

Residency for the People  
Diary

April 7, 2021

Sleet and hail cover the pavements and the streets of Eindhoven with an inch of slush. My shoes get wet, no matter how I try to follow the tracks, and my socks get soaked with cold water. There is no one at the bar, the gate is closed, I tap on the window but there is no response, perhaps François is still sleeping. Or maybe he isn't here. So the meeting was eleven after all. I should have checked, but my mind was elsewhere, with Marianne's dying mother. Such sad news... One day it seemed like a matter of getting her fit again, the next day the doctors said there was nothing they could do to save her. They arranged to bring her home to die. It's raining. I'm getting a coffee around the corner. "Is it still snowing," the guy behind the bar asks me, "or is that rain?" "It's all wet anyway," I reply. Somewhere in the back, a woman starts to laugh. I try to call Lucas, perhaps he's already on his way. "I'm sorry to inform you..." Still no sign of life at the bar. I decide to go, Marianne needs me.

April 10, 2021

A short call with Lucas. The meeting last Wednesday was good. François was still jet-lagged but at least Jip was now in the loop. Things with the Muziekgebouw were a bit iffy, they were reconsidering the residency, maybe next year... "The deadline for the Impuls Geld applications is tomorrow," I say. "What do you think: should we put in an extra effort and write it anyway? I'm sure we can do it, we have most of the information." "I don't think we should," Lucas says. "Me neither, to be honest. I have a feeling that we're not quite ready yet. Better focus on getting the residency up and running." "How are things with Marianne's mum?" "She's ready to go." "We're having another meeting this Wednesday..." "Oh, good, what time? Five? I'll be there." "Alright, see you on Wednesday. Take care man." "Thanks, you too."

April 14, 2021

Lucas forwards an email from the Muziekgebouw. They agree to do a residency after all.

Meeting in Eindhoven at six with Lucas, François and Jip. There is not much time before the Storioni Festival, so we need to move fast. Get out a newsletter, get the Open Call online. Make a Facebook page, create a website. Lucas is trying to grant Jip access to his Instagram account. He's swearing. "Now it's completely gone!" "No," says François, "don't worry, look, it's still here." Jip has requested a new password for the account. "The mail was sent to your Onomatopoeia address." Meanwhile she discusses the neurodiversity workshop with François. "I contacted OOK, the organisation that supports people with autism, and they are definitely interested, but they were having trouble with the English terminology." "Would it be a problem for the workshop too?" François asks. "Not at all," I reply: "Block is blok, design is design..." "Anyway, we're investigating making as a language," François suddenly realises;

“we should be able to rely less on spoken language.” “Now it’s working!” Lucas shouts with obvious relief. “Perhaps someone from OOK could help with the translation,” Jip suggests.

François turns to me: “How do we go about the website?” “It should be very basic,” I say. “But when the residency is over, who will maintain it?” “We will, so it has to be simple.” “And the person who makes it, maybe they should give a workshop, an instruction on how to update it and maintain it?” “Lovely idea, that could be the presentation!”

Lucas brings up the timetable for the residencies. “Did I get it right that we want to announce them early May?” I ask. “Yes.” “But should we announce them all at once?” François wonders. Lucas thinks we should, but Jip is hesitant. “Maybe we should split them...” Lucas thinks three calls together will attract more attention than three separate calls in rapid succession. We all agree. The exact date to announce the workshops depends on the upcoming meeting with OOK. François would like to know what Lucas’ project will be. “I’m doing the Post-Corona Sessions,” he says; “they will be a lot like the Quarantine Sessions. Open for everyone, people can do whatever they want to do, as long as it is about some development post-corona.” Jip brings up the fee: “Is it the same for all residencies?” “No,” Lucas says, “it’s different for Storioni.” “The Fee?” François looks puzzled. “Oh, right, you mean the stipend! To me, a fee implies they need to pay, so I was confused.”

We return to the topic of the website. “I think it should be like an archive,” Lucas says. “So at least it should contain texts and images, depending on what we get.” “Do we need a shop?” I ask. “Perhaps we can sell the products your residents are making, François?” “That might put too much pressure on them,” he says. “François, I’m just teasing!” Residency for the People shouldn’t be about creating and selling objects. “But we might do it as a service for the residents, like a gallery. We would sell their work on commission,” Lucas suggests, and then comes back to the timetable: “I was thinking it would be good to use Google Calendar.” “I can set that up,” says Jip. “But we have to monitor it,” Lucas says. “In another project I was in, someone started using it for some very strange things.” I’m trying to imagine what that could be, then realise we haven’t finished the topic of the website: “What about the diaries,” I ask: “can we post them the way they are now? What do you think? Perhaps you can read them and give some feedback?” The others agree to do so.

