

Residency for the People  
Diary

March 3, 2021

Thinking and writing about the work of Margriet Craens, I come across the Situationists, originally a group of artists bent on changing the existing order by artistic means. Their frontman Guy Debord was a foresighted philosopher of (post)modern society, who anticipated the complete mediation of everyday experience in *Society of the Spectacle*. His views are related to John Berger's (*Ways of Seeing*, which I need to buy & read) and Marshall McLuhan's (*The Medium is the Message*, which I need to read) and hinge on the idea that consumerism replaces being with having, and the spectacle replaces having with appearing. Human relations and experiences are supplanted by images. The Situationist International was announced in 1957, and *Society of the Spectacle* was written in 1967 (Situationist thought was an important inspiration for the revolt of 1968), but the analysis of Debord remains eerily relevant – except that the revolutionary dissolution of the society of the spectacle he envisioned seems more far away than ever.

Zoom meeting with Atty Bax and Warner Werkhoven about Residency for the People. After some pleasantries Warner comes to the point: “how can we help you?” “That was exactly what I would like to ask you,” Lucas retorts. He’s dead serious of course, this is what he wants to know. Atty mentions the need for funding, but she is also curious to know more about the project, so Lucas lays out the plans. It starts to sound like a routine, I’m not sure if that is good or not. Warner wonders how we would select proposals. “If anyone can participate, you might have hundreds or thousands of proposals – and how will you select the residents?” Lucas explains that we will put out open calls that specify the type of residency people can apply for. I add that the first question is how we find these non-artists in the first place. We discuss the function of the bar. Then Atty asks about the way we use artistic means. “It’s very much about providing the conditions for people to create their own value. Rather than to make a design object or an art object that should inspire or move people and thus become important, we want to create a process that allows people to do or make things themselves that really matter to them,” I say. “Ah!” Atty seems relieved: “so it’s social design!” “No, not really. Social design starts from a problem within society, and then you figure out how to help the people involved to solve it together. We are not trying to solve a problem, we are just interested in letting people realise their own plans.” “I’ve been teaching the master Social Design at the Design Academy for six years now,” says Lucas, “and the first thing we say to the students is that social design doesn’t exist.” Warner likes to keep it practical. “There’s no need to get into a lengthy discussion about what the project is or isn’t, it’s more about formulating the right questions. Nanne said you still need to find out how to reach potential residents. That is a very concrete question.” We discuss the possibilities to look for local partners, depending on the type of residency, etc.

Gradually, we drift towards funding of course. Warner sees possibilities to apply for funding with VSB Fonds, that is about societal projects, and Oranjefonds that is more about meeting people. “You could apply for a few more residencies, focus on these issues, and use the time to make the initiative financially more stable.” Atty returns to the need to choose between a more art-oriented approach, where you apply for money with artistic funds, or a societal framing, where you identify specific problems that the project might address. This is of course not what we want – it shouldn’t be limited to one specific purpose. “But when you say, like you do, that you want to help people who are affected by corona, this would be a perfect basis to ask for funding – and it would still be an art project.” “So what is the best way forward?” Lucas wants to know. “I just want to make cool stuff, I don’t really care where the money comes from, but I need to know our best bet.” Atty suggests a knowledge voucher – a subsidy you can use to pay an expert to help you develop your artistic practice, for instance: how to set up a feasible business model. “But does it actually work?” Lucas wants to know. “I would hate spending a lot of time applying for the voucher, and then work for so many hours with an expert only to find out it doesn’t get us anywhere.” “It depends on the expert,” Atty says; “when you connect, it is usually very helpful.” “The trick is to ask the right question,” Warden adds. “When you define our question really well, the answer is already included.” “Of course, if you don’t want to apply for subsidies, you can always look for alternative ways to raise the money, like crowdfunding for instance,” says Atty. “You won’t have to write an application but you would be spending time advertising your cause in different ways.” This upsets Lucas: “We were sort of joking about it before the call, that you might come up with crowd funding as a solution. That is the kind of thing I can come up with myself.” Atty is defensive, somewhat understandably, she’s only trying to help. Warner talks about finding the suitable networks with each residency. UWV for example, if you help people sort out their lives after losing their job. “You mentioned the creative expat women, Lucas,” Atty says; “they usually have a great network and they might help you find more funding. And actually, if you say that the project is mainly about developing your practice, you might apply for Impuls Subsidies too.” “Isn’t that more about artistic merit?” Warner asks. “Well, yes it is, but the committee usually looks at your record to judge it.” “The artistic merit wouldn’t be based on individual residency results, but on the whole process,” I add.

