

#### Content:

I would like to start this report with giving a second impression of ramadhan, and telling you about Lebaran, the celebration of its end.

Next I will tell about my hand work (you missed bananas, did not you?)

Lastly I would like to get back to agency learning by helping. Can I translate what I see and also what I experienced here into tools or methodology of helping, or let's say (social design) action ?



Sorry for the poor quality of that image. Up you can see Enin sleeping in the living room, finding some rest time in the night, before the nice people of the down photo wakes her up in order to prepare the sahur (meal before dawn). The waking up of people is called obrok obrok, and is cultural tradition of Indonesia, it is often the same ingenious portable orchestra with terrible sound system.

## Ramadhan 0.2

Here is what I wrote on the 2d of June

“Oh, we are already the second of June. I feel hungry. As much as the first days of ramadhan felt intense and productive, it has now become a habit, some sort of constraint, slightly annoying, which we deal with.”

On May 29th, I did not sleep at all in the night, because of an event Jaf was hosting : sahur with minister. (I will talk about this later).

From that day I started living in the night and sleeping in the day. I think I forced it a little bit, for several reasons :

- all my friends are awake in the night, that's the moment to work or chat in a good atmosphere (or escape in a motorbike tour)
- the days are getting very hot, the night brings freshness
- I became afraid of being hungry if I don't eat twice in the night before.
- it is more easy to communicate with Europe

That was not really healthy life style. Though I did sleep 10 hours per nights (or should I say mornings), I still felt exhausted in the days, day dreaming, sometimes feeling down, not able to do much. I started eating too much again, and was unable to sleep earlier.

## Lebaran (Eid Mubarak)

Yesterday, June 15th was Lebaran. Lebaran is the celebration for the end of the Ramadan, the biggest celebration in here, more or less similar to Christmas, with the same excitement days before, and preparations. People paint their house new, buy new clothes and offer presents and money. It is a celebration focused on the family, the cities empties as people go back to their families' village. Results a big exodus in which a lot of people die every year. In order to lessen the amount road accidents, the government decided to give longer holidays this year : 10 days.

Indeed the number of cars increased a lot in the village, with people making small money from parking spots, and one has to queue in the fuel station.

1 week before Lebaran was already in everybody's lips. At that time I was in this slightly autistic period when I focus only on my work, bananas. But 3 days before lebaran I realize the fuss around me. I was not sure if I should do anything myself. Not sure whether I look forward or be anxious about this family time full of people and food.

2 days before Lebaran were a lot of circulation and animation everywhere : street orchestras playing not only in the night to wake up people, but in the day, with masked dancers. The main street became a nonstop market full of food, flowers (in Lebaran one goes to the cemetery and decorate the tombs his or her ancestors) and a specific woven basket made from coconut leave in which people cook the Lebaran rice : ketupot.



I learned how to make those woven boxes with a family living in the mountains, they make a living selling Gulah Aren, a dark sugar made from the palm tree resin. That sugar is more healthy than others, and I brought a pack to Enin as Lebaran present, since her health forbids her to eat white sugar. yes! I can make ketupots now :)



top left : convivial chaos for the last buka puasa. down left : too bad I cannot put sound on my report, you would have heard the lamentation that kept me from sleeping, as well as the majority of the population. Which gives time for cooking the lebaran meal.

right : in the streets and parks around the mosque, white lines indicate the praying direction for the crowd : too many people praying at once for the mosques' capacity. I was sleeping as this happens (frustration!), down is a picture from Ika, a friend.

The day before Lebaran was the last time we break the fast (buka). They put tables outside, a lot of people came and brought food and drinks ; as soon as the muezzin called for praying, everybody jumps to the food in a happy « panic » chaos.

The night before Lebaran was awful. It was a non stop religious « chant » coming from the numerous mosques. And our neighbours' mosques really do not sing well. It sounded like a lamentation that would never stop, and impeached anyone to rest. I could not sleep, nobody could sleep. I cooked lemon pie and failed soft bread. Around 3AM another lady came to cook, or better said finish cooking the prepared Lebaran food, which contains a chicken soup with coconut and fried sambal, plus this basket ketupot.