Now Jip brings up a thorny subject: “What about data privacy?” “Good question,” I say; “there are very specific rules about keeping people’s data. We’re going to store quite a lot of information about the residents – names, addresses, birth dates, perhaps, bank account numbers for the fee, etc. We’re not only supposed to store these data securely, we also need to make an inventory of all the data we keep, how long we keep them, for what purpose... I’m not sure about the exact obligations, it would be a good thing to check that.” Lucas doesn’t look too worried. “Do we want to send out a newsletter?” he asks. We all agree it would be a good idea, and Mailchimp would be the easiest thing to use. “But again, we need to be careful about privacy,” I say. “Officially, you can’t just put your mailing list in Mailchimp and send out a newsletter without asking permission.” “Perhaps we can each send the first newsletter to our own contacts,” Lucas suggests, “and include an opt-out button?” “We can do that, but I still don’t think it’s entirely legal,” I reply. *No use to push the matter now, I think to myself. How closely should we be following the letter of the law anyway, in a project like this? Still, we’ll need to have another look at it soon.*

Lucas has a suggestion. “Maybe we should make a different one for each residency?” “I like the idea,” says Jip, it would communicate well on Instagram.” “So you change them individually, you mean?” François asks. “Yes,” says Lucas, “each of us would adjust it in his own way.” “But always based on the logo with the window?” I ask. François starts to laugh. “It’s so funny, the way you get all excited about the window.” We agree it’s a lovely idea. “I’ll make the one for the Storioni residency,” Lucas says.

“How about the publication, Lucas,” I ask, “did you contact the Constant van Renesse Fund?” “No, I haven’t yet, but I will do so, I know someone at the board. I will also contact Onomatopée, to see if they are interested in publishing another Residency for the People newspaper.” “That would be nice,” I say. “Perhaps they are also interested in reprinting the first edition? We’re completely out of copies, aren’t we?”

François promised to make us dinner tonight, and it’s getting late: I have to back in Tilburg by ten because of the curfew, it’s a forty-five-minute drive. “We still need to discuss the structure, and the board, and we have to talk about the future...” Lucas says. “Maybe we can do that next week?” I suggest, “or is that too late?” François is laughing. “Would next week be too late to discuss the future? Ahahah, that’s a good one!” “Anyway,” Jip says, “we can still talk over dinner, right?” So we move upstairs, to François’ apartment. He really turned it into a nice place, decorating it with several of his original pieces that somehow make the space his without shouting DESIGN. We sit around the table while he warms up a lovely risotto. Some bread, salad – god, I’m hungry. We agree to meet again next week Tuesday, at five. François and I will start earlier, to have a look at the text for his workshop.

April 20, 2021

Meeting at Kerkstraat 1, with Lucas, François and Jip. Lucas is tired, I’m sad because Marianne’s mom has died. We’re talking about the structure of Residency for the People. The basis should be a fixed programme of a certain number of residencies in four rounds per year, with their open calls and presentations, and a publication. What kind of budget would that require and where could we apply for funding? In addition, we could do residencies paid by companies or organisations. Someone comes up with the idea of small, medium and large residencies. Medium being the normal ones that would take one month. Large could be anything. “Maybe it could even be Jess’s transition house,” I say. There could be residencies in New York or in Beirut (where Jip has been working before). The small residencies could be workshops for a day, or organising a presentation here at the bar. As long as it brings in some money for the programme. “I do feel they should still start from this question of how people themselves add value to their lives,” I say. “It might be great to have a teambuilding session in here where someone gives a presentation about their hobbies,” Lucas replies. “Show ponies, beer, anything. We could invite an expert to talk about expensive cigars.”

We’re discussing our roles in the organisation. François will focus on the neurodiversity community, developing tools to make it less difficult for them to participate in (design) studies and practice. He’s thinking of doing four residencies a year, which would be very tight, given the fact that he will only be here three months of and on. Otherwise, he’ll do

whatever has to be done to make Residency for the People a success. “When I have a few case studies, I can try and find some client too,” he says. “To be honest, I don’t get the Dutch system yet. In the US, there are no grants for design like you have them here. I’m used to making my own money.” “It can go in different directions,” Lucas says. “Perhaps we’ll be selling our products to tech companies...” “Like an agency, offering different services,” François adds. “Who not?” Now it’s my turn: “I’ll be writing about the residencies, combining it with my studies Philosophy of Humanity and Culture – I know, it sounds a bit pompous – at Tilburg University that start in September.” “And how many residencies would you like to do?” Lucas asks. I hadn’t given it much thought. “Just not too many. Once every three months?” “And what should they be about?” “I don’t know yet.” “Maybe you could do research residencies, that give more theoretical depth to the programme?” “Yeah, as long as it’s about people adding value to their own lives somehow...” “Isn’t that just a matter of what you ask in the Open Call?” “Maybe Lucas, but my mind is blank right now. Let me think about it later, alright?” Jip will be doing organisational stuff. She would also like to do a few residencies later on. François raises the question in what kind of way she wants to be involved, he feels, probably rightly so, that there might be a difference in commitment, given that he and Lucas, and me to a certain extent, are all at a point in our lives where we would consider Residency for the People as a mayor change of course in our careers, while for Jip, it’s a start. Still, who can tell what happens next? If corona has taught us anything, it’s that life doesn’t give a toss about our plans. She does feel she wants to be part of the team for the long run, rather than just being a hired hand. “So, welcome on board.”