“One last thing I wonder,” Atty says: “what’s in it for you?” I talk about the pleasure of helping other people along, Lucas explains again how he is motivated by people who are motivated. “I’ve been working as a designer for a long time now, I sell my stuff to people with a lot of money, but that doesn’t mean much anymore these days. It was different when I just started out...” “I guess the recognition is nice,” Atty says. “No, it never interested me all that much. You go the big fairs in Milan, New York, Miami – it’s not all that exciting.” Atty needs to process this. “But it is really great to work with other people, outside the art bubble, and give them the chances normally only reserved for artists.” “So it’s all very social!” she concludes, and I agree. She brings up inclusivity – we *are* three middle-aged white guys after all, just looking to do something new. “For now, it’s us three who select the proposals,” I say, “but it might well be that it would be better if we had a separate committee.” “You might ask former residents to be members of the selection committee,”

Atty suggests. Warner has a final piece of advise: “You would have to look for people from the business community to join your board – it can make all the difference.”

March 4, 2021

Some of the texts for the ‘fast funding’ application are too long. I have to reduce each section to 3000 characters. It takes another few hours of deleting and rewriting. In the afternoon, Lucas uploads all the files.

March 8, 2021

Cultuur Eindhoven has sent Lucas a message that the application is complete. Now we wait...

March 9, 2021

Lucas calls with an unexpected request: “I’m supposed to make a programme at RaRaRadio on Thursday, from four to five in the afternoon, but I’ve got to pick up some things in Maastricht and I don’t think I can make it back in time. Would you feel like going there in my place?” “A radio programme?” My thoughts start racing. “Sounds interesting... what do I do?” “You can do anything, really. The programme is officially for Residency for the People, so I thought you could read from the diary. But if you feel more like playing some songs, that’s fine too.” There’s definitely a pattern here: Lucas is trying to figure out how my involvement might work out best for the both of us, and I’m adjusting to a different kind of collaboration that invites me to step outside my comfort zone – which was an important reason to get on board in the first place. “I have no idea how it works Lucas; all I have is a bunch of CDs. Would that fly?” “Yes, I think you can bring anything: CDs, LPs, tapes, your laptop, your phone with a Spotify list – as long as it has a mini jack, your good to go. I usually play songs from my laptop, but sometimes I bring records too.” “And how about the technique?” “Stephan can explain it to you, ten minutes before you go on air. It’s pretty basic, just two sliders, one for the mic and one for the music.” “Al right, I’ll do it. Where is RaRaRadio broadcasting from?” “They’re at Plug-In City, Strijp-S. You know where that is, right?” “Sure, I’ll get there. It should be fun!” We hang up. What have I gotten myself into?

March 11, 2021

Terribly nervous about the radio programme. I don’t really feel like reading from the Residency for the People diary – who wants to listen to that? – but what else could I do? Pick up some book with poetry or read from *Society of the Specacle*? And what kind of music should I bring? Not Dylan or Smith... Maybe Couperin’s *Les Barricades Mystérieuses*? Together with Bach’s *Cello Suites*? And what? Then it hits me: this is a chance to play some

songs on the radio that you would never hear on Dutch radio. Saoud Massi, Setona, Abdel Aziz al Mubarak, Najat Aatabou, Segor Bucknor... I spend a few hours picking the right tracks, nearly breaking down in tears when I read the lyrics to Oumou Sangare's *Kun Fè Ko*.

*Everything in life is uncertain.*

*Truly, in life everything is uncertain.*

*Uncertainty is a part of human existence.*

*Parents who enrol their child at school can never know whether the child will become something in life.*

*Everything depends on fate.*

*When a couple marries they can never know if the woman will have a child or not.*

*Everything depends on God's will.*

*Parents who send their child to Koranic school can never know if the child will be wise.*

*You can never predict the future of a child.*

*The child's future is up to God.*

*Everything in life is uncertain.*

Of course it reminds me of Nuria, who married without me being present. She is a Muslim and found it too much bother to find a way to include me in the ceremony in the mosque. "Officially, in Islam, I have no guardian because you are not a Muslim. So we paid an imam to give me away." Time to head to Eindhoven.

