

THE DIALOGUES
TRANSCRIBED
BELOW ARE A HARVESTING
OF A CONVERSATION OF
HALF-BURNT RICE AROUND A
COMMON POT AND OVER AN
ELECTRIC STOVE IN SLUMIL
K' AJKEMK' OP

TRIGGER WARNING: THIS TEXT IS BASED ON TWO OR THREE REAL FACTS AND THE REST MIGHT AS WELL BE SURPLUS VALUE.

–Let's see, let's see... but, to all this, compis... What has been the so-called lumbung for us? How do you question it? Because when you ask, you answer...

–Well... Is it a way of socializing the arts? Or... a three-track, three-day concert in the courtyard of the mansion of some German writers that specialize in horror children's stories?

–Or is it a nomadic sauna in the shape of an atomic reactor with a dj set, or is it a circular digital currency with zeros and ones and smart contracts... a-la Matrix, weeee, or is it a photonovel and transvestite thriller set during the Cold War in Lebanon? Or is it a South American cuir soccer championship in a 360-degree circle? Or is it a Jatiwangi terracotta brick equivalent to some square meters in a forest in Indonesia?

–Or, is it a forum to dispute from the aesthetic-political point of view a new pluriversality, or, is it more like a QTBIPOC basement that at night becomes a pro-BDSM party room?

–Or is it a risograph printer with tempé juice ink, or some guns fished in ceramics in Bangladesh in front of a mural of Bollywood movies, or is all this lumbung just an elaborate Wakaliwood meta-narrative fiction, or a gang of cardboard puppets to protest in the streets?

–...well yes, yes it may be all this, but what it certainly isn't, no, what it really is not is: anti-Semitic. No, no. That, it is not.

–And well... How is it that the lumbung could meet people who refuse to open the national floo-

dgates of their Eurocentric heart?

–It happens that as the lumbung wants to happen in the whole world, there are parts of this globe that are closed to dialogue. And curiously enough, the closure comes from the whitest, most capitalist, most patriarchal, most racist and colonialist geographical zones. The most imperialist.

–Of course, Germany! And the German state has a long tail to tread on, from the genocide against the Herero and Namaqua peoples in Namibia, to the world-renowned Holocaust. They carry tons of white guilt and that's why they are now white saviors.

–It is symptomatic, then, that the German state supports the media attacks, orchestrated by both pro-colonial right and left, against the work of the lumbung.

–Let's remember that these attacks were originally aimed at the Palestinian artists participating in documenta 15.

–And this may seem small and harmless, but it represents a serious threat to the interests of the State of Israel. How did the Palestinians get to Kassel? Who let them in? They got in through the back door of culture! Islamo-leftists! How did the Palestinians manage to take over the documenta?

–Palestinians co-managing and co-deciding the forms and contents of the most important contemporary art event in the West was too much for the State of Israel.

–Ah, right... that's why you say that it is symptomatic that the German state supports these smear campaigns, of unfounded anti-Semitism, and also wants to show that Germany is the ultimate defender of the Jews?

–Yes, yes, yes, yes, they even rave and claim to know more about racism than anyone else in the Global South. Because according to them, the non-European, non-gringo people do not know about the true and only Universal History which is that of Europe. That is why they know more about racism than the colored people of South Africa, of Mexico, of Palestine, of Indonesia!

–They aspire to forced redemption. White supremacy!

–Despite being the victimizer, they will forever be the blond heroes of history. Giving their support to the State of Israel!

–They don't want to question themselves, so they pretend not to look. And who else benefits from this historical guilt?

–In addition to the German state and Europe, the state of Israel itself! It constantly confirms the ideological backing to be able to continue to carry out, what it has been doing for more than 60 years, crimes against humanity, against the worthy people of Palestine.

–The lumbung is dangerous and the ruling class knows it. That is why they label the lumbung as anti-Semitic or neutralize the lumbung with identitarian jargon.

–The other day I read that ruangrupa's Ade Darmawan said that this lumbung thing was not just about the Global South for the Global South. "... this isn't about that Southern World alien to or separate from the Northern World. For centuries, Europeans have lived side by side with the so-called southern world, from the colonial era through the era of capitalism's expansion to the present day."

–ruangrupa is thus inviting us to rethink together: "What the hell, as you know, the situation is very bad, so from our area of work, which is the arts, how can we reorganize ourselves?"

