Kimberley Cosmilla
"Somewhere on the highway, publishing"

This thesis originates from the desire to dislodge a classical decision-making process present in my practice of graphic design: an individual application of the discipline where the content, separately produced, is "locked in place" before "design" can take place. I have progressively lost interest in being assigned the unwanted responsibility of making aesthetic and structural choices arbitrarily (or upon my subjectivity) at a post-production stage of the workflow.

More recently and through an increasing practice of design in contexts where publishing is a process achieved collectively, I attempted, in different ways, to shift the design process from a post-production to a pre-production stage. These experiments resulted in what I identified as an intuitive persistence to design "open-systems" in place of "solutions". Practically, I found myself dialoguing with collectivity through the design of "living" structures that demanded to be responded to.
Reversing the process of design, however, does not seem sufficient to prevent the division between content and container (the design in which the content is poured). Instead, I imagine sharing a form of curatorial agency with the intention of producing collective outcomes where content and design are mutually beneficial in that they permeate each other in the course of the process.

The aims carried by the practice of graphic design appeared to be discordant with the values upon which the process of publishing collectively operates, especially in that designing is often a means for experimenting in the collective process rather than its goal (a "good design").
I am curious about the impact that graphic design may have when its process happens elsewhere than at the post-

production stage and how such a shift may be relevant in the facilitation of collective processes of production. How can these processes be shared with the audience at the moment of crystallisation that the final publication itself represents? Which aspects are to be considered so the design remains faithful to the collective process and intentions? How to practise graphic design in a way that is non-obstructive to the content yet to be published and to the environment in which it is published?

In the following research, I use narration to recollect past projects resulting from various collective processes. By crossing a retrospective reading of these processes with the research question, I intend to unveil previously unexplored dimensions of their structures and meanings. The different examples are drawn from projects to which I either was a co-initiator, a co-participant or a member of its audience.

Understanding what publishing collectively entails for the individuals that are part of its process will be the first stop of this exploration, we will then look closer at the example of an experiment where awareness is brought to the roles and relations in the process of collective decision-making. Keep in mind that the lens offered is that of a graphic designer newly owning tools to navigate an experimental and collective publishing sea. Going back to a much further in time collective experience of publishing, we will near the edges—or limits—of the "open-system" and assess the causes and risks of unfaithful documentation. Finally, our last stop will bring us back to a rather recent example delineating the importance of branching the collective experience to its environment.

<u>Rotterdam, 2023</u>
While I initially typed and began to work along the terminology 'collective publishing', as to delineate the context of this research, I wasn't quite satisfied with the word 'publishing' when used as a noun. It seemed to describe a wide area of practice ('publishing') and, adjectivized by the word 'collective', it did not really evoke more than a branch of that area ('Collective Publishing'). Additionally, the stiffness of the phrasing prompted me that there exists only a fixed form of

"Collective Publishing" while I believe that all processes leading to publishing collectively are unique due to their situatedness. 'Publishing collectively' or 'to publish collectively', as an alternative, intuitively locates the scope of my analysis more accurately in the very effort that leads to publishing but yet precedes this "public moment" as an outcome. Through this slight shift of class—from 'noun' to 'verb'—I suggest that we also consider the verb 'publishing' and the terminology 'publishing collectively' as the shared effort that is performed towards "making things public".

Whereas the initial terminology could lead to a vast interrogation about 'what *collective publishing* is', its alternative —'publishing collectively'—allows us to actually reflect on 'what publishing collectively does'.

In her text "Performative Materiality and Theoretical Approaches to Interface", Drucker (2013) proposes to extend the understanding of "materiality" by considering its "*performative* dimension". Departing from Kirschenbaum's argument "for materiality as essential to the operation and identity of digital media" she suggests that "what something *is* has to be understood in terms of what it *does*, how it works within machinic, systemic, and cultural domains." (Drucker, 2013)

Publishing collectively entails a process of communication and exchange between contributors that share the authorship of a collective message to be published. When publishing is done independently, out of the participants' urgency for making something public, or the project is self-initiated and does not operate under the direction of another entity, a considerable part of this process is dedicated by the assembled formation to figuring out a tailored model of group organisation in order to structure the process and the relations towards the "public moment".