I finally managed to sleep a bit around 5 or 6 AM, and woke up to the sound of people at 7:30. I had just missed the thing I was curious of : the Lebaran prayer that is so popular that people don't fit into the mosque anymore and pray in the street, where specific lines have been traced, to indicate the praying direction.



family reunion, children have fun, parents talks. But also visit from neigbous, friends, with a specific salutation.

Since my room gives on the living area, as soon I as opened the door I met lot of well-dressed people willing to eat or share hand. So hurried dress up and went into the crowd. Minalaidin, maaf. Happy laid, sorry if my behaviour annoyed you. And you share had with everyone coming in. I ate also, the famous hot chicken soup, which my stomach found surprising early in the morning, after one month eating only in the night.

The atmosphere really felt like Christmas time, after dinner or something. People talking with relatives, taking pictures together, joking around and playing with the kids. Talking sundanese, of course. I did not really belong. After some more hand sharing I went back to sleep.

I woke up in an quiet and empty house. I felt a bit alone and decided to go for a walk, hoping for a fruit or vegetable but the village was, for once, completely silent. Only small supermarkets were open, and some people traveling in motor bikes. I continued walking, went further, tried new ways in the rice fields, sharing hands with the few people I met. It felt sort of resourcing. I think this was the time in which everybody tried to sleep (since the night had been restless).



beautiful cemetery I found in while walking. People visit ancestors during Lebaran, I have seen family praying. They put flowers in the square holes in the tombs.

I came back early afternoon, found other friends and family. Felt very tired again and went back sleeping, in another room, more silent. As I woke up, the house was empty: the people visiting their neighbours, friends, and other family. Which is everything I don't have here. Again I felt very lonely and homesick, and I ate terribly wrong.

So again I went walking, with the intention of giving a lemon pie to IbuEntur, the lady I did batik with 1 month ago, in the neighbour village. The night was falling, I tried the rice fields again, got beautiful view on the stars and the fireworks. In the night shops opened again, but my aching belly refused me any food. In the end IbuEntur had left to see family so I went back.

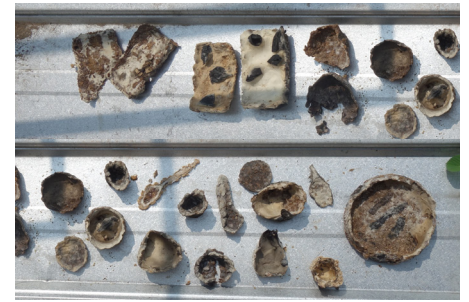
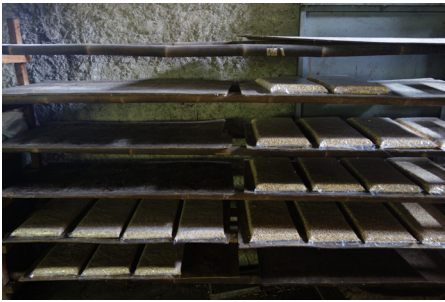
I could chat with my brother on the way, which made me feel better. Also I was glad to see friends at home, and the evening became much nicer. We looked at horoscope and talked about pisang kulit, renaissance and print making.

The day after I found an empty envelope that looked just like the one I had received with money for an event on the 19th, in which we would give pisang bakar. It was 250 000rp, to buy the material and pay ourselves that has been stolen in Lebaran. I had forgotten my hand bag in the living room, with the envelope in it. The other money was not stolen, and also in Lebaran people do exchange money so it might have been a mistake. But it does feel like a pain. Therefore I am looking forward the end of Lebaran.



houses are full of visitors.

# hand works



The tempeh process (from left to right, up to down) : 1 boiling of the soybeans (the resulting liquid and foam containing a lot of proteins is fed to the cows) 2 breaking them in two (before using machines they did it by foot, adding more bacterias to the process) 3 cleaning and fermentation of the beans overnight 4 inoculating the mycellium (the workers changing the amount according to the weather condition) and letting it grow for three days. (after one day spent in the factory, tempeh sellers take the packs home and finish the process there). 5, 6 my own trials.

## Let's start with failures :)

Have you hear of mycellium? It is the plant, a network of snowlike white roots connecting many living organism of an ecosystem, whose fruit is the mushroom. Each mushroom has its mycellium, and researchers around the world only start to see its many qualities. One of them is that, once dried (and therefore killed), the mycellium of such mushrooms (in europe we use a lot the oyster one) show very good resistance to shock, fire, and floats. Being a live organism it can be grown in almost any shape. And it is hundred percent natural product (for what this means). Therefore there is big hope that mycellium can replace plastic in the near future.

