villagers speak Chinese, Cantonese, or Arabic. The main streets have multiple Chinese restaurants opened by former migrant workers. Every family has their own car or other means of transport, which has led to the cessation of public transportation. Here, we see migrant workers returning home with their political ideals, struggling to support women and youth communities, and trying to revitalize the village's mutual aid system (*gotong-royong*).

Such "industrial villages" are widespread around the peripheries of Jakarta and Yogyakarta, Indonesia's two main political and economic cities. Etik Purwani, who left her hometown in East Java after the turn of the millennium, meticulously puts into words both the aspiration and desperation felt during the Indonesian Democratic Reform (*reformasi*) in her highly autobiographical short story "Wedding in Autobiography" (*Merajut Takdir*, 2020). Etik describes a scene where a migrant worker escapes the

training center by jumping out of the window in desperation. Later, when I was interviewing the owner of an Indonesian dance hall in Kaohsiung, she also described how she jumped out of the window back in the 1990s because she could not bear waiting indefinitely at the training center to come to Taiwan. After escaping from the training center, she walked from Bekasi, West Java, to Kampong Malays and wandered on the streets of Jakarta for a year, mixing with people from all social classes.

The plot of jumping out of the window is not uncommon in the literary creations of migrant workers. Such incidents are reported quite often in Taiwanese social news: people jump out of the window because of a fire in the dormitory, or because of fear of police raids. Jumping out of the window implies an urgent attempt to escape from a situation, a predicament, or a disciplinary body. I noticed many different tactics in the face of precarious situations in both the literary works and the actual realities of the migrant workers. For instance, some people move to large cities and work in the lowest-paid factories or in the sex industry. Others move to foreign lands to become migrant workers or fishermen using techniques they have learned from their forefathers on foreign sea vessels. Hence, jumping out of the window is only one of many survival strategies.

Performance and Proclamation: Imagining Power Relations

The aforementioned scenarios are not unfamiliar to people in Taiwan. However, the challenge remains how to address the issue of migrant workers in their home country and further embed their political realities into the local historical context of Taiwan. For me, this is a necessary task to pursue. During the Japanese colonial era, Kaohsiung, a southern city of Taiwan, was the base for southward advancement. After World War II, Taiwan and Indonesia were implicated in the Cold War. The first export-processing zone was set up in the harbor of Kaohsiung due to its industrial foundation and with the aid of the United States. In addition, the offshore fishing industry also began to develop. At that time, many young people from rural areas, including Indigenous peoples, poured into Kaohsiung. Even though Indigenous people only account for between 2 to 4 percent of Taiwan's total population, they make up more than 30 percent of the labor force in the offshore fishing industry. While there are many songs depicting the working class in Taiwanese pop music, Indigenous peoples have also created work songs from their own internal experiences of displacement and labor. These songs assist in making sense of the internal migration of Taiwanese citizens under the wave of globalization.

At the same time, migrant workers from Southeast Asia are visibly part of the Taiwanese labor force. For instance, it is noticeable that laborers working on vessels in the fishing industry have been almost completely replaced by migrant workers. Among them, Indonesian fishermen are the majority. In this context, my partners and I began to conduct fieldwork and collect Indonesian migrant song files and information about music scenes, exploring music production and practices of Indonesian migrant workers in the state of work (*bekerja*) and creation (*berkarya*). We collected sixty-three works from twenty-two groups of migrant musicians and bands for this publication project. After the completion of the book, several enthusiastic migrant workers continued to send us their new creations. Such vibrant energy is something I have not felt before during my research on migrant workers' literature. Among the twenty-two groups of music creators, most are from the border regions of Lampung and the peripheries of Java Island, especially Pantura, the north coast, where various cultures converge. The diaspora narratives in these songs are important since they are almost regarded as a necessary condition for migrant workers. However, the political, historical, social, and cultural reality of the migrant workers'

3. The New Order refers to the political period during Soeharto's presidency (1967–1998). The term signifies the military dictatorship, shrinking public space, and oppression of human rights and political and creative expression during the period. Today, the term serves as a reminder of how the New Order-oligarchy attitude lasts and continues to haunt subsequent political periods. See "Tools for Radical Study," footnote 1 for more information.

hometowns cannot be ignored. Learning about such realities prevents us from exotifying them; instead, it encourages us to try to better understand others and their origin stories.