Rotterdam, 2023
Piet Zwart Institute

Every month or so, I find on my desk a new single-coloured RISO-printed newspaper which indubitably reminds me of the time that has already passed since I last received an issue of the periodical. At the origin of this generous and continuous publication assembling eclectic contributions sent by any volunteer students: the student initiative, formed by participants from different masters.

After loosely getting acquainted with its content, I usually pile the latest issue at the top of a stack, on my desk. There, they have become effective and materialistic time dividers: In between the "April 2022" and the "May 2022" issues a stack of miscellaneous documents, books and other prints I was busy with within the span of this time interval has built up, the same goes for the stack between "May 2022" and "June 2022", and so on. The term "periodical" is truly embodied by the performativity of this self-forming archive. Besides representing a time anchor hooking me to the collective's (the aggregation of students part of the same institution) temporality, I see in each published issue a crystallisation of my peer's process in a disinhibited form of design.

One of them (1) involved in the team publishing the paper sits across from my desk, I often see her busy collating the next issue. I have only been involved as part of its audience. As a retired graphic designer that practically never started a career, I wanted to contribute without ever knowing *how* since I made myself a prisoner of the idea that only "finished works" must see the light of the public world.

She once casually revealed that the periodical was not relying on any fixed layout from one issue to the next and its design had to be reinvented over and over. The fluidity of this self-organisation also seemed to manifest in the absence of protocol framing the file sharing from contributor to editor: She mentioned receiving contributions on as many platforms as she was possibly signed in (school and personal email, multiple instant messaging, etc.) and having to deal with even more formats (text, pdf, images, drawings in analogue and digital forms, etc.). From her testimony, I also understood that the editorial team members were adroitly swapping or sharing roles regardless of their expertise in designing or editing. I caught myself suggesting that my contribution could take the form of a

cleverly thought layout, a sort of "format-pleaser" template that could adapt to the diversity of the contributions and be reused over the issues. Yet, after this informal chat, the thought that such organic processes need not be "improved" started to form, making my eagerness to uniform the publications irrelevant. What I mistakenly read as an absence of defined structure was in fact a very precise drive of flexibility to preserve a shared environment fruitful to experimentation. "Any group of people of whatever nature that comes together for any length of time for any purpose will inevitably structure itself in some fashion." (Freeman, 1971) As we later resumed this conversation, I received the information from my insider that what they were truly looking for, if not a magic layout, was a system for documenting their activities that could be insightful to future students and members of the editorial team. As I understand it, this documentation's purpose is less meant to impose "a way of doing" than "one way that it has/can been/be done", something collective to build upon.

Accepting that publishing collectively is, to a considerable extent, a matter of processes has been for me, the designer established on a rock, a crucial grasp to start thinking of design in terms of "support" rather than "solution".

In her thesis titled "Figuring things out together: on the relationship between design and collective practice.", Groten (2022, p.29) insists on the importance of "designing with collectivity" as a process preceding any potential outcome. Drawing from her manifold experiences of collective practice, she rather locates its value in the coming together that painstakingly organises to approach or respond to a subject collectively than in the result that is produced: "It [*designing with collectivity*] is a process, not a method or a goal, in the sense that a participatory design process would follow a goal by involving others, i.e., to improve design processes or outcomes. Designing with collectivity is not about designing better. It is an imaginative as well as concrete material process of being and doing things together differently from how it would be usually done." (Groten, 2022, p.302)

The traces left by the group process of individuals in friction

collaterally crystallise at the moment of publication. "Every contact leaves a trace" (Drucker, 2013)

Rotterdam, 2022
Piet Zwart Institute, XPUB1
During the first year of the master, our class published collectively on at least three occurrences. We built up the habit to document the numerous meetings dedicated to preparing these publications. Each of these meetings was an occasion to experiment a new structure for it. The documentation mostly happened in a written form using Etherpad (an open-source tool allowing us to take notes simultaneously on the same online document). The attempts to improve the form of our documentation were driven by the need for clarity and understanding. We rapidly introduced new "roles" to our group of twelve: "the Guardian of the pad"—responsible for taking notes; and "the Guardian of the clock"—in charge of keeping track of time rapidly made their appearance and remained with us until the end of the school year.