The door to the studio is open, there are two women with head phones on, and two hosts who are not really expecting me but welcome me anyway. Of course, I immediately forget their names, The girl makes me a coffee while the guy tells me he will show me how things work in a bit. One of the two women making radio right now is Jolanda (who curates the KONT magazine with Griet) – such a coincidence. I feel better right away. Ten minutes to go. I sort the discs, get out my list with song titles. The host is showing me which buttons to push and what sliders to move up or down. And showtime! Starting with Segor Bucknor's *Dye Dye*, followed by Youssou N'Dour's *Thiapa Thioly*. Unfortunately, there is some technical glitch, the left channel has a crackling noise it is clearly not supposed to have – and it's not in the discs. The host is checking wires and turning dials up or down, to no avail. Oh well, I guess there's not that many people listening anyway. I just announce the next song, telling about my friend Imad whom I met in a refugee centre, and who would always smile when he played me music from the Sudan. "Here is Abdel Aziz El Mubarak: *Sabihni Dayman*." The girl is smoking full-strength tobacco, the guy is rolling a joint. A camera is filming me, the image is broadcasted online with the music, somewhat distorted by a filter. "The next song is by Oumou Sangare, I heard it for the first time when I was visiting another friend from Sudan, Kamil Kowe, at the refugee centre in Vught. He was living in a small room with his family and it wasn't easy. I remember when he put on this song, *Kun Fè Ko*; my hair stood up on my

arms.” I read the lyrics. “Everything in live is uncertain... This one is for my daughter Nuria.” When the song is finished, I talk briefly about the Residency for the People. A few more announcements, a few more songs, and the hour is over. I end with Shoufi Rirou, by Najat Aatabou. “Go find yourself another man!” Both the hosts compliment me with the music. “It was pretty cool!” At least they had never heard it before.

March 12, 2021

Lucas forwards an email from Virginie who wanted to know if Lucas, François and I actually live or work in Eindhoven. I reply immediately that Lucas and François actually live in Eindhoven and that I have most of my clients there.

March 15, 2021

I’ve just uploaded the required documents for the master philosophy of humanity and culture. In the optional cover letter with my BA of visual arts certificate and cv, I wrote about the reasons why I would like to do this study. The thrill of learning, the writing for artists and designers, the Residency for the People. I also wrote about the Nuba Mountains, triggered by a line in the programme description on the university website: *Examine and interpret the experience of war, loss and migration and their impact on art, philosophy and humanity today*. I know a bit about war, loss and migration. For a long time, many of my friends were refugees from a warzone. My former partner Asha, mother of our children, had barely made it out of Mogadishu alive. I travelled to a war zone myself for five times. But when I think of the people I knew or still know, when I think about my own experiences, it is very hard to see how one could make any sense of it all. It all comes down to a simple conclusion: the suffering is terrible and solutions are very hard to find, which is awfully frustrating. I’ve written web texts for a study programme myself; it is not easy to explain what students will learn... But what kind of impact do war, loss and migration have on humanity today? As if humanity has not known loss, war and migration for thousands and thousands of years. As if today’s wars, losses and migrations are somehow different from the ones of the past. Or are we now a different humanity? Or is this about the new media? But what is more: whose experiences? Whose wars, whose loss, whose migration? And whose art, whose culture, whose humanity do they impact on?

*After completing the Master’s track in Philosophy of Humanity and Culture you will be an expert in the understanding of human existence, culture, and society.* When I read such sentences, I almost lose hope – as if any study would make anyone an expert in the understanding of human existence, leave alone a one-year master track. I suppose this is the kind of blurb a junior copywriter at a fairly prestigious pr firm might produce. But the fact that none of the professors or programme coordinators objected to this nonsense, makes me wonder if this is the right course for me. Still, I applied. And I referenced my experience

in Sudan in my cover letter because I think it might help me skip the pre-master. I didn't mention that I want to have a master's degree to earn more money with my writing. I'm 51 now, 53 or 54 by the time I've finishes my studies, and I will probably have to continue working for another 15, 20 years... Anyway: the reasons I gave are real enough. And I would love to try and make more sense of my own experience in the Nuba Mountains. If this master could help me to finally edit my diaries, the effort (and the money) would have been worth it. *The knowledge, insights and skills you acquire in this track, such as continually asking questions, observing, reasoning, speaking and writing, offer a solid foundation for a career in philosophy, writing, journalism, teaching or research.* Speaking and writing... about what? In what way? Oh well, I think I will be continually asking questions – ad nauseum.