–And yes, they are being radically inclusive and diverse, they have even invited the Global North! The whites! Because I think this lumbung is not an international call but an internationalist call. An invitation to build forms of collective organization by and for artists, to take over the means of production, to re-invent technique! As the good Walter Benjamin would have longed for in his influential essay, *The Author as Producer*.

–We are invited to go over and beyond the Eurocentric liberal aesthetic forms! To go beyond their two institutions of administration of the sensible, be their museums, biennials (ideological apparatuses of the State) or galleries, fairs (ideological apparatuses of the market).

–It is important to emphasize that it is not a mere coincidence that an important part of lumbung members come from territories marked by European or gringo colonial occupation. In the end, all of us who are from these territories are affected by the relations of neocolonial domination that capitalist organizations such as the Interna-

tional Monetary Fund or the World Bank impose on the Global South.

–The actualization of Western imperialist domination is rationally executed in the form of millionaire debts, economic blockades and inhuman sanctions.

–Yes, that is true. And despite the disaster caused by colonialism and capitalist expansion, there is resistance in these subalternized territories. Plural forms have been organized historically: tequio, lumbung, ubuntu, fa'zaa, mutirão. Ways of sustaining and fostering the practice of the commons.

–Ways that cannot be subsumed to modern (neo) liberal democratic reason. In the eyes of white supremacy these invariably appear as irrational, communist, diabolical, savage, uncivilized, backward, etc.

–Long live the places where rivers are people and land is not for sale!

–It seems to me that we are not seeking to dedicate these lumbung efforts and values exclusively to a certain "southern" or "postcolonial" political geography, as some would say. The lumbung methodology is based on full hospitality. That is why European communal forms such as the allmende or the auzolan are welcome.

–Even the whites! And even better if they bring something to pay back their share! Hahahahaha-hahahaha.

–So we try to rehearse the sharing in whatever coordinate it is. Whether it is occupied in the North, West, South, East or wherever.

–The world is already interconnected up to its ass from the very beginning of the 6th mass extinction....

–Wait, and when was that? I didn't even know...

–Back in the year 1492 when Columbus arrived in what they came to call America.

–This reminds me of what I was reading on the Flixbus on the way to Kassel. "Any policy in favor of universality is rejected as "intolerant". Like the universality of the lumbung which is incorrectly branded as anti-Semitic....

–FREE, FREE PALESTINE!

–When Palestine is liberated, the process of liberation from white German guilt might begin! ■

OKAAVVV, FREE PALESTINE

denisse



We all knew the symposium would be kind of shit. We knew it the moment we met this annoying German white woman, who was one of the main organizers. We first met her in Kassel at a dinner we were invited to during one of the first days of our residency. She, a mid-fifty art educator/cultural worker, whatever, asked one of the residency coordinators to be introduced in the middle of our dinner. We were still eating when she came to our table and introduced herself as the moderator and organizer of the symposium we were attending in two weeks from now. By us I mean the 'art educators in residence', which by the way it is worth mentioning none of us were white, but from the 'global south'.

She self-invited to sit with us, and with this typical fake politeness uncovering an also typical sense of white entitlement, interrupted our conversation deciding that whatever she had to say was much more relevant than listening to our already initiated conversation. The German woman shared with us her views on the exhibition and how confused she ended up, by not knowing how to look at "that kind

of art", that is "much more about politics than art in the classical sense", lol. Obviously after hearing this nonsense bullshit typical of privileged white art people, I was already half zoomed out of whatever she would say after. But then she added in a kinda lowered voice so the rest of the mostly white attendees to the dinner didn't hear: "...and also you knowwww, all these rumors about antisemitism flying around, it's very concerning...". None of us dared to reply back, except for a long silence that already said a lot. Maybe it was because we had literally just met as a group two days before, and we were still trying to figure out our kinships, solidarities and political views which fortunately were abundant and shared, as we would find out in the coming days.

This was our first encounter with this kind of annoying whiteness. The one that pretends 'it's with us' because of what? it's into art education? pedagogy? welcomes racialized peoples into its symposium? But it's completely unaware of their own white positionality.

This encounter was also a kind of prophesy of what was awaiting for us the weeks to come in Kassel, particularly in encounters with German white cultural workers.