The documentation was also performed as a script for these meetings. The pad was "prepared" prior to the meeting, clearly stating information such as "Goal of the meeting", "break", "Who wants to do What", "vote", etc. A lot of care was also placed in creating space for individual needs which manifested in implementing "check-in" rounds at strategic moments: Before a vote, at the closing of the meeting, or anytime someone sensed a need for it.

These "simulations" were impacting in the sense that we could directly measure or verify their effects on "real"—published—publications. These processes enabled a collective and participative sense of organisation which is what motivated me to team up with another classmate (2) and contribute to the next meeting with a tool intended for collective decision-making. The idea stemmed from the desire to support the running of the meetings in a playful yet constructive way borrowed from the concept of role-play. Role-plays are games during which a story is built up collectively and its denouement depends on the participants' decisions. The characteristics of

each role are scripted and interpreted by the players embodying them.

For the development of the game, we listed ten characters that were fictitious although based on exaggerated behavioural tendencies observed during previous group experiences. The description of the different roles also comprised a set of instructions, in a nutshell, the condition for their participation in the discussion. The pad was used as a script, revealing the timeline of the meeting. We did not take part in the actual debate for which the meeting was called but rather co-facilitated the game and took notes in the dedicated parts of the pad.

The participants were instructed the following:

In the beginning, the discussion will be facilitated by a script and evolve towards a 'free form' discussion towards the end. In the scripted part, each character is invited to type at an allocated moment. During the free form part, characters can converse whenever they want but keeping in mind the constraint imposed by their roles!
The aim of this role-play session is to stir a different group dynamic than the one we tend to get used to. It also allows one to get acquainted with certain social roles that one might not be used to outside of this game.

The different characters consisted of an assortment of personified kitchen tools and condiments. For example, "The Table" could only say something if they were the first to open a discussion, they were not allowed to ask questions and had overall confidence in their ideas; "The Jug" had the ability to highlight a character's ideas and the instruction to exclusively develop further this person's suggestion by rephrasing and adding to it; "The Bread Knife" was only allowed to talk in negative sentences, creating debate by questioning the weakest point of an idea; etc.

In the practice of graphic design, each decision made is a step closer to the outcome. In a situation where publishing is collectively initiated, decision-making becomes a common

matter and therefore often the outcome of discussions, negotiations or votes. This process can be exhausting, compared to when it is led solitarily, as it requires a structured and transparent way of exposing ideas. (Although in a designer-client relation, similar qualities for communication are required, the final decision usually belongs to the client in that it requires their approval before being published. The difference between this example of relation instructed by a commercial setting and the dynamic between the members of a self-initiated collective gathered to publish resides in the operation of a shared agency versus a relation where a designer is assigned to take decisions before being validated by someone else.)

On a highway, a chauffeur and their client on the backseat are driving steadily and at a rather high speed when they suddenly pass another car. The chauffeur, in a glimpse, believes they just saw a car filled with individuals figuring out how to steer its wheel with twelve pairs of hands.

Amsterdam, 2017—2018

During the completion of a bachelor's degree in Graphic Design, I teamed up with a friend in the class (3) and started a series of—what a former teacher later described as—"liquid publications". At the time, the concept seemed straightforward and was candidly executed: we repeatedly invited ourselves to book launches, exhibition openings and other art fairs taking place in the city with the project of selling to visitors an interpretation of each event turned into alcoholic mixed drinks. We quickly built up a portfolio of uncanny and disruptive recipes varying from lip-numbing Sichuan Pepper-rimmed cocktails to semi-permanent teeth-staining black beverages.