March 20, 2021

The Oxford University Press *Very Short Introductions* on contemporary art and the avant-garde combine with the texts about the situationists to make me think a lot about society and art. I would like very much for art to have a revolutionary potential but more and more, this seems like a ludicrous desire for some super power that would allow me to take on all the wrongs of the world. Oppression, inequality, exploitation, abuse, pollution, destruction, greed, ignorance, suffering, exclusion... Whom should a politicised art represent, or whom should it fight? What kind of situation could it strive for? I sense that it would be more appropriate to ask what kind of art I would want to make, or be involved in. Why claim any overarching goal or aim for art at all? One that all artists should adhere to? From what position would anyone determine such universal goals or aims? But that is a question of power, of asserting oneself, of wanting things to be a certain way, especially when they are not so.

March 23, 2021

I receive a letter from Tilburg University: I'm admitted to the pre-master Philosophy of Humanity and Culture. I also applied for the master directly, but that verdict is still out.

March 24, 2021

It's a bright day, I am walking across the Markt in Eindhoven and turn my face towards the sun in anticipation of the joy this usually brings me. The response of my body is not overwhelming, perhaps because I'm tired. In the Rechtestraat I walk behind a man with fabulous yellow sneakers, then I run into Freek and his daughter [Eva?]. We briefly talk about the Residency. "It's still a pity that the collaboration..." I say hesitantly; "it is a very nice project after all." "Yeah, well... There were so many interesting projects – you can't do them all. But it is good that Lucas and you are continuing it together." Cut your losses, loose dead

weight, leave a trail of disillusion. "I have to go, I'm already late for my meeting with Lucas. Let's talk some time?" "Or write..."

Lucas greets me outside the bar and while we exchange some small-talk, the man in the fabulous sneakers walks up to us. He seems to originate from South Asia. "What is this place?" he asks. "It's a residency," Lucas replies. "Is it for homeless people?" He doesn't look homeless to me. "No, it's for everyone," Lucas says. "Ah... I was just wondering," the man says, and leaves.

Coffee, a feeling of freedom. Not because of the coffee, but because of this collaboration with Lucas. Anything might happen. "I'm giving a workshop on slaughtering chickens with my students," he says. "Actually, I do it together with Lonny. This morning, I put my interns to work, but I should be there myself as well. And there is too much going on with the house." "Margriet told me that the architect had a burn-out..." "It all comes crashing down right now. So I hope we can just quickly make a list of things to do – I can't stay very long." We first discuss the options for the Constant van Renesse Fund. Best to focus on the publication, because the fund is meant for makers who have no way of securing larger subsidies. The grant is €2,500 max. "I should have the budget for the previous paper here somewhere..." says Lucas, staring at his laptop screen. "No, I don't seem to have it after all. It was published by Onomatopoe, so... But I can ask Wibke Bramesfeld, she designed the first newspaper for Residency for the People. I would like her to do the next one too." Indeed, Wibke has the details: printing was €350 for 300 copies. That is not enough, we need at least a thousand copies. And this new issue will contain more items, so it will have more pages. Probably will cost about €1,000. "If you would design it again, more or less like the first issue, but with a different content: how much would it cost? Three-fifty?" Lucas looks at me, I nod approvingly. "That is not a lot," I say when Lucas has hung up. "She probably likes to help us," he says. "Or maybe she badly needs a job?" "No, she's very busy." "Perhaps you should put her in the budget for five hundred."