The symposium of Art Education in question was not organized by Documenta 15, but by a German university in a city two hours away from Kassel. The programmers of the residency thought it made sense for us, a highly global-Southerner group to attend a highly white academic event. After discussions amongst our group whether to attend or not to this thing, we decided to join. Personally, I agreed to join because my new comrades were going too, and admittedly I also had some kind of morbid desire to witness more exemplary events of little white supremacy unfolding. The symposium didn't disappoint. We arrived two hours after it had started, but just in time to join a kick off introductory workshop. There were around 50-60 art educators, mostly white but also non-white. The workshop leader, a very energetic German white woman, divided the group in three. Two of the three groups were standing, facing each other in the opposite extremes of the room. The other group sat in the space in between. The workshop was about rounds of statements, participants from the standing groups had to shout an answer to the posed statement, and those that felt they were in tune with it, should get up and

walk across the room. For instance: "my dream is: free education!" so everyone from the two standing groups who identified with that idea, get up and walk across the room. Each round was a statement like: "my dream is..."; "I succeed at my job when..."; "I feel challenged by..."; "my dream team is..." The white woman leading the workshop, who was the only one who was posing the statements, had a mic through which she was repeating every answer that was shouted. Clearly, soon the whole thing turned into very annoying neoliberal answers like: "I succeed at my job when: I touch people's hearts" (lol).

As I said before, for me one of the main reasons to attend this thing was precisely for this kind of bullshit exercises, so tbh I was kind of fascinated by the disrupting opportunities this type of workshops allows..."I succeed at my job when: my work does not get censored because of my political views!!" I shouted. Of course only 3-4 people crossed the room next to me. Some of my peers also joined in this disrupting exercise and shouted: "my dream team is... queer". In a room full of 60 academics, only me and another participant crossed the room following my peer. Who would have thought that in this kind of highly academic, white and European spheres of art education, saying one's favorite team is one that is not binary, is already quite a statement. "I feel challenged by: not getting silenced", said another one of my lovely comrades.

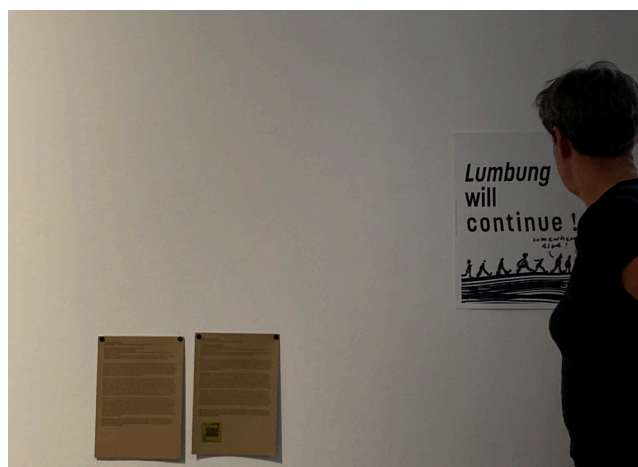
In the last round you could shout "whatever you want", "be crazy", the white woman leading the workshop said enthusiastically. By then I was standing next to Thuli, one of my peers from South Africa. I whispered to her ear: 'I think we need to say something heavily political', 'I think so too', she said. 'Say whatever you want, I'll follow you'... Coming from post-apartheid South-Africa and post-colonial Mexico it wasn't really that difficult to get politicized in this kind of highly white academic contexts. After just a few seconds Thuli shouted: Palestine must be free!!! And started crossing the room. I followed her. Nobody else did. It was the least popular answer in a room full of 'art educators'. What a joke. And the silence while we walked across the room...I could hear my own steps. The white workshop leader, who had been repeating every single answer in the mic, was forced to say the unthinkable for a German: okaayyy, free Palestine...

After the neoliberal workshop finished, lunch followed. Clearly the aftermath of our political statements had consequences. There was this mid-fifty woman from Portugal, that again, in this fake friendliness that for some reason white people with 'good progressive politics' have, approached me on the way to the cafeteria. Eventually she asked the inevitable..."where are you from?..." Jesus fucking Christ! If there is something that bothers me in this world is white people I just met starting the conversation with this stupid question. In my experience in Europe, when this question is asked by young guys, mostly it is about an exoticized racial desire. With this kind of senior white european woman, it seems about a morbid 'othering' curiosity of some kind.

- "From Mexico" I said.
- "Oh, it makes sense" (lololol) -she replied.
- "Whhhhy???" - I asked in a kinda passive-aggressive way.
- "Because of what you said, about censorship, I thought you might be from Colombia or Latin America."
- "...but there is censorship everywhere, no? even in Europe?" - I replied quite pissed...
- "In a different way" - she thoughtfully said.