And if it could, that would make Indonesia such a better place to live in!

The interesting thing is that Indonesian people are already quite familiar with mycellium, since it is more or less every day in their plates !

Tempeh (but also oncom, and peyem) is an indonesian food made from beans (for tempeh, soybeans) fermented and inoculated with a mycellium, that make them stick together.

My plan was therefore to try and make tempeh mycellium products that could replace the plastics (especially cups). We went to a tempeh factory, in order to get a bag of freshly inoculated beans, so I could work with it and let it grow in molds.

Equipped with plastic gloves and anti bacterial gel (meant for hand disinfection) I broke the beans in smaller pieces, putting them in molds.

I also tried adding coffee ground (coffee being a good fertilizer and the number one drink in Indonesia), flour (for they food) as well as chunks of banana trees, dried or boiled, bananas skins, here again dried or boiled (this time trying to give structural strength, since soybeans seemed fragile and soft).

I placed the lot in a dark and humid place, my room, in which they happily grew, the snowy white mycellium very visible... and producing a strong smell that made it hard for me to sleep. (and even, how shameful! made someone clean my room in my absence...). So the following night I placed them outside, but forgot to remove the plastic molds. Instead of drying, they steamed cooked under the hot sun, resulting in smelly flies candies.

I still managed to dry some pieces, but realized the mycelium had grown only in surface, the part touching the mould was still only a bean mash, and I missed a bigger clean boxes to allow them to grow out of their molds. Plus the part covered with tempeh were still easy to break.

I decided I was not working in good condition to make it really work, and should better focus on my bananas (slightly less smelly)



top : extracting the roots.  
bottom : this is how it looks like



cleaning the roots.

## let's start with the roots ... a shrinking process.

My fascination for banana opens new link for me. One of Arie's friend is selling roti bakar (a bread baked in butter and other sweet things). He also makes pipes from the roots of a specific banana tree. He offered to make a workshop with us, as I hoped to produce cup and spoons (I had planned to go selling banana food soon).

On the way to its home we went saluting friends, and also visited the bread factory. They import the yeast from France, it is apparently quite expensive, and since I manage to make bread yeast from banana and flour, I suggested to try it over there. So another workshop to come.

Said hi to family and went to the banana tree.

(In case you did not know, the banana trees are a grass. They reproduce through roots, and not via the fruits. So why do banana exists?)

The men extracted the root, which were surprisingly small for such high tree. They cleaned them, removing the dirt or moisted parts. The next step is boiling them for 5 hours. They told me another way that people used to do is bury the roots for one month until they are spoiled and smooth enough to shape.

We went back to the village in order to boil the roots. I had nothing to do except look, try to talk and take pictures, as a lot of people had gathered.

Luckily we manage to escape a little and visit a nearby farm that tries to do organic, then event went swimming in river where kids were playing (and later shampooing). The place was beautiful but shamefully full of plastic and I was not so reassured for the water quality.

Anyways, we went back to the boiled roots after having broken the fast, I gave me more energy.

The roots were more hard than I expected them to be. Once again, neighbors from the village got together, observing what was going on, and taking photos with me. But I felt much better because I could also work on something and keep my hands busy.

The men showed me how they make their pipes, cutting the roots into a cylinder then wrapping tightly with a strong elastic (a bicycle inner tube).

The making of cups and spoon were new for them so they had to think of solution for giving the right shape while put pressure. We pre-shaped the roots, half carving only since this process bears a huge shrinking. I was happy to hold and tool and work with people chit chatting and having fun behind me.





top : while make something complicated? roof tiles can do anything!  
 bottom : she used plastic to start the fire...



top : carving the roots  
 bottom : under the eyes of curious people



he is tightening the future pipe with an inner tube.

I felt a bit ashamed that those people had spend their all day working for me (and giving me presents) with nothign in return but photograph. However it seems that public workshop gave them attention from other poeple about their activity, potential buyers. And it was a good nongkrong time for everyone.

