

Learning from Indonesian Artists and Art Initiatives

**From
Alternative Space
to Also-Space:**

reinaart vanhoe

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Introductory note

This publication is part of a research of the artistic and social practice of ruangrupa, an artists' initiative from Jakarta, Indonesia. The complete research, consisting of three chapters, will be published later this summer (2016) under the title *Also-Space, from Hot to Something Else: How Indonesian Art Initiatives Have Reinvented Networking*.

The text of the present publication is the third and final chapter of the book, focusing on the author's concepts of 'also-space' and 'gLEAP' and based on the examples of a number of other Indonesian artists and artists' initiatives.

How can we develop an artistic practice that does not define itself as 'alternative' or 'in opposition' to the society in which it exists, but rather as an integral part of the various communities in which the artist functions, produces and lives, and is thus very much a part of?

This research was conducted and written by reinaart vanhoe at the Research Centre Creating 010, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, and the Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. Part of the field research was conducted during a residency by the author at KUNCI Cultural Studies Center, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 2014.

The present pre-publication was realised for the occasion of the event SONSBEK'16 transACTION in Arnhem, the Netherlands, which is curated by ruangrupa.

Editor's note: Many of the texts quoted in this publication were written directly in English, by international artists and researchers who may not necessarily be fluent in this language, but for whom English is simply the necessary medium for communicating with a global contemporary audience. Out of respect for all the individuals quoted, we have left their texts exactly as they were. We sincerely believe that any possible idiosyncrasies in their use of the English language do not in any way diminish the substance or eloquence of their texts.

From alternative space to also-space

3.1 Also-space as a term and a place

3.1.1 Where does the idea of also-space come from?

In the mid to late 1990s, the term 'non-place' (after M. Augé's book 'Non-Places', 1992) was used in the art world to describe places that were seen as non-productive, leftover spaces, residual and more or less abandoned, transitional spaces in which you might find yourself on your way to someplace else. I found it strange and somewhat passive to label these places as abandoned, or to represent them as non-places in videos, photos and slides (looking back, I can only remember works by Els Opsomer and Aglaia Konrad, though these are by no means the most appropriate examples. The exhibition 'Wasteland' in Rotterdam in 1993 was perhaps a better example of this trend. At the Documenta X, in 1997, there was also some interest in the concept of non-place). At that point in my own development I saw the non-place as an essential cogwheel in the broader system of a 'globalised world'. Naomi Klein described some aspects of this in her book 'No Logo' (2000). Whatever the case, non-places are not residual or marginal spaces, they are in fact places in their own right, and often essential parts of a greater whole.

Much later, in 2009, I spent half a year in Beijing in the context of a residency programme. One thing I missed there was informal spaces for showing art, presentation spaces for dialogue and production. The sheer size of the city, the art boom currently going on and the inevitable focus on success meant that there was less room and less attention for such spaces.

There simply seemed to be no time or money to organise them. If they indeed did exist, it was for a public of insiders and anyway everything was in Mandarin, which I didn't speak. Also, all art events that could be seen as more or less alternative were still inevitably focused on the success, image, and production of the individual artist. I assumed there must actually be enough people interested in bringing together dialogue and production in a certain way, but who simply couldn't find the time, or had other reasons for not initiating such a situation.¹ This is why I decided to take the initiative to create such a space. I organised two exhibitions in Beijing for which I used the term 'also-space'.²

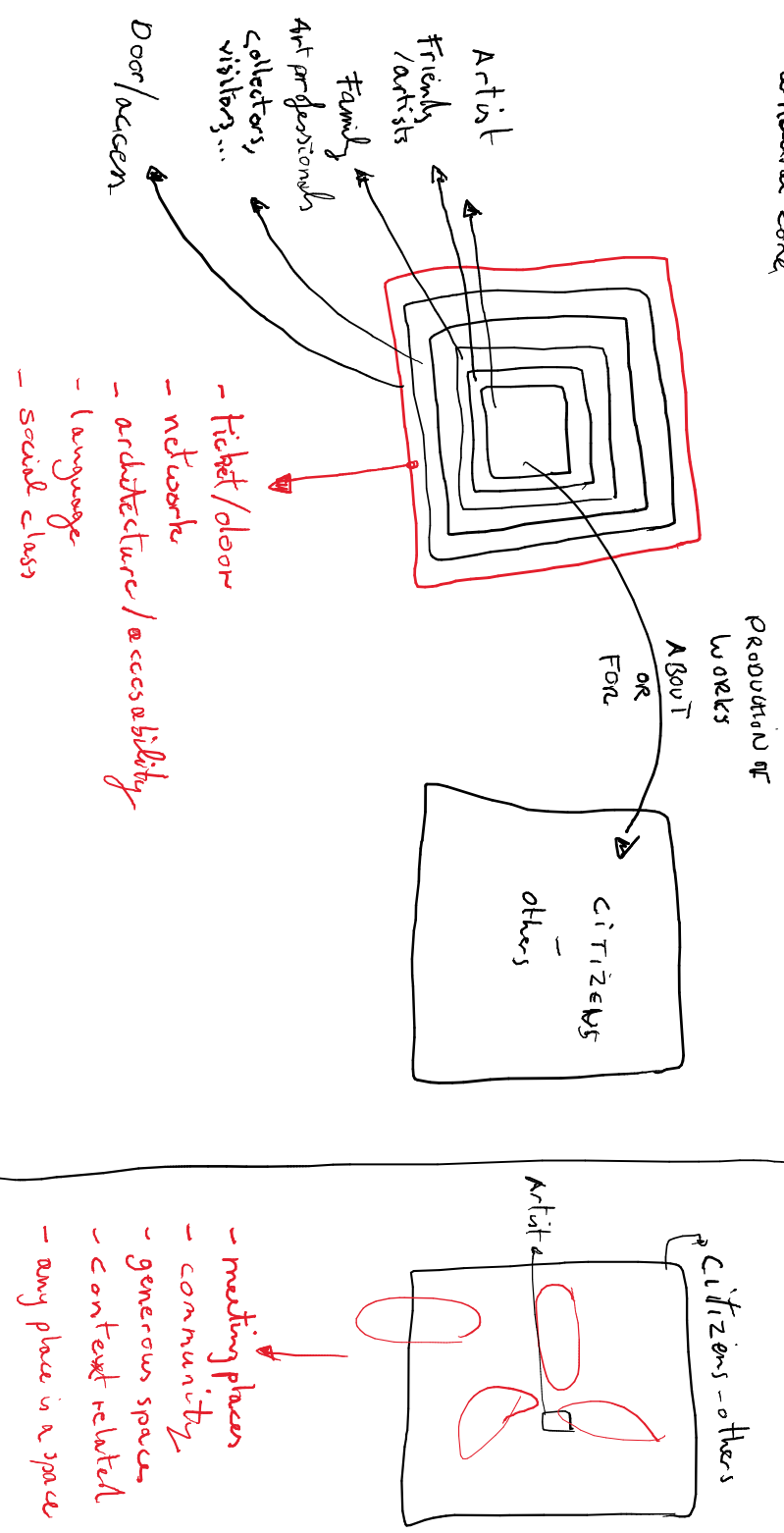
Occupying space, meeting people, an informal setting in which to share one's work with colleagues and the public; a generous space, partly because it was possible, partly because it was necessary. It was from this perspective that the concept of the also-space for the first time took on a concrete shape for me. These exhibitions were a first step in formulating what an also-space meant to me, and thus how I imagined what for me might be an ideal artistic practice. And now that I've had the opportunity to closely research the Indonesian artists' collective *ruangrupa*, I understand

¹ Such places did exist to some extent, or were being set up: examples include Homeshop (which I have already discussed in chapter 1 of this book; see footnote #3), Sugar Jar (a shop for noise music and other experimental musics, <http://nytimes.com/2007/10/27/arts/music/27expe.html>) and Forget Art (an intervention-based institution for self-organised projects, focused on relating artistic practices directly to the social context).

