

LUMBUNG

Lumbung, directly translatable as “rice barn”, is a collective pot or accumulation system, where crops produced by a community is stored as a future shared common resource.

A proposal for **documenta 15**
by ruangrupa

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PROVOCATION

When ruangrupa meets documenta, institutional building should be put into real practice directly. We are proposing a partnership between our two institutions to give birth to a new cooperative platform, focusing on arts and culture. Thinking sustainably, we intend to build something that lasts longer than one edition of documenta.

The understanding of the term **resource** could be shed anew. The use of funds, spaces (both physical and mental), time, social capitals, existing networks, and different forms of knowledge will not only be questioned, but also be operated in the real world directly to push equal resource distribution in our ecosystem. We are planning to use documenta to research into and operate directly within a global network of institutions and initiatives in various geographical locations, for each of these institutions and initiatives to achieve independence and sustainability.

In short, we are proposing to transform the resources already allotted to hold the 15th edition of documenta in 2022 to build these networks of organizations from within: developing sustainability local strategy plan, capacity building and putting speculative, experimental and representational projects into new practiced realities. To outlast this one edition, these resources should be renewed by the network itself on a yearly basis.

Lumbung as a mechanism—something we have been and continuously experimenting with in our own ecosystem— is a metaphorical space to store our common resources. It will be the main driving force and act as a base for this collaboration to understand resources as both tangible (money, time, space and equipment, for example) and intangible (program, knowledge, archive, et cetera) materials.

BACKGROUND

Analogous with the 0.1% narrative that was responsible for the Occupy Movement, we can consider the global contemporary art world as a business scape or an economical terrain. Who gains the most from the current global practice of contemporary art? Can we strive for a more just distribution model, in which asymmetrical dependency rooted in unfair power relations and demoralization is not being reproduced?

Also analogous with capitalism that can absorb and turn anything into commodity, contemporary art nowadays could also swallow and churn anything out into its product. Worse than capitalism, art nowadays is still hegemonic.

This proposal is our attempt to break this cycle, so contemporary art could be useful for more, especially those who contribute to it. We are using this invitation to answer this condition by making an attempt to imagine, develop and practice a new model of contemporary art economy.

GOVERNANCE

How can we work together? Not only between ruangrupa and documenta, but also future initiatives and institutions that we will collaborate with. If we decide to work together, we will be working together to achieve two things: (1) a documenta edition, that is delivered through (2) a new institutional practice.

KOPERASI, (closest in translation to, but not exactly, *cooperative* in English) is the model we are interested in researching, implementing and, if opportunities arose, hacking. Koperasi, in essence, is an economical model whose main mission is to guarantee prosperity for its members—as opposed to exclusively for capital owners, such as shareholders in a company. In order to reach this goal, either the Koperasi itself or its members execute a sustainability plan. One becomes a member through making a contribution, based on the scale of which the targeted gains/returns would be distributed based on the time scale agreed previously. This process is intended to be circular in nature, so it is reproducible.

Lumbung, on the other hand, is a commoning model for sharing resources—economical to start with, but could continuously expanding to non-monetary resources, such as ideas, knowledge, programs, innovations, time and space. In this understanding, we are challenging the notion of commodity. We are essentially looking for strategies that transform (documenta's) production funds to sustain in deeper understanding of time and impact. Could social relations be made through reproductions and non-commodity transactions?

RUANGRUPA AS AN ARTISTIC AND CURATORIAL PRACTICE

For this proposed collaboration, we are offering our own practice with collaborative dialectic sensibilities that are rooted in the local in order to create and expand time, space and understanding of the public. Through interdisciplinary artistic interventions mainly based on our constant interest in making, meeting and spending time with people, we are always interested in minor findings and surprises acquired through continuous mutual conversations.

MECHANISM

Practically, we are planning to start by inviting five members to the Koperasi in the first year, chosen together by us together with our appointed curators and partners. With these collaborators, we are to choose not more than 10 members for each year after.

