

Friends and family first !
researching help in Jatiwangi Art Factory



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Introduction

Western society has been tending to perceive competition as «natural» and cooperation as « ideologic», for a long time. Getting back to Enlightenment - « Nature, red in tooth and claw » poem by Alfred Tennyson - there is a need to get out of Nature (which is bad, and the source of our inclination for fighting and vices) in order to create Society, using our spirit which is like a white page, not being influenced by anything else than ideas (dichotomy mind/body and man/nature). Hobbes is another example, in his idea only a power state can hold our bloody desires, and only market can let them express in personal enrichment.

There is a common believe that our interactions are led -and can be explained by- personal and rational interests only (homo economicus) which is what capitalism is based on.

Biological discoveries such as the competition laws of Darwin were used in a political and economic context, either to say we should let the « survival of the fittest » be and have minimal state intervention, or that we should use the state to protect ourselves against it.

However, as much as competition does occur in nature, numerous cases of collaboration and mutual help have always been observed, only science did not research it further until recently ; with the exception of Kropotkin: he worked in Siberia -a place of scarcity, opposite to Darwin's' research in the abundance of jungle- and found a lot of cooperation. Without mutual help the organisms would die; therefore he placed his research in the context of natural selection. Following these observations,

he concluded that since mutual help is a natural process, there is no need of a state to make sure we cooperate. On the opposite, to create a fair society we should deepen our instincts and be anarchists. His revolutionary ideas -against the dichotomy mind spirit and against competition - made him forgotten.

Nowadays a lot of literature is being published on the necessity for biodiversity and the discoveries of plant and animal complex abilities to network and collaborate, in order to survive better. Inside the human brain « mirror neurons » stimulates us the same way seeing someone doing something, as if doing it ourselves. I think this new knowledge should help us rethink our idea of society making. I want to research the concrete potential of generosity and help as a tool for development, bringing it out of the moralist or religious sphere.

In the Design Academy, I created the Agency learning by Helping, a project in which I offered my help to graduating students of DAE for anything related to their project. I would not get money from it, but knowledge - I would also not lose any money. It was a way to keep being busy with my hands, open to new people and practices, and reflect on my own. It also kept me updated about new discoveries and inspired me for new project. And it made space for community building in a rather individual centered school.

In order to further research the potential of help, I decided to leave Europe for a while and study with a group of Indonesian artists called Jatiwangi Art Factory (JAF), invited by one of its artists, Arie Syarifuddin, - whom I had met and shortly worked with- and who impressed me with his positive energy and generosity.

Jatiwangi art Factory is a place and it is people. It is located in a village in West-Java, a rural area that also has a tradition of roof-tile making. The region is changing quickly though, with the erection of an international airport and the national decision to focus on industry: big clothing factories suddenly stand in the middle of the rice fields, mainly coming from ASEAN countries. JAF is trying to help dealing with the transition, looking at traditions for what good they possess and taking it into the

close-future. It is an attractive, hopeful place incredibly opened and incredibly relaxed for the need-to-keep-busy, project orientated girl I am. So, I spent four months trying to understand this mystery: just how do they work? how can they have such active programs, survive financially speaking, while being so laid down? It turned out that they are very good at making friends, if not making family-like ties (I got « caught » in there, too). That ability is a strong one: family or friends are the ones we can trust with our problems. Gifts and help are mostly offered to people we are emotionally attached to. Mutual help, therefore has to do with emotions.

The question becomes then a very basic one: how to get attached, how to build trust, how to become family with (as numerous as possible) others?

In the first part I would like to focus on what I observe of JAF's members strategies.

On the second part I will speak about my own way, which had to differ since I am a foreigner. Another important feature of my 4 months was the experience of fame (because of my physical characteristics) and dealing with being a *bule cantik* (beautiful and white).

In conclusion I would love to say that « all you need is love », but I will try to make it a bit more complicated so that it looks more serious; how is this all a « designer thing »? Isn't it normal life?

1) What I understood from JAF's tools :

How does Jatiwangi Art Factory functions? p.6

- A) Be a place and a home (sharpening the weapon of love)
- B) Forbid overthinking (Aris, the real helper?) + keep trying, keep doing
- C) Stay a curious and attractive, opened place; be also coherent and reliable
- D) Make people that you don't like cooler: inclusion strategy
- E) Give time for coffee and cigarettes: nongkrong
- E bonus) tool that is general to Indonesian people: Nasi Liwet
- F) Create traditions
- G) Focus on people, not on money + get as many as you can in, so to build a collective lot of skills

2) My tools :

How to get included ?

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- A) Following: ikut, visiting people and houses and staying there longer than I would think is necessary.
- B) Accepting food and gift with gratitude. Therefore, trying a bit of everything.
- C) Sharing what I have.
- D) Standing on picture with them (?)
- E) Learning the language and trying to speak a bit. otherwise, look at them talking and smile
- F) Being very polite, shaking hands, greeting people in the streets
- G) Being curious, learning from people with enthusiasm
- H) Making something special so people can relate to me
- I) Being helped

1) How does Jatiwangi Art Factory functions ?

JAF's members made a publication named 10 Culture Immunization Strategies. I find it very characteristic of their energy, and it gave me some new insights. Therefore, I would like to share some quotes, and let them introduce themselves.

Jatiwangi Art Factory was founded in 2005 at Mr. Omo family house. At the beginning the house was used as a gathering place for men whose their wife left to work at Arab countries. Then Mr. Omo's eldest son, Arief Yudi and his wife, Loranita Theo came back to their home after wandering from the town. Then they invited his brother; Ginggi Syarif Hasyim to create a new gathering space. Thus, formed Jatiwangi art Factory. Started with painting the kitchen. The first rule was 'Thinking is prohibited' in this house. Then they invite relatives from other cities and countries, introduced them to Jatiwangi people and reported back.

The dream was; art can fill in the deepest anatomy of society. Become a human relationship, a reminder between neighbors, a goodwill. (...) Starting trust without too much explaining. Live and feel instead.

A) It is a place and it is a home + « sharpening the weapon of love »

I arrived 13 years after the foundation of JAF. By that time hard days were over, members could count on a network of friends and even got new buildings paid by the national government (the only support they received from it). It is located on a previous roof-tile factory: the kiln is still standing in the « museum » a house designed by Pak Ginggi, which stays mostly empty but is a great background for photos or events. The production area became a big hall that can host many events (concerts, exhibition, political speeches...) One side is a cinema and a multimedia room, with a painting and silk-screening studio area on 1st floor. The other side is storage area, with a cafe on top. Next to the hall there is a recording music studio. Close by is the ceramic studio, and next to it stands the family house, where members of the family -and more or less anyone who wants to sleep over- can rest.

Yes, Jatiwangi Art Factory is a home, and that is easy to say since it revolves around one family: the sons and grandsons of Enin (Mr. Omo's wife) who is still there to welcome people and ask them to eat). But the family has a lot of adopted members, with me being maybe the new cousin.

I am not sure whether providing a list of the characters can help you follow my story, also because there is far too many people and I am not even remembering all the names (and this all is only my understanding of what I have heard and observed), but I can give it a try for you to get a taste of the lively atmosphere:

Enin: the grandmother. Lives in Jaf. She stays mostly at home between her room, the kitchen and the living room, from early morning to evening. She will welcome you and make sure you have eaten well whenever you get in. She is very caring, and takes care of people's diet preferences, and knows who is at home or not. Like most people I met, she is easily laughing.