While Lucas was on the phone, I made a quick summary of the things we need to include in the applications at Kunstloc Brabant and the VSB Fund. For *Impulsgelden* It should be connected to the cultural system in Brabant. "Is there a cultural system in Brabant? What does that mean?" asks Lucas. "No idea, they don't elaborate." "Is it some secret society I don't know about perhaps?" "Probably, but they won't tell you about it." The second condition is that the plan must be future-proof. They want to give us money only once, so we can stand on our own feet. I don't believe any cultural activity can do without subsidy altogether, but hey..." "I thought we could do very short residencies for people who can afford to pay a lot of money for a short workshop or presentation. A kind of sponsoring. If they are completely into fat cigars, we'll organise an evening about fat cigars – as long as it contributes to the budget." "Sounds good. We can also try to find some partners outside the art and design field. The foundation François wants to work with for example: if they are enthusiastic about the project, they might want to sponsor it. Or the Employee Insurance Agency perhaps?" "We can definitely try." The final criterium, from the VSB Fund: the project should have one or more societal goals, which would be clear from choosing specific

target audiences, with specific programmes. “Well, we have François of course, with the neurodiverse people...” “I already put him in all three categories: his project is enriching the cultural system, it is geared towards the future by researching methods to include more neurodiverse people in design education and design practice, and it is pretty specific. But we can’t make our entire case on his workshops. That wouldn’t be fair, as if we only use him to real in some subsidies...” “This Friday, I’m talking to Jess Øberlin. Maybe she can do some residencies too. That would be a great addition to the cultural system in Brabant, to involve the lgbthq community. And then there’s Didier: he could work with refugees...” Lucas has to take a phone call. It gives me time to think about the kind of residency I would like to do myself. “Personally, I like to do a few residencies with people of colour who would love to work in an art institution, but never seem to get a chance. See if we can find out what makes it so hard, what we might do to help. And then put out an open call to the institutions too: are you having trouble diversifying your office staff? Do you want to improve the chances of reaching people of colour... Can we do that? Send an open call to art institutions?” “Sure, why not. I know a great name for your residency, by the way: Do you want to be institutionalised? Send us your resumé!” “And what about you? You do want to organise some residencies yourself, I suppose?” “Of course! I haven’t given it much thought yet, but... I would like to install a kitchen. Do something with the garden and the workshop maybe. And I want to do a residency with dumplings. I once ate these amazing Xiao long bao dumplings that they do in Shang-Hai – but I had them in New York – made with slices of a broth that is turned solid with gelatine. They’re combined with minced meat and wrapped in dough, and then when they heat them, the gelatine liquifies into a soup again. It is *so* tasty! But we can have all kinds of dumplings, from all over the world. Salad to the side – that’s all you need.” “I love sambusa – the Somalis make them...”

Another phone call. I walk around the bar, try to figure out the coffee grinder and the espresso machine – too many handles, too many things that might go wrong. The book case that doubles as a sliding door to the toilets holds a few books on design. One is called *Made in China, Designed in California, Criticised in Europe* – great title. Perhaps I should read it.

We’re trying to figure out the maximum amount you can apply for at the VSB Fund. “It’s not in the conditions...” I go through the quick scan, perhaps it’s there? No. FAQs? Nothing. “Perhaps we have to call them, because it isn’t anywhere on the site,” I say. “That’s really weird.” “Isn’t it, just?” Lucas has to go. We pack our laptops, pick up some things, slowly move towards the door. “I nearly forgot to tell you Lucas: I’ve been admitted to the university! I can start the premaster Philosophy of Humanity and Culture in September. Actually, I’m hoping they will let me enter the master straight away – it would save a lot of time and money – but either way, I’m happy!” “Hey, that’s super nice! You’re going to be our scientific branch. I think it will be a very valuable contribution to the project.” “Definitely. So much looking forward to it!”

I’m starving and I know just what I want to eat: a hamburger at Burger King. The take-away at the station is open but I’m the only customer. “What can I get you?” the girl behind the counter asks. “I spread my arms wide to express a sense of luxury of having the place to myself. “I want it all!!” She laughs. “Well, actually, just get me a double whopper with

cheese and a chocolate milkshake.” “Sure. Medium shake?” “Yeah, that’ll do.” I take the food up to the platform, struggling with my mask on the escalator, taking it off once I’ve installed myself in the sun. Meat! Lots of it. And tomato and onion and ketchup, dripping between my fingers. Now, my body is full of joy.