These invitations are made based on experiential approach and mapping of potentials by on-the-ground research visits to locations largely absent and non-represented in global contemporary art circuit. We will pay more attention to geographies with no or resistant to funding schemes offered by mainstream art markets, corporations, national and international funding. We are looking for implemented projects and initiatives, which embed interests to be independent in sustaining socially impactful artistic works in local scale. Further, with every parties involved we are interested in expanding the localities for documenta 15 by staging an open call based on a rigorous framing, such as market as a form and/or educational focus, as a mechanism.

As we are practicing what we are preaching ourselves, the collaborators we are looking for are those who work **artistically** through **alternative education** and **economical sustainability experimentations**, either through making revenue-making initiative or striving through making new realities. These qualities are vital. They are the ethical, aesthetical and political arguments we are trying to put forward. Through the arguments we are going to build together with these collaborators, we are aiming to come up with new understandings of art, artist and the resulting networks.

After being a member, an initiative will go through sustainability plan development phase, after which funds are given as seeding. By agreement, these funds were given to be returned back to *lumbung* under a time span, in order to make it circular. Therefore more initiatives could be invited and the Koperasi grows larger in time.

Surplus in *lumbung* will be redistributed proportionately to all members, based on the contribution each has made in a given time span. If certain collective needs arise, resources in *lumbung* could be used and decided using a simple assembly process.

These artistic spaces have to have a desire to be independent from external funding scheme—either private multinational corporations or funding bodies, or nation-state and regional funding initiatives. Only through this sensibility we could gain our collective endeavors to find a new cultural funding model in the global scale.

Geographically, we are looking at both Kassel and beyond as our space for interventions. We will start by mapping Kassel as a context—economically, artistically and politically. How should we stage a Koperasi in such context?

If promoting equality could be done through decentralization, how to connect Kassel to other global contexts where our future partners are operating in—contexts we are assuming will be mainly constituted by non-centers, such as Jakarta for our own context in ruangrupa?

If documenta was founded on the noble intention to heal European post-war wounds, shouldn't we enlarge this intention to heal areas suffering from other wounds rooted in colonialism, capitalism, remoteness and patriarchy, just to name a few possible causes?

As an artistic endeavor, we deem our biggest challenge is to show a new curatorial practice that is achieved through institutional building (in order to go beyond what formerly known as institutional critique). To translate institutional building process into a show, with the title of documenta 15, to happen in the summer of 2022, we will build a process with several roughly co-existing and dialectic schemes happening in parallel:

1) Process/archival/journey showcasing

Institutional/organizational collaborators in various scales, with whom we are building Koperasi together from the start. Done through showcasing their process, journey and development of schemes in real practice.

2) Parallel public presentations in different locales by partners in Koperasi

Different sustainability projects exposures in each partners' contexts, as a road to documenta 15, as well as during the celebration in Summer 2022. Relations therefore are fostered, stitched together and integrated to complement each other.

3) Hacking existing systems with different model experimentations and occupations

Working together with Kassel-based educational institution to run alternative pedagogies developed by one or several Koperasi collaborators or invited artists. Similar approach could also be implemented to other public facilities, such as hospitals with alternative medicinal practices, or religious facilities, banks or even prisons. Kassel-based research is paramount to shape this part.

4) Inter-cities or local-global dialogues

What could Kassel contribute to, as example, a Thai artists' collective working as a café and book shop in Chiang Mai? And vice-versa?

This question could be worked through two schemes: one is to bring transformable local practices by our Koperasi members to Kassel, or the other way around: activating a hyper-local alternative school in Cali, Colombia, as one of documenta 15's public programs—again, just to imagine an example.

5) Interventions

Inviting artists to do various interventions in public spaces and take part in the main exhibition venues during documenta 15. We are looking for experiential and systemic artistic practices that work in speculative economical model, interrogation and critical attempts towards funder-grantee or colonized-colonizer power relations, alternative education, sustainability models and sharp institutional critiques.

