Constellations ° Assemblies: Who are we working for? Transcript

Elisabeth Del Prete 0:05
Hello, everyone. Good afternoon and welcome to the sixth and final of our 2022 online *Assemblies: Who are we working for?* I am Elisabeth Del Prete, Senior Curator (Learning & Live Research) at UP Projects. And I am white woman wearing a stripy colourful shirt with different colours; purple, blue, orange, white, and black. My pronouns are she/her. The programme of six *Assemblies* has been taking place here in our online event space, The Hall, since March, and this is our final event this year. The programme forms part of our wider *Constellations* learning and development programme, curated by UP Projects working in partnership with Flat Time House and Liverpool Biennial. Through the *Assemblies*, we are exploring lines of enquiries that we feel are most vital for the public art sector to pursue right now. And these include questions around how can art inspire social change? Do we need to start thinking about moving beyond sustainability when working in public contexts? What is the role of context when developing work in the public realm? And how can our decision-making be democratic when we work collaboratively? These are the many questions that we've been exploring and continue to explore through this programme. Today's event is the last from the series. And who are we working for asks what it means to authentically respond to the needs of communities, while also navigating the shifting hierarchies that are inherent to all socially engaged art projects. How do we build upon failures and vulnerabilities? How do we make space for indigenous knowledge? This event addresses a set of questions that have been devised collectively by the *Constellations ° Cohort 2022* and is informed by the in-depth analysis, critical thinking and creative experimentation undertaking over the course of the *Constellations 2022* programme. This year's *Constellations ° Cohort* are Amina Agoro, Benedict Rutherford, Jordan Rowe, Kate Mahony, Laura Eldret, Manon Awst, Monica Tolia, Nisha Duggal, Rebecca moss and Taey Iohe. You can read more about the individual practice in a link that we will add to the chat shortly. The seminars attended by the cohort during the programme have been led by the individuals within the cohort and facilitated by artist Harun Morrison. To ensure we get a variety of perspectives into the conversation, we've invited speakers who represent different roles. We've invited a curator, Sara Reisman, Chief Curator and Director of National Academician Affairs at National Academy of Design in New York City to moderate the event. We've also invited an artist, Farid Rakun, who's also a member of the art organisation, ruangrupa. And finally, we've invited a commissioner, Binki Taylor, who is the founder of The Brixton Project and Commissioner for the Mayor of London's Diversity in the Public Realm. I'm very excited to introduce you to our moderator, Sara Reisman, who is a curator,

educator and writer. Sara was most recently the Executive and Artistic Director of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation. And prior to that, Sara held roles as Director of the Percent for Art programme at the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. She was Associate Dean of the School of Arts at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art and Curatorial Consultant for Public Art at the Queens Museum. Sara has curated exhibitions locally and internationally useful venues including the National Arts Club in New York City, Hugh Lane Dublin City Gallery, Futura Centre for Contemporary Art in Prague, the Queens Museum of Art, Socrates Sculpture Park, the Cooper Union School of Art, and many more. But before I hand over to Sara, I would like to very quickly run through some virtual housekeeping. If you experience any time technical issues during the event, please use the chat function at the bottom of your screen to chat with our dedicated tech support. On the right of the screen, you will see our Slido bar where you can post questions for our speakers using the Q&A function. Please remember that moderator and speakers will only be picking up questions from the Slido Q&A and not from the Zoom chat function. So, if you'd like your questions to be answered by the panel, just post them on the Q&A in Slido. We also have a British Sign Language interpreter available for this event. So, if you need a BSL interpreter, please message us in the chat and our tech assistant will give you a dedicated access link. If you would like to access closed captions, please select the CC button at the bottom of your video conferencing screen to ring along - to read along and just a reminder the today's event will be recorded. I hope you enjoyed the event, and I am very pleased to hand over to Sara out to kick off the discussion. Thank you.

Sara Reisman 6:13
Thank you, Elisabeth. It's great to be here with you, and the team at UP Projects, Jack Newbury and to be in conversation with Binki Taylor and Farid Rakun of ruangrupa. I'm Sara Reisman. I'm a cisgender white woman with dark shoulder length wavy brown hair with lines of grey. I'm wearing a black T-shirt sitting in a white room. My pronouns are she/her. I'm really pleased to be here in conversation with Binki and Farid and appreciate the Cohort's connective tissue and conceiving of this conversation, who are we working for? Public art and socially engaged art, and general public practice always lead to questions of who the work is for. A bit of context about my background in relation to the public. Years ago, between 2008 and 2014, I was Director of New York City's Percent for Art Programme during the Bloomberg administration, at a time when public art was being highlighted, promoted, made very visible. And just to say that, at the time the Percent for Art law - a local law that required art be commissioned along with new construction on city land, the law was being upheld like it never had. But the nature of Percent for Art and that programme is that I worked with a very small team to implement the law - the percent for our law - in all five boroughs of New York City. We have more commissions underway for streetscapes, parks, plazas, public schools, correctional facilities and other kinds of civic spaces - more commissions than the programme