² See <http://vanhoe.org/paginas/alsospace.html>

Also-space: learning from Indonesian artists and art initiatives

If an artist produces a body of work which is about critique of society, about the citizen who is in need. Artists often talk about the citizen from a specialist zone. A specialist zone is not the same as a neutral zone.



much better the significance of these exhibitions.

3.1.2 Alternative space vs. also-space

In chapter two of this book,³ I briefly introduced the also-space as a concept for artists working within existing communities which they are already a part of.

I propose the model of also-space in order to encourage artists to consider their production from within the different communities they are a part of (artists, neighbours, social class, hobbies, profession, knowledge, etc.), beginning from an ontology of 'being-in-common'. In this way of thinking, there is no need to exclude oneself, no need to protect one's ideas as in the traditional autonomy-based Western models of the arts. Instead we are in constant dialogue, and each individual ego is essentially part of this 'we'.

Today, (critical) citizens such as artists should not make the mistake of isolating themselves in so-called alternative spaces. What they are actually seeking is more likely an 'also-world', an also-possible construction of everyday life. The issues in the arts are the same as in local and global economics: people understand that a substantial change is needed, but the greatest obstacle is always on a cultural level. Referring to economic obstacles, the philosopher and educator Euclides André Mance, a member of the Popular Solidarity Economy Network in Brazil, pointed out that:

'However fast solidarity economy is developing, millions of people who fight for "another world" (I use the term "also-world", RV) do not practise or participate in it. First, because they are unaware of it; second, because of the relatively difficult access to the products and

³ This publication is an excerpt from my upcoming book *Also-Space, from Hot to Something Else*; see introductory note.

*services produced within this other economy. Both difficulties can be quickly surmounted. The main obstacle is cultural: to overcome a consumerist culture that prizes quantity, excess, possession and waste over the welfare of people and communities (I call this the power of the mainstream or centralised world, RV), we need to replace unsustainable forms of production, consumption and ways-of-life with the affirmation of new ways of producing, consuming and living in solidarity.'*⁴

This implies that it is not sufficient to have a 'good' or 'right' concept, but that an engaged practice must be embedded within a long-term commitment. Instead of seeing themselves as the avant-garde of a movement, artists should instead find their place as contributors and collaborators within a movement. By identifying themselves as 'alternative', artists confirm the hegemony of the dominant system, the centralised world.⁵ The concept of alternative space is thus inadequate. The term also-space, however, offers possibilities for overcoming the limitations of alternative spaces.

3.2 Also-space: learning from Indonesian artists and art initiatives

In addition to my study of *ruangrupa*, I have focused on 4 other Indonesian artists and art initiatives. Working together is often normal for artists and other cultural practitioners in Indonesia. By examining other practices, my goal was to confirm the ideas I had formulated while studying *ruangrupa*.

⁴ Euclides André Mance, 'Solidarity Economics', Instituto de Filosofia da Libertação, 2007, p. 3. <http://solidarius.com.br/mance/biblioteca/turbulencia-en.pdf>

⁵ A world depicted in the work of Bureau d'études (<http://bureaudetudes.org/>) or Walid Raad, for example in his explanation of the APT (Artists' Pension Trust, see <http://eng.majalla.com/2013/04/article55240387>)

3.2.1 Why Indonesian examples?

3.2.1.1 In general

First of all, it is important to note that this is a momentary and personal proposal with the goal of understanding:

- how Indonesian artists or collectives often work (whether consciously or not) with the notion of citizenship or 'warga' (the Indonesian translation of 'citizen'/'citizenship');
- how to reconnect the artist's everyday activities with their artistic production. As I like to say: 'it is easier to perform being a rebel than to live as one';
- how to support interesting practices of artists who are lacking recognition. How to support interesting artists or communities when they have no real grip on what they are actually doing;
- how can we practice or teach art without falling into the trap of the mainstream (art) world, which often refers to (critical) concepts such as post-colonial, post-Fordism, art in a global context, activism or sustainability, but only produces a *representation* of these themes. For example, the 2013 Istanbul Biennial was interesting in the context of the Gezi Park protests.⁶ However, all the Biennial was able to do was show a romanticised archive of interesting 'activist' artists from the past. Another example: The Amsterdam Stedelijk Museum's project space SMBA has a series of exhibitions titled *Global Collaborations: 'Global Collaborations is a three-year project that aims to generate an informed and well-balanced overview of developments in contemporary art*

⁶ The Gezi Park protests were a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in 2013 in Turkey, following a violent crackdown against a peaceful sit-in protesting against an urban redevelopment plan for Istanbul's Gezi Park. The demonstrations soon escalated into wider protests against the authoritarian Turkish government.

*from a global perspective. It is based on collaborative partnerships with experimental and multifaceted art institutions throughout the world and encompasses exhibitions, publications, events, and an online platform.'*⁷ But how can we talk about real 'collaborative partnerships' when in the end the exhibition remains just that, an exhibition with its back turned to the context of the principles it is supposedly based on?

3.2.1.2 In Indonesia, and Java in particular:

Many artists seem to work with the concept of 'warga' (citizenship) as an integral part of their practice, with the goal of:

- portraying the everyday reality of people and using this as a tool for working beyond political power structures, thus empowering individuals as well as communities (see section 3.3.3, 'Practitioners', artist Moelyono);
- using art as a tool to empower people (see section 3.3.1, 'Practitioners', collective Lifepatch);
- seeing people as collaborators and co-authors (see section 3.3.4, 'Practitioners', artist Wok the Rock);
- gaining access to resources, collaborations, ideas (see section 3.3.2, 'Practitioners', collective Jatiwangi Art Factory);
- being useful or supportive to their fellow artists (see section 2.6,⁸ 'Development of *ruangrupa*: the first 15 years');
- working with their direct surroundings, the space and the people (for *ruangrupa* this space is mainly the

⁷ Stedelijk Museum, 'SMBA: Made in Commons', 2013-2014. Accessed online Jan. 1, 2015. <http://stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/sm>

⁸ This publication is an excerpt from my upcoming book *Also-Space, from Hot to Something Else*; see introductory note.

city of Jakarta, and often also the world at large);

- etc.

3.2.1.3 Why these specific examples?

What follows are four examples of two artists and two artists' collectives. I have limited myself here to describing examples related to the concept of also-space. A general discussion of alternative space, also-space and negotiation space will come later, in an insert at the end of this chapter.

These are concrete examples of practices, which provide a hint of what an also-space could be like. I have chosen to describe these four different types of practitioners in order to provide a broader perspective. Talking to different Indonesian artists or art initiatives, I sensed some opposition against the term 'also-space'. I should say that also-space is not a fixed term but a working term. In that sense it's comparable to anarchism, which has no fixed definition either. Anarchy is not something you can do, it is a part of being active, and an anarchist way of doing things depends on the context, situation, etc. Solidarity economy is another such fluid term; Ethan Miller, a practitioner/theorist of community economies, describes solidarity economy as:

(...) an open process, an invitation. The concept does not arise from a single political tradition or body of ideas. Its very nature and definition are in continual development, discussed and debated among its advocates. Seeking to "make the road by walking" rather than to push a closed or finalized ideology, solidarity economy is a "movement

*of movements" continually seeking connections and possibilities while holding on to the transformative commitment of shared values.'*⁹

One could also argue that fluid structures are by definition tricky. Activists and artists may end up weakening themselves through such fluid structures. This is exactly how neoliberal systems seduce us, by framing every measure as a next step in a fluid structure serving individual freedom. Artists and activists must always find a balance between taking a stance and being pragmatic. Let us not be naïve; there is no other way out, or as Roel in 't Veld says,¹⁰ all is already lost. To be able to act strategically, artists need first to connect to their everyday life of being active, and to build up from there. As ruangrupa did: just start from friendship and see where that leads to, find out what friendship is really capable of. From there, artists and activists can find out what actual power is, and how they can find their role in this power.