Arief : surname Baba. The eldest son of Enin, husband of Yuma and father of Nyanya. Lives 5min walking from JAF. He is co-founder of JAF. He used to be director and actor in the theatre scene in Bandung. This year he was named maestro of Indonesia, among 10 other famous artists. Any kind of people would come to him and ask for advice, for the people he helped became quite successful. He loves to discuss with people, and challenges them with jokes. He would always ask me to smoke with him and eat more rice.

Yuma, is a painter and loves to make new songs with as many languages as possible. She makes quite gloomy oil painting that can be found in the house, and joyful or social murals in the village (for example in schools). She also does batik with Ibu Entur (see later)

Ginggi: second son of Enin, husband of Ana and father of Ghea, Ijan, and another boy who studies in East Java. Lives 20 minutes away, comes by car. He used to be a gangster (there was quite a lot at the time, dealing with the roof-tile producers) but by the time I met him, he was only a very sweet massive man. Very famous, also, as he has been chief of village in Wates.

Ana, works in the modern roof-tile factory; she is also a teacher in a kindergarten and currently studies to get a master in education. She is very busy but does not show tiredness, always lively and energetic.

Ami: younger son of Enin. Married to Yuli, has no child yet. They live in JAF. He is part of Hanyaterra, a music band that plays with clay instruments. He spends a lot of time producing and experimenting in the ceramic studio.

Yuli has some business in selling products of a friend: jelly drinks, banana chips, iced yogurt. If you want some just help yourself in the fridge and pay her. She also loves to cook, and sings doing so.

Ijan, grandson of Enin, son of Ginggi. I think he lives mainly in JAF. Still studying in his last year of high-school, and not sure whether he wants to continue. He seems like a duck takes to water working in JAF, landing a hand here and there, learning video editing or ceramic, hanging out with his friend Daus and others, taking care of the coffee in the main hall called Kitchen Council.

Then come the adopted ones, and I am missing lots:

Ila, married, 2 sons, lives in the neighbor's village. He has a degree in ceramic and works in there sometimes. He is very closed to the roof-tile factories in his village (which give clay and make space for JAF's piece to burn in their kiln). He makes projects with them, such as the Jatiwangi cup: a bodybuilder competition amongst the workers of the clay factory. He is also our free way to the aquatic park nearby, since he helped the owner to launch it. And he is quite involved in politics, trying to get elected chief of his village.

Arie: surname Ghorie. Married, just got a second baby. He lives in Majalengka but comes daily to JAF. He used to be a famous singer in the Punk scene, convinced by communist and anarchist thinkers before his thinking was challenged by Arief in JAF. That is how he got « trapped in ». He is the one I met in Netherlands and he is responsible for artists in residence. I spend most of my time with him and he is my main source of information. He is also a very good graphic designer, and made most of JAF's logo.

Ismal: husband of Bunga. They live in a small house build against a wall of the main hall. The house was part of a challenge to architects' friends and a gift to the couple when they married, since they did not have any family house around. He is a soft and sensible person. Together with Bunga they

work a lot with the farmers of Wates (a neighbor village) and take care of the cinema. They travelled to Europe for preparing a short movie festival.

I think Bunga is also a journalist. She was pregnant of their first child.

Ika: is not married yet, lives in the room next to me. She is a journalist, lived in Jakarta before coming here, and is at the moment the only woman of JAF that is not also wife of a member. She is singer in Lair (another music band), sometimes curator, and wants to make archives of JAF events. She also loves to read and is building up a library and reading festival. She is independent, fun and energetic, 2 years older than me.

Pandu: lives with his wife in Majalengka. He is a photograph and tries to record of the region as it is now so that we can look back at it in the fast-changing future. He also documents most activities in JAF, makes photo for the music band. He studied economics and created Apamart, a monthly market with local money (made of clay). He wants to research further the economic systems.

Teddy: lives in Majalengka, with his wife's family and a very cute baby. He is a member of Hanyaterra and Lair (the 2 music bands of JAF).

Aaf: not yet married, lives 5 minutes away from Jaf. He is also part of Hanyaterra and Lair.

Alma: boyfriend of Ika, he lives in a village not too far away, but mainly stays in JAF; part of the journalist team.

Tam Tam: He is still studying informatics, more or less my age. He mostly stays in JAF, following events, helping where he can, often driving people in and out. He also spent times in a cafe named Kopia apik, learning barista skills.

Haris: He sleeps at JAF. I don't know where he comes from. He is quite silent, and is helping with anything necessary. Bringing people or buying food, preparing exhibition. I will tell more about him later.

There is also Pak Toha: a friend of Arief, expert in ceramic. He stayed in JAF for several months working on proposal for the ceramic biennial but also trying to work more in relation to the local government in their plans for the region's future.

And people without whom JAF would not go far:

Ibu masak: they are two ladies who come to help cooking and cleaning the house. I think they are somehow related to the family. They are very sweet and watched all my cooking with banana experiments with curiosity and smiles. They don't seem to be too annoyed by the mess we often leave behind.

Mang Nana: he is a handyman. There seem to be nothing he can't fix, from water, to building stage. He is the one to ask for tools or help when building something. He also takes care of the garden.

Those people are the ones I met daily; together they are JAF. There are old and young people, married, studying, pondering on what to do...Some always there, some visiting. Each of them having his or her own thing to be busy with. Sometimes making research groups, often asking each other's help, for advice, cameraman, logo, ...or just for getting out. There is always possibility to improvise or prepare a meeting with the collective. And every now and then, there is a big event that unites all members on one project (when I was there, it was an exhibition).

It really feels like a big family in which one does not necessarily know what the cousin is studying, when is the uncle's birthday, nor what is the summer plan of the brother, but is happy to learn about those, to meet again, is willing to help if one can, and looking forward for the next important birthday that will reunite everyone. And just like family, there is some sort obviousness of the relationships and the mutual helps that derives from it. A small example: there was a day when I could not find the bicycle I used to travel with, while I needed to give a workshop in another village. My close friends were not in JAF, so I just ask another member of the community to bring me there, now (please). That he would stop playing games on his phone and get his scooter immediately, I could take as granted.

How come does this familial organization work in an art collective, what makes the bonds somehow always present in the background? I think that has to do with two things: one is to have the home and not only studio as common place to eat, discuss, sleep or rest, chit-chat. The grandmother brings a caring presence for everyone, making sure the food can please everybody's diets and asking for the news. JAF is definitely a place to hang-out before it is anything else (but I will come back to this later).

The other thing is immaterial: there has to be a common believe with every one, although that is difficult to say since members are so different (they are not supporting the same political party for example). I think some kind of trust (or at least a curiosity strong enough to try it out) that you can do what you like without having to fit in (break free) is shared, and there is a will for engaging with the world and the people

around: be joyful activists. I think older members have a strong charisma, and their thinking is often challenging, so what might be another common thing is to be fascinated by them.