had ever been engaged in historically, which meant that our engagement with communities on the receiving end was minimal at best. And honestly, the mayoral administration at that time did not foster that kind of engagement. While the Percent for Art's commissions I was managing needed to be permanent to last what we call the useful life of what was being constructed. So that would be 50 years for a public school or 15 years for a streetscape. There were discussions towards the end of my tenure about how to make socially engaged projects a possibility for the artists. Rather than the straightforward integrated design, or standalone sculpture, lighting, installation or mosaic. One thing that became clear was a very kind of distinct line, one of dialogue between the conventional commissioning model and social practice, that at least in New York City, many of the artists who had done permanent art with municipalities that I was working with were also active and socially engaged and community-based practice, perhaps as a response to the restrictions of these permanent commissions for civic spaces. So being here with Farid and Binki is a pleasure because their work actively pushes beyond these conventions of public art and public practice. And so, I appreciate their perspectives. Binki who's a commissioner engaged with placemaking in Brixton and Farid whose involvement with ruangrupa has been immersed in all kinds of community settings, both art role and beyond. So, for the conversation, I came up with a list of terms, what I think of is an initial glossary of terms that further articulate this question of who are we working for? Before I lay out the terms, I'll introduce Binki and Farid, so I'll start in the order of the presentation. So, Farid Rakun is ruangrupa, gender pronouns for Farid are he/him and for ruangrupa is they/them. Founded in 2000 by a group of artists in Jakarta, ruangrupa is a contemporary art organisation active in promoting the advancement of art ideas in an urban context and abroad scope of culture through exhibitions, festivals, art laboratories, workshops, research, as well as the publication of books, magazines and online journals. In its development, ruangrupa has evolved into a contemporary art collective, and a steady ecosystem with two organisations providing a public learning space that carries the values of equality, sharing solidarity, friendship and togetherness. During its nearly two decades of journey, ruangrupa has undergone several ups and downs of programmes and organisational restructuring. From the very beginning, the work of this organisation was designed freely so that everyone could continue to work individually. ruangrupa is accustomed to working and creating by involving many individuals with different backgrounds. Each individual is like a key to a treasure trove of historical and cultural facts. This could also be seen from the residential buildings used to house ruangrupa's activities, familiar sensibilities that continue to inform ruangrupa's work up till now. So welcome Farid on behalf of ruangrupa. And now it's my pleasure to introduce Binki Taylor, whose gender pronouns are she/her. Binki Taylor is an experienced coach, mentor, creative producer and community activator. Commissioner for the Mayor of London's Diversity in the Public Realm, curator for the London Festival of Architecture 2023, and partner of

The Brixton Project, formerly the Brixton Design Trail. Binki advocates for fusing the skills, knowledge, culture and heritage of local people into future community development. So welcome to you both. Great to see you. So, I'll just give a kind of, I'm going to list out some terms and I'll pose questions in connection with those terms. And it's, we came up with some more this morning. So, it's evolving, and it starts at the beginning of the alphabet: access. So, the question is who has access to the work that we're doing? Who is our intended audience? Accountability, and for some reason, this sticks for me the most: who are working for is a question of accountability. Who are we accountable to in the work that we do? How does this accountability affect the aesthetics and impact of public practice? Agency: as we think about how public works are funded how our agency and autonomy maintained by the artists or cultural producers creating the commission work? Conditions: seems that was something that came up this morning, under what conditions is an artwork being brought into a community? Is it in response to a historical event, a local conflict, community challenge or something much more positive? Equity: How is equity facilitated and insured when community stakeholders join in a collective process initiated by artistic organisations or artists? In other words, how do artists and cultural producers facilitate equitable public engagement? Is it even their responsibility to do so? Funding: Who pays and what difference does that make? Legibility: For me this feels especially important with research-based practice. How can research based art projects be legible to local community members? I only have a few more. Representation: who is represented in public art be the monuments installation statues, memorials, and how is the artwork conceived? What are some of the constraints or challenges inherent to cultural representation in the public realm? Storytelling: the key question here is whose story is being told and by whom? And then the last item on this list is temporality: thinking about permanence versus temporary work. So, the duration of an artwork and public space can impact its reception. The question being how was a public artworks lifespan determined and by whom? Who has to live with the work? What are some of the benefits and challenges of staging permanent long term, or conversely, short term projects? So that's, that's my introduction. And I think we'll move quickly into our presentations. Thank you for having me here.

ruangrupa 13:55
I think that's my cue. Thank you very, very much for having me. For UP Projects - Elisabeth and Jack. My name is Farid Rakun. I'm representing ruangrupa, the artist collective from Jakarta, Indonesia right now. I - my pronunciation in English, it's he/him because like in Bahasa Indonesia, we don't have gender. So, it's a bit sometimes, if you speak to Indonesians, like many others as well, I think we switch it kind of like, unintentionally, we call he she, etc. etc. It was because of how our brain was wired since birth, let's say so yeah, we don't have that gender pronunciation in, in our mother tongue. I'm um, let's see, I'm Asian let's say -