In a few months, we decided to transform our nomadic setting into an established 'artist-run bar'. We swiftly worked our way to obtain funding for this project as well as a fixed location to host us, details to which I will come back later. The story we imagined was that of a bar whose constitutive features—such as glasses, bar counter, neon sign on the wall, logo and live acts—would each be designed and/or performed by a different commissioned artist. By providing an invitation which required

to be responded to (input), and prompting a structure (the bar and commissioned elements) to be inhabited, we aimed at creating an "open system" that would then be responsible for generating and showcasing a collection of miscellaneous artefacts (output) authored by a collectivity of artists within a common context. Visitors were then invited to follow the suggested narrative of the bar—and engage and use the produced artworks—a narrative which revealed to be the binding element of this multi-voiced project.

Narration, as described by Le Guin (1980, p.42), is an "immensely flexible technology" that serves to organise and connect "wildly disparate experiences". Whereas in fiction a narrative structure might be identifiable through its literary elements (time and relation markers, for example), intentional narrative patterns can also be found in the graphic elements determined by a designer. In the present case, the "wildly disparate experiences" are represented by a diversity of contributions, articulating in a collective publication, our designer role slides towards the one of the 'narrator' in its attempt to facilitate a plurality of contributions into a singular surface destined for publishing.

What I describe as "open-system" is close to what a script is, whether it be from its literary definition—the written text version of a stage play, which result may also depend on the director's and actor's interpretations—or its computer science definition—the instructions set for the computer to execute and which result may also depend on the variability of the input.

The terms defining the form of the result are conditioned at a pre-production stage and can be set in motion multiple times with the quality of letting space for a contributor's agency and identity.

Operating this project as an omniscient-narrator-meets-ground-controller was an opportunity to question the limits of a post-production-based practice of graphic design in relation to a collective practice of publishing.

Initially, we had the plan to publish 'new versions' of the bar at a periodical rhythm, keeping it close to our nomadic history. For every iteration of the script, we would invite different artists to

each contribute with a new series of glasses, bar counter, neon sign, logo, etc. thus generating "other" bars based on an identical structure. Images of the artefacts issued in the preceding versions of the bar would have been archived on its website and the physical pieces sold on the occasion of an in-house auction.

The reason for the use of past conditional in the previous sentence is to be found in the very details about the space which I mentioned I would go back to…

We had found shelter in a newly established art space occupying a voluminous warehouse which had been divided into stalls to host artists' studios. This peripheral area of the city is gradually being deindustrialised and such buildings are made available for "affordable" rent to people willing to use the space on a short to medium-term basis.

We were offered to fill the "mezzanine", the non-fenced flat roof of a freshly built 'kitchen-cabin', measuring about 25 square metres, overlooking the rest of the warehouse and its stacked wooden stalls. At the time, the offer was attractive, the experienced artists running the space had exempted us from paying rent in exchange for our labour in renovating that bit of spare space which was yet to be granted a function. The vague mention of a percentage of the benefit we would make by selling drinks was made but never set into any written agreement.

Rotterdam, 2023

In fact, the project was reduced—in several layers—to exist in gaps 'in-between', to persist in leftover spaces: The space occupied by the bar had for its first function to roof a makeshift kitchen, the warehouse hosting it was nothing less than an unwanted building destined to be demolished in the near future while the whole area itself had been undergoing urban planification for years. These layers of precariousness piled up, surreptitiously contributed to the identity of the project. The night of our first event, we were announced that half of our benefit would be taken by the artists running the space, a decision they judged as being the "fairest" in return for the

"light" reaching the interstice we were located in and that they had named "visibility".

 Some of the aspects never came to realisation, the system did not sustain and a second iteration was never made possible.