As they wrote in their 10 strategies...: *Informal structure moves. The trick is to create sense of longing to gather. From comfort feel emerge seeds of love. And Love become social bound that secure each other.*

What is also impressive is how easily they can « extend their family »: they have a wild network of friends / « uncles » that makes it very easy to travel: there was not a city in which we had to sleep in a hostel. In Jakarta for example, we were sleeping at an architect's home. He was not there but his wife welcomed us with food and we chit-chatted at night. The day after, we had the home for our own since they all worked. Ika, who before becoming member of JAF was part of another art collective of Jakarta told us that she could never be this close and easy-going with the architect before. Being invited to sleep everywhere like at home is one very pleasant characteristic of being part of JAF. I think that comes from their own ease at welcoming people in JAF, sharing food and moments so simply. *We are always inviting people to come as guests, it's the way we make our house comfortable.*

B) Forbidden to think (Aris, the real helper?) + keep trying, keep doing

JAF is a place in which I felt very at ease, kind of accepted for what I am, whatever I would do. Therefore, it is for me a space for freedom and self-exploratory (also since I did not have such specific project). But there is also some sort of process of becoming JAF member, which I could observe amongst the younger persons, and that Arie confirmed to me with his experience. JAF is often a place for personal transformation. Before becoming member, Arie was famous in the punk scene, reading anarchist thinkers, talking and singing loud about change. He visited JAF because they hosted a concert from a band he admired, and was mocked by Arief and Ginggi. They challenged him in discussions and since he could not answer properly, he stayed there. And became at first very shy.

At the time I was there was another man (Aris) of about my age, who seemed to be in the same situation. He barely spoke, did not seem to have a project of his own. He was often next to the music studio, watching anime. But he was always in JAF, and he did all kind of small services: from waking up at 5AM to drop Nyanya, son of Arief, at school in Majalengka by scooter, to buying food or medicine for the Grandmother, making coffee in the kitchen council, or coloring banners for the exhibition... He never complained. I think he is another figure of the helper. It seems that he has no ego or personal ambition that pushes him here or there, and gives him a 'reason to help'. He just does it. He follows. And observes. And learns. I am sure it is bubbling inside.

There comes the rule « don't think »: Arie told me it took him some years of observation before he had a project on his own. He was learning by being there, helped a bit with making websites and keeping in touch with the foreigner artists since he had some knowledge in dealing with internet and speaks English well.

Don't think: that is an interesting learning methodology that seems quite opposite to our values. I understand it as an encouragement for action and trust. And a kind of maturation time before becoming another charismatic, self-assured and self-thinking person.

This maturation period is also maybe what links the members together. It can be a time to get to trust that the way JAF people do - which is very out of the box, and seems too idealistic to be true- works also.

"Don't think »; (older) members of JAF are very good thinkers; they can analyze situations and make links amongst them; they are dealing with important social topics, and sustainability of the region. But they can keep it light. « Don't think » is maybe do not sink in complexity, or become dramatic about anything. Be hopeful. Keep doing and keep trying, because that is a way to learn. Do not demand to much, neither. I spent the last day making a mural on a kindergarten with some of the members. That was for me very typical: while in Europe I would have pondered whether the results would have been worth the energy and material, if a white wall was not just better, and what kind of decors could fit the children, without being cliché or discriminative... in here we just went with some paint, no plan in advance, everyone taking a bit of wall's surface. I do think the quality could have been improved while some talking before-hand. But it was nice to do it all together, to respond to the kindergarten teachers' demand. And in worse case they can paint over it. In June I decided to sell grilled banana in the street since I was working with banana skins. I wanted to test it out better, do proper banana decoration and add another layer of concept... but Arie pushed me to start selling, now. And those moments have been a very good experience to me.

« Don't think »; looking back at my time there, I guess I was a bit in Aris' situation. Only, it was hard, because I tend to see how complex everything is and relates together. I see it big and whole and have trouble reducing it. I can be quite dramatic, too. My time in JAF helped me relax, and be less demanding, starting with where I was and what I could do. Spending much more time with people. Getting the issues I could not deal with (such as people's addiction to cigarettes, the burning of plastic waste, or having everything posted on unsafe social media) on the back of my head so that I don't get stuck. I also did things I don't consider so good, such as standing on so many selfies (just because I am white) and advertising for places or local brand I did not know so well. But that is about me, so it should stand on the 2nd part.

C) Stay a curious and attractive place, open for all; be also coherent and reliable

The buildings of JAF are Enin's property, but they like to consider it a public space. I never saw it closed. It is a place for people to hang-out. I met a young English teacher who told me she always brings her students to JAF (she does outdoor, extra-curriculum English courses) since it is always inspiring. I remember pretty well how confused I was in the first week seeing so many different people passing by, not knowing whether I should try to remember their names -what were their position in the collective, were they only visitors? -; I had no reference to compare it with, only my imagination about what a squat would be: welcoming, with people chatting and smoking while others would play music.

And there was music, often. JAF possesses a recording studio, and during some month Hanyaterra, the oldest band, would train and record every night (so melodies are still stuck in my brain). But also, students would come and sing as a choir, and anyone was just welcome to use any instrument one could find there. That happens often, since a lot of Indonesian people I met could play the guitar. Music is an important tool of JAF. I spent one week in Philippines for a meeting on south-east Asia artist residencies; some people had already been to JAF: they all asked me whether I had already made a song with them, for this is a habit of theirs. I did work on some songs, not creating but translating them in French: what a joy to have them write the sentence in phonetic alphabet and singing along! *A nice sunny day, delicious coffee, singing together, to meet genuine people, happy together. To meet inspiring guys, like Mukti- mukti that always comes and asking to write a song together. Music is the good tool for sharpening the weapon of love.*

The songs that they create are almost propaganda (at least talking about what I know from Hanyaterra ; I think Lair, the youngest band, is more poetic and abstract in its lyrics). Sometimes they use traditional lyrics, but arrange them in a contemporary way (some terrible evening it was time for hard metal...) or take one sentence they heard in

a meeting and found interesting. Anybody that have some text can also just ask one of them to make a music for it; I made one on food together with Yuma.

Maybe I should talk a bit more about Hanyaterra: it means «our soil». This band plays mostly with clay instrument that they create at the ceramic studio or in collaboration with the roof-tile factory or professional instrument maker. They made roof-tile electric guitars, percussions, they also found bowls that sounds on a right tone, and broke some other tiles until they could make a xylophone out of it. They also have a specific percussion instrument coming from India: “Udu”.

I think music is a building rock in JAF: making music out of the ceramic was maybe the first mind-opener for villagers: they could see new potential in what they have always used for making rooftops. The ceramic music festival had become a tradition; it gives rhythms to their calendar, with for example the celebration of clay instrument firing in September.

JAF also welcome concert: I had to luck to be at one, the launching of an album of *Substreet*, a relatively famous band from Leuwimunding (a nearby village). I was impressed by their ability to change the main hall into professional-looking settings (it also happened while they were organizing an art exhibition). And they got me very surprise for they kept experimenting: this time trying to avoid the violence that often happens in this kind of concert (I have been told). They had people first sit, with some free food and soft-drinks (again, friends’ network) but most of all: they kept interrupting the concert with speeches of several people, and they focused on the family of the musicians. They displayed a video showing their daily life (small jobs, with their parents commenting) they shared a song with their old teacher from junior high school... It did cut off some dancing energy, but it was definitely interesting (and really non-violent).

I would like to finish with karaoke: it is something I learned to appreciate and became very fond of. They have friends with a karaoke display at the back of a car, and we went singing at night in market

street (though I felt very bad for the neighbors). The night before I left, they installed a karaoke in the hall, using their own sound system. There is something about singing out loud that, even though it is a famous song, made me feel I could express what I could not release elsewhere. It is also about letting go your pride and not be too serious about it. And one really feels part of a community when singing along with everyone.