Southeast Asian male. Short hair, white t-shirt with a print and then sitting on blurred background of like stacks of clothes. And then what I can start sharing screen I think so I don't lose a lot of people's time. So yes, thank you very, very much for having me. I hope you can hear me okay, you can see everything okay? Yeah, as I said, I am here because of ruangrupa, thank you for the interest on us from the cohorts as well, because from what we understood, like this invitation to speak to whom right now is made also in relation or in collaboration with the cohort. But I cannot assume that a lot of people know about us. So, I think I'll try while weaving to the questions to the glossary, I'll introduce ourselves as well. I've started with this like an in like ongoing installation, while it's while installing picture in Central Pompidou in Paris, when we were invited in a group show, let's say from the Global South, they call it and then they call it *Cosmopolis*. And this is the first edition. And then, as you can see, like this one was a picture from where we started, when, where and when we started in Jakarta, around early 2000. We started with rent - with renting, renting residences, several houses, let's say we like a lot of collectors in Indonesia, we started that way, because it's affordable. And then we make that more private setting into more public setting. It's never big. So, it's the public that we're talking about. It's not that large, let's say. But we started also, as a group of artists, I'm not one of the founders, only one of the original founders stayed up until right now, although we still keep in touch with the rest. But we started, yeah, we started by artists. And then as a group of friends, we realised that that moment in 2000, just after the dictatorship era in Indonesia fell down in 1998, were part of the euphoria of ganging up together again, not only in the art world, but also in other parts of our disciplines and other parts of life in society. Then, with we started as a group of friends, and we always think the first audience that we have is this group of friends, let's say, up until now, it started in 2000. Right now, it's 22 years old, like all when we were young ones, we realised after like, several years, let's say this, this understanding of circle of friends, keep on expanding throughout the years, and then I came, I'll come back to the Central Pompidou show. This is how it looks like. Keep in mind a map, because that's, that will be a repeating thing throughout the presentation. But we use a lot of times we use this opportunity to stage an artwork, let's say. So, keep on pushing our trajectory, or trajectory around ruangrupa itself is a work that kind of like, have its own sustainability and has its own legs. What we can do is like helping this type of opportunities to be part of that sustainability thing, let's say. We, like our space in Pompidou during *Cosmopolis*, was like recycling the that's why it's called parasite or *ruangruparasite*, like, weird parasite thing, what's left over from exhibitions past, not that much that we have access to, but we used what we were what we could, and then we also kind of like open that space for other collectives in the show to use let's say. The picture here is like Chto Delat from St. Petersburg, someone from Vietnam, and others also the creators of the show, etc. And then although we learn a lot from this kind of opportunity, sometimes what we learn is what not to do anymore. Let's say we got a lot of connections, friendships, relationships, etc,

which we tend to sustain. But then sometimes in in the space of like, the proper gallery or museum exhibition space like this, we feel like - we felt like especially here as well, because we were put in a corner, we felt like being kind of like, limited - our cage, let's say. This is kind of like, just to give you a visual of what we are right now with other collectives in Jakarta, namely Serrum and Graphic Huru Hara. This is what we established in the end of 2018. And we turn ourselves after a lot of discussions between us, we turn ourselves into an informal educational platform called GUDSKUL altogether. The plan was to let ruangrupa kind of like disappear in the background and with GUDSKUL going to be more visible. But then, since the end of 2018, up until this year, hopefully it's not going to continue, but like certain things, like Documenta 15, for example, in Germany, forced us to still use ruangrupa as a banner, and then we're right now after it's done, Documenta, we're getting back – we're doing a homecoming of like, answering certain questions that still haven't been answered since the end of 2018. Coming back to the *Cosmopolis #1*, this is *Cosmopolis #1.5*. The next year, it was 2017. This one is 2018. It was done in a village called Shiyancun in Chengdu province in Sichuan area - near Chengdu as a town - as a city in mainland China. Because like, you know, this is one of the relationships that continues like with funding, for example, this continues because one of the funders was actually coming from Chengdu and then part of *Cosmopolis* was transferred there. But for us, that means a totally different set of people we are working with, let's say. The village itself, we do - we arrived, and then we learn with them. Of course, language barriers all the time. But then luckily, technology can help us right now, if you're not too shy about it, we can - we can surpass that. Then doing karaoke, aerobics, like, block party thing - a block party in the way English speaking world understood it, but like we call it differently, but that's what we did. Most of the time, but also using that kind of like map again, of like, in like a communication tool with the locals because that's a lot of times that's what we're working with. Like with Paris, of course, we were with some collectors in Paris. In here, there's no art collective per se, but like the paper making industry was our main partner, let's say. And then the question of like, who we are working for, I think like this, this picture can speak 1000 words more than me. I think like it's clear, which comes from or who comes from the artwork, or come to this show, let's say looking for artworks and then who's the - what we can consider as collaborators on a day-to-day basis. Most of the time, when we said like this circle of friends. These collaborators are the ones who are making our work for let's say, and then there are users for the ones that are there for, like documentation, like doing another artwork or art projects in different places all that kind of stuff, of course, it's part of an ecosystem. But it's kind of like a second layer in the way we think about, about working, I'd say. I'll continue to another project - I'll come back to the thing, I'm sorry I'm already close to my 10 minutes. But this is Sao Paulo Biennial, also working - using these maps again, this is kind of like a big thing. This one is called *ruru*, short for ruangrupa, this is project was 2000 – ongoing. Because this is how we saw it like transferring what our space was at that moment but

opening it up to the to the collectives in São Paulo - São Paulistas. And then this is one of the kinds of like learning process that we keep on doing coming in batches, always looking for collectives in the localities, etc, etc. And those connections also continue up until today, let's say oh, there are certain friends that we keep on talking to. With the Chengdu part with the Sichuanese, because of we're part of that, we knew some artists in this in this case; a couple from Chengdu, let's say, their work captivated us. We kept in touch. And then of course, we when we extend our invitation for Documenta 15 - not asking/not making commission works, coming back to what Sara was talking about before, we intentionally steered out from commission logic, we asked them to continue what they're doing so new, not new projects that they're showing in Kassel, but then how they can use this opportunity of being part of something like Documenta for to sustain further their practice. And I think everyone has different understanding answers of how they can use it, who they're working for, what kind of ecosystem they are working with, and what's the strategy of using it. This is like a past life of ruangrupa when we started when we took over this, two of these ex-warehouses out of three, but it was turned out to be too big, then we knew that we want to keep things intimate, let's say. Documenta 15, the last one, the last experience from our site was proven to be too big. We're not going - hopefully we learn from that process, and we won't do it again. And then again, this map, this one is from Kassel, two years before the opening, because we landed with kind of like notion of living room for the city. So, we work with what we call it like "Kassel-ecosystem" a lot. And then because of that, we can make something like Documenta 15. And I'll stop there. Sorry again for the time. But hopefully we can continue discussing things further. Thank you.