Having said that, let us now examine some aspects of these four practices.

My descriptions of the collectives Lifepatch and Jatiwangi Art Factory are first-hand observations. My text about the artist Moelyono is based on a text by the researcher Nuraini Juliasuti as well as notes from a discussion organised by KUNCI, Cultural Studies Centre in Yogyakarta in the context of the project 'Made in Commons', 2014. The text about the artist Wok the Rock (Woto Wibowo) is based on a text sent to me personally by Nuraini Juliasuti and a text published in the catalogue of the 2013 Jakarta Biennale.

⁹ Ethan Miller, 'Solidarity Economy Key Issues', in: E. Kawano, T. Masterson and J. Teller-Ellsberg (eds.), *Solidarity Economy I: Building Alternatives for People and Planet*. Amherst, MA: Center for Popular Economics. 2010.

¹⁰ Roel in 't Veld gave a talk at a conference organised by Freehouse ('Freehouse: Radicalizing the Local') in Rotterdam, Jan. 22-23, 2014.

3.3 Practitioners

3.3.1 Lifepatch

<http://lifepatch.org>

Citizen initiative in art, science and technology

Members (2015): Agus Tri Budiarto, Nur Akbar Arofattullah, Budi Prakosa, Andreas Siagian, Agung Geger, Arifin Wicaksono, Adhari Donora, Ferial Afiff, Wawies Wishnu Wisdantio.

'Lifepatch is a citizen initiative that works in creative and effective applications in the fields of art, science and technology. In its activities, Lifepatch's practices focus on the arts and educations in science and technology that are practical and useful for citizens around them. This is done through with the development of creative and innovative practices in technology such as biological technology, environmental technology and digital technology. In practice, Lifepatch enriches the culture emphasizes on the spirit of DIY and DIWO by inviting designated public to be involved, to examine, explore, develop and maximize the function of technology in both the theoretical and practical use to society and culture itself.'

Grace Samboh, in an a text sent to me by e-mail on Lifepatch. In this e-mail she also said: 'I wrote an intro on Lifepatch but haven't had the chance to expand or update them to an essay', July 2014.

Lifepatch is a collective of nine people from different backgrounds and different fields of interest. Some have a technical background in science, others are part of the cycling community of Yogyakarta. One is a bookkeeper, the other is an architect interested in urban development. One person is simply there, another is attracted to photography, etc.

Lifepatch was founded relatively recently, in 2012. Since then Lifepatch has been finding its way as an open-structured collective. It's nice to see how they, in a seemingly natural way, just breathe the air where they are and work with that substance. A motto of being active could be:

'You don't know the result, you are part of the result, it's about organising activities that are an important way of making art. It's about passing ideas on to each other, sharing resources and research. Some can use your resources for experiments, some to discover new methods, sometimes to bring different people together working on a same topic from different angles (...)'

Andreas Siagian, in a conversation with me, August 2014.

Lifepatch's approach could be described as follows: Lifepatch projects are initiated through contacts with friends, neighbours and others. Lifepatch develops ideas based on available knowledge. If there is no specific knowledge available, Lifepatch postpones the project in order to develop more knowledge and subsequently get a better grip on the content of the project in which they have been invited to participate. They are not interested in responding to an invitation if they don't yet have a relationship with the people who invited them.

'The main focus of Lifepatch is on sharing knowledge with the people. Until now, there were no formal education options for learning about new media – there is no school for that. At Lifepatch, we question global technologies and science – the trends. We realised that Indonesia lost many traditional sciences during colonisation. We try to bring this specific issue of traditional science into our practices

because we think it is very important and very interesting.’

Andreas Siagian, in an interview with Rebecca Conroy, Inside Indonesia 118: Oct.-Dec. 2014 (<http://insideindonesia.org/between-science-art-and-social-design-there-is-community>).

Though Lifepatch is often described as a ‘new media’ initiative or collective, for many of its members it is much more than that. Andreas Siagian states that Lifepatch is first and foremost a citizens’ initiative. Through Lifepatch, members develop their own interests and empower individuals and communities through their own prior specific knowledge.

PLATFORM: ANY PLACE IS A STAGE	COLLABORATORS AND PRODUCERS	CONCERNS	METHODS	ART
<p>There is not really a public or audience. Lifepatch conducts projects and shares knowledge through workshops and collaborations. People are connected by participating or attending public moments (exhibitions, events, etc.)</p> <p>In one project in a museum, Lifepatch gave a child the opportunity to show her works. Providing this child (and indirectly also her family) with a stage, rather than emphasising their own role in ‘curating’ these works</p> <p>On other occasions they will present results of earlier activities in a more formal and archival (artefact) format</p>	<p>Socio-cultural communities</p> <p>Friends</p> <p>Villagers</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Children</p> <p>Students</p> <p>City dwellers</p> <p>Makers community</p> <p>International network of new media</p> <p>Etc.</p>	<p>Education</p> <p>Biology</p> <p>Understanding science (new and traditional)</p> <p>Trust in ability of citizens</p> <p>Sharing of knowledge</p> <p>Etc.</p>	<p>All members bring in their own field of interest</p> <p>Led by curiosity, friendship and citizenship</p> <p>Anything can happen</p> <p>Applied thinking such as: linking street murals to a digital map, connecting street artists with cycling community</p> <p>Etc.</p>	<p>Art is not that important yet.</p> <p>Lifepatch member Andreas Siagian: ‘Just use a set of technical skills and work together, search or use collaborations to develop your own language in a mind-set of communing. Look for interaction, develop activities within the context you really relate to. Base these activities on personal relations.’</p>

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3.3.2 JAF, Jatiwangi Art Factory

<https://jatiwangiartfactory.wordpress.com>

Members (2014): Ismal Muntaha, Arief Yudi Rahman, Ginggi Syarif Hasyim, Deni Aryanto, Ahmad Tian Fulthan, Loranita Theo, Tedi En, Syarif Hidayat (Peyet), Yopie Nugraha, Arie Syarifuddin (Alghorie).

‘Mimpinya; seni bisa masuk ke dalam anatomi masyarakat paling dalam. Menjadi hubungan antar manusia, menjadi pengingat antar tetangga, menjadi itikad baik.’

‘(The dream was; art can fill in the deepest anatomy of society. Become a human relationship, a reminder between neighbours, a goodwill.)’

Jatiwangi Art Factory, 2013, a statement on their website.