Other activities that might attract curious are for example the movies they show in the cinema every week-end (3 shows per day, children friendly, documentary, adult), Apamart -a monthly market with local, clay currency- , the discussion of the 27th (which I will go back to), but also festivals and workshops (short videos, making clay flute, talking and learning about farming and new media...), visit from politicians (visiting JAF had become a to-do thing for anyone willing to launch him or herself in local politics, but I will also write more about this, later), exhibitions, happenings, and meeting various artists in residence (hopefully they will let you have a selfie) !

JAF mixes very last minute, not even planned a week in advance or changing time events (such as « buka bersama » : during Ramadan they broke the fast together with several people and had discussions - the food providers were the local heads of the smoking company so I did not stay - or ceramic flute workshop improvised as they had a visit of student from Bandung) with big temporary happenings (like exhibitions or festivals) and fixed, reliable things (such as the movie or the forum happening every 27th of the month). They upload everything on the social media, and people in the village do follow their publications. Villagers seeing Jaf activities like the way they watch a football game. Because people are always working on a routine, when intervention entering their daily life there are interesting reactions. Even leaving a sense of longing to see again and again, to be part of the artistic activities.

Some festivals are financed by companies (I think the concerts) or government. That was the case for the 3-day festivals on farming

and new media, which gathered art collective or permaculture farms of around Java and Lombok and in which I gave a talk. But most of them are self-funded: understand: funded by friends « and God ». Their friends are talented, some are the currently most famous artists in their domain, nationally speaking. Therefore, when they decided to hold a contemporary exhibition, they got very expensive art pieces for free. They manage everything by themselves: curating (members of Jaf), transportation (with the trucks that transport the roof-tiles), painting and cleaning, explicative notes (on clay pads), installing TVs and lightnings, setting up the art works precisely... I already said that I was amazed by how the hall could change functions and get such a professional appearance. It has been busy weeks, and especially the last two days, it was good for me to have a dead time together: cleaning and painting in the night. I felt very much like before end-term, but the being together made it pleasant.

In all these happenings, there is one standing stone, a date that they never miss: on 27th of each month, villagers are invited to come to JAF for discussions. It is a time when they share their discoveries with the rest of the community (for example relating a trip in a foreign country if some of them went in a residence or a project abroad). They discuss plans for the future festivals or activities.

27an forum is weapon to penetrate, invite experts, practitioners, artists, sharing experiences and invisibly intervene mindset and paradigm. Make people see and appreciate themselves and their environment by borrowing the “perspective “of others who come. For that was born the monthly discussion forum known as Forum 27an JAF. Because it is done on the 27th of each month. What is the essence of this activity? Restlessness, unity, longing, cross-legged, noise, chat, luxury, vibration, jiggle.

In most cases, they invite someone of the government to come so that they can present their ideas for the region and meet the remarks and expectation of the people. There is always one member of JAF working as a mediator. It is a good moment to train and speak in public for the participants, and learn managing emotions and redirecting the dialogue

for the mediator. Arie told me forum 27th is a way to act on government that is more efficient than big strikes: inviting them, making them feel comfortable with a mic on a stage, and then water them with sharp questions and critics. That is a very specific tool of theirs, which I called the inclusion strategy.

D) Make the people you don't like cooler: the inclusion strategy

On May 29th the minister of rural life came to JAF for Sahur (the meal before dawn during Ramadan). JAF was hosting the event, facilities and food were provided, my friends played music. This was the first time I had seen so many people in the buildings. Arief explained the activities of JAF, and the minister deliver a speech. The government had placed extremely poorly designed posters everywhere and for me the whole event felt very much like advertisement, or campaigning; I was surprised that JAF supports this, for it such autonomous, self-founded and politically implied collective. I shared my surprise with Arie and he explained that since they consider JAF as a public area, they are open to anyone who wants to organize an event. But this does not mean they give support: if one wants food, one has to pay for it (in that case the government paid Wates' -a neighbor village- cooks). Also, since they are open to everyone, and several parties come into their walls, they don't bear a political colour. But have become a sort of « must go to» for any person willing to do politics in the region. Which is good, since welcoming the politicians allow them to ask critical questions and treat important people as pairs. It is the same work on inclusion with the gangsters I met on my arrival, or treating the police and military as what they are: persons that are also villagers and part of the community. JAF hardly reject anybody, because once the people are on their ground, they can start working their own way with them. It is very tricky and demanding but also a very smart idea.

*The faith is not to conquer, but convey. Invite them to our sense.
Not hit but embrace.*

What to say more?

E) Keep time for coffee and cigarettes: Nongkrong and sweet manipulation.

The media must be warming citizens ties. It's time we heard from our neighbors.

I remember very well the first days when I was willing to use Agency of Learning by Helping with JAF members. I had a very hard time, because I could not tell when they were working! All I could see them doing, was sitting with friends, drinking coffee and chatting. Or the opposite scenario: visiting friends, drinking coffee and chatting.

Well, that is maybe the main work of JAF: keeping a social glue, talking to anybody they have the opportunity to meet, since it increases their knowledge of the community -knowing what is happening- and expand their network. For sure, people would not come directly to them with a burning problem. One needs light chit-chat, getting to know each-other, building friendly relationship before the conversation can deepen and reach ways to bring change and think of issues. And that pays off:

JAF role or position in the eyes of the villagers: as home, as a shaman.

JAF's projects were most of the time successful, they became a trend or allowed them to travel the world to exhibit. Also, their friends, who followed their advice (especially Arief's) got very successful (which is handy when they need to borrow money). Therefore, even though they don't always build or make so much themselves, they manage to bring a lot of people around them to get into action (Arie, for example, has punk friends that made an unused land into a coffee place with a garden). They aim at making people think for their own comfort and be independent, instead of spending all their energy working for their bosses, or being stuck in the system. They encourage a lot of the planting edible seeds at home, and making self. But to convince people, they need to know them well and get their trust. Time is therefore a key element; time that is spent together.

Indonesian people in general are good at doing this: they even have a specific name for that moment of collective chit-chat: Nongkrong. Nongkrong has to be improvised and aimless. It is talking for the sake of being together, staying curious and sharing last events. That is a difficult practice for project-led, efficient-seeker, time is money thinker or people that have to hurry up to get their children after school and bring them to the theatre class so they can be on time for their own yoga lesson. The only context that I can think of « European nongkrong » is meetings with strangers in festivals (therefore, strangers with whom one has common tastes or interests), or meeting with your friends or your family when you have free time (again, friends and family...cf title).

In Indonesia, Nongkrong is very likely to happen with your neighbors. It might need some kind of trigger; once some men in taught me how to make things out of banana trees' roots. It was quite a long process that we did outside, in front of their home. Quite soon curious neighbors came to watch us and they stayed chit-chatting with each other for a whole hour.

E bonus) Nasi Liwet

There is another specific tool for being together in Indonesia: Nasi Liwet. Nasi is their daily meal: it is the neutral starchy food (almost always white rice) that one eats with « friends »- understand side dishes. They have many names according to the different dishes or geographical locations (Nasi campur, Nasi lengko...) or the way the rice is cooked (Nasi kuning with curcuma, Nasi Uduk with coconut milk, Nasi goreng when it is fried afterwards). But they also have a name for the meal, if it presented nicely and... they have Nasi Liwet, for when the meal is cooked with many people, once again improvised, each of them bringing in something they had at home. Nasi Liwet is also linked to night-watching: most villages have a team of people that guard the villagers from gangsters and « improper behaviors » (that includes man and women relationships). The villagers take turn doing this, or they have a volunteer team. Night-watchers can rest in small shelters that are

numerous in the village, and there is a tradition that villagers put rice in a specific can in front of their homes, for the night-watchers to cook and eat together -Nasi Liwet. They could also sell the rice, if they need money. The rice in the cans was a way to compensate them from their work.