Binki Taylor 28:35
Hi! I guess that's then my cue. I'm going to share my screen and hopefully everything is in the right place. Okay. Okay, hi, everyone. My name is Binki Taylor. Can everybody see what's on the screen? That's brilliant. Thank you. I am of Ghanaian heritage. I'm a black female with bright white hair, and glasses. My pronouns are she/her. It really is a great pleasure to be in this conversation today and have an opportunity to contribute thoughts from this corner of the world in Brixton. I'm speaking to you today from our office on the sixth floor of an ex-council building, with an inspiring view of Brixton and out across to the City of London. As Sara kindly introduced earlier, The Brixton project works with communities to tell stories with lived experience, heritage and to bring to life the nuance of many cultures of Britain's people past and present. We help people share their current reality, dream of the future and to heal the past. We're a small team of seven and we are powered by a network of creative residents and community organisations in and around Brixton in South London. Pretty much as Farid was saying, we actually began life as a group of residents who realised the healing power of a simple creative act following the last uprising in 2011. And as we go through, I will probably talk about healing quite a lot. This is partly why we do this.

In 2016, as part of the London Design Festival, we conceived the idea of a nation state of mind called *Brixtopia* with a manifesto for how we might live in what has been declared the kind of upcoming Brexit issue, but it was to bring focus to our community and what we - what we need, what we thought and what we needed, in the kind of face of that dislocation from Europe. Our work now is focused on ensuring that local people are heard and singing and active in engaging a wide audience of stakeholders or authorities in the beam, maintaining of identities place and the amplification of character and the pulses with the people within it. We want to ensure that local people have a visionary seat at the table and are active in shaping the world around them. And it is a world that is constantly delivering, challenging and responding to complex problems every day. We believe that creativity and art and culture create a fertile place for dialogue, reimagining and healing that forges a pass to recognition. We have held an Arts Council grant and National Lottery funding, we have negotiated with stakeholders, managed equitable structure for local commissioning, and being a executive producer for all events, creative interventions and public art over a two-year period. This is a project that is fundamentally led by the heart of community. But it offers an invitation to stakeholders to honour and support the activism of black communities, past and present, in driving change forward against the odds of a dominant and pervasive system. Following this, I just want to introduce you to this particular act called *Holding the Flame*. It's a site-specific act, which is a temporary augmented reality statue of a woman called Marcia Rigg who is a social justice campaigner and the sister of Sean Rigg, who died of a cardiac arrest in police custody after being restrained there. The project was developed throughout the tumultuous year of 2020 and reflects and explores the reawakened trauma of black communities following the death of George Floyd. The statue was created locally by artistic director, Thor McIntyre Burnie. And Marcia breaths and it features a candid interview of her in dialogue with the building behind her, which is in fact Brixton Police Station, where her brother dies. We worked with the police and with public protection and the local authority to store this specific location outside the police station as a means of also opening up and continuing a positive dialogue between police and residents in the face of continuing distressing situations that are occurring between police and local people. It's a piece that really does show the power of culture in areas of difficult dialogue, to transform the conversation and to shift the balance of power. Marcia is there. She's breathing, she's holding flowers to her brother. She's also holding symbols of other significant activism, such as the people who protested for justice at Grenfell. She has a candle, which is held a black power fist and he's wearing traditional clothing. It's a very powerful piece if you're ever able to get you here to see it, and I really do urge you to come and seek it out. And next up, I'm going to talk a little bit about Windrush, which means a lot to this borough. Brixton is at the heart of Lambeth. It's one of London's 32 boroughs and it's one of the places most associated with Windrush and subsequent generations of Afro Caribbean descendants. The

Windrush scandal of 2018 unearthed stories of 1000s of people impacted by threat of deportation has given rise to focus on the lived experience of Afro Caribbeans in the UK, and the trauma sustained of sustained racism and social marginalisation - which is juxtaposed against the foundational contribution to the development of the UK and what these people brought with them both culturally and in terms of public services, you know, that is born out of a remarkable characteristics of fortitude and commitment and with resilience spirit. This picture that is on the screen right now is a picture from the 2012 Olympics. It is of the Empire Windrush. I just think it's extraordinary to note that in 2012, this could be part of a national celebration for Britain. It shows the Empire Windrush, there is not a single black face in the picture, it is really quite remarkable. And it's a good juxtaposition I think, what I'm going to talk about next in terms of what Windrush does for us now in Lambeth here and how we work with it. Okay, so, you know, part of the question is apart from communities, who else do we work for? In this picture here, you will see our local and active counsellors who are very much proud of the work that Lambeth does in terms of Windrush and what it does, what happens and how it's championing in our communities. Really, the work we do here is to help the local authority to make authentic steps towards equity, inclusion, and the offer of allyship. So, for the past three years, we have created a structure of community groups, individuals and cultural organisations to celebrate and commemorate Windrush. And the borough has fought hard, I think, also at the same time in the battle for reparations and justice and is committed to June 22nd as being a day of borough-wide celebration that in recognition of its black communities. It does two things, it creates legacy, but it also allows us all to practice playing - it allows us to, to practice that amplification. In this context, our role is to use culture as a way for authority to engage in a different way. It allows the borough plan to come to life. And it yes, it undoubtedly delivered both the evidence and the experience of an authority collaborating with community and local people. And I understand that this might invite a certain level of cynicism, but the Windrush platform in Lambeth is also for hyper-local groups to come together and for the community to recognise it talent, its expertise, its knowledge and achievement and to be in full celebration of that heritage. And this is not a feeling to be underestimated in the power to build self-esteem and resilience within a community. So why do we do it? Because it's complicated, and it's difficult and it's ever changing. Well, we do it one because we believe that Brixton is the centre of the world. We want to represent and uphold the lives of people here and the stories of those that have lived and currently live to shape the future of this place as a rich and interesting place to have an experience of life. Our responsibility is to ensure that art and creativity is accessible as that kind of infinite shared resource where people can connect and act and create for the future. Thank you very much, that's kind of what I had to offer, and I look forward to taking questions and exploring things in more details.