Jatiwangi Art Factory (JAF) is an initiative by artists and the head of the village in Jatisura, Indonesia. The village, which is one of 16 villages composing the Jatiwangi district, currently finds itself in a period of transition. Until recently it was the main centre of production of roof tiles in Indonesia. Now Jatiwangi has to find new ways of generating income and thus value. One of the answers is to professionalise the industry. The district will also be transformed by the new Kertajati Airport due to open in 2017 and the arrival of new factories producing consumer goods in the textile industry. Land is cheap, unemployment is high and the area will be within close distance of Jakarta and Bandung once the highway has been built. Since 2005, Jatiwangi Art Factory plays an important role in finding answers to the challenges facing the old social structure of the former roof tile capital. In a second period, since 2010, JAF has been attempting to play a subtle role in shaping the changing social structure of the village. This change was mostly the result of a shift from family-based entrepreneurship to corporate entrepreneurship which is taking over the region (including precarious jobs, shopping malls, investment climate, waste production, etc.).

In 2005, Arief Yudi, originally from Jatisura, began using his parents’ house and former roof tile factory as a place to inspire and generate new insights regarding the situation in the Jatiwangi district. Together with his wife Loranita Theo and his brother Ginggi Syarif Hasyim, who became head of the village of Jatisura, they set up a testing ground for artists, students, citizens and other interested people. JAF provides a context for formulating questions and facilitating meaningful encounters, providing insight in the context of Jatiwangi and preparing the ground for possible projects and collaborations with anyone joining them at Jatisura.

In order for this to take place, there is a need for generosity, hospitality, production tools, etc. I like to say that JAF’s main interest is to create ‘carpets’ or ‘airstrips’ as a curatorial programme. ‘Airstrips’ because Jatisura is currently not easy to reach: from Jakarta the trip takes three hours by train, followed by more than one hour by car on a very busy road. This is why JAF often refers to itself as an airstrip (‘Landasan’ in Indonesian). People land and take off again and therefore it is important to be prepared to provide these transitory visitors with basic conditions. And ‘carpets’ because of the way Indonesian communities tend to receive their guests for a gathering: they spread out a carpet, people gather on it and are served food and drinks and are able to discuss whatever business they came for. It is no surprise that JAF involves not only the neighbours but also a local school, shop owners, and the ‘Camat’ (the head of the district and the heads of the villages) in their programming, since a connection to one’s roots is seen as a valuable and productive resource by many Indonesian art collectives.

Whether or not JAF and their guests produce ‘art’ doesn’t really matter. It’s more important to formulate questions, to generate new insights and bring existing insights to the surface, and to explore further from that point. JAF has done this for example with the Future Festival in 2013, in which JAF collaborated with the villagers in formulating their wishes for the year 2023. Another example is the Family Festival: ten families from outside the Jatiwangi district were invited to stay in the villages for two weeks and were asked to help develop a programme for ten families in Jatiwangi.

Also here, it doesn’t matter whether or not what is being produced is ‘art’. If producing artworks is only about self-confirmation and applying the same methods as the neoliberal production methods which critical artists are opposed to, then it might be better for critical artists to try something else. What is the value

of imagination for an artist? What is it a gLEAP¹¹ artist is (visually) representing? In which respects is an artist radical? Practices such as those we see at JAF, where it doesn't matter whether something is considered 'art' or not, challenge the very ontological status of art and confront artists with the question of what is it exactly they are producing.

Arief asks the artists involved in the Village Festival: who is more inventive, who has more authority, the villager or the artist? Arief likes to leave the function of JAF open; he likes to play the role of the one who doesn't know. He wishes to provide a space for young people in which they can be confronted with reality and generate non-capitalist visions together with villagers, thus creating a new force that will hopefully take over Jatiwangi in the near future.

PLATFORM: ANY PLACE IS A STAGE	COLLABORATORS AND PRODUCERS	CONCERNS	METHODS	ART
Private houses Broadcasting video and radio Central meeting hall Public spaces Community spaces School buildings Etc.	Local government Informal art network Villagers Teachers Communities Students Etc.	Education Organic food Trust in ability of citizens Sharing of knowledge Value production Everyday life	Artist in residence Project residencies in villagers' houses Providing space to meet and reside Anything can happen Adapting social structures (or working 'within') Networking within the structure of the village The central hub of JAF is the house consisting of a working hall, bedrooms and a kitchen	Encouraging 'cari sendiri' (finding your own way) Visual representation of possibilities for acting and producing Understanding and getting a grip on today's world Daring to be radical Research and testing focused on later production and application Life as an art form?

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Childhood Care Development program the notions of ahimsa (non-violence and respect for all life) and swadeshi (self-sufficiency). This experience encouraged Moelyono to practice "holistic education", which is centred on the idea that everything is based on what we already have available; hence a community rich in local culture can initiate its own education system. It can develop its own inherent potentials as teaching modules that can be broken down into different subject areas. Moelyono said to the people of the village of Anyelma: "We don't need to invite teachers from outside the village because we have a wealth of local potential. Those who can sing can be teachers, those who can make a noken can be teachers as well." At this time, Moelyono produced an object that embodied the notion of holistic education. It was a simple bag from unbleached cotton cloth containing a set of educational games and tools made by the family. This "portable school" could be hung from the house walls, taken to the fields or brought into neighbours' houses. Education in this form is based on self-support and a spirit of do-it-yourself, so that every community can set up a school on its own. A community that masters local wisdom becomes its own educational agent. The above outline of Moelyono's practice establishes his methodology and use of art as a means to promote new ways of thinking in society. The effects of his practice still need to be examined.'

Nuraini Juliastuti, 'Moelyono and the Endurance of Arts for Society', in: Afterall, no. 13, Spring/Summer 2006.

After his trip to India, Moelyono came back with a number of new terminologies and insights with which to reframe his artistic practice. Transformation, dialogue and participation became the words he would use to describe his material and practice, rather than paint, ink, expression, etc. In this way Moelyono was able to link his work to activism and to move from 'art for art's sake' towards 'art for the sake of what I can achieve with it'. With his work he stimulates the (personal) production of all participants and documents the ways in which society develops (receiving feedback and activating people). He calls his work 'seni rupa kerja', which roughly translates as 'visual art at work, useful art, stimulating art, etc. the translation is difficult as the meaning of the term is somewhat open-ended. Moelyono is known as 'the drawing man' or 'pak moel guru nggambar'. With his drawing classes Moelyono searches for the common ground within a community; getting to know the hidden layers of issues around land ownership, exploring drawing as a way of addressing social issues. He also creates a platform for encouraging people to act, for stimulating physical and mental motor sensitivity. In the beginning Moelyono worked in his own neighbouring community. Afterwards, he travelled to different parts of Indonesia, parts that were new to him, working with various local communities through drawing. He also started working together with NGOs, which was, besides a financial necessity, more importantly a strategic choice: this made it possible for Moelyono to reach more people with his educational method.

While discussing Moelyono's way of working, two important questions arise. First of all, what is commitment? When can or does an artist distance himself from the community he is working with? Or should the artist maintain a relationship with that community? In Moelyono's work it is important that the community can appropriate in their own way the method he has devised, and in order to make this possible he invests a lot of time and dedication in the places where he works. His works are not projects to be produced; rather, projects develop through dialogue and informal contacts.

The second question is related to art production: how can we develop a social value system for Moelyono's practice, as opposed to the value of an artist's work in gallery? Is it an artwork you can look at, or a moment to be experienced and dealt with? It really is a nonsensical question. If a certain type of art is about encour-

3.3.3 Moelyono

'Artists cannot remain neutral and only treat people as an aesthetic object to produce their work. Artists must provide a way to awaken public awareness. Moelyono named the art activity he conducts with communities as "awakening media".'