Fucking hell.

She of course decided to join our table too, full of brown and black women. What is this thing with white senior women and their self-invitations to women of color's tables? Like really? As soon as she sat, she asked the same question to Thuli, who was eating in front of her. After hearing Thuli was from South Africa, the Portuguese woman seemed very confused and asked: "why then did you say that thing about Palestine?," I mean...wtf. ■





Juca laughed, telling us that in the next documenta it would probably be forbidden to do communal meals in public, 0 lumbung, as Jaime had coined one night, referring to the act of selfishness or poor group awareness. Documenta sixteen might be organized through the mechanics of 0 lumbung. Ajeng and Sari, at the front of the group we were walking with, stopped to take a picture of a window case in an apothecary where a banner that read “Lumbung means sharing, Kassel 2022,” was displayed. It was the second thing I had seen written about documenta fifteen produced by local people.

The first thing had been the 187 spray-painted on the wall of the top floor of WH22, as a means to threaten and intimidate. It is a space hosted by The Question of Funding, at the exhibition of Eltiqa, the Gaza collective that told us about the sustainability of life making art with the potential for death very close at hand. We didn't know it at the time but the artists of Eltiqa would soon find themselves living through yet another bombing spree again, in the first week of Au-

gust. It was also much later that we found out that, based on the painting entitled Guernica Gaza, part of that same exhibition, certain influential groups argue that it is anti-Semitic to make and display art suggesting a comparison between the historical bombing of the city of Guernica and the current bombing of Gaza, Palestine. Unbelievable. The Guernica Gaza, still on display there, right now, at WH22 venue. I'd go back and see it again if I could.

The Party Office people were taken from that venue also, apparently, they had committed an illegal act when they defended themselves from several aggressors that broke into their show. That was also the venue where we were also visited by Kassel police officers while doing the JamOnJamOnJamOnJamOnJam for three days with Togar's baby drums, keyboards, a flute, a saxophone, Aldo's guitar, Ghenwa's mandolin, synthesizers, microphones, harvesting by hand, colorful foamis, Diana's bass (with sticky, plastic eyes), an accordion, tote bags and whatever else we could find to generate noise with the crazy people of Kassel and Radio Alhara, where the sessions were broadcasted.

OK STUDIO. I had never heard Simnikiwe scream as loudly as the night of the 19th, during the first trip, towards the end of our last jamming at The Question of Funding ekosystem. There, one morning when I was sad, Daniel gave me a troll with electric orange hair that was exchanged for a coin in a toy vending machine. When I saw that it came in a miniature plastic egg, I immediately realized that it was the first sighting of such a creature in Slumil K'ajxemk'op (Europe below and to the left, according to the zapatistas).

I also remember the time Togar said, “I know what I'm saying but I haven't heard it before.” We laughed.

I feel like I already want to go back and I haven't left yet. Days later I will find myself again in this trail by the park, except it's daytime. I get here after walking past the giant tree trunks at the Karlsaue Greenhouse that hosts the MAMA installation. I'm with Rahmat, who took a photo of a giant truck that carries wood as we walked –while playing t o d songs, from Makassar, under the trees, on YouTube for mobile phones.

After the first trip, Daniel, Diana and I stopped to see a piece on the water at the Walter-Lübcke-Brücke, by Black Quantum Futurism, before entering the Rondell to visit Nguyen Trinh Thi's auto-biographical novel that we listened to in the dark until someone almost tripped over the railing. They were apparently trying to find out where the play

of shadows that seemed to climb the walls all the way to the ceiling came from. Outside the Rondell, if I'm not mistaken, there were also some incredible murals by Tarim Padi. They escaped censorship, I never found out how.