Sara Reisman 39:37
So, I think that's my cue. Is that right? Great. So, I guess I, of course, we have, you know, a set of questions. But I think to start, I'd like to pose a question to each of the panellists that's really specific to what was raised in your presentation. So, starting, I'll pose them, and we can figure out who wants to answer first or if you want to answer at all. Looking at Farid's presentation, you mentioned that since Documenta 15, you're returning to questions that what I understood had guided ruangrupa up to a point. And so now this is a chance to come back to those questions and I wondered if you could share what those key questions are that motivate your practice as a collective. And I'm, and then I'll go to Binki, and I think Binki you raised and bringing up *81 Acts of Exuberant Defiance*, that project, there's this key kind of point about policing and the impact of policing on communities and I - to me, it feels like the heart of a project like that is how in the world, you know, how do we work with police and the work that we're doing or that you're doing and thinking about that? Initially, I thought, okay, how do you balance art and activism in these kinds of commission? But in a way, then there's this kind of more specific question around policing, how to engage with the police. And it's not so much the full how to, maybe there's an anecdote or some example of the kind of interaction with the police that's been - has helped transform the project, or maybe has challenged the project? So, I don't know who would like to start. I know, these are not these were not, these aren't prescribed questions that we talked about an advanced so. Farid, would you like to start?

ruangrupa 41:32
If Binki wants to start, I'm happy, but I can start. It's up to Binki. What do you think Binki?

Binki Taylor 41:39
No, Farid you go for it!

ruangrupa 41:42
Thank you for your presentation as well Binki. It's, yeah, I like seeing it and being explained what you're doing. Thank you very much for it. So, your question Sara, like, our motivation as collective? I think that we, I didn't, I couldn't delve deeper into that. But so, thank you for the question. It has changed, where - when I said like, when we started the circle of friends was like, let's say relatively small compared to right now. Throughout the years, we also kind of like have come up and go, there are ups and downs, let's say. We ask ourselves, it started every year, but right now it's less than every year, like maybe every three years or five even - should we keep on existing or not? We, we from like, you know, there are certain parts of our ecosystem that need still our support from making concerts, from making exhibitions, from making workshops of curatorial workshops, writing workshops, etc, etc. Up until then, our understanding of actually collective practice

is something that we can contribute to, because like, only recently, I think like the past three years, the schools in Indonesia, art schools in Indonesia started to look into collective practice, although it has been one of the main ways of Indonesian artists to practice their work. So, and also kind of like, the questions, which is part of your question as well, Sara in the glossaries. What kind of aesthetics can be made if it's like, if it's, if it's real collectively, it shouldn't be just like a sum of its parts, you know? And then, right now, we know that we're the last answer to that, at least partially, that we can come up with, a lot of times it's retrospect, it's like, we know, we're doing things differently than many others. And then we are not saying that we know certain things especially like, you know, the mainstream ways of doing things like capitalism, you name - you can call it anything. It's kind of like failed us. So, it was based on sort of another mode, that we look for other ways of doing things. But then, after a while, we can say that, like, we're not trying to replace our system is not the magic pill of things, or like, you know, many people do collective things differently. But we know in our ecosystem, there are still so many things that we can work with and for, and because of that, we'll just like keep on continuing the strategies as we indifferent since even with GUDSKUL for example, since 2018 up until now, every year has been different. Right now, we should realise that we're, we're based in Jakarta, where like, you know, in Indonesian context, it's centralised. Like it's a centralised society, let's say, as a state. So outside of Jakarta outside of Jaffa, we should not ask them to work with us. But maybe we can offer something to those who are working outside of these central points, let's say. Then that's why also we turn ourselves into an educational platform, although informal, because we cannot do formal, let's say we cannot meet the requirements, but we're not interested either. But then, because of that, it's like kind of like, up until now at least, there's a certain type of flexibility that we can close down our, our programme, we can replace it with something else, we can go somewhere. So not making our headquarters to be like the ground zero of everything, for example, you know, so, it has been deferring right now. We want the sustainability of this type of practices, this type of projects is the one in Indonesia particularly, that's where we're standing let's say right now.

Sara Reisman 46:40
So there, thank you for your response, Farid. And there, there's a question and in the - posed by the audience, but I want to switch to Binki and just sort of, if you can address the question about sort of activism, and specifically police, and then I have some questions that can be kind of posed to both of you.