2013 Jakarta Biennale catalogue

'Moelyono is an Indonesian artist born in 1957. In some communities in which he has collaborated, he is known as "the drawing man". Since the 1980s Moelyono went steadfastly from village to village, holding art workshops for the villagers and conducting many social, economic and political empowerment activities with them. In 2001 he left for Pune, India, where he learnt from the Early

¹¹ See section 3.5.1 for a definition of gLEAP.

aging (individual) change, how can we put a value on that? If you work so closely with a community and with their children, how can you measure the impact of that work on a social level, or its potential in the near future? Should we use the type of measurements used by public institutes or NGOs, or do we have to formulate a new concept of evaluation and appreciation?

PLATFORM: ANY PLACE IS A STAGE	COLLABORATORS AND PRODUCERS	CONCERNS	METHODS	ART
Community spaces	Local government	Education	Using the infrastructure of NGOs to reach audiences	Encouraging 'cari sendiri' (finding your own way)
Art galleries	Villagers	Trust in ability of citizens, empowering	Drawing workshops	Visual representation of possibilities for acting and producing
Public spaces	Teachers	Sharing of knowledge	Adapting social structures (or working 'within')	Showing 'artefacts' of workshops in gallery spaces
School buildings	Communities		Networking within the structure of the village	
Etc.	Students	Visual representation of hidden community structures and concerns		
	NGOs			
	Etc.			

3.3.4 Wok the Rock

'Woto Wibowo, or Wok the Rock, his more popular public name, is a musician and a visual artist based in Yogyakarta. As an artist, his works are based on his histories of friendships. It is the kind of friendship, which borders on the platform of partnership. Collaborators in a partnership can be friends. While building on a state of shared emotions and trust, in the case of Wok, friendship is also continuously seen as an association of labour from which a partnership can be constructed. (...) The idea of "people as infrastructure" proposed by (AbdouMaliq) Simone, derives from the extension of the idea of "infrastructure" to "people's activities". Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's "representations of space" which describes the close interrelation between places, people, actions, and things, Simone's "people as infrastructure" defines adeptness at generating "maximal outcomes" from tentative and precarious process of remaking the city and urban environment, which shapes how one lives, makes things, and collaborates with one another.'

Nuraini Juliastuti, 'Wok the Rock & Co: Making Sense of Friendship in Yogyakarta's Art Scene', unpublished, 2015. This text was sent to me personally by Nuraini Juliastuti by e-mail, and is part of her preparation for a research on Wok The Rock, which was expected to be finished around 2015.

The above quotation tells us that the work of Woto Wibowo / Wok the Rock (also known as WoWo) should not be understood as community art, but rather finds its form through a supportive structure of friendship and togetherness. The work of WoWo can be seen as a community in itself. Wok the Rock once described himself as follows:

'I have no specific style or theme in making an artwork. But I'm always interested to represent the symptoms of social-cultural changes in the place I live. In present days I was inspired by free-culture movement, which is promoting a share culture in exchange of information, knowledge, intellectual works. This concept has influenced the way I worked. By this direction then I produced some appropriation art and get engaged with digital/internet technology. Alongside doing individual works, I'm interested doing a collaborative and interactive art project. Beside visual art, I am also interested in music. I was involved in underground music

scene in Yogyakarta. By 2007 I'm running Yes No Wave Music, a net label (internet records label) releasing music album in MP3 format for free download.'¹²

For his contribution to the 2013 Jakarta Biennale, Wok the Rock founded TrashSquad, a punk cleaning crew. He knew from experience that punk-culture youth tend to hang out at places like the evening supermarkets you can find all around Jakarta. Punks are often seen as 'dirty troublemakers', but this TrashSquad actually cleans the mess left behind by 'normal people' near the supermarket, while singing marches and patriotic songs.¹³

In WoWo's work and network there is a danger of an internalised discourse: being a member of the Yogyakarta-based photography collective Mes 56, running the punk music label Yes Wave No Wave, residing most of the time at the Cultural Studies Centre KUNCI, and otherwise living and working in Yogyakarta, a city with many artists and art communities, it would be easy for him to get stuck in a self-confirming alternative scene.

However, with his project TrashSquad for the 2013 Jakarta Biennale, WoWo shows that it is possible to operate within the public space, that his stage is a stage which is already there. He was asked by the curators to represent (or re-enact) this work in one of the Biennale venues. I discussed with him this logical/illogical request: why would you present this activity in an exhibition space when the work has in fact already been presented, and an archival representation is not that important (yet)?

It was a challenge made up by the curators to provide WoWo with an opportunity to show the work to an art audience, to provide an insight to people who hadn't witnessed the work in action. However, I wonder whether this is really necessary and worth the energy of re-enacting the work in the context of an art exhibition. This request of the curators not only challenged WoWo, it also challenged the curators themselves. Was their request really suitable to WoWo's work? Of course, such a request should in fact be understood as part of an ongoing dialogue on how to deal with this kind of work in the first place. Though on one hand they did compel him to present his work in an unnatural location, on the other hand this can also be seen as a thought experiment by the curators. For this reason Wok The Rock himself tried his best, but didn't really feel comfortable in the context of the art venue.

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PLATFORM: ANY PLACE IS A STAGE	COLLABORATORS AND PRODUCERS	CONCERNS	METHODS	ART
Concerts	Friends	Free culture	Using the structure of friendship	Sculpture of communities
Art galleries	Artists	Building communities		Manager
Public spaces	(Punk) communities	Useful art?	Social media analog/digital	Anarchist / punk attitude
Website	Music scene		Using network of artists	Life as an art form?
Social media	Etc.			

¹² See <http://rhizome.org/profile/woktherock1/>

¹³ As described in the 2013 Jakarta Biennale catalogue.

3.4 Extracting characteristics for an also-space?

- Stage: In the tables in the preceding pages, I have replaced the word 'exhibition' with the word 'stage' in order to shift the focus toward the public to whom the activities are being addressed. Activities and public moments usually happen at a specific time and place. This should prompt us to think about the limitations of what we can show at (traditional) exhibition spaces and what we can expect from these spaces. When the examples we have considered above are presented in more traditional exhibition spaces, we see that the exhibition often consists of archival 'artefacts' of previous activities. A stage, however, can be set up anywhere, anytime. An exhibition or a stage is a 'public moment' and the 'white cube' habitat of fine art usually isn't the most suitable place for communicating (with the intended audience). People visiting such art spaces are only a small percentage of the intended audience. On the other hand I do understand that a museum, a gallery, an institution can provide continuity, accessibility, a neutral place or a safe haven, and so the need for such places is quite understandable (as for example public libraries are); but how they function and how they are equipped doesn't suit the practices described above, nor the (supposed) ambition of much critical art.
- Audience: There is a certain contextual logic in who exactly is considered to be the audience, who is involved in projects. The audience is often the people who are the direct actors in the matter at hand. The work is human so to speak, it breathes. It's not *about* issues or people, it's *with* people and it makes connections between issues that are of interest to people. However, in the case of a show at a gallery or an art institution, the audience is little more than a passive spectator. The audience remains at a safe distance from

interesting topics, whether or not the works are (so-called) interactive.

- Influence in the making process: There is a dialogue during the making process, the work is influenced by third parties. The activity or the work is often done collectively or influenced by people passing by, a possible audience. An artist requires a certain concentration or contributes a specific quality, but the work is often at its best when it is related to other activities, like-minded energies in different layers of society or disciplines. (I would go so far as to call this 'transdisciplinary' in a very real sense, as well as citizenship-related).
- The artist's own production: Artists should worry less about their status as an artist, and instead learn to inhabit different roles. The artist can if necessary be active 'merely' as a facilitator, assistant, builder, collaborator, etc. Sometimes artists need to express their own thinking as an individual artwork, sometimes they are only a spectator, etc.
- Taking initiative: Often an artist or a group of artists clearly takes the lead, the initiative. The artist can see possibilities, or can call to action. This is a specific quality and an intelligence of artists. This leadership role is to a great extent confirmed by the role the artist plays in generating empowerment, confidence, support and encouragement of people to believe in their potential.