March 26, 2021

*Made in China, Designed in California, Criticised in Europe* by Geert Lovink and Mieke Gerritzen is basically a rehash of *Society of the Spectacle* and *No Logo* – there isn’t a single original idea in it. Two things stand out: the designer as main producer of the spectacle, and the ubiquitous ‘we’ as some wide unspecified audience of consumers. In a precursor to David Graeber’s *Bullshit Jobs*, Debord writes:

*The only way to prevent automation (or any other less extreme method of increasing labour productivity) from reducing society’s total necessary labour time is to create new jobs. To this end the reserve army of the unemployed is enlisted into the tertiary or “service” sector, reinforcing the troops responsible for distributing and glorifying the latest commodities; and in this it is serving a real need, in the sense that increasingly extensive campaigns are necessary to convince people to buy increasingly unnecessary commodities.*

Of course it doesn’t really matter what Debord wrote, it’s just that designers are only facilitating and realising the spectacle’s expansion. This eerily resembles Tilmann Meyer-Faje’s theory that in industrialised societies everyone, including the designer of the product, is merely an executer of a predetermined production process.

As to the ‘we’ so often encountered in *Made in China*, I think it is much more than a conventionality. To talk of ‘we’ suggests a multitude of like-minded people, who recognise themselves in the message of the book. It allows for a multitude of individuals with different ideas, experiences, beliefs, desires, capacities, positions or references to imagine a homogeneous multitude of people like them. The fact that humans are generally more or less compatible – genetic make-up and all that – makes it possible that they procreate and communicate, but it doesn’t make them the same. Still, they like to feel that they belong to a multitude. Elias Canetti made some astute observations to that effect in *Masse und Macht*. So by using ‘we’ the authors blunt their readers’ critical awareness, by letting them identify with some universal ‘we’ and at the same time distance themselves to join the authors’ position of fully understanding what is going on. In reality, the text oscillates between confirming the spectacle’s inevitability and the designers’ complicity in its supreme rule on the one hand, and looking to designers for salvation on the other:

*Now that our entire society has been thoroughly designed the time has come for ambitious maverick designers to search for the cracks in the cultural-economic system. Where are the fracture points in our financial bedrock? Where are the fissures leading to new ways of creating and being? A counter-voice is desperately needed. After the moral bankruptcy of the creative industry, it’s up to the design society to fill in the blanks. That doesn’t just mean more conventional products, wrapped in an anarchistic retro-punk skin. Resistance is not an Amazon category or a label slapped on to add value. Instead, what is urgently needed is this:*

*the design of a radically different way of living. Growing prosperity has turned the common citizen into a lecherous consumer.*

I can't take this pile of slogans serious. Perhaps it isn't meant to be taken serious, perhaps it is all intensely ironic. But since the authors are clearly aware of the pitfalls of recuperation in other passages, why not discuss the possibilities to avoid them? Or do they not believe that recuperation can be evaded anyway? If they understand that a 'design of a radically different way of living' is just a continuation of the same old dialectical two-step in pursuit of the perfect society, why then not acknowledge the complex power relations that would have to be navigated, circumvented, subverted or exploded to escape from capitalism? To read the text as irony, I need to assume that the authors have a much more profound understanding of the actual problem, which they don't discuss however, because... why? No, I find it hard to believe that this would be the case.

'To fill in the blanks' suggests that the surrounding information is available and all designers need to do is provide the correct, fitting answer. Or, perhaps this is not a question for designers? Why involve them at all? As if they were not incredibly eager to assist in the acceleration of the spectacle, looking for a seat at the table in any branch of services, industry or politics. Lovink and Gerritzen are aware of this and then they carry on with business as usual.

I'm not sure yet where *Residency for the People* fits in. Considering the current cultural climate of looking for inclusivity, it can hardly be called subversive. What it does point out, is the privileged position of artists and designers, who can make use of the free space offered in artist-in-residence programmes to produce new work, develop ideas, meet and discuss with other people – in short: to enrich their lives. They do this, ideally, in order to better enrich the lives of other people... So, why not provide this open space to everyone else, so they can enrich their own lives, rather than consuming the products of artists and designers? And then again: it is a project by artists and designers, figuring out new ways to enrich people's lives now that they are done designing objects – so what are we talking about here? To what extent is *Residency for the People* a democratising and emancipatory project? I guess we can't really tell until we know more about the impact of the residency programme on the lives of the participants, or about the effects the ideas of the programme may have on the wider cultural community.