Binki Taylor 47:06
Okay, yes, thank you, Sara. I mean, the impact of this work on policing, particularly *Holding the Flame*, it was kind of about a year's worth of conversation with the police public protection, and the local authority to get that piece put in place. And this is bare mind that it is an AR piece, you don't see it, most of the time, it is not

triggering anything in the everyday and we were really very, very careful about that. There was huge nervousness and they was nervousness on their part of. A: they gotta be seen to be doing the right thing, but also being mindful of the implication of that. *81 Acts* worked really hard to get in place a memorandum of understanding with the local council, which, in stone, the support that the council is prepared to give to that group of people, which is, yeah, it's just really an amazing piece of work in itself. So the conversations that we were then having with high level police officers outside in Brixton, in Lambeth, but also, you know, high level across The Met, was really then changed the tone or kind of how can we use this, this piece internally to help our employees, our staff to understand what exactly the job is that we need to do to repair and to heal and to offer a new level of ally ship. Now, this doesn't obviously go for every single employee or police every single police person at all. But it has allowed that level to really kind of grasp it as a tool that they can use, which was kind of amazing. It's also given Marcia the opportunity to have her activism validated in that space - in that place. And this is, for a woman who has literally been beating that that drum for so many years It is extraordinarily powerful for her. And then she will literally explain a scenario where she has previously left flowers for her brother on the tree that I think you can see in the back of the picture every year on his birthday, and every year on his birthday, the day after those flowers have been removed. The statue, although temporary, and ephemeral, is something of permanence to her. It allows her permanently to be in place and to being in dialogue, and for that to be recognised. So, yeah. It's powerful. It's hard but it's powerful and I think the thing I'm picking up from Farid is that we are in a constantly changing, we have to be in a constantly changing space, if we need to wake up tomorrow and reinvent ourselves with something slightly different, then that's what we need to do. Because we have to be completely sort of addressing, constantly addressing the needs of community and understanding that and therefore creating and recreating ourselves in the best way to facilitate. Does that help?

Sara Reisman 50:34
So, I think I mean, the idea of constant change, I think makes sense in both - both your practices. I'm going to read from the questions and then I'm going to try to pull this into one question for you both. Hassan Varda wrote "amazing and inspiring both want to pick up on scale". And I noted that as you both were talking. Farid you already mentioned Documenta 15 being too big. Questioning, "do we think intimacy is always more value than reach? And then there are two anonymous questions, what type of hierarchies have you come across in your work? And how have you overcome these issues?" And then another question is, "thank you for this Farid, having had a major curation in Documenta, how has your collective experience changed since then? What did you learn from the experience?" I think what I would say is, if we can talk about scale, and I want to take this to a different, slightly different point is about participation. Because in

both cases, I think if we're looking at the work with *81 Acts of Resistance*, there's this - there's, it's, you know, it's an in public space, there's kind of openness for response, but at the same time it is someone's work, right? It's an artwork. Whereas, and then with Documenta you have, I mean, my understanding is that 1000 plus artists involved or contributors. And I think the question here is, how do you determine who can participate? And then how does that connect to authorship? I'm sorry, these are big questions, we don't have that much time. But I'm thinking about kind of authorship or ownership, right? So, ownership, authorship, scale - what do these terms mean for you in your practices? And, and if there's some, I mean, I think the change the changeability that you both spoke of, and needing to adapt as you go through the work you're doing maybe you could reflect on that? very wide-ranging question I realise. So, you can pick - you can take any part of it and address it.

Binki Taylor 52:52
Well, I'll go through it Farid. I think the ownership or authorship bit is- it is really interesting. And it is quite complex, because *Holding the Flame* is a scenario where you have a creator, you have a maker - Thor McIntyre Burnie who is - he very much sees his role to work with the stories that are brought to him from communities. So as much yes, there is a there is a creator. But there are also the narratives, and that is, you know, the narrative is the things. So, there can be many, many narratives, there are lots of opportunities to create more, more versions of an AR statue that tell different stories. So, in that way, it can be scaled, and it can be scaled to again, this sounds very contradictory, but it can be scaled to tell individual stories that are really very different and distinct from each other. But it can be done on a scale. So that's why the kind of AR format is actually quite powerful in a way as you know, the way we are looking at monumentation at the moment kind of across London. So yeah, I hope I hope that's something there to explain it from my perspective.

Sara Reisman 54:31
It has [*laughter*]

Binki Taylor 54:34
Good!

Sara Reisman 54:34
Definitely, Farid do you want to jump in?

ruangrupa 54:37
Yeah, I can pick up from Binki, thank you for that. On authorship and ownership as well, maybe and scale. And also, maybe it relates to kind of like the change in the collective as well. We know or we knew when we embark on this thing although it's