We are envisioning documenta 15 to feel like a *sonke*, or market celebrating independence, or *istiqlal*—in large part for knowledge and ideas through showcases and exhibitions, public and educational programs, textual and intellectual publications, to name a few possible formats. Rendering documenta 15 as the first location to showcase and experiment with various sustainability models.

Besides Kassel's documenta premises, we would like to explore the city's other public spaces by injecting them with several particular management and sustainability models achieved through direct artistic systemic and situational interventions. To name several of such spaces: city hall, mosques/churches/synagogues, football stadia, parks, hospitals, banks, prisons and schools. Through this model, a 1 : 1 occupation of Kassel could be achieved.

Several works from previous editions of documenta stayed and enrich Kassel's public life. Through documenta 15, a platform/model/system could also sustain in Kassel and in the process also giving certain benefits to the longevity of Koperasi.

Last but not least, we are also planning to implement a sizable campaign using documenta's online presence and treating them as another vital space for interventions. These spaces include, but not limited to, documenta's website, YouTube channel and other social media presence.

TIMELINE—ESTIMATION

Based on our experiences, we are proposing the following working time line. It is speculative and subject to change, as it is in our nature to always work in close proximity to the (urban) context we are in and make further decisions accordingly.

2019

Until June: **warming up** phase (will commence as soon as we find out the result of the selection process from documenta)

- 1) Decisions on the establishment of the funding space, deciding legal entities and finalizing the selection and distribution model to Koperasi members. Decision making based on assembly model to figure out the aesthetical, ethical and political values of Koperasi.
- 2) Finalization of schedules, prioritizing our presence in Kassel to research Kassel's urban system and potentials.
- 3) Notification of possible partners for the funding space (to work for the funding space) and artistic team, which will consists of five collective or initiatives as inaugural members of Koperasi.
- 4) Negotiation with documenta on institutional partnerships (pre- and post-2022).

July-December: **research** phase

- 1) Conducting research on contemporary art economy: quantitatively, who benefits the most from the global practice of contemporary art? Where are the hotspots of money in this operation (is one of them include the Singaporean Special Economic Zones where a lot of collected artistic materials being stored and accumulate economic values, for example?)? Who are researching and implementing different funding systems in this ecosystem? Are international diplomatic funding bodies more knowledgeable and experimental than small local grassroots initiatives? Should we work with any of them or it is better to leave them untouched as they are?
- 2) Finalizing and putting mechanisms to work as research results on funding body format and structure: what type and field will our Koperasi work in? Should we use cryptocurrency or other alternative currency in our processes of implementing *Lumbung* system? How should we translate *popular economy* through open source, circular, sharing or shariah economy, profit sharing and crowdfunding? What do we mean when we talk about entrepreneurship (critical towards the notion of creative economy)?
We are interested in working with curators to translate our institution-as-curatorial-method to a presentable approach/articulation in 2022. Other disciplines we are looking into are economists and activists, technologists and hackers, editors-designers-translators, educators and researchers.
- 3) *Contemporary-art-as-sustainability-plan* development and delivery: considering documenta budget as operational and seed funds, what is our profit projections, and therefore profit sharing schemes? How do we fundraise on the way to 2022? Most importantly, what will happen after 2023?

4) Curatorial strategies: artistic production processes as transformation/articulation occupation. Besides the four venues in Kassel, can we activate other spaces in the city such as banks, schools, universities, football teams, mosques/churches/synagogues, city hall, hospitals, prisons and parks? Which initiatives we would work with in making exhibitions, educational platforms, symposia plus public interventions and programs in Gudskul's understanding?

2020

January-June: **institution building** phase

- 1) Artistic research: choosing the first five partners we want to work in the Koperasi.
- 2) Implementing communication strategies in physical presence, print publications and social media activations, with a possibility of taking one of our Koperasi members to be in charge for communication planning.

July-December: **artistic** phase

- 1) Decision making and issuing contracts with all the partners we want to work for d15.
- 2) Looking for the not more than 10 possible next partners for Koperasi. Decisions made together with the first five inaugural members.
- 3) Inaugural local public presentations, taking different possibilities of presenting and articulating arts, in collaborators' respective local contexts.