If I could summarise all of these characteristics in one word, I guess it would be either 'connectedness' or 'embedded'. It is no surprise that the artists and initiatives described above mostly exist in a close relationship with the collaborative partners or the subjects they are working with or upon (and using a specific medium of general interest such as music, photography/video, science, etc.). They all emerged and developed (or literally grew up) with some of the typical Indonesian characteristics of an understanding of

Extracting characteristics for an also-space?

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3.5 To outline also-space

In the context of ruangrupa and the other examples of Indonesian artists and collectives through which I am illustrating this notion of also-space, what I mean to say by the diagram on these pages is that as artists develop a clearer and more practical understanding of the meaning of citizenship, or of that which ruangrupa calls 'the various transactions', they become more accomplished in applying their artistic practice within the context of this citizenship. Ruangrupa has been increasingly using the word 'transactions' to describe the formal and informal activities which residents engage in with each other; by observing and identifying the wide variety of informal relationships, these activities can be made visible, or a project based on these activities can be initiated.

The activities and persons being studied can for example be providers of information, participants, an audience; or simply (momentary) neighbours, fellow citizens, etc. Such practices do not necessarily yield solutions immediately applicable in society, but rather serve to collectively define the existing (also-)narratives, as absurd and impractical as these sometimes may seem. In a focused setting, such as that attempted by Homeshop,¹⁵ this

¹⁴ See chapter 2 of my upcoming book, *Also-Space, from Hot to Something Else*, section 2.2.3.2, 'Indonesian customs that have shaped ruangrupa'. The current publication is an excerpt from that book; see also introductory note.

¹⁵ See publications by Homeshop: *Wear*, 2009, *Wear 2*, 2011 and *Appendix*, 2012.

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contributes to building an also-world, an also-possible arrangement or design of the social and political environment.

We can see that:

- An also-space, as we have already noted, is essentially the result of an understanding that we are all active parts of a community/society. An important task for artists is to question their own ideas, and to test these ideas against the various valid visions of how a society could be designed. It requires a great deal of energy to work and think this way, since all of the structures we are used to working in are focused on promoting competition and protecting individual interests. However this approach also gives a great deal of energy which would otherwise be wasted on competition and opposition; in this view of things, conflicts are seen instead as dialogues, or at least provide some space for different views and different ways of doing things. The development of knowledge is seen as an ongoing process, and consequently a (temporary) lack of knowledge or understanding is accepted as an integral part of this process.
- An also-space can be based on individual fields of interest or motivations, as well as on the wishes of a community.
- An also-space is always open to finding new partners and meeting kindred spirits in various communities. These kindred spirits are not necessarily to be found in your own circle of friends and colleagues. Sometimes a family doctor will happen to be closer to your mentality and approach than a colleague artist with whom you share a studio.
- An also-space is a testing ground in which to develop an artistic practice together *with* others, rather than *for* others or *for* an audience. By applying skills, insights and the curiosity of others and yourself. By being in a state of dialogue with the

environment (literally and figuratively), stimulated by the insights or projects of other people, etc.

- Building networks which allow us to strengthen our position, which in turn allows us to help develop each other's vocabulary and provide each other with input.
- Ultimately it's all about how social-political spaces can be designed, how we reflect upon such processes, how we bring to light different ways of doing things, how we draw attention to the visible and the invisible.

To summarise: the themes or topics of an also-space, loosely related to the notion of citizenship, are always connected to that which is already present. In contrast, artists and art institutes in countries such as the Netherlands and Belgium tend to work on projects with broader or more abstract themes, and to remain at a certain distance from their subjects. On a conceptual level the subjects themselves may be interesting, but they fail to connect to what is already happening or what is in development. Thus we tend to exclude ourselves from the themes we would like to work with, or we use a language that is not related to the subjects we are talking about. I would say that artists and institutes thus tend to live too much in a not-so-relevant 'utopia.'

3.6 Moving on

3.6.1 gLEAP

I became closely involved with ruangrupa shortly after it was founded in 2000. Ruangrupa has always been a 'sparring partner' which has helped me to understand and improve my own practice as an artist and as a citizen. My personal doubts about the art world, and at the same time my stubborn persistence in continuing to operate within this world, were to some degree confirmed by what I encountered there. Ruangrupa also served as an important source of inspiration in defining my concept of

a '(g)Locally Embedded Art Practice' (gLEAP), an art practice that attempts to reconfigure the relation between the artists' everyday life/activity and their artistic production.

As I have said before, it is highly problematic when artists/citizens (working towards social change) define their activities as 'alternative'. As the Brazilian philosopher Rodrigo Nunes, a member of the editorial collective of the news blog 'Turbulence', explains in his book 'Organisation of the Organisationless':

*'The non-debate between the for and against camps, and the distorted picture of what we do that results from it, has become a hindrance to posing questions concerning the exercise of power, political organisation, and how to effect social change, and to finding the ways in which these can be posed in a new situation. We are certainly not lacking in urgent reasons to do so.'*¹⁶

We are aware that we are being indoctrinated by thinking in oppositions; consider for example political campaigns, the patent industry, the media industry, ethnic differentiation, international sports competitions such as the Olympics, etc. It may be more productive to consider instead what the 'opposing party' thinks and does as 'also-ways' of designing our environment. Critical citizens are not in opposition to the world; rather, they are part of the world, just like everybody else. I am not talking here about 'community art' or 'participatory art'; rather, I am searching for specific places and forms of 'publicness', and discovering what I see as contextually logical ways of collaborating and sharing knowledge, in order to arrive at another way of developing an artistic practice, which I am still in the process of defining more clearly; for the time being I have called it gLEAP.

Artists who practice gLEAP do

¹⁶ Rodrigo Nunes, *Organisation of the Organisationless: Collective Action After Networks*, Mute/PML Books, 2014, p. 12.

not act alone. They are part of a network of people working on creating a possible world, an also-world that exists alongside the centralised world that many people do not really like but which most of us still unwillingly support. We vote, we sell or buy artworks, we take city trips, we depend upon the banks, we like gadgets and apps, we sometimes buy into retirement plans, etc. There is an acute awareness of the contradiction between on one hand our thinking, and on the other hand our way of living and acting; however, the following step, bringing the two together, often feels obscured or remains plainly absent. We observe that the content and concept of artworks are often out of sync with the everyday activities and production of artists (their ways of living, socialising, buying things, but also their ways of producing artworks, etc.) I would like to think a step further. One definition of gLEAP would be to say that artists build together with and within communities. When artists become a substantial part of the subject of their work, then they also share a long-term commitment to the projects they are involved in.