a long shot, it came as a surprise. We never thought that we could, we could do something as big as Documenta, let's say it's never in our goal, let's say. And then it's a, it's an attempt to clash - operate - two different operating systems, if not more, but at least as an archetype it's two - no one is like this international state funded, big, important in all those canon - canonising in all those kinds of stuff. While we are seeing things differently, we, we, and it's not because we just want to see things differently. Yes, we were young, we were punk once, we were rebellious once. But I think that's one of the changes as well. We've made sure with this kind of challenges, because we know when we trash it, that's where the work starts, you know, and then we know it cannot, yeah, not that we not only don't want, but also, we cannot play the role of artistic director conventionally. We can't - we don't have the capacity to do so, even if we want to. So, we extended invites, we keep on extending invitations. So, we - first we extend out the invitation for Documenta, an institution like Documenta to be part of our journey. And then after, after that positive response, or got a positive response, yes. And then we keep we kept on thinking who should we can invite these invitations to. So that why it was only when we made the handbook or because we don't want to call it a catalogue, we don't understand it as catalogue, a handbook of Documenta 15, we realise that there is actually like more than one - around 1500 parties or collaborators being part of it. And at that moment, we realised it became too big. But also, it was because of we didn't know better that if we will, if we worked and be consistent with the way we were make of keep on extending invitations, people know their localities best, so they know who to invite, and we trust them fully. Also, because of COVID we couldn't like you know, we couldn't travel. So, we practice that trust more extremely, let's say. And then, so it dissolves, let's say. And then sometimes in the beginning where personally, I would love to think that like, you know, being a Documenta artist became more democratic. Like it is a resource that we can share, just share it to add to as many people as possible, you know, because there's no one losing about that, besides the myth of Documenta itself, maybe, but it's fine, you know. But then, even though it wasn't like that it has become too big anyway. And then, in the sense, like, even I couldn't enjoy everything that we were preparing to do you know, like, every day, there was in the end, during 100 days, if there was like 1000 - yeah, well, around 1500 events in the end, you know, like from small to big and all those kinds of stuff. It's impossible for me to, it's inhuman, let's say, although, when we started, what we wanted to do, in terms of scale is actually something that's intimate that no one that if no one should be running around to get everything, to see everything. Even then, like we failed in that, let's say. Then, if we could do it in the future, there's no regret in doing it that way. But then in the future, we learn from it. And then coming back to the context and local question, let's say, every local should be doing it, not the whole network should do it. Because it's not an umbrella term, let's say of what we're doing. But different localities can, can initiate something that's kind of like independent from others. So, it's nodes, connecting nodes, let's say the way we understand connecting nodes

not making one big circle out of it, but just connecting it with dash/dots. Maybe helps that visualisation that are of our understanding of practice change as well. I'm sorry if it's too long or too meandering, but hopefully it started to answer the question.

Sara Reisman 1:00:14
Yeah, it's actually great, because I think what you're getting at is, goes back to ruangrupa's kind of one of the key ways you operate from what I understand is that everyone maintains an individual practice. So, it's that kind of collective but still with autonomy too, you know, produce individually or on your own terms. There's a question in the in the Slido, and I think I'm going to build it into a kind of extended to a theme. So, the question is, "are hierarchies always restrictive?" And I'd love for both of you to think about the hierarchies implicit to the way that you work. And I know, I don't know, but I assume there's resistance on both sides to upholding hierarchies. But I think back to 2011, when Occupy Wall Street was underway in New York, and going to certain meetings with the arts and labour working group and understanding, like, at least operational hierarchies can be helpful in terms of efficiency and kind of enabling movement forward, right, as opposed to kind of reiterating process again, and again, and again, every time a new sort of person or group enters the room or the conversation. But I wanted to - so the question about are hierarchies necessarily restrictive and then adding into that the question of funding, because I think there's a kind of politics in the US, or maybe the New York art world, in which there's the idea that money can kind of spoil/poison the well, let's say, or undermine the, the sort of integrity of a project or an artistic project because it smacks up the market, right? And I think the question I sometimes we, you know, I sometimes have to ask is, is it who are we relying on if something is free, right? Who has the kind of capacity to participate if it's - if there is no funding attached to the work? Of course, socially engaged art is often as a friend of mine used to say, who ran a Blade of Grass, Deborah Fisher would say, it's like you're working without a client. Like you're making something you are making something it's with or without a client, I suppose it could be for community in a distinct way. Or it could be your independent idea about what is needed or what should happen. But so just going back to hierarchies and funding, how does that impact your work? And is, you know, what impact does funding have on the work you do?

Binki Taylor 1:02:54
It's not easy, it's very difficult. And again, we're looking at it from two very distinctly different perspective. Communities need to be paid for the creative work that they do. So funding is important and it enables more people to get involved and to get skills and talent and knowledge and to really be able to explore that. And I'm, I really, really strongly believe that that is the way forward it is, you know, people should not be asked to tell or share their stories for free, because for the

entertainment of somebody else, and in that there is hierarchy. And so, part of the levelling up is how we fund - how people are funded. And it is really, really very, super important. However, it then causes all of these kinds of, you know, there are things there's an evaluation to be done. There are numbers to be counted.

Sara Reisman 1:04:04
Metrics?

Binki Taylor 1:04:05
Metrics - that the metrics, and getting, and that is like a little, you know, you find yourself on a treadmill of kind of needing to deliver on that. What we're attempting to do is to sort of break back down by, you know, if we are able to sit in the middle and be the bodies of the commission, then the metrics that people are counting is just between us and them rather than the rest of everybody else. And so that's, that's where we're trying to get to with a kind of new model, but it's, it's really very difficult, but absolutely for me, everybody needs to be paid and they need to be upheld in their creativity.