Since its inception in 2008, the Forum Silaturahmi Pelaut Indonesia (FOSPI), with which I am deeply involved, has grown to become the largest Indonesian fishermen's association in Taiwan. Currently, eleven regional geopolitical associations from the Javanese coastal areas are affiliated with the association consisting of around 3,000 members. From here, we learn how in the 1960s and 1970s, sea-crew management agencies tapped into the Indigenous tribes in Hualien and Taitung to recruit manpower. If we juxtapose the reports of excessive agency fees and violence toward offshore fishermen in the past with the condition of foreign fishermen nowadays, there seems to be little difference between foreign and native fishermen in terms of their experiences across generations. For example, the fee for issuing a passport is 800 yuan (about US $28.80). However, the intermediaries often ask Indonesian crew members for agency fees ranging from 5,000 to 15,000 yuan (about US $180 to $540).

I see the potential of historical exchange in the creation of migrant ballads between Indramayu and Banyuwangi on the north coast of Java. Ang Wang is one of many Indonesian fishermen with a lot of creative energy. Wang, who has traveled back and forth to Taiwan since 1999, comes from Dadap in Indramayu. He used to be a musician in the Kaohsiung Dangdut Bollo Band and later established the first fishermen's orchestra in Donggang. Wang often hums the feelings of being in a foreign land and makes them into songs. These songs are mostly popular *tarling* tunes popular in Nan'an (Quanzhou City) and the content is mostly about parting, heartbreak, and hard work.

Firman Setia Budi, another factory worker from Banyuwangi, often plays the guitar in the dormitory at night after working overtime. He uses songs to relieve the anguish caused by his work. Setia Budi's creation resembles the typical form of contemporary Banyuwangi songs. Banyuwangi has a unique existence in Java. The native inhabitants, *Suku Osing*, use their music to resist the dominant culture from Java and Bali. They even have their own category in the karaoke songbooks in Indonesian music stores in Taiwan. In the past, this area was stigmatized due to its common practice of witchcraft. In addition, its folk songs describing farm life were labeled as communist, which also resulted in the area's marginalization. Due to poor industrial development and limited employment options in modern Banyuwangi, many people choose to leave their homes to work in other countries. From 2018 to 2020, the number of people from Banyuwangi who migrated overseas was always in Indonesia's top ten.[4] At the same time, more people from Banyuwangi are selling land or borrowing money to pay for high agency fees so they can work abroad. With land prices rarely lowering, many people are forced to become strangers in their own region.

Prospect: Friendship and Togetherness

In the past three years, I have explored the historical and social changes in Taiwan and Indonesia through the creative narratives of Indonesian migrant workers. We aim to produce knowledge that facilitates better public understanding and perception of migrant workers through these fictional or nonfictional stories. Although this has become my lifelong research interest, I often feel at a loss as to how to deal with the duality of migrant workers' issues in the social field. To compete with China, Taiwan introduced the New Southbound Policy (NSP). However, the NSP fails to optimize legal frameworks. Rather, it tends to assimilate multiple cultures within Taiwan, such as the migrant labor literature mentioned earlier. Consequently, the policy becomes an awkward tool with which to force heterogeneous ethnic groups under the ruling power of the Chinese. In short, this new nation that is trying to include

4. See the statistics from the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (Badan Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia), available at: https://bp2mi.go.id/

Southeast Asia or the "South" into its borders is still fragile.

More than five years after the implementation of the NSP, migrant workers continue to be a chip on the diplomatic bargaining table; they are still exotic figures or victims of witch hunts. For the nation-state, migrant workers are only regarded as "part of the family" in certain circumstances. From my observation, however, efforts are being made to bring forth community-oriented propositions. Several immigrant and migrant worker-related NGOs, such as Living Together, Deciding Together from The International Workers Association (TIWA) and the J-Association of Development for Women's Rights in Pingtung (JADWRP), offer valuable examples of long-term guidance for new residents entering communities.