Most of these insights have been dismissed from the public (published) narrative and left unaddressed, leaving the stage for a utopian version of the bar-scenario.

In retrospect, it is striking to see how much the documentation of this project has biased my recollection of the process and the overall experience. Indeed, funding boards—which we majorly depended on—usually allocate eighty per cent of the awarded subsidy prior to the start of the project while the remaining twenty per cent are granted after the end of the project and in return for a report stipulating the "substantive and financial obligations" (Stimuleringsfonds, 'accountability', 2022).
In these reports, it is generally assessed whether the "activities have been conducted according to the application" or to what is called the "project plan". The emphasis given by the funding's guidelines to match the outcome with what was stated in the project plan leaves little to no room to report on the didactical aspects of the unforeseen. Much of the external criteria for a successful experience are based on the measurement of the "achievements" and the "performance". Meanwhile, unpredicted bifurcations may be threatened by monetary sanctions.

This self-initiated project was funded on two occasions, in March and September 2018. Firstly for the opening of the bar in its fixed location and secondly for an off-site project showcasing a bootleg version of the bar on the occasion of a graphic design and visual arts event abroad.

One of the fundings' guidelines indicating criteria for the assessment the report warns that if "*the achievements of the recipient are less than was determined in the grant decision or if the quality of the completed project or programme does not meet the requirements laid down in the decision, this will be taken into account when finalising the amount of the subsidy. The subsidy will then be fixed at a lower amount, proportional to the lesser performance with respect to the performance for*

which the subsidy was awarded." (AFK, 2022)

In her essay titled "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", Bishop (2004) gives an analysis of the work of two artists (Rirkrit Tiravanija and Liam Gillick) to support her argument denouncing the lack of political engagement within the Relational Aesthetics theory as it is defined by Bourriaud in his book identically titled and published in 1998. In the second part of her essay, she brings into perspective the work of two other artists (Thomas Hirshorn and Santiago Sierra) to demonstrate how their approach to creating art interventions results in exposing relations that are far more "controversial" and "complicated" (Bishop, 2004) than those produced by works encompassed by Relational Aesthetics. It is with the concern that the "artist-run bar-project", initiated, then interrupted years ago and depicted above, might have been a missed opportunity to expose the inner workings of such a structure that I am looking back at the past through the lens of this text. Here, by backtracking, I am attempting to document the "back end", in other words: The unpublished relations and conditions that highly influenced the outcome of the project in order to assemble its complete picture.

Coincidentally, Bishop's essay refers, in three instances, to artworks that also appropriate or use the social space of the bar, in its shape and structure. In the introduction, she makes a mention of bars initiated by artists within museums, critically pointing out "the trend toward inviting contemporary artists to design or troubleshoot amenities within the museum" and presenting them as "works of art" (Bishop, 2004).

The examples of artworks drawn from Relational Aesthetics and counterexamples using methodologies of Relational Antagonism given by the author are in many aspects comparable. The artists cited are contemporary of each other and benefit from "equally high visibility" (Bishop, 2004) in the art scene, their installations were showcased in artistic events and institutions of comparable renown (Documenta XI, 2001 and 2003 Venice Biennale, Kölnisher Kunstverein, Palais de Tokyo, etc.) and take the shape of scenarios that intend to produce or expose social relations. However, their differences rely on

choices that either transform the meaning of these relations into thought-provoking political gestures or carry on a utopian alternative likely to be disengaged from any political concern. Bishop (2004) denotes this difference:

"The relations produced by their [Hirshorn and Sierra] performances and installations are marked by sensations of unease and discomfort rather than belonging, because the work acknowledges the impossibility of "microtopia" and instead sustains a tension among viewers, participants and context."

Depending on its context, the bar might mean something different. In the same essay, an existing "bar run by a local family" (Bishop, 2004) in the suburb of Kassel restaged by Hirshorn's narrative in "Bataille Monument" (Documenta XI, 2002) or a bar presented as an artwork within a museum that becomes "marketable as a space of leisure and entertainment" (Bishop, 2004) carry opposite meanings.