Sara Reisman 1:04:52
So, if I read how are you thinking about? [*laughter*]

ruangrupa 1:04:57
Yeah, I'm just curious about the times so I'll try to make it short. I'll pick up on metrics. We understood also like, it has been different from, like, coming from a state that has no state funding, or not to us at least, or our type of practices and up and like it has been changing that we actually do have some right now, for example. And then foreign funds also kind of like has been different for a country like - this is the politics as well. But this the picture of Indonesia has been changing in macroeconomics level, all those kinds of stuff. But we know we've been working and in ruangrupa, at least, because with Serrum and Graphic Huru Hara, it's a bit different. But from ruangrupa, when we have been trying, our attempt is to sit down with funders as well, no matter where they're coming from, on a on an equal level, because it's not surface based, transactional relationship that we're trying to have. You have resource, we have resource. That's how we also kind of like imagine our relationship with Documenta before or during everything. And it's not easy like what Binki said, it's not only one addition of Documenta three years being done can solve it. Even us has been talking about it for 20 plus years, right now, we haven't been able to nail it down to one answer. But changing the metrics is one I think like, because what's important for an institution, what's important for a practitioner what's important for a funding body - a lot of times it's just different. And then sometimes one is imposing to the other because of the transactional thing. And then when we're talking about hierarchies, I think there's a systemic hierarchies and then there's like, everyday hierarchies, sorry, for my layman language. But one

thing is like that, hierarchies that was forced on us, because we want to apply for funding, all those kinds of stuff. We consider it as a work of fiction, so we can change it the way we want it. It's also artwork. So, like, you know, even our economy is like creative economy. So, like our report, all those kinds of stuff. But when it's hierarchies between ourselves, between us and collaborators, it's like life as well, like in in neighbourhood, or community, let's say, it will happen anyway. Other collectives, we know, we learn from strife for us for strict horizontality, we don't, because we never came from that. We're not trying to prove certain theories, right? But what we try to do is like to address that imbalance, or asymmetries, and then realise it in our everyday level, who's harder, who's talking the more than we know, to break things into smaller group maybe, or it's time to take a break, or to shut someone up, or all those kinds of stuff. We do it transparently up until now, or at least between us. When we're working across geographies and across culture, then it becomes more difficult, I would say. But up until now we learn from like Occupy, for example, or other organising practice, not necessarily art, but we learn in our art practice, we learn a lot from that type of thing, and we keep on learning. Hopefully, it's not too long. Thank you.

Sara Reisman 1:09:00
Thank you. So, we're so thankful for that. I mean, there, there's so much. I feel like we could have a day together, and it wouldn't be enough. Binki, did you want to comment on anything?

Binki Taylor 1:09:12
I just wanted to come back on that a little bit. I completely agree with everything that Farid is saying. This is why change is important. And this is - this is why the ability to moving because, as with Occupy, you know, it became a hierarchy that could no longer sustain itself. So, you know, we understand there's enormous pressure in this space of art and activism. So, the pressure, you know, the impetus, the motivation to raise your voice means that somebody is raising their voice. They are doing that possibly on behalf of other people. That voice then needs to kind of move on to allow others to raise their voice, I guess. So, in a sense, we're always looking to this future of who that might be. So, you know, and that is our young people, as if the only way is to look forward to the next generation thing.

Sara Reisman 1:10:11
So, I guess my, I'll just say a few things, and then we'll close. I love what both of you were saying, Binki and Farid. And I would just put forward that there, you know, new terms were introduced that build on the kind of initial glossary that we came up with thinking about changeability. But I think sustainability is something that links both of your practices in a really meaningful way, thinking about scale. And I would say one of maybe the most beautiful things that comes out of this, and I see in both of your practices is the idea, the importance of the invitation, in terms of

shifting a hierarchical structure that as varied mentioned, as either kind of external, imaginary, fictional, but that that can be shifted. But of course, there's the issue of like always a scale. So maybe we leave it on the note of the power of invitation towards engagement, ownership, participation, authorship collaboration, and I'll end there. Thank you.

Elisabeth Del Prete 1:11:20
Thank you so much. Thank you, Sara, and Farid and Binki for this thought-provoking conversation. You mentioned Sara now the glossary of words that was introduced at the beginning. And also, the conversation about hierarchies just now was particularly poignant. There's so much for us to reflect on, on how to navigate hierarchies with critical awareness, and in a productive way. Thank you to Tracey Keeble, our BSL interpreter for this event. And a big thank you to our audience for participating. And for the comments and questions that you shared in the chat. A big thank you goes to this year's *Constellations ° Cohort* who as mentioned before, collectively informed the thinking and the direction for this event. This is the sixth and final event in the - on the *Constellations ° Assembly 2022* series, we really want to build and listen to your feedback for future events. So, you will see a survey a questionnaire in the Slido bar, we would be really really grateful if you could take a couple of minutes to fill it out. And add in any comments, suggestions, and feedback you may have. There will be a recording of today's event on our YouTube channel, which will include captions and BSL interpretation. And will be we will be sharing a text of today's events with insights from our speakers. It will be shared via social media and via the *Constellations* email newsletter in a few weeks' time. And as you saw on the slides at the beginning of the event, we are endeavouring to keep the *Constellations* programme free for participants and event attendees. If you're able, we would really appreciate if you could consider making a small donation to ensure we can keep *Constellations* free. And you should be able to see a link to donate in the Zoom chat. And you can also use the QR code on the screen. We that - that would be brilliant if you could consider contributing to the programme. And finally, another huge thank you to all the speakers who have engaged with the *Assemblies* programme so far since March 2022, all the workshop leaders who have led sessions with the Cohort, thank you to The Art Fund, the Arts Council of England, Barrington Hibbert Associates, the Constellations Patrons and UP Supporters for supporting this programme. Thank you to our partners Flat Time House and Liverpool Biennial, and the curatorial teams. Thank you to Jes Fernie, our Curatorial Advisor, to Harun Morrison, the cohort Seminar Leader, to Jack Newbury, the Programme Coordinator and the fantastic team at UP Projects. We look forward to sharing with you our plans for the *Constellations ° Assemblies* programme in 2023. And make sure you have signed up to our newsletter so we can keep you updated. Thank you have a good day.