*Residency for the People* has its root in *Wall Street*, that was presented as a way to produce value. It made me look at the residencies as a way to let people create value for themselves. But is this concept of value able to resist monetarisation? The *Wall Street* project started out as an attempt of artists and designers to make money from gentrification themselves instead of only generating more wealth for real estate owners. Then somewhere along the line, money became value. It might be interesting to discuss this shift or transformation with Lucas, Margriet and other people who ran *Wall Street*. In a sense, it reverses the normal direction of value being turned into money. But where does the concept of value come from? Who came up with it, how was it used? I mean, before Marx? Before money? Etymologically, it goes back to the Indo-Germanic root *wal*, meaning 'strong'. With an additional d – *wald* – it refers to ruling. (I am just citing freely from the Free Dictionary.) In

Latin, *valere* is to be strong, to be healthy, and also to be priced. What might be inferred is an oppositional meaning: someone is strong in his convictions when they are tested; a wall is a strong defence against assailants, some commodity are not easily matched by other commodities in exchange, et cetera. Value, it seems, comes about in interaction. Value can be estimated, but it still needs to be put to the test. *Residency for the People* does just that: it invites people to put their dreams – the things that they believe will enrich or better their lives – to the test by actually realising them.

Another way of looking at it is to wonder what the participants in the residency programme are up against. What is it that kept them from realising their dreams in the first place? This seems to be a societal question: how do we organise self-realisation? How can we let people discover their talents, their potential, their interests, their passions – so they can pursue them in a productive way? (As soon as I write ‘productive’ I’m in trouble: how to define productive? I shit, I piss, sweat, ejaculate and spit; I exhale carbon dioxide, my hair and nails grow, millions of glands produce a greasy film of sebum... To be alive is to be productive and billions of microbes feed on me – but none of this demands the development of any particular talent, except the capacity to keep myself alive somehow.) I’d like to address self-realisation’s origin in the womb, with the cramped space, the sudden sounds from somewhere, the distinction between known and unknown situations and so much more, but that would take such a long time to write – and to read! So: let’s stick to self-realisation mediated by an educational system and a wide range of extracurricular activities (sports, arts, all kinds of clubs for science, debate, fun and so on). In this way, society allows children in various stages of their development to try out activities that might appeal to them. This is how it works, more or less, in a wealthy nation like the Netherlands. Hold up the example of extraordinary people to kids: famous artists, athletes, freedom fighters, eco-warriors, tech-billionaires. Introduce them to different professions during viewing days; provide internships, voluntary work. Of course, most children don’t experience their search for self-realisation this way. They join a club because their friends do; they are pressured by their parents; piano practice as a daily chore they come to resent – but that is fine: it might help them figure out what it is they really want for themselves. Still, personally I suspect that there is no ‘true self’ that has any particular dreams, ambitions, visions, ideas of its own.

Wall Street in New York derives its name, by the way, from the rampart protecting New Amsterdam from Native-American retaliations after the Dutch director Willem Kieft had massacred the local population. Some maps of New Amsterdam however call the street Waal Straat, which would refer to the Walloon settlers, for a Walloon is a ‘Waal’ in Dutch, and there was a contingent of thirty Walloons among the early settlers of New Amsterdam. Be that as it may, it was very fitting that Wall Street should become synonymous with money.

March 31, 2021

A sympathetic call with Virginie of Cultuur Eindhoven. It turns out that I was the one who messed up communications. I had responded to Virginie's email that Lucas had forwarded on March 12, sending my reply to him instead of her. Now there is a problem: Cultuur Eindhoven's legal department has instructed the consultants that 'working in Eindhoven' should be understood as having a studio or workspace there. In other words: I need an address. "Really, Virginie, I understand that this is the legal department and not you, but it's not sound policy: nowhere in the conditions or criteria for the application does it say: you need an address in Eindhoven." "You are right, and I will certainly take this up with the team... It's just that we didn't want artists from, say, Rotterdam who have an exhibition in TAC to apply for funding. TAC is already heavily subsidised. The thing is, without some proof that you actually have a workspace in Eindhoven, I have to reject your application. You can object against the decision and you might even be proven right – but that takes quite some time. Didn't you mention a working space at Kerkstraat 1? What kind of arrangement is that?" "Well, we didn't exactly make it formal: it's Lucas' space, I can work there." "I don't know what your time frame is exactly?" "François arrives here in a couple of days, we want to get to work and send out the first open calls as soon as possible." "In that case... We really are very positive about your initiative. If I can sign off on it, the money could be transferred to you by mid-April. So if you could provide me with a contract or something..." "I think we can arrange some sort of document."