Amsterdam, 2018
Soon after our opening, the artists running the warehouse (curators)—which in parallel were renting out the space to host festive events sometimes loosely related to arts—requested us to provide a bar service for these events, again in exchange for fifty per cent of the benefit and some unquantifiable amount of visibility. No more uncanny cocktails in custom blown glasses, nor curation of the live acts: we were delivered crates of beers that we had to serve in the context of mainstream bar interactions. Once our curatorial agency was dismissed, the project became "compensatory entertainment" (Bishop, 2004). We felt that the intentions of the project had been purposefully misunderstood since we accepted a "free" space from another party. The meaning of the bar switched as its context was changed (from a platform that gathers artists and designers to produce works in situ to a catering service "with a touch").

Bishop's (2004) depiction of Tiravanija's installation (Untitled (Tomorrow is Another Day), 1996) informs us about "the atmosphere of a late-night bar" it is giving, although it is not exactly a bar. The reconstitution of his own apartment within

the walls of an art gallery accessible to visitors day and night leaves Bishop (2004) sceptical about the democratic value of its approach again:

"Despite Tiravanija's rhetoric of open-endedness and viewer emancipation, the structure of his work circumscribes the outcome in advance and relies on its presence within a gallery to differentiate it from entertainment. Tiravanija's microtopia gives up on the idea of transformation in public culture and reduces its scope to the pleasures of a private group who identify with one another as gallery-goers."

Our initiative, first in its nomadic state then once settled, claimed to "infiltrate" events and spaces dedicated to art and culture (artist-run spaces, bookstores, galleries, art fairs and museums). Although we identified with the idea of "infiltration" as an approach by imposing our presence in places we were not invited to and by leaving literal stains on "white cubes'" tiled floors, we remained within the bounds of a familiar circle that brought "art lovers" together. Thus fatally "[producing] a community whose members identify with each other, because they have something in common" (Bishop, 2004).

We neglected to "[address the] political aspects" of "interpersonal relations" (Bishop, 2004) produced by the project. Instead, we maintained the utopian idea of the bar and its community with a similar result to Tiravanija's intervention as described by Bishop (2004) where "Everyone has a common interest in art, and the result is art-world gossip, exhibition reviews, and flirtation."

Bishop refers to the necessity of representing conflictual and disrupting parties in order not to fall into an authoritarian approach and only recreate an environment that is exclusively reproducing ideal relationships and unfaithful to the real conditions and reasons of a situation.

Rotterdam, 2023
This retrospection is useful to figure out the essential aspects of an open-system that is designed to facilitate a collective approach to publishing. By "facilitating" I mean "organising the coming together of author-contributors and preparing ahead the surface for a production that happens in concert between

author-contributors as well as between author-contributors and their surroundings".
What we omitted to script, in the above example of open-system, was the relation to the surrounding in which it operated, the tension between "stage" and "back-stage", the "stage" being the surface of the project, its "back-stage" the material conditions it depended on (such as budget and space).

About five years have passed since I exited "the bar project" through the back door and until I finally gave justice to its under-documented process. By muting the complicated parts we produced an unfaithful documentation that reports of an "ideal scenario" that would only be possible in a vacuum.

Our dependency on prevailing parties, such as curators and funding boards, and the vocabulary used in their guidelines is an example of a mechanism that maintains a polished reality of how self-initiated projects may function (Such examples are far from disappearing, but being aware of it allows us to imagine ways to bypass these mechanisms). The outcome becomes the main obsession while the pathway is neglected. By bringing forward the documentation of relations that may be conflictual or complicated—fully mapping out the current situation—we may provide a learning space for the audience and other models to build upon. The sharing of experience through documentation may as well contribute to sustaining other collective processes and ultimately an act of "collectiveness".