The drying process is very long , especially without a van. Because I did not pay enought attention to it (I was probably supposed to tighten the elastic each day) and did not have enough proper elastic, the results are mixed. I am still waiting for some. You can judge by yourself. But the shrinking is impressive, so I could not help thinking of the shriking man project of Arne Hendriks.





## helping strategies



### Saur sama minister : the inclusion Strategy

On may 29th the minister of rural life came to Jaf for Saur (the meal before dawn). This was the first time I had seen so many people in the buildings. Jaf was hosting the event, facilities and food were provided, my friends played music. Arief called me the 'ambassador', my role was to welcome the minister together with another, more traditional orchestra (the sweet one that wakes people up at 1, 2 and 3 AM). Later, as my friends were playing, I danced (I miss dancing a lot) despite being very much watched by everybody. I also, obviously, stand in pictures and selfies. Arief explained the activities of Jaf, and the minister gave a speech. Food coming from Water was distributed.

The government had put extremely poorly designed poster everywhere. For me the whole event felt very much like advertisement, or campaigning, and I was surprised that Jaf supports this. One has to know that Jar is very autonomous : they did every thing without asking founding for the government. Last year the government became aware of their importance and offered to make new buildings, which I am in now. But that is all they ever gave.

I shared my surprise to Arie and he explained that their consider Jaf as a public area. Therefore, if some party wants to organise an event, their are open for it. But this does not mean they give financial

support : if one wants food, he has to pay for it (in that case the government payed Wates cooks). Also, since they are open to everyone, and several parties come into their walls, they don't have a political color. They have become a sort of « must go to» for any person willing to do politics in the region. And welcoming the politicians allow them to ask critical questions and treat important people as pairs. I think this is very significant strategy of Jaf, which I would call strategy of inclusion. It is the same with the gangsters I met on my arrival. Jaf hardly reject anybody, because once the people are on their ground, they can start working their way with them. It is very tricky and demanding but also very smart idea.



## Turba program : the communist strategy

turun ke bawah', meaning 'descend from above'. In the 50s and 60s some Indonesian artist members of cultural association named Lekra and related to the communist party invented Turba. The idea was to bring artists to the villages in order for them to experience the reality of life over there. Though the name is not very politically correct and thought this was also a political manoeuvre in order to make villagers vote for the communist party, it carries nowadays questioning in terms of social art and design.

Diskusi bersama Tim Ngandong:  
"Membaca Waktu Kerja dari Bawah"

Sabtu, 12 Mei 2018  
15.00 - 17.00 WIB

KUNCI Cultural Studies Center  
Ngadinegaran MJ 3/100,  
Mantriijeron, Yogyakarta

Gelar Editorial Sekolah Salah Didik:  
Belajar dari Bawah

*PechaKucha Night*  
vol. 21

Gelar Editorial Sekolah Salah Didik:  
Belajar dari Bawah

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I met Fiki, a man working in Kunci cultural studies in Jogjakarta. It has been a year they are working on a program called the school of Improper education, and in that program they started research Turba as a methodological too, seeking to find out its limits and potential. My friend Sari from Mexico was in residency with them and together they printed a book with a few principles and rules. I will share The rules

the 'Do's':  
work alike/together, eat alike/together, sleep alike/together

the 'don't's  
don't sleep at the home of those who exploit the village  
don't patronize peasants  
don't harm the host or the peasant  
don't take notes in front of the peasant

the 'must's  
must be humble, polite and enjoy learning from the peasant  
must know local language and customs  
must help solving the problems and face the difficulties of the host, peasants and political organizations.

Again, trying not to care about the 'peasant' condescend-ance , and bringing it out to broader contexts of any design action (and for my agent learning by helping), I think this could be useful. And it has limits. It reminds me of my own experience here, and from that I can say it misses a big point : the image of the foreigner. Here as buleh (white person) I carry image, associations, expectations. I cannot hide, cannot smuggle. People are excited to see me (young children are even afraid of me), and want to take pictures with me. Just because I am white. To a lesser extent, this is the same with the position of designer. I remember when working with farmers in the agri meets design project, our presence was giving a lot of hopes to the farmers. Probably because we were the first hand they got from the government since a long time. And because we are from another world, somehow.