2021

January-June: **articulation** phase

- 1) Locations, including those possibilities outside of Kassel, are locked and pursued.
- 2) Tickets are on sale.
- 3) Possible implementation of alternative fundraising and communication strategies.
- 4) Looking for the not more than 10 possible next partners for Koperasi. Decisions made together with the previous 15 members.
- 5) Second round of local public presentations, taking different possibilities of presenting and articulating arts, in collaborators' respective local contexts.

July-December: **artistic finalization** phase

- 1) Finalizing all partners' contracts, all partners.
- 2) In November, list of artists are to be published.
- 3) List of artists, collaborators and Koperasi members to be announced.

2022

January-December: **'souk'** or *istiqlal* phase

- 1) Possible implementation of *Pasar Jumat*, Friday markets throughout the year until d15 closed in mosques, churches and parks in Kassel.
- 2) Opening of d15 in June.
- 3) Closing of d15 in September.
- 4) The kick-off for the Koperasi platform's existence post d15.

2023

January-December: **sustainability schemes implementation** phase

- 1) Implementation of the results we would have learned from the research and practice processes in the form of a new partnering institution between ruangrupa and documenta.
- 2) Knowledge dissemination through teaching, public lectures and publications to make d15 and its structure impactful and replicable.

INSTITUTION

In this proposal, we are proposing what we have been and continuously are doing. Through Gudskul (the educational platform we established with other Jakarta-based collectives Serrum and Grafis Huru Hara) as the latest iteration, ruangrupa has researched, experimented and implemented various strategies for our abilities to sustain independently, at least since 2010. It is from Gudskul we learn how to implement the notion of *lumbung* as a collective resource management and to look for the right model of *koperasi* that works best in artistic and cultural realms.

Not surprisingly, with this proposal we are risking our own development here in Jakarta by significantly scaling up our model of economical experimentations towards sharing, collectivity and circularity. We are looking for new modes of distributions through on-the-ground research for playful, imaginative, innocent and therefore radical initiatives in different scales and various interests—from urban to rural, queer to pagan, radical to environmental. If everything goes well, our aim to come up with a new sustainability model that could be implemented, developed and shared with other institutions could be a reality. In order to do this, the sustainability of this idea needs to be upheld.

A big challenge for this proposal is to ensure how the Koperasi and its *lumbung* system exist after documenta 15 ends in 2022. For this we figured out several thoughts:

- 1) documenta becomes one of the sustainability plans of our Koperasi platform. What relationship is possible in this scheme? What resources are there to share together?
- 2) Koperasi is given commercial rights as cultural capital to be monetized further, such as official merchandising or revenue-generating programs. In the process, documenta could be a decentralization art ecosystem model this way.
- 3) Koperasi platform becomes documenta's CSR—Contemporary (art) Social Responsibility—scheme to continuously support social awareness and education in contemporary art through independent sustainability thinking. Distribution will still be key to push better equality in the art world.

INVITATION

Is documenta interested in being the first partner in this Koperasi reality of ours, through which we intend to find new ways to share the benefits reaped from the global practice of contemporary art in a more symmetrical and just way? Is it interested to work together with us to co-initiate a *lumbung* system that could work towards a contemporary art ecosystem of a planetary scale and in deeper understanding of time?

By working with us in imagining, experimenting, tinkering with, and implementing this new mode of cooperation, documenta will also gain sustained networks and artistic resources which could last more than one edition. All the while also transforming itself into a more just and contemporaneous institution, to be a reference model to other institutions worldwide, who are currently trying to decolonize their respective old mode of operations.

If agreed, together we will imagine and exercise this new understanding of a contemporary art show or commonly referred to as an exhibition, which is ripe for a revisit—from how it is conceived, managed, calculated, put into practice, learned from and influenced others in the process: before, during and after the exhibition happens.