Rotterdam, 2022
Piet Zwart Institute, XPUB2
The beginning of the second year of the master was punctuated with the so-called "public moments". On several occasions, our class had a chance to organise public events in changing locations during which we would invite the audience to permeate our processes, exchange with us unfinished thoughts, drafts, prototypes, questions… Although we were all concerned with our individual research, the small-scale events had everything of a "group show". Therefore, the collective concern to unite the various contributions and provide a comprehensible experience to our guests quickly emerged. The

first format suggested for the "public moment #3"—and adopted —was that of a zine to be launched and distributed during the event. Each of us was free to design an A3-sized spread capturing our research in its current state and which would all come together attached by a paper strap crediting our 11 names and a few lines summarising the origin of the publication's content.

Both triggered by the role of "the host" for this event, a classmate (4) and I decided to form a pair and embody this role. The intention was to experiment with gestures that engage with our audience. Our expected contribution was to suggest a common lens through which the public could look at the different research. The challenge was to find a way to connect without obstructing.

It is by questioning the meaning of the very space that was going to host the event that we found a thread to pull. Indeed, a few weeks prior to the event, our group was asked whether we wanted to host "in school" or "outside school"–in "space A" or "outside space A" instead of: in "space A" or in "space B". We did not seek for much information about "space B" but certainly wanted to escape "space A".
This detail of phrasing became telling, a posteriori, of the little awareness we grew for the environment hosting us, of the silencing of each space's meanings and the acknowledgement of their influence on the meaning of our own presentation.

The place we indirectly chose is, in fact, a "neighbourhood centre" (in Dutch "buurtcenter") which welcomes a community composed of locals. They themselves determine and run a program of activities that enable sociable encounters over culture sharing such as knitting, cooking, learning Dutch, etc.

We were informed that the members of this neighbourhood centre would be more inclined to communicate in Dutch than in English (the latter being our group's common language). A few days ahead of the date, we attempted in vain to translate a part of our presentation into the Dutch language (which the majority of us do not speak). In fact, we were disconcerted in advance knowing that the technical jargon we use to describe our very

specific field of research would inevitably grow a bigger distance between the members of the centre and us, whether it be communicated in Dutch or English. We came to realise that we were displacing our own audience (most likely made of the department's teachers, alumni and friends) to an unfamiliar location, disregarding the existing audience of that location. Facing the discomfort caused by our lack of care, our group decided that this was the crucial concern we were going to share with the predicted audience.

At the start of the presentation, we read the following text which was also wrapped around the individual contributions and bound with the paper strap. The zine then circulated to be introduced, from one contributor to the next, such as a baton, following its page order.

(kim, grgr)

The zine you are holding was published on the occasion of "XPUB Take-away", the third Public Moment of the year organised by XPUB2. We decided to host the event at Het Bollenpandje (Rotterdam-West), which in fact is hosting us. Het Bollenpandje is a community centre that carries various activities for and with people from its neighbourhood.

The intention of the present zine is to introduce snippets of our graduation research to an audience, and share a glimpse of its current state.

While selecting content for the zine, we became aware of the responsibilities tied to the decision of hosting a cultural event in such a specific place. The truth was: rushed decisions had us forget priorities. Hosting a cultural event in a space where we are guests ourselves comes with delicate contingencies. We couldn't think of any space existing in a vacuum, empty of meaning, purpose or even community. Thus, we started a list of questions that we wished we had asked ourselves since the very beginning, in order not to ignore the absence of Het Bollenpandje's community in the planning of this event.

Take-away questions that shall not be taken away
•How to host an event in a space that we are foreign to, and

that already exists through its own community and series of activities?•What is the relation between our event and the space we chose to host it in?•How to host the public of a space that is hosting us?•Why is it important to do so? •How may the specificity of the topic and the language used in our event encourage or limit access to an existing public?•Which elements of our event may affect the inclusion of a community?•How to handle one's urgency in a foreign space? Is one's urgency everyone's urgency?•••"

Rotterdam, 2023
Although the presentation showcased a number of research led individually, the publicising of these works (the public event and the zine) was the result of decisions made collectively.
While each model of publishing processes experienced collectively is unique and this example represents one among an infinity, some aspects are well and truly recurring. As I wondered whether it belonged to the series of examples dissected in this thesis, I was able to assert that the shared nature of the curatorial agency for this public moment inscribes this experience in the realm of collective publishing.