But Nasi liwet happens a lot in casual situations; traditionally the rice is cooked in a big pot, so some rice burns underneath which gives the rest a specific taste, and it is displayed on full banana leaves so that people gather around. Here is something I wrote in July:

Yesterday I went Nasi liwet with the neighbors of baba. It was a really nice moment; crazy how Indonesian people can gather and chit chat just for being together! They are “bon-vivants” without the alcohol! They eat and smoke and tell you to eat more, because « here is no diet! » And laughing from simple jokes or stories (playing on words...), and repeating them. It is not complicated to get along. They are also talking quite a lot about food, though this might be my influence. It is a great way to get knowledge: about old food, medicine, or else.... I am surprised by how much knowledge one can get from those ‘random’ conversations. For example, I learned that people names change a lot during their lives. If you have children for instance, people can also call you mama/bapak+first child name. And they have a lot of different nicknames. Once the meal was over, the men were sitting in another place, having coffee and getting massaged by one of them.

Once again, eating prove to bring people together. It is interesting to note that the cooking is also part of the concept in Indonesia, and that the discussions do not stop once the meal is finished, because they seem to enjoy togetherness.

F) Create traditions

As I mentioned in the introduction, Jatiwangi is changing rapidly. JAF members are trying to see through, analyzing what is the value of their current culture, and how to preserve it, while looking forward -the title of their publication might be understood this way: 10 strategies for culture immunization. They preserve it by ways of archiving (for instance Pandu takes photos of the region as it is now: the people, their occupations, their environment... because the region lacks recorded history, it is all made-up) and researching (about local crafts and materials, about ancient cooking recipes or coffee drippings... Arie, for instance, made CUR, a coffee drip made of bamboo, similar to the bamboo cones people use for steaming the rice. The coffee drip replaces the paper, and while doing so he researched the relationship people had with coffee before the colonial era). History is often not clear (and from what I understood, especially not there), so the result of their research is just a potential story. But that is not important since they only aim at getting inspiration and look for facts that goes in their direction. The goal is also to comfort people with a sense of identity, and proudness (though as they mention in their publication it might be a backfire because it could strengthen tribal values which actually threaten diversity).

A funny (and secret) story: once, they made a clay flute with traditional patterns on it, so that it would look old. They buried it somewhere near the cemetery, then told some villagers they had a dream about it. Those people dug and found it, and that made big emotion in the community (police came and everything). JAF happened to have an artist in residence that was related to archeology and she certified the historical value of the flute. Arie told me this story, I am not sure whether I should believe a liar telling about his lie ;), but the point is history and traditions are here to serve the present, and give energy.

Mixing traditional art and take its philosophy. How art become the tool to meet people's needs. Because the pattern actually happens is still the same; Celebration. Old patterns have been updated in the present situation.

Another reason why JAF members are looking for traditions and traditional ways of life, is because they believe traditions hold what contemporary art is looking for: participatory action. They make ceremonies out of daily actions, such as harvesting rice, to pinpoint their importance and get people together. They also have memorial ceremonies (one consists of carrying a bamboo house altogether, the way villagers of Wates had to do when flying the Japanese occupation), and contemporary ceremonies, which are more likely called festival (such as the firing clay instrument festival, the ceramic music festival, or the Jatiwangi cup).

I had the chance to participate in the Harvest festival, that took place in Wates. They were celebrating the harvest of organic, black rice, a crop that is healthier and suitable for persons with diabetes, and that was planted on a collective field. One month later was the 'regular' harvest time, and I saw a traditional shadow puppet show that takes place on this particular date. There was also a night market with food and games for kids, on that occasion. But the way JAF designed the celebration was quite different. They had made a sculpture from the wooden tools used to extract the grain and made some kind of altar. They had installed tents and carpets for people to sit, and invited an orchestra. What happened? First a lot of talking: several important people took the mic one after the other. Such as the elder of the village (who knows stories of the past and told about the military occupation), a man « who knows about Islam », the chief of village (which I was pleased to see is a woman! And I don't know what she said but she had a lot of claps...), and so on. Then musicians started singing/praying. Between songs, the main singer would say things on the mic; I thought it was religion based, but then heard cholesterol and antioxidant in his speech! After quite a time, they cut two rice plants, rolled the stem in a fabric on which is written a blessing and that has some specific perfume on it. They went in a procession around the village. And when they came back, there was food ready for everyone. After eating, most of the villagers went home (without actually harvesting!) All was very much recorded with videos and photos.

G) Focus on people, not on money + get as many as you can in,
so that you build a collective lot of skill

And then comes the questions that are probably already in your head: that is all very nice, but how can they survive? where do they get money from?

For me, it is still a surprise. Some members do commissioned works such as photos or videos, but most of the time, they manage differently. Money fluctuates there. I think they borrow quite a lot of money to friends (for instance those who became famous thanks to their help) - I also participated to some of their electricity bills...and suddenly would get quite a lot of money from a museum that would buy someone's project, or some organization asking for lectures, workshops... In July they hosted a group of selected students who spent 2 weeks learning from Arief (he had been elected 'maestro', meaning he is an important artist of the country). That also brought money in. And they are often invited in Asia and Europe, so their travel expenses are covered.

So, no clear plan, nothing secure, one has to trust in it. As Arief told me, they try not to focus on the economy (and they try to convince the government to do the same) since economy is a means, not a goal. What is really important is the people, their environment, what is there to improve or to achieve.

Invests do not have to come back in the material form. Exchanges are mostly not in money, but access and network. Which later on makes money.

Here is a small example that I wrote in June.

Everything works with friends: money is borrowed, motorbikes, material, or advice. My phone broke? I bought a second-hand phone to a friend. Am I sick? We go to neighbor or wife of the friend who is nurse and gives me (expired) medicine. We need a bike to sell food? Some friend planned to sell and made one but we can borrow as he is not using it

now... My mum cannot find any train back to Jakarta? Some friend of friend can do late minute taxi.

Following the same mindset, JAF tries to get as many people as they can in. Because the more people in the collective, the more skills!

The more often we visit, the more we are tied. The more are coming, the more knowledge comes up.

In July a group of high school students from all over Indonesia came to « study with Maestro » (maestros are the designated best Indonesian artists at the moment, Arief being the maestro of new media art). They spent two weeks in JAF being given lectures or workshops by several members; though I joined only later, it was a good example for me too, to have a resume of their fields of actions. I saw them make a video clip for a song they had written and arranged together, I helped make a fresco on village's wall. They also did tee-shirt in serigraphy; had a “visit-your-neighbors” class and an “imagine your community” workshop.

I think faith -into people and into self-power- is very characteristic of JAF, and that makes it such a demanding and at the same time pleasant, and relaxed, place to stay.

2) How to get included ?

JAF has the characteristic of being part of the community they are working with; most of them are village boys and can work on projects with their high-school friends. They speak the local language (which differs from Bahasa Indonesia) and know the common history and rules. That makes them quite different from social artists/designers coming with a specific problematic, to work with specific people. Or, as it was the case for me, an artist in residence.