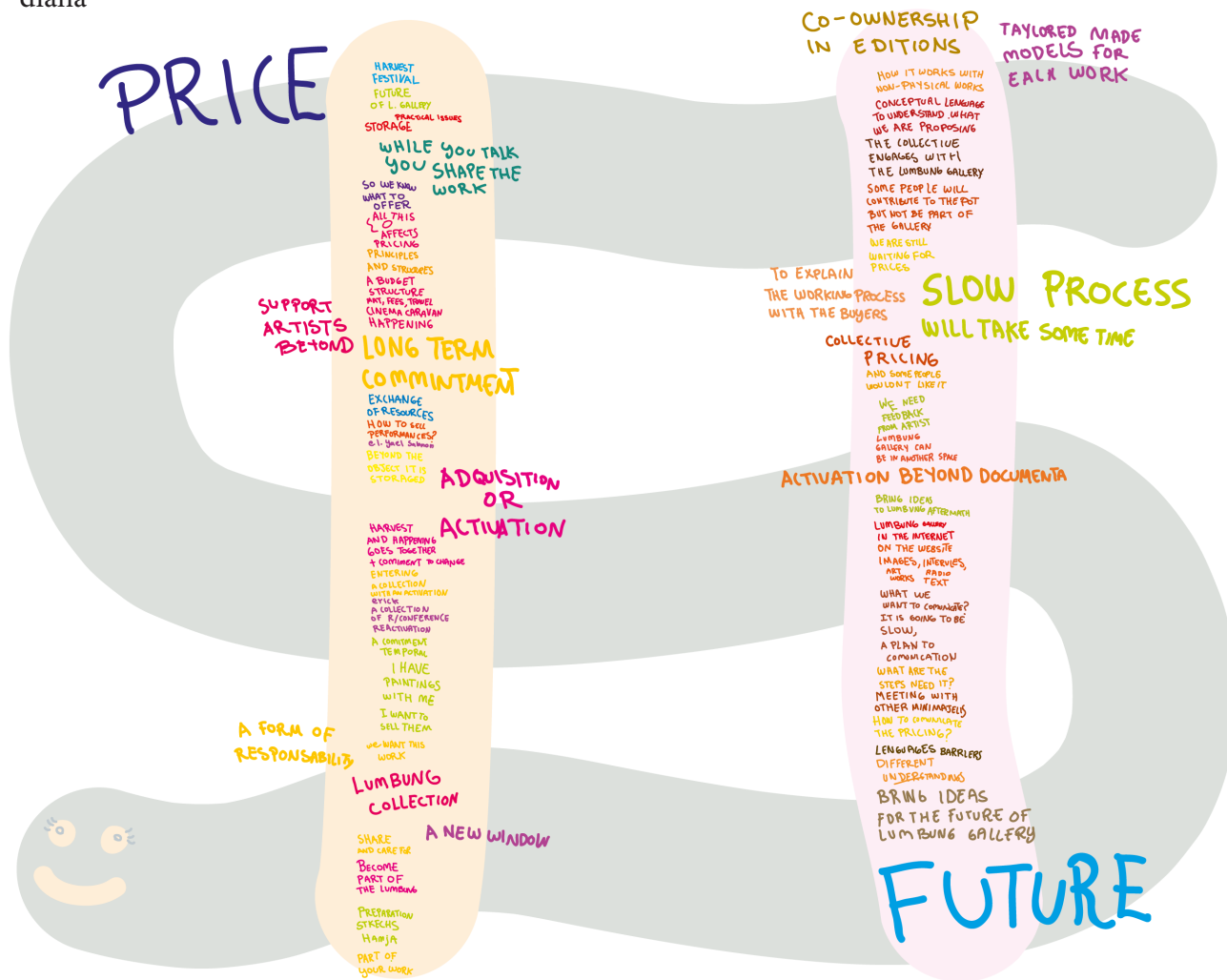
Before Rondell –and the ever-moving shadows coming from the ping-pong table at the Gudkitchen, where Julian, Abdul, Rahmat and Gertrude spent plenty of time playing– I hadn't taken the time to look at a group of shadows for a few weeks. Not since the huge baskom* at the baskommunal* space run by Tropical Tap Water and company, where before our trips to the lumbung ekosystem we came together around the practice of sharing, learning and becoming common among many people, quite crazy of all of them, if I'm not mistaken. ■

bernardo



ON TRANSVESTMENT

diana



That day it was raining, or so I remember. Back in Amsterdam we arranged to meet Lara Khaldi at a Surinamese food stall and then we went to a café to finish understanding how the lumbung gallery works. “It’s all about transvestment,” she explained with a big smile, “it’s about transferring the value from capitalism to the commons.” I wondered where she found enough energy to keep up hope after all that had happened that cruel weekend, when attacks intensified in the Gaza Strip and in the increasingly insignificant Kassel some shareholders of Documenta tried to remove a drawing from the Archives des Luttes des Femmes en Algérie initiative, which depicts a fierce Israeli soldier threatening Palestinian children –an image frighteningly similar to those circulating in the news media those days. Lara did not want to return to Kassel and confessed how tiring and disappointing the antisemitic accusations had been for her; the gossip-gossip underground wonders if they would probably all be

fired or sued?; the outlook was not favorable. Still she smiled as she detailed the principles, costs and plans for a common future.