I have seen the passion of the individuals working in these NGOs to build migrant workers' communities and their work on related issues. At the same time, I constantly reflect on my own relations with these migrant workers. These people, who come from the lowest social level in their home country, often express their embarrassment about having hardly any education. However, when they genuinely share their thoughts with me, specifically about their creations, which are inseparable from life, they often move me deeply. After I left my fieldwork, I continued assisting migrant workers in various ways, such as translating documents, buying various tickets for transportation (flight, train, bus), taking them to amusement parks, or renting venues. Although these small tasks can take up a lot of time, it is perhaps the sense of responsibility that enables trust and friendship with migrant workers.

What does it mean to stand by someone? Why do we stand by someone? What are the kinds of histories we have experienced? And what kinds of futures do we want? I believe that by exploring together under the premise of equality, we may find answers to these questions.

2015

After work, Indonesian fishermen get together and jam where their vessels dock. This is Ta'bir Band, which was formed by Ang Wang, a fisher and songwriter from Indramayu. Wang has been a helpful contact for researching the music scene of migrant workers.





2020

Indonesian fishermen celebrate Indonesian Independence Day in Donggang.



2020

In Donggang Port, Indonesian fishermen have organized religious activities since around 2004. After fundraising for ten years, they managed to buy a building near the port and established Masjid An-Nur Tongkang mosque in 2018. This picture shows Indonesian fishermen performing *Takbir* around the port on Eid al-Adha's Eve (*Idul Adha*, the Festival of Sacrifice).





2021

Although Taiwan is the leading fishing industry in the world, this doesn't reflect in the lives and working conditions of migrant fishers. Public facilities for these fishermen are often insufficient, forcing them to build temporary and makeshift facilities for showers, laundry, rest, and prayer. Many Muslim fishermen (most of them Indonesian) build a *musholla* (praying room) using second-hand containers and recycled materials. Shown in this picture is Musholla Al-Ikhlas, built by Indonesian fishermen.



The Burning of the King Boat, or Ying-Wang Festival, is the most important activity in Donggang. This festival takes place every three years. It tells the story of the God Wang Ye (or Ong Ya in Hokkien/ Hok-Lok) who subdues ghosts and wipes out bad things like pandemics. Migrant fishermen have participated in this week-long ritual since the 1990s. In the parade, Indonesian fishermen create a drum formation called *Pasukan Hore*, or the Hurray Troops. They usually play Javanese folk songs, *dangdut* songs, and *Salawat* (Islamic prayer songs) with a percussion set of handmade bamboo instruments.

2021

There are more than 2,500 Indonesian fishermen in Donggang Port. Forum Silaturahmi Pelaut Indonesia (FOSPI, Indonesian Seafarers Gathering Forum) has become the largest community of Indonesian fishers in Taiwan. One of its main activities is fundraising. It has organized various activities to raise funds for Eid al-Fitr (*Idul Fitri*, the end of the holy month of Ramadhan), Eid al-Adha, and Indonesian Independence Day. The organization has also raised funds for various disaster relief efforts. Recently, FOSPI's fishermen gathered donations from various ships in the port for victims of the eruption of Semeru Volcano in East Java Province.



This is an image from the screening of the film *BATAM* (2020)—an abbreviation of *Bila Anda Tiba Anda Menyesal* (When You Arrive You Regret).[5] The film is by the Jakarta-based artist duo Irwan Ahmett and Tita Salina. I organized the screening in collaboration with Nusantara Archive. Nusantara Archive is a residency and archiving project initiated by No Man's Land (NML) to develop a framework for art exchange between Taiwan and the Malay/Indonesian Archipelago. The screening event was intended to create a platform to connect artists and fishermen who live and work in Donggang. Through such activities, we hope that the fishermen can address historical and political issues through art.

5. *BATAM* is available with English subtitles at: https://youtu.be/qWo-V7T5LZM.





2021

Various works of graffiti scattered around the fishing port in Donggang contain the names of the fishermen's hometowns. The word "DADAP" in this picture is the name of a fishing village in Indramayu Regency on the North Coast of Java Island. Fishermen from Indramayu and the neighboring cities (Cirebon, Brebes, Tegal, Pemalang, and Batang) are predominant among migrant fishers in Taiwan.