By studying a model of also-space, artists could gain a clearer understanding of their own practice. This in turn could help solve the discrepancy between their thoughts/wishes and what they actually do. What I believe is really needed is an opening up of the notion of 'autonomous practices' (the fine arts), which seems to be embedded in the DNA of most Western European artists. There is nothing particularly interesting or challenging about artists claiming their individual autonomy in this day and age; indeed, it seems a rather quaint and outdated romanticist position. It may be more interesting to speculate instead about a collective autonomy. According to the cultural theorist, writer, critic and activist Brian Holmes,

'Autonomy means giving yourself your own law. But men and women are social beings; we only exist as

*"ourselves" through the language of the other, through the sensations of the other; and what is more, this shared language, these transiting sensations, are bound up in the uncertainty of memory and forgetting, the incompleteness of perception, the wilfulness of imagination. Thus the attempt to give oneself one's own law becomes a collective adventure, as well as a cultural and artistic one.'*¹⁷

This is the space which is understood and inhabited by most of the artists and collectives I have described here. They do not merely address themselves to an art scene, but in fact employ a variety of perspectives in their discourse and their actions. This way they avoid the dilemma that Jennifer Smiles pointed out when she criticised Claire Bishop for asking:

*'(..) for an art that "address[es] this contradictory pull between autonomy and social intervention". As valid as this argument is, its blind spot is that it poses the contemplation of art – with all its potential of emancipation and insight – above other possibly emancipating forms of cultural experience, ignoring that this kind of reception is relevant (and relevant it is) only to a narrow and defined group of people. She thus makes the same mistake of underestimating her own position within the institution of art.'*¹⁸

What Smiles describes here must certainly be the biggest trap (and reality) of any potentially interesting art programme or project. But perhaps an even more worrisome reality is that

¹⁷ During a conference at the Tate Modern, London, October 25, 2003, titled 'Diffusion: Collaborative Practice in Contemporary Art'. Also present were Bureau d'études, Francois Deck, Eve Chiapello, Jochen Gerz, Stephen Wright, John Roberts, Charles Green, and others.

¹⁸ Jennifer Smiles. 'Being radical. Gently', in: *Newpaper #2: The Autonomy Project*, Onomatopoe 43.1. A project by the Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, 2010. (<http://theautonomyproject.ning.com>).

hardly any Dutch and Belgian art institutes (or artists) are equipped to avoid this trap. Most of them are not even aware of it yet, and therefore haven't really rethought the nature of their working and presentation spaces.

It cannot be overemphasised that formulating an also-space by definition generates a space for individuals in which to connect. As pleasant as it can be to stroll around with our own concerns and ideas, sometimes it can be even more interesting and fruitful to connect to other people and share these ideas. Some people/artists may have difficulties in connecting and will do so in a clumsy way, but who cares? There are always valid reasons for connecting to others, however impossible it may seem. A jump into the unknown, with a certain confidence that there are in fact possibilities for connecting our own ideas with those of others.

3.6.2 Art school practice: an institute

In Dutch and Belgian art schools, the main goal of art is usually 'to be autonomous and making authentic works of art in which one expresses one's individuality'.¹⁹ In this text written in English, Hans Abbing, a Dutch artist and art theoretician, use two terms that have a somewhat different meaning in Dutch: 'autonomous' which is a Dutch term for fine art, and 'authentic' which also means 'original'.

The framework provided to students, in the perspective of their future artistic practice (and creative entrepreneurship), is mainly an established vision of how the (alternative) art world is organised. The problem with this framework is that its seemingly independent/autonomous attitude is in fact a myth, since, as I have said before, alternative art is itself a myth.

This framework is related to a

¹⁹ Hans Abbing, 'The Autonomous Artist still Rules the World of Culture: A Portrait of the Artist in 2005', in: I. Jansen (ed.), *Artistic Careers and Higher Arts Education in Europe*, Amsterdam, Boekmanstudies, 2004, pp. 55-66.

capitalist value system that emphasises visibility and financial success. It is framed within a Western perspective on exchange and dialogue, constructed around a copyright-protected production of artworks. The system produces artists who, at the end of the day, tend to distance themselves from the communities in which they are living. Art students are trained:

- to provide 'the public' with other perspectives on reality (often in a naïve way);
- to experiment (formally) with material;
- to increase general awareness of public/social issues.

In addition to this programme, art schools also inevitably function as extensions of the political agendas of the countries they happen to be in. This effectively hinders the possibility of allowing art students to arrive at certain types of understanding, at least as long as the educational system is supposed to have some kind of controlling function, as it does now.

'With its call for realism, the currently prevailing neoliberalism attempts to reduce this kaleidoscope of approaches to a single perspective, that of the free market. The push to be more entrepreneurial and to embrace the creative industry is supposed to convince us that only one world matters.'

Pascal Gielen, 'Autonomy via Heteronomy', OPEN! Platform for Art, Culture and the Public Domain, October 1, 2013.

Art institutions such as art schools are trapped in this situation and there's no way out; all they can do is go on running around in a closed circle. It's a tricky situation, as these institutions go on behaving as though they are already 'perfect actors' (see also the quote by Cindy Milstein below). The situation outlined by Pascal Gielen is easy

enough to recognise; however another important step is missing. Gielen still talks of a modern hope for autonomy. But the friction or polarisation between on one hand neoliberalism, and on the other hand the concept of autonomy, leads only to false choices and non-existent alternatives. The concept of autonomy does not show the way to a truly autonomous art practice, while neoliberalism leads mainly to inefficient and speculative art-market practices.

I cannot teach my students art. The only thing I can do is ask them to consider their context, to work and talk with people and to try to form an understanding of this context. There is no art, as we know it, that can be taught. There is a profession that can be taught, but the question is: what kind of background does this profession exist in?

Why is teaching art all about understanding context, and why should we bother reconsidering the alternative art space? The anarchist activist Cindy Milstein writes:

*'We tear each other apart in so many varied ways in our social spaces, along so many lines of hurt already inscribed into our bodies by white supremacy, heteronormativity, patriarchy, ableism, settler colonialism, classism, overdetermined identity politics, and a long lineage of other violences. It's frequently assumed that the tag "social space" (or radical bookstore, collective café, bike co-op, and so on) has already done the work for us, as if we are already those perfect actors in our perfectly alternative places.'*²⁰

We understand that we will have to drastically change some of our habits, but simply going to a bike co-op, working together on a project with a community, or participating in a balcony farm project won't be enough to change our behaviour, our mentality.

²⁰ Cindy Milstein, 'Organising Social Space', in: *Roar Magazine*, June 13, 2014. Online journal. Accessible through <http://roarmag.org>

There is another level of commitment required, another level of understanding of being together, other perspectives on designing a world.

3.6.3 On a more personal note

Thanks to ruangrupa and other also-activities in which I have been engaged over the years,²¹ I understand better now my early intuitive doubts about this alternative art scene; I also understand my own moves which led to a next step that is, in fact, already there. Still, I needed to write this text in order to make it all more explicit. Twenty years after I first came to live in to the Netherlands, my idealistic practice of being in a constructive state of dialogue and exchange can now be reframed.

Life is a mix of relations and relationships, of poetry, power, joy, facts, sorrow, mistreatment, abuse, unforeseen events, etc.

We all are part of this composition in which we act, search, unite, find, fundamentally disagree, share our positions. Why should artists hide in their own established spaces? Why should artists only confirm their own assumptions and work alone, without others taking part in this work? I am not pleading here for an instrumentalisation of art, nor for artists to make only social art or to work collaboratively; not at all. That would imply a limited view of what artists do and can do.

I also know we shouldn't underestimate the audience, and yes, I too like to stroll around in art spaces such as Witte de With in Rotterdam, Wiels in Brussels, Extra City in Antwerp, Kunst-Werke in Berlin, Pakt

²¹ The most important of these were: 'Also-Space', which consisted of two exhibitions in Beijing; two events in De Player/DSPS in Rotterdam, a platform for performative art which, at the time I was involved with it, worked with and within a neighbourhood; Casco, a centre for art, design and theory in Utrecht with a public program which I regularly attend; Homeshop, an artists' initiative that existed from 2008 to 2012 in Beijing; RTVP1, a travelling exhibition for one person at a person's house, without opening hours or an art audience, organised by Hans Bossmann.

in Amsterdam, etc. I like browsing through art books and reading articles on e-flux and in Afterall. On the other hand I believe it's important to realise that these spaces also serve to confirm a world which we don't necessarily want to be part of. It's still a copyright-protected world, a world for individual profit, a men's world, a scene for insiders, and although it may appear to be a generous world, it is not.