In the 50s and 60s a group of Indonesian artists from Lekra (a cultural association related to the communist party) invented TURBA - turun ke bawah', meaning 'descend from above: a methodology to go outside of their city, intellectualized relationship to farmers and get inside, sharing their lives. Despite the 'not so politically correct' name and thought this was also a political maneuver in order to make villagers vote for the communist party, TURBA carries nowadays questionings in terms of social art and design. In Jogjakarta I met Fiki, a man working in Kunci cultural studies. They were working on a program called the school of Improper education, and in that context, they started research TURBA as a methodological tool. 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'ts’

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.

As much as I recognize some tools, especially in the « do's », this feels somehow wrong. Probably from the condescendence of « peasant » and the rational, cold tone of the text; it makes the whole project sounds like a war/political strategy (which was probably the case) and deepens the difference between the two parties. The one who speaks about a « community » is not part of it. Secondly, it does not consider the image of the foreigner. In my experience of being a bule (white person) in Indonesia, 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. 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, my goal had become to deal with distance: how to get included, how to overcome, or play with, my being a bule?

...In the end, maybe, I took my being a bule as one of my characteristics, if not a tool that could help in some situations. People would come to ask me things because I am white, just like others would come to Teddy because he knows how to play music. At first, I was frustrated not to be seen for some designer skills I might have, but for my physical appearance. However, the last is not detachable from my spirit, and people come to see the whole Cecile. So better see this as a tool to work on my social skills, which are important for design also.

A) Following: ikut, visiting people and houses and staying longer than I would think is necessary.

Here again the key is time. I am not sure how well time for making friends can be noted down in a design invoice, but it is very important. I am happy that I came with such a vague (let's say open) project as agency learning by helping, because it freed me for the pressure of production and gave me full flexibility. The aim was to be careful to what was there, and go for whatever opportunity would show up.

Ikut means to accompany, to join. That is something I was very often invited to do, and that shown very helpful. It reminds me of the « do not think » rule I talked about in the first part. I followed members of JAF whenever they invited me to, which allowed me to have some very fun activities (such as river tubing), see beautiful areas (like the roof-tile fabrics with the dynamism of the drying structure against the light, and the fascinating choreography of the working men), travel further (I went to Jakarta for a lecture Arief was given) and mostly sit down in various locations (friends' homes and terraces, chief of village's office, wedding table, schools, cafes, friends' homes again) while they were talking. In most situations I was not able to do much, nor understand. I experienced a quiet boredom; I was attentive to atmosphere, to peoples' faces, trying to make sense from their expressive language and adapting my own facial attitude. Trying to spot when I should smile. I was also looking around at the space or activities, but mainly focusing back on the discussion: trying to be present. Waiting. It is important to stay long at people's place; let's say it is important to sit down with them. Even if you just met them by chance or wanted to say hi only.

It was hard, if I had other expectations, or things I wanted to do, or if it really took long. But it is fascinating to observe the way they talk, the way they sit and move, how they get close and are careful to their interlocutors. How easily Indonesian people can stick together? Even if there are moments of silence.

I must admit I was not comfortable doing so alone, except with good friends. Often when I went walking in the street, people offered me to visit their houses and sit with them. I never really stopped, afraid be-

cause of my lack of vocabulary. That might be a challenge for next time!

B) Accepting food and gifts with gratitude.

The reason so many people invited me to come visit their homes, but also and especially to sleep over, is that they could 'serve' me better (says Arie). Indonesian people are indeed very generous and will welcome you with tea or coffee and food - at any time. I remember Ibu Entur, for instance, who is very talented in cooking: I would always wait to be a little bit hungry before I visit her... And there was not a single time that I went back home with my hands empty. Ibu Entur is a good friend of mine, but I also receive food from a lot of people I will most likely never see again: the wife of the bike mechanic that repaired the flat tire in the night, a family to whom I bought black sugar, an English teacher who invited me to her village...and numerous friends of JAF people. Since they are mostly not people I would see again, there is no chance for me to give back. The only thing I can do is be very curious about the food they give me (especially since they often give me something particular from their place, or Indonesia, for me to try it out), spend time looking at it, tasting it. Asking questions about it. In one word, show appreciation. It is therefore very important that I can eat a bit of everything - I was very happy not to have a demanding diet. The only thing that bothered me was to have so many deep-fried stuffs. But that also became part of my characteristics and in most cases I would always find a non-deep-fried food to show interest for.

My small concern for hygiene was also helping; in a way it relates to trust. For instance, I did not mind sipping in someone's glass to try a new drink if they offered me to, nor sharing the same meal. I am not saying it is good, only that it helps feel close, family-like.

I also received quite a lot of gifts: same logic, show gratitude and understand if not increase the value of the object.

C) Sharing what you have

The natural way to become part of their society is to imitate their welcoming attitude. Act like they do: if I have cooked something, offer it to the people around so that they can try (and they are often quite afraid of doing so). If I have received some food somewhere else, share it back in JAF. If I am buying some ginger milk or fruits, buy extra to bring home.

If in a restaurant, pays for your buddies' food, unless they have already paid for you. There is no splitting of the bill in Indonesia.

Cooking and food in general was my best tool to give.

D) Photos

There is something else that happens when I visit people. The huge majority of them wants to take a picture with me. To be honest, I don't know if that is a tool to be included - since they want my picture for the very reason I am different, therefore rare, therefore famous. I also don't understand how this could be any helpful for them, especially thinking on a longer term. Because people with a white skin are not only rare, they are somehow 'better' -or at least more beautiful. Most advertisements are made with white people, either because the brand is western, or because the local brand wants to have a western image, and that means newer, cooler (that is the argument of the local T-shirt brand I have been asked to pose for). What is the point of keeping this « white supremacy »?

But I could not refuse. I have been offered so many things, how could I say no to giving some time smiling in front of their camera so that they can have a photo that will bring them comments on their Instagram? Also, being physically next to them, or having my arm around their shoulders. The hardest for me was to show my thumb up or fist... Especially since photos were also a tool for advertisement/propaganda: I posed in food cart with the cook, or with gifts from a brand, but also with important people or local organizations... let's say since it was also my

« inclusion strategy »: since I take pictures with a lot of people, I am not really supporting one neither. But it does question me: is there a limit? Anyway, taking photos was a way to make people around me happy, even for a short while, and spending time with them. The underlying problems I decided to put aside, because saying no would break cold the moment I was spending with people. It would not help me to get included neither. I am sure there are cleverer, step aside ways to work on changing the “white is beautiful”.

And if it did not help me get included as such, I did become very famous, and some people that visit me knew I was in JAF because of social media, therefore because of selfies people posted.

E) Learning the language

Yes, that is very basic. But that is also very important; I was lucky to be in a village, with a majority of non-English speakers, so I felt the need to learn. Obviously, it helped me communicate, but that was still very basic conversations. I could tell about food, health, directions, my origins, basic feelings... Only that was not nuanced enough to talk about projects, conceptualize, or even make jokes. So, what learning the language was really useful for, was the social level. My efforts to learn bahasa Indonesia showed my interests for its people and their culture. Speaking the little I knew with them almost felt like a gift. Asking how to say this or that was always a good way to keep talking (keep the contact) when I could not think of how/what to discuss else. It was my only way to speak directly to people I care for, such as Enin, the grandmother, Ibu Entur..., and to people that greet me in the streets. It also showed a will to stay, or come back, and differentiated me from other white people (I remember very well how badly I tried to speak to people in the streets of Bali in order to show I was different from the mass of tourists). The good thing with starting to learn is that I also had a pretext not to answer if the conversation was getting unpleasant, or I could save time if the questions were difficult. It forced me to think more clearly, be more caricatural, since I lacked vocabulary to lose myself in details. ...And it was very funny for the people around me, since I used to mismatch syllables, cre-

ating new words or worse, saying another existing word. For instance, sakit means sick, while sikat means brush. Some of my mistakes became private jokes in JAF.