So yes, we can and probably should eat alike and sleep alike. The working alike I love, because I like to work with my hands and learn new skills and experience new things ; productivity is an escape from endless questions and doubts. But sometimes it is tricky : for example even though I would have liked to, I did not work in the roof-tile nor tempeh factories. Many reasons : I am a woman and not supposed to do heavy manual job, I am a buleh and not supposed to get my hands dirty (?) and mostly, I don't come in the same context, my presence is temporary, I don't need to work, I would slow them down : it would have felt like some kind of tourism.

But I did work with the batik factory, so what is the difference? Is it because batik relates to printing, art and therefore has a different status than « pure » labour? But isn't learning by helping, or Turba, or design work, precisely supposed to work against preconceptions?



top : me working in the batik factory  
left : worker in a tempeh factory

To help, one need a reason. My reason in school had been learning. And for batik it makes sense since this is an 'artistic' practice. Concerning the tile or tempeh factory, I would have needed a specific project over there. Some sort of identity. The concept of agency learning be helping is to vague when brought out of school context, when helping non-designer persons, with non-directly design-related knowledge.

That is maybe also a reason why I became the banana queen. Now poeple can have a idea of what I can do -and I can answer the 'what do you do here' question ; plus banana gives me a new opportunity to reach anybody who, in any manner, relates to this fruit. Also, and though it may sounds paradoxal, having a project on my own allowed me to help on other projects, because it helped make me part of the community, in which help is often given. However I still mostly help as Buleh : nobody yet asked me to help with my fresh banana skins expertise.

Concerning the knowing the language and customs, I think it is indeed a must. In some cases, gestures and material can replace language, but that is very rare. Even so, it is impossible to communicate new ideas and concepts, things that does not exists in materiality yet, without language. And language (and customs) is necessary for building trust, making jokes.

## Jaf in relation to Turba

I would like to share what I can observe of Jaf's methodology, in relation to the Turba principles. In some ways they are very similar, but in others very different. Turba seemed very intellectual while Jaf is much more intuitive. I like that they do instead of analysing. Sometime conceptualisation feels like butterflies framing, especially this sentence « must be humble, polite and enjoy learning from the peasant ». Jaf members are humble, and they look truly happy. The main difference is that are from the village, they belong in the community and therefore already eat, sleep, and talk alike. Which makes me understand that the Turba principles are written in order for foreigner artists (such as I, artist in residence) to get into the community. Jaf members don't need them, also because their reverse the movement of them going to the community members, to the community members getting into Jaf (the strategie of inclusion I spoke about before).

So what are their tools? A very important material is time -and language (and cigarettes)-, as time is needed to build trust. Jaf relies on nongkrong : this specific Indonesian improvised moment in which people only sit and talked, without specific plan. It is a social glue that keep people updated about the last news and gossip. It is also necessary to first talk very light with people before they can get to know deeper informations or problems. Each artist in jaw has his or her way of keeping the conversation up, and giving advices. Joking and mocking is par tof the culture, and is very often used.

For me this is difficult to achieve because I don't speak the local language, and I am a pretty anxious, project driven person. But I am also very curious and that is a tool I can train for chit chatting. And being a buleh, only speaking some indonesian words show I care and make them proud (even better if I would speak sundanese) But I am drifting.

Arief, drinking coffee, smoking and chatting while apamart (local market). This photo could have been taken anytime, because that's his main activity



So Jaf is a lot about talking, but is also action. They do organise event, such as markets, concerts, exhibitions, meetings, shared lunches. They have a big networks of friends that bring some expertise, material (coffee barista, farmers, roof-tile producer, even cigarette sellers...) or audience (teachers...). They also manage to into a position of adviser (because in most cases, the people following their advice get very successful) so often they also manage to get people around them to produce a lot. Arie for example has a friend currently hard working on building gardens and coffee house more or less on his own.

But the important thing is that they are never imposing. They manage to make the people think in the same direction as they do, and have them own the idea, or they start doing it themselves, and get followed.