It's all a bit weird. I should be very happy, but Marianne's mom is in hospital with corona, her dad is ill too and she's in quarantine herself, very tense and sad to see her parents lose some of their autonomy. It's exactly the same process I went through a few months back, when my parents were ill. Suddenly I had to acknowledge that they needed my support. Not just now, but more and more...

Zoom meeting with François and Lucas, who introduces us to Jip Geven, one of his former students who is keen to work with us on the organisational side. Jip is a Frisian boy's name, by the way, that is derived from the verb *jibbe*: 'to give' – or 'geven' in Dutch. She is, in other words, called Give Give. When the name is truly a sign, she must be extremely generous. Jip went to Beirut and saw the devastation of the city after the blast of August 2020, and she is still cheerful – so she's probably a great asset to our team. We're going to work together on the application for Impuls money and VSB Fund. Meanwhile, Lucas has sent a quote to the music theatre for two residencies during the Strioni Festival. He hasn't heard back yet. They were willing to take the risk, as long as the plans in some way benefit the Theatre. Now it's about the budget.

François had been vaccinated, he's flying on Sunday. We're all looking forward to see him. He says that, so far, he hasn't been able to reach the director of OOK, the organisation for people in the autism spectrum that he hopes to work with for his project. He'll try again once he is in Eindhoven. Jip's mom works in special education, she might have some useful contacts too. When I ask François to think a bit about the follow-up of his first workshop, he basically says he's in it for the long run. "It might be the last project I do, the coming ten, fifteen years. I hope that doesn't scare you guys." "No, not at all François!" Lucas says he already knew our grant application would be awarded: "A few days ago, Cultuur Eindhoven

asked me to talk about *Residency for the People* on local television next month.” Aha. Things do look promising. “And what about Jess,” I ask Lucas, “you talked to her last Friday, didn’t you?” “That’s right, Jess Øberlin. I thought it might be interesting if she could do a few residencies as well. But she wanted to talk about something else: she started a safehouse for people in transition from one gender to another, but the housing corporation who initially supported the initiative is now evicting her.” “That’s not her own home, is it Lucas?” “No, I already suggested that she would provide the safehouse herself. But seriously, I think it would be really good if we could help her out somehow. I don’t know how you feel about it?” “I think it’s good plan,” I say. “Jess usually has great ideas and a wonderful network among people of the lgbtq+ community. If we could somehow give her a solid base for the coming years, that would be marvellous.” “And after all, it would be a residency too,” François adds, “it would be about a major change in someone’s life.” “That’s right,” I say: “it shouldn’t be hard to fit it in, and it would certainly make our case for inclusivity a lot stronger.” “Someone would be dramatically shaping their lives,” Lucas says; “it would be interesting to document that process perhaps?” “It’s like the pinnacle of self-design,” I reply, “like the DDW show at MU last year.” Jess had been a bit reluctant about joining *Residency for the People* though. “She wondered if I wasn’t only asking her because she’s a woman.” It helped that we plan to have an all-female board. “We do need to avoid any suggestion that we only invite her because of her contacts in the lgbtq+ community,” I say. “But doesn’t it cut both ways?” Jip asks. “If we can actually help her set up a safehouse, that would be wonderful, wouldn’t it?” “She wanted to combine it with a bar and a coffee shop,” Lucas says, “but I don’t think we can do that, so let’s see.” There is a lot of work to be done: get the open calls out, write more applications, form a board. But we are getting the SnelGeld and we can get to work.

Lucas would be super happy, if it weren’t for all the troubles at the housing project he’s participating in. “Everything I warned them about, everything that might go wrong, is now actually happening – and worse.” On that happy note, we say goodbye.