It is also very common to see graffiti on the bodies of fishing vessels. Fishermen have scribbled amusing words and mottos on the vessels where they have worked and lived. The phrase captured here, “Struggle and Prayer” (*Perjuangan dan Doa*), is one of them. “Perjuangan dan Doa” is the title of a song by Rhoma Irama, a famous Indonesian singer also known as the King of Dangdut. The song narrates a story about how a hard beginning often leads to a good ending.



2021

The daily feast of Indonesian fishermen. Even though most of the fishermen prefer Indonesian dishes, *cuteng* (“cook soup” in Hokkien or Hok-Lok dialect) prepared in the Taiwanese way is always being served on improvised tables made from cardboard boxes. *Cuteng* is mainly made from unsellable fish and seafood donated by the captains, demonstrating the relationship between the fishermen and their employers.



2021

A community money box made from a buoy, hanging in an Indonesian fishermen's self-built shelter. With these savings, the fishermen hold annual activities like Eid al-Fitr or New Year parties. Shown at the back is a curtain made from tarpaulin, painted in red and white to make it look like an Indonesian flag.





Two Indonesian fishermen weave baskets with tuna fishing lines. Shown here is a young fisherman learning how to weave. Smartphones are ubiquitous, but WiFi signals are not available on every vessel at sea. Weaving is one activity to kill time during fishermen's long fishing journeys.

2021

Recently, Annie Kuan, Working Hard (an artist collective in Taipei), and I collaborated with Indonesian fishermen from FOSPI to organize an exhibition at the Kaohsiung Museum of Labor. During the fieldwork, we organized the visual and audio participation of the fishermen. Their participation took the form of graffiti, paintings, songs, and readings. Through documenting and collecting various objects, we tried to represent the scenes where migrant fishers work and live. For example, “the transparent shower room” shows the everyday difficulties that migrant fishermen have to face when their vessels dock in the ports. In most fishing ports in Taiwan, proper and functional bathrooms are difficult to find.




POSKO
KEAMANAN
FOSPI
Mix Tea
HUT RI
75

Why do tools become the locus of conversation? readers of this publication may wonder. At least for those of us who reside amid the proliferation of collective practices in the Global South, this is particularly significant. Talking about and sharing tools means talking about and performing the redistribution of power—a power that is most likely derived through the process of knowledge accumulation. Talking about tools also means talking about things one finds in places like public kitchens, village meeting halls, slaughterhouses, and residential gardens—places where theory and its methods are rarely found, whether on the ground or in quotidian conversation. We treat KUNCI's editorial role in this publication as an opportunity to network and cross-reference our educational initiative, the School of Improper Education, with other initiatives and their publics. We understand cross-referencing as a framework to provide a grounded understanding of local study contexts while also engaging in the mobility and connection of people, ideas, tools, and institutions that, in turn, multiply the frame of references in each implicated study practice. Inhabiting the space of sharing and collectivity, this multiplication creates a commons-based production of knowledge rather than a centralized accumulation of intellectual property. All contributors to this publication offer alternative forms of learning that are fundamentally practiced as a mode of sharing and nurturing alternative publics or counterpublics.

For this publication we have invited education practitioners from diverse learning spaces to share their tools, which have been developed through collective learning practices. Questions include: What kinds of strategies, tactics, and methods have been created, tested out, and developed to redistribute power in the learning relationships in these spaces? How could they be used to create and manage the condition of safe and democratic spaces to pose oppositional views? How can the goodwill of each person involved form the basis of a nurturing, ethical principle? What kind of space is able to capture and at the same time re-narrate—to make tools become more universal?

Edited by KUNCI Study Forum & Collective, founded in 1999 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. KUNCI experiments with methods of producing and sharing knowledge through acts of studying together at the intersections between affective, manual, and intellectual labor.

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Contributors include Al Maeishah, Fawaz, Feminist Search Tools, Sanchayan Ghosh, Moelyono, S. Soedjojono and Sindhusiswara, Sima Ting Kuan Wu, and Chen Yun. Designed by Celcea Tifani and Tasia Loekito. Published by MARCH and available at march.international.