With the beginner level I had, and my friends around, it was mostly ok to make myself understood. But the understanding was frustrating. Whenever they were talking in group I was lost, either because of the speed and diversity of the words they used, or because they were talking Sundanese, the local language. Sundanese is much more complicated, but if I am to come back, I should learn it. For all the reasons above; already at the time I was there, people asked me whether I could speak some words, and if I could, their pleasure was tripled.

Not understanding the conversations can be very frustrating; you cannot jump in, it takes a lot of concentration to guess when to laugh and smile, and imagine what they are talking about. It also made me reluctant to try some things alone, I felt dependent of my friends.

There are few people with whom I felt comfortable to visit alone. Ibu Entur is one of them; I first learned Batik (a traditional textile printing technique) at her place, and came back to know more about her cooking skills (and because I really appreciate her). She keeps talking to me, quite fast. Most of the time I don't understand, or get only a vague idea of what she is talking about, but that does not matter so much, as long as she is not asking precise questions. I nod and fake to understand, I am just with her, in the atmosphere of her talking, and that is good enough sometimes. The good thing with cooking or working on a print is that gestures are self-explaining. I can learn, I can share moments of togetherness by mimicking them. Production processes are great for this.

On a different level, music and dance bring people together without need for words. Only they are very abstract.

So, I think that having a common language is necessary to have a real collaboration - the one in which the thinking process is shared from the start. Because gestures, drawings... are not enough to explain things that does not exists yet, or are immaterial, such concepts, and especially emotions. I don't think a project can be built with many people, without sharing expectations, intuitions and doubts. We need a common language to reassure, push each other.

F) Be polite

In Indonesia I was extremely polite: I would greet anyone I met while walking in the village, and answers their questions. Even when cycling, I would try to answer people shouting at me, as if acknowledging their presence. Indonesian people are very curious: they would often ask me where I am from, where I am going, where I am sleeping... It is a way to show they care for me so it did not feel intrusive. I learned to use Bapak or Pak (for men), Ibu or Bu (for women), Aa or Mas (for men around my age) and Teh or Mbak (for women around my age) in almost all my sentences - I must admit it is very practical because it allows you to address everybody nicely, without having to remember their names! Finally, I followed Arie as he was greeting everyone before leaving a cafe, with this specific way of holding the person's hand in both your own hands while noting, a gesture that is mostly use for Lebaran, the celebration at the end of Ramadan.

Politely greeting people is a great way to be included: either it forces people to see you are here (but being bule I was rarely unnoticed) or reassures the one looking at you in the street (I learned your language, I am friendly). I loved to see how people who might look suspiciously at me open up into smiling when I said « Selamat pagi, pak! ». Concerning the numerous ones who would always greet me with a « good morning, mister! » « what is your name? » and other questions, it was sometimes tiring, but worth the effort. It is always a good strategy to keep friendly relationships with people of the neighborhood (especially in a village). And it does feel good, too.

G) Being curious, learning from people with enthusiasm

Curiosity is maybe my best tool to trigger conversations with people, and engaging myself in learning from them (especially if using my body/hands) was a good way to create relationships. I was very lucky to be in a region where a lot of work is done in the open, where it is possible to see inside of the shops what's going on, or on the overloaded trucks

and motorbikes. I was also impressed by the knowledge I could gather speaking with people: never underestimate random the human encyclopedia!

I suppose learning from people brings proudness and amusement to the teaching ones since I would start being very clumsy trying to repeat his or her expert (and for them daily, therefore common) gestures; and maybe some protective feeling, too. I guess this can also work with theoretical knowledge only, if I am genuinely asking questions and trying to understand. What is probably key to creating link is that in the learning process I open up, I show fragilities such as wrong gestures, lack of knowledge, frustration in failure or joy in success...in a word emotion that breaks the «bule» throne and makes me very human.

That is what I meant with enthusiasm: it is about engaging fully, showing expressions of surprise, admiration... and as much as possible getting out of the 'observing only' position and try to do it myself, to touch, to feel, to learn from my hands and get them dirty.

In some situations, it was easy: I learned Batik at Ibu Entur's, working with another women in painting and waxing the textiles. I first had a try out sample but since I was not too bad we soon worked on the same piece. With them I also learned to cook buras (coconut rice with filling in banana leaves), as they were making big amount for some political event. I spoiled quite some banana leaves but that's not a problem. With other friends I learned out to make fake rice out of cassava, weave a small basket from coconut leaves in order to steam cook rice...

In other it was more difficult. For instance, I wanted to help and learn making soft bread in a family factory (since I was making bread in JAF), but I was not good enough shaping the dough (I lacked experience with their elastic dough) and Arie told me I better stop, afraid that I ruin their productions without them daring to tell me so. I think what made it difficult this time is that we did not know the persons so well, plus they had produced fast and well. With more time spend there, having talked more with the makers, it would probably have been fine. In other cases, I did not dare to come and learn, I stayed observing only: the tempéh factory and the roof tile factory. I would have loved to try it though, but it would have felt like some kind of tourism: my presence is temporary,

I don't need to work, I would slow them down, and I somehow missed a reason to do so. And time. If I had spent more time working with tempeh, and visited more often, coming back, showing them experiment... I would probably have been able to work there. Would I have a research project on roof-tile making, same thing. However it is interesting to note that it was very easy to start working in Batik - for many reasons, Ibu Entur being a good friend, she was needing help for the batik business and at first we thought I could help... before realizing I suck at making money, but also because that is somehow more fitting in an art perspective : it is a craft, and a women perspective : it is not demanding physically - while carrying clay and liters of soybeans seemed only a men, » non-bule » thing. But isn't learning by helping, or design work, precisely supposed to work against preconceptions?

H) Making something special so that people can relate to you

I said I lacked a pretext to start working in a tempeh or roof-tile factory. Indeed, one cannot help if one is nobody. In order to be included in a community, and therefore be able to help, one needs an identity, some things people can relate one to, some things that makes one special. More or less one month after my arrival in JAF, I felt tired of being brought here and there and take dozens of photos. I had the feeling it was all very superficial; any white person could do the job and I was not appreciated for what I could bring. I started working with bananas. I am fascinated by the bananas, here. I like the banana tree for its large leaves, sometimes dotted in a very regular manner. I like the massive branch on which banana grows. I think I like the massiveness of the tree -its leaves, its branches-, while at the same time it feels gracious and light. It is also a very sensual tree, with the generous curves of his leaves, the powerful branch and the huge, red, oval shaped heart -not to speak about the bananas themselves, massed around the heart like begging hands and fingers, which are already famous for their phallic shape. The end of bananas reminds me of nipples. It is both a masculine and feminine tree. Maybe I love bananas and banana trees for their sexual appeal. But not only: I love the colors

of bananas. Especially the red pigmentation that occur when bananas grew tightly together: red dots or circles are the trace of their neighbor's body. But also, darker, brownish dots, appear as they grew more mature. I even love the mould developing in their last age.