The goal of lumbung gallery is to make the processes of art circulation transparent, bringing to the forefront of economic discussion the transactions that otherwise pass in secrecy thanks to the maneuvers of the traditional art market. Faithful to the lumbung principles of resistance, generosity, independence, regenerativity and humor, this cooperative gallery project designed a pricing system that responds to the needs of artists and destabilizes the asymmetry presupposed by the speculative relationship between sellers and buyers. Prices are set on the basis of an equation that takes into account a two-year subsistence period with the highest minimum wage of all the countries in which artists reside –Australia. Instead of “owning”, collectors are asked to “collaborate”, that is, to support the sustenance of the artists, attaching to the receipt a list of

recommendations to avoid economic speculation with the pieces and to continue to the lumbung process, and often the pieces to be exchanged are not based on objects, that is, they are immaterial, such as performances, workshops, processes and apprenticeships.

The transvestment, that is, the anti-capitalist investment, is obtained from the cost of production of the artworks, a payment previously covered by documenta gGmbH. In addition, this system of costs considers a percentage of 30% destined to the lumbung pot, a common fund for all artists, lumbung members and their respective ecosystems, who will collectively decide what to do with it, having the construction of the commons as a guide. "It's a new common sense, the commonsense!" I know that Lara is not too worried about being fired, because in its quest for independence, the lumbung gallery is now a legal association, with a rotating board that includes lumbung artists, members of ruangrupa and members of the Swiss association TheArtists, who manage a cooperative gallery similar to the lumbung principles. Even if they are fired, the project continues.

After having accompanied as harvesters* the discussions, agreements and concrete applications of the lumbung gallery and the lumbung kios**, we cannot agree more with Lara about the construction of a new common sense: colonialist thought has imposed its epistemology as the ontological basis of the world around it. Dispossession, accumulation, dismemberment, racism and gender violence are the pillars that build imperialist rationality, always adorned with bureaucracy, financialization and legality. Although the media, the German state and the whitewashed public claim that this documenta lacks art and is poisoned with anti-Semitism, we consider that this great smear campaign is in reality a cry of pain from the capitalist hydra, a monster with a thousand heads, which has been given a good punch in the guts by the lumbung.

Despite Western multiculturalist agendas, in which the other is invited to assert its difference and exoticism, to assert one's superiority and highlight colonial relations of domination, the differences that the lumbung brings to the fore are not cultural, but political and economic. This is a direct offensive to the Western crisis

of political imagination: the lumbung, by not positioning itself as an identity or minority struggle seeking moral or economic recognition, situates desire in the political creation of a collective will, thus contesting Western common sense. By rethinking and reorganizing economic systems that make possible the creation and distribution of art, leaving out accumulation, dispossession and speculation, the lumbung has encountered many other experiences that make possible a common dwelling, a deep reciprocity, such is the case of the minga in South America, tequio in Mexico, auzolan in Euskal Herria, andecha in Asturias, mutirão in Brazil, ubuntu in different African countries, gadugi in the Cherokee communities, talkoot in Finland, guanxi in China or fa'zaa in Arabic***. Evidently these proposals are not infallible, since they depend on the will and desires of the individuals involved; dishonesty or abandonment of others can always happen, but it is the bet on trust and reciprocity that might imply true transgression in this savage world of borders, criminalization and seclusion. "That's why they don't like us," Lara finishes with a tired snort, suddenly reminding us of the attrition and media harassment they have received. I smile sourly as I imagine a giant watermelon ship, delivering the coup de grace to the desperate hydra. We're going to win, I want to say foolishly to Lara, but fortunately she takes the floor first and says to me: "What happened to your leg?!", pointing in alarm at the fizzing wound on my left leg. "Ah, it's my lumbung wound".

*Harvester is the agent who attends the meetings of the different lumbung work teams for harvesting, that is, to collect the knowledge obtained in these assemblies in order to process it and turn it into easily circulated audiovisual material (video, drawing, meme, song...), and thus be able to share it with more territories, ecosystems and affinity groups.

**Work team in charge of distributing the artists' merchandise.

***harriet c. brown, *Relatos lumbung. Ficciones desde lo común*, Almadía, México, 2022, p. 10 ■