For me, this whole exercise of writing and understanding the practices with which I have found so much common ground, is a belated investigation into the kind of practice I see for myself, as well as how I have worked up to this point. With all my likes and dislikes of being and existing in the art world, it was never very clear to me what it is exactly that moves and inspires me. Through this writing I hope to help myself, my friends and my students to gain a better understanding of how we do art and how we ideally would like to do it.

I should clarify once again that the categories of spaces I have described here (and defined more in detail in the insert at the end of this chapter: alternative space, ethical also-space, DIWO also-space, negotiation space, etc.) should be understood as merely a working example within this particular research; a method for shedding light upon the ways in which artists can become aware of their intentions, and how these intentions are realised, or are not. I hope this text can lead to some discussions and ideas that can be tested in the real world. More generally, this is my goal for my own (teaching) practice in the art school and within my professional network.

I'm not there yet. You can see this by the references included in this publication, which are more often than not still from representatives of a specific cultural background.

There are of course artists and movements outside of my interest in Indonesian art practices which I find

interesting and worth mentioning here: for example, the FLOK society, an open source art project; new political movements such as Podemos in Spain; artist-run organisations such as Constant in Brussels; artists such as Guy van Belle and Jef Geys, etc. Also, organisations such as Casco in the Netherlands are inspiring because of their diverse approach to programming and connecting networks. W139 in Amsterdam is also an interesting case, as it is now going back to its roots after having had professional curators run the organisation since about 1997. Although the question now is whether they will be able to go beyond the 'alternative art only' discourse in which they were grounded in the early 1980s...

I'm not sure if ruangrupa really is something else. The art world, which ruangrupa is certainly a part of, is a corrupted world in which everyone is constantly networking, working hard to be or remain visible and valuable, always worrying about their reputation. These are things that all of us who are active in the art world have to deal with in one way or another. But how we understand them and bring them in practice, that's where the difference is.

Poetry, fiction, narrative, hacking, documenting, working together are all possible ways of suggesting a road towards something else, or of providing and sharing insights in those places where it already is happening. As I was writing this text, I came to appreciate and even admire people who are involved both theoretically and practically with their own practice from the perspective and level of citizens, in a way that I would call transdisciplinary for want of a better word. This way we can merge different worlds, allowing us to influence both the political world (negotiation space) and the world of grassroots activities (also-space).

I'd like to end with a thought by the American media theoretician Mark Poster. Not only does he reflect upon the digital world as part of our

everyday lives, which is a dimension I have not touched upon enough in this research; more importantly, he provides a clear insight into why we have to give up an essential part of ourselves in order to create space in which an also-space can occur. This is part of a debate that has been going on since the 1990s, however it also exemplifies how little has changed:

'I want to suggest in this essay, in the spirit of my epigraph from Jean Baudrillard, that Western concepts and political principles such as the rights of man and the citizen, however progressive a role they played in history, may not provide an adequate basis of critique in our current, increasingly global condition. They may not provide, that is, a vehicle for thinking through and mobilizing a planetary democratic movement. This is so for three reasons. First, the simple fact that these principles derive from the West, which is responsible for an imperialist and capitalist form of globalization, detracts from their ability to catalyse truly global movements against domination; the origin of these principles makes one suspicious of them from the start. Second, the situation today calls for democratic principles that include difference with universality, that cover the peoples of the earth but acknowledge situational differences. Enlightenment principles are deficient here because they move to the universal too quickly, forgetting their conditions of possibility in an emergent bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century. In the rush to insist on democracy and humanity, in the intoxication with the idea of democracy, in the irrefutable radicalism of such ideas in the context of the waning of the Old Regime in Europe, the principles of natural right required one to extract oneself from the social in order to proclaim the universal as natural. Third, today the natural no longer

*exists as an autonomous realm of self-determination. Today science and technology constitute a humanized nature and in so doing bring forth machines. The conditions of globalization are not only capitalism and imperialism; they include the linking of human and machine. New democratizing principles must take into account the cultural construction of the human-machine interface. In short, we may build new political structures outside the nation-state only in collaboration with machines. The new community will not be a replica of the agora, but it will be mediatized.'*²²

What does this mean for an art practice? How can we make democratic art? One thing we can learn from the examples from Indonesia is that a critical (citizen-related) art practice doesn't necessarily start from critique, or from an individualist independent ('autonomous') position. The Indonesian activist artist doesn't begin with critique, but works from an acceptance of a given starting position. Though an individual's thoughts and intentions are often a leading force in realising things, in the end the goal of these thoughts is always to generate content, to develop interesting ideas, with individual authorship being ultimately irrelevant. The formation of a collective of citizens is not a programme written by individuals. The genius only exists as a collective, even if this slows things down or makes them more complicated.

It was never my intention to write this text alone. I wanted to write it collaboratively with members of ruangrupa and members of the former Homeshop collective. Yet I was not successful in clarifying who exactly was this 'we' that would be working collaboratively on this text...

²² Mark Poster, 'Digital Networks and Citizenship', in: *PMLA*, vol. 117, no. 1, Special Topic: Mobile Citizens, Media States, January 2002, pp. 98-103.

3.7 Conclusion: Is there a 'something else'?

Theoretically, yes. In reality, we can only try.

I hesitate to propose to others how they can or should conduct their profession. Also, I have often been sceptical towards collaborative practices or social art projects. It appeared to me that in the end, everyone tended to stick too much to their own point of view, or the activity remained solely within an art discourse. In my own practice, too, I have been mostly unable to successfully negotiate the pitfalls of the contemporary art world. Also, I am quite sceptical of contemporary 'hypes' such as urban farming, time banks, makers' communities and certain forms of sustainable entrepreneurship.²³

Nevertheless I am convinced that artists should radically change direction, not only in the way they produce artworks, but also in where to present these works and whom to address them to. What matters is that we should truthfully relate to, and be

a part of, the different communities in which we live. We should see ourselves as part of a network that can influence, encourage and provide feedback focused on the creation of an also-possible world.

What I'm really interested in here is a model of the ethical also-space, that focuses on designing an also-possible world from practical/speculative/fictional motives. Homeshop did this for a while. Most of its former members still do. We are going 'from hot to something else' anyway; even if we don't know yet what the 'something else' will look like, we still need to prepare for it. Many of us are already engaged in this, in focused and/or playful ways, using both social and digital channels.

Rather than entrenching themselves within a narrowly defined counter-movement, artists and other 'creative practitioners' should rather seek to be part of a broad movement that organically develops from the strengths and capacities of all its participants.

FROM HOT...		... TO SOMETHING ELSE
Profit-driven, market-driven	networking effort	Benefit-driven, community-driven
Networking in order to increase one's visibility within the art scene	value visibility reputation	Networking in order to learn and share knowledge
Individual careers		Working towards common goals
Effort to be seen; energy is focused on being represented, on being present and valuable, on being credited		Effort to engage with and relate to the context of everyday production; effort to give and receive
Internal community		Different communities

²³ As depicted in the Dutch TV programme 'Wie zijn de mensen van nu?' (literally: 'Who are the people of now?'), September 2013, produced by Tegenlicht (<http://tegenlicht.vpro.nl>).