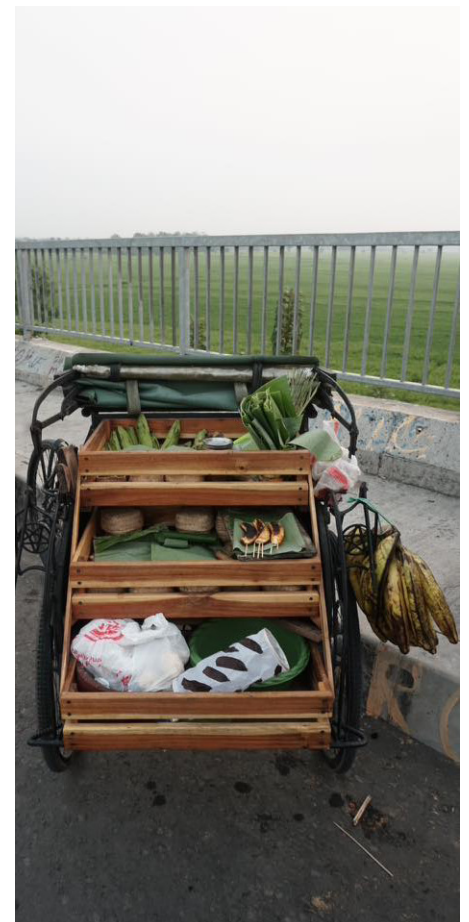
I think I can only do the 2nd one.

I am shocked by the plastic overconsumption and pollution and by the unhealthy diets.

The only way to act is starting by myself : I obviously eat fruits (and bear the jokes about it) ; I cook a little bit and share with them. Supermarket sellers now know I will ask no plastic bags. I sell barbecued bananas in bamboos boxes, on a tricycle. I can only hope that my blue popularity helps me share this life style. Before I wanted to give the food for free if people clean the road around the tricycle. I must admit I did not give it a proper try, but it does feel inappropriate somehow. Like imposing, or like a European strategy (or I am just hiding away?)



Selfies at jaf's last contemporary art exhibition, named Present : the future of our past and showing works from Bandung and Jogjakarta artists.



Babercued bananas sold in banana leaves and bamboo boxes

## Other ways of helping :

is to be helped.

To received presents and accept I will not be able to give it back most of the time. To get along, to follow, to be only present, to only say hi, to visit people and their house. And take selfies.

To do sports with them, and that is maybe the most pleasant one. At least sports does not care about colour of the skin. Though the players do welcome and play maybe a bit softer with me.

When I walk or bike in the streets a lot of people call me. It is an effort to smile or answer all of them, but I try to acknowledge their presence or something, to answer the never ending « mau ke mana? » (where do you go?). Also in smaller street, I greet them politely. Maybe that is a village thing maybe that is an Indonesian village thing, but I find it important.

I keep being invited to visit people in their home, or sleep at their place. People I don't know at all, when I walk in the street, or the people that visit the house, especially for Lebaran. Arie told me that is because if I sleep at their place, they will be able to serve me better, give me more things, food... And it is something they really would like to do, they are not only being polite, according to him. He thinks this service-oriented mindset also explains colonialism. It is quite different that in Europe, for sure. But I wonder if this apply for anyone, or do they care only for important people? I did see few homeless people.

## My own Turba?

'helping' (maybe it is more 'acting' as in action) is :

-be present, be in the open

-acknowledge/greet the other people that are present there be curious of them

-bring something from you, an identity, what brings you here (it does not need much, it can be food related, it can skill related)

-chit chat and joke

-accept the things they offer, share what you have, if you do.

-stay longer than you would think is necessary

-greet everyone and try to come back

important also : helping myself with keeping my hands busy. with buying fruits and oatmeal.



anywhere, anytime : photo miss!

Helping by standing on picture

Helping by being made up for fun

Helping by caring home so many present I do need

Helping by singing that song  
Helping is visiting

Helping is sometimes just being helped

Helping is often only 'ikut' get along

And its hard, sometimes, never to be smuggling, to be called in the street to provoke excitement or fear

to be observed and overfed

But to help

one has to be someone

I was banana queen

To help is to sit down while they chat

Speaking some Indonesian words

If Sunda, lebih baik iya

Help can be moral support  
can be food exchange  
can be

What is help? baby don't ask me don't ask me, no more. Here help is in the air. No need for spelling.

I am looking for places in where I am not rare animal  
Ibu enture, roti bakar.

I want to give back but it never happens

I only can cook a little bit

I want to fight again the plastic against the fried, against the sugar. against the smoking.

the only thing I can do is consume less myself. and talk.