What I found relevant to share, through this example, is the acknowledgement and materialisation of the environment that surrounds the intervention. The parties that compose the collectivity are not limited to the participants involved in the making of the publication but extend to all entities connected to the publication. "Hosting while being hosted" therefore involves at least the following: a "host" that provides the publishing space; a "guest-host" that, at once, inhabits that space on a given occasion and opens it to the public; and the two streams of "guests" gathered by the "host" and the "guest-host".

The binding gesture achieved by the paper strap and the common format of the zine—which I am tempted to label as the "graphic design equivalent" of the aforementioned desire to connect disparate contributions—was reinforced by the introduction of a text ("Take-away questions that shall not be taken away") inviting the audience to engage with the content

through a given perspective. The base for the narrative did not originate from a "new" creation, but it was found by exposing the existing relations between the space, the publication and the audiences and required to be excavated and vocalised in a thought-provoking way.

In publishing projects that involve a collective approach, the pathway leading to the publication itself is an occasion to experiment, fail and learn. At a given milestone on that pathway, the act of publishing marks the border between "simulation" (operating in private, before the "public moment") and "implication" (taking place in public). What is made public— the publication—crystallises the frictions of the collective process and allows the dialogue with the audience to surface. The simulation phase is an opportunity to invent, test out, modulate or tailor various models of organisation for self-initiated collectives. "Mostly, we will have to experiment with different kinds of structuring and develop a variety of techniques to use for different situations." (Freeman,1972) Graphic design is an adequate tool for organising content although when it is also the process through which the publication takes form—the material condition of the outcome— it may be challenging for "the designer" not to overstep the process by wanting to make "effective" design decisions. In the process of publishing collectively, it is essential to operate graphic design methodologies from within the collective process, in fact as an integral part of it, instead of intending, with design, to frame content at a separate stage. Here, the reason for graphic design may rather be located in its potential for "facilitating" content than organising it.

To bifurcate a practice of graphic design from an "outcome-driven" and "external operation to publishing" activity,

considering methods of narration may be insightful. Narration allows similar logic of "organisation" as graphic design does in that it connects events in a directional order, may it be spatial or temporal or both (Le Guin, 1980). Such an approach may facilitate the forming of a whole that consists of a plurality of things. Narration may be included as a method to support the self-organisation of a collective with the intention of connecting the parties involved in the publishing. Its use also has the potential to allow various forms of connections to be pictured and is not only bound to utopian scenarios, thus it might represent a tool useful to give an account of the reality of a situation or deliver faithful documentation of a collective process. Indeed, beyond its connecting, curatorial purpose, narration reveals to be relevant when used in a thought-provoking way to depict "problematic" or "conflictual" relations and again, offers an opportunity to learn from and build upon.

Travelling back to and retrospectively documenting past publications, I began to see reasons to consider the moment of publication as an integral part of the process, a suspended moment somewhere in the continuity—the directional order—of a thought process. In the last example of this thesis, this very moment we curated was the occasion to enter a dialogue with our surroundings (hosting space and hosted audiences). Such interaction grounds the simulation to its surroundings and enables the thought process to continue moving forward. Publishing collectively and repeatedly is essential to reflect on alternative realities of self-organisation and confronting these alternatives to the world outside the collectivity.

Designing approaches will offer relevant support to the process of publishing collectively when their tools are used with the aim to facilitate a plurality of things rather than establishing design solutions. In turn, collectives gathered to publish will offer support to designers by enabling the possibility to practise design from within the collectivity and encourage a practice where the vulnerable act of publishing is, in fact, an opportunity for growth.

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