I worked mostly with their peels, doing material research as I felt my « mission » was to show the beauty of bananas, for people to appreciate them as physical object, not only for their taste. The discourse of being happy with less, taking maximum pleasure from what is there. I also felt the « mission » of finding something to replace plastic. Both « missions » put me in a tangible world, material, more comfortable because I have much pleasure experimenting, and being busy reassure me. They also somehow fit the image of what (Design Academy Eindhoven?) designer should be doing (being in the making, finding out new materials and work towards sustainability). Although I am far too messy to be a good DAE designer ;) Which is probably why it did not go very successful.

But what it has been successful for, was to give me a personality: I became banana queen. People in the village often see me carrying bananas, people in JAF would presume I went buying bananas each time I go the market (which was often the case, there was a specific banana shop there), and mostly, think there is banana in each food that I cooked (bananas being the byproduct of my skin research, I experiment cooking with them a lot and they ended in bread yeast, pasta dough...). Bananas relate to a lot of things, it could be research for its history, its link to colonialism, or cultural symbolism, its economic influence, but it is also simply the food Indonesian people grew up with, the one their mums would feed them with, the one they grow at home, the one they can cook in numerous ways and the one they name and describe species with specific vocabulary. That is also the reason why I wanted to highlight their aesthetic value, to help them see bananas anew. But the reason it was a lucky shot is mostly that it allowed me to relate to a lot of people (and finally gave me an easy answer to the « what are you doing here? » common question): everybody having a little bit of knowledge they were happy to share with me. Banana linked me to people, I received bananas as gifts, gave banana pasta cooking workshops ... The

best example is maybe the day when men from a neighbor village taught me how to make wood products out of the roots of a specific banana tree.

Working with banana was not only a good idea. At first, I felt I was really part of JAF, working on a project like the others did, sometimes asking for help, and sometimes giving a hand (especially with the paintings for the art exhibition they held). It was reassuring to have something that hold my fascination for a longer time and gave a sensation of working. But after some time without concrete results I realized it drove me far from the agency learning by helping: I was spending a lot of time working alone, caught in a fascination I was not even able to share properly. I was missing some conversations, did not paid enough attention to what was in the air (such as the preparation of the end of Ramadan) and to people around me.

I have therefore ambiguous thoughts concerning the banana projects, but I do think it was very useful to get included. The thing I am regretting is that I did not share enough about it. Was rarely asking for help, and barely shown my experiment. The cooking with banana saved me because this I would do under the amused eyes of the cooks of JAF, and because I would always make people try it. If it was to do again, and this actually applies to all hand work- I would work in the open, in the street or a restaurant. Because my aim is to trigger people's reaction. Other things that I became known for: bicycling or walking rather than using the motorbikes (their idea of « far » being quite different than mine), eating fruits, asking no sugar, no condensed in all my drinks, eating as little deep-fried food as possible, avoiding plastic whenever I could (and maybe not wearing bra nor makeup). I remember writing the only way to act (as in, bring change on some topic I see as problematic: health, pollution) is starting by myself, and hope to open up questions.

I) Being helped

I would like to finish with the pendant of what I started with (Agency learning by helping); something that is just as necessary in collaboration: being helped.

Agency learning by being helped is worth being created if I want to research help as a way to make society. Agency learning by helping focuses on me, Agency learning by being helped allows people to become helpers.

It is maybe the most difficult tool: one usually likes to give more than receiving, becomes one has the feeling of carrying debt. Asking for help is showing one is not perfect, showing a lack of, a weakness. In some situations, being help means one is not master of his or her project anymore, has to follow the helper's indications. So being help means giving up some proud, being aware of one's dependency to others (that is making society, we depend on each other's for eating, health, laughing...), and having to deal with leadership. I relate to the project I did with elderly, as I remember writing: just like babies, very old people could give us the opportunity to be tender, caring (though we rarely are).

One usually likes to help; it just feels good to think you've helped someone today, doesn't it? Plus, it is often easier to focus on others' problems since we are more detached. Important decisions, inner doubts about the relevancy of the project, is it worth the investments? are not for the helper, who can therefore focus on practical things, get in action and be rewarded with self-satisfaction, building trust on what he or she can achieve, and getting gratitude from the helped person. Agency learning by being helped could indeed be named agency helping by being helped (are you following me?).

I guess being helped includes subcategories I have already mentioned, such as learning from people, accepting gifts and food with gratitude. It is probably easier to implement in Asia, where people have this service orientated education, and in a place where time is not money, does not fly in a tight schedule. Maybe a rural area, or a care center... but even there... But then again, it is about making our schedules less tight and we are the only ones able to do so.

Being helped is also a good way to push people in one's direction: if people help one on his or her project, they learn about his or her project, and will be able to repeat what they have done in the helping context elsewhere, at home or work...

Helping and being help are obviously two sides of the same thing, and quite intertwined. I am curious, what is the best one to start with, in order to get included, to create link? I would say the chances that someone asks for your help is rare (except beggars, or some associations, now that I think of it...but I don't think those persons aims at creating friendships or getting towards mutual help. That is precisely why helping and being helped should stay intertwined. Otherwise it becomes exploitation or opportunism.) In order to be included, become part of a society I think it is faster to start by asking for help, than waiting for someone to ask you anything. And why not prepare conditions so that helping is really enjoyable, food or music... This reminds me posts that one can find on the Facebook group of my school when someone is asking for a service: « beers, food and eternal gratitude in exchange! ». That might be in order to feel less in debt, but it is also just a way to spend good time together. In any case I think being helped -and being aware of it-, as a tool to become part of a community, is very important, especially maybe for designers who often have the position of solving (other's) issues.

Conclusion

My stay in Jatiwangi Art Factory really convinced me of « the power of mutual help » and how having, working on and keep using a network of friends and ‘uncles’ allows living (that might sound paradoxical) autonomously. Looking back now that I am in Europe, it sometime seems a very idealistic and impossible lifestyle again (their money management is still mysterious to me). Impressive how society making is a matter of beliefs, isn’t it? It reminds me of discourses on agriculture: could small scale, organic, biodynamic -and everything- farms be enough to feed the world or do they survive precisely because others do mass production? Could places like JAF survive without the support of family members and friends that work in a more classic way? I don’t know, maybe there is no need to know. But in the situation now, such places can exist, and they have developed tools to manage their way. I find it liberating to see it is possible to live with those values and faith and that collective work and community making is not always doomed (opposing what I feel as a common idea that maybe came from the end of hippy communities). It has changed my idea of success and widened my working perspectives. I hope places like this can multiply so that people can feel they have a choice. That is one of the purposes of this paper: to try and replicate, adapt the tools I have seen or developed there into somewhere new, while keeping close link - I am still often surprised by what they do, and how they think. I could learn a lot more, especially on inclusion (lots of things and ideas I still reject) and Nongkrong (I am

really bad at not making something).

« Help by being present. » That what they would tell me when I feel guilty of not doing much. « Give people your time » (ok, but they also give me theirs).

I am curious in what ways this artist or designer action differs from anybody's normal life. How can I make being present a specific designer task? Should I? It feels more like a philosophy of life than a specific job. How could I asked for money if I am only trying to do what other people do in their leisure time? Such as talking to people and making friends, DIY repairing, planting seeds, cooking and eating together, making songs, paintings...

Of course, I should not, and I am very happy other people spend time building comfortable places. Maybe the difference is simply that artist or designer makes it their job, spend their working time on it and therefore highlight its value: listening and talking, being together and feeling it is important, essential and not necessarily easy.