April 30, 2021

Bars are finally allowed to open their terraces again and it’s a sunny day. Windy though. A lot of people in town, everyone is happy that the corona measures are gradually being lifted. It seemed like the perfect day to wear my brand new pink *Onatsuka Tigers*, but to be honest, they’re killing me. Pain shoots up from my right ankle – I hadn’t expected that. Still, a sense of celebration.

Meeting with the team at Kerkstraat 1. The bar is starting to look really nice, with François putting in a lot of work. He framed a large sheet of some deep blue reflective material and hung it from a wall, where it will undoubtedly become a selfie-magnate. The stairs have been sanded and painted, the wooden railing looks brand new, panels hide the clutter of cables and equipment that was there before. “It’s my contribution to the Residency, you know,” he says. After all, this is kind of our home.” We’re sitting at the large table in his apartment. Lucas is really trying to bring some structure to the discussion, setting an agenda, actually making an effort to stick to it. We discuss the website. “We shouldn’t call it a website,” Lucas says, “but an archive.” “Why? It’s much more than that,” I object. “There’s the open calls, interactive features, connections with social media.” “It just doesn’t feel right to send out an open call for someone to design our website.” “So we need to call it differently,” Jip says. “what about platform?” We agree it sounds good. Some things that need to be done, like getting an SSL certificate, and adding info about Residency for the People to the site.

François and Jip had a good meeting at OOK, they are enthusiastic about the project and will assist with the selection of the participants. They will also support the workshop with professional guidance. Language shouldn't be a problem. For the Storioni Festival residency, response was very low, only two candidates, one of them [...] who has already been collaborating with Lucas before. The second application is from a thirteen-year-old girl who would love to design and make costumes for the Storioni Trio. I catch a glimpse of anime-type drawings – seems perfect to me. “The deadline is today, so there might still be some more reactions,” Jip says. Lucas agrees: “People always wait for the very last moment to send in their applications.” The selection committee will meet on Sunday.

The cycle of residencies will be structured to coincide with DDW once a year. The idea now is to have four residencies every three months, with 2 residents on average. Costs for the residencies, publications, additional hours for Jip and Lucas... it amounts to 125,000 euro a year. It's a lot of money. Still, general sense that we're getting somewhere, but we do need to find funding for the last couple of months of the year. Lucas is going to talk with [...], and Cultuur Eindhoven might be inclined to give us another round of SnelGeld. Perhaps we should be looking for corporate sponsors. I think it would be wonderful if we could become less dependent on subsidies, operate more independently. I agree to look into possibilities with the Rabobank, François is happy to look into other corporate sponsorship, even though he is not very familiar with the tech industry that dominates the Eindhoven area. “ASML? What are they doing?” “They are the region's largest employer of neurodiverse people,” Lucas replies, only half in jest. “ASML is a world-leading tech company, they make the most advanced machines to produce silicon chips,” I explain. He doesn't seem too impressed – probably right not to be.

Jip proposes a possible board member, [...], a former UN youth representative for the Netherlands and presently a public speaker and youth inclusion expert. It would be lovely if she could join. “But she would like to know what we would expect her to do...” “I guess we'll have four board meetings a year,” Lucas says, “to evaluate the last round of residencies and look forward to the next.” “But she might also want to be at one or more presentations,” I add, “depending on the topics closest to her other activities. Oh, and don't forget: she would need to read the year reports, because I think she would have to sign them.” Lucas has to go downstairs, it's time to open his bar too.

We're sitting outside with a beer, Jip tells me her father passed away six years ago, then it turns out he was her stepfather, her biological father is still alive. I'm acutely aware that she might have loved her stepfather just as much or more. François explains why he prefers to stand: his back is hurting from sitting behind a screen all day. He damaged his back long ago, when he was serving in the French military. “At the time, military service was still obligatory. But higher educated draftees could opt for civil service abroad. It was the perfect way for already privileged kids to expand their network, earn good wages, see the world. Meanwhile, the less privileged served in the military. I decided to do military service, almost out of protest. I was pretty physical, and I was able to join the Alpine Hunters, an elite unit based in the Alps. It was the best time of my life, I loved it. Of course, with my business education at one of the *grandes écoles*, I would still quickly gain some privileges. I speak several languages, so I was employed in international collaborations, I had my own car... The best thing were the 1992 Winter Olympics of Albertville. We were involved in security, but

we were also part of the opening ceremony, waving large flags – it was great. And apart from all that, I got to meet so many different people, made friends for life. Anyway, long story short, I hurt my back while I was skying with a heavy backpack. I could hardly move anymore, one of the intervertebral discs had been dislocated. It was so bad, I agreed to have two vertebrae fixed. At the time, it seemed like a good idea. I wanted to be able to move again! Today, they would probably not do that anymore.”

It’s a lovely evening, but it’s time to go home. Lucas takes a quick picture of me in my pink sneakers and matching pink ‘my heart is a muscle not a toy’ T-shirt by Chantal Rens and Gumbah. “Good shoes,” Margriet says when I say goodbye to her. At the station, I treat myself to a maple pecan pastry.