

An inviting reflection

As if it wasn't already challenging enough to find a holy grail answer to what "Future Gardens" should look like, here is a first thank you to Koen by setting the bar high and hosting us in his own, LABIOMISTA. This thought-provoking setting has only made it more challenging to think about our relation to the world as human beings. All our surroundings have continuously highlighted the tensions between freedom and danger, domestication and wilderness, the local and the global, to name just a few. These are tensions that belong to the solutions we explore for Future Gardens, for future society, and ultimately, for our role as future humans – tensions that are pertinent to the unthinkable, and to this year's edition: Future Gardens.

How do we – as human beings - relate with nature, our environment, to ourselves and others? How can we bridge the present with the future, and yet understand our track record of bridging the past to the present. Or is the notion of "future" an irrelevant linear construct, as multiple people had already pointed out within the first few hours in the thinking boxes. Indeed, thank you to the anthropologists out there for the endless discussions on the questionable role that human beings play in today's world and what their role could be in Future Gardens. Perhaps, the easiest way to tackle this experiment was to take frequent walks to the washrooms, to think outside of the box – predictable, but pun intended.

A big thank you to Emil, in sharing our roles as facilitators and endlessly extending our philosophical discussions to what facilitating actually means? We do actually still have a few open questions about that for the sake of this experiment: if we should think away from structures and regulation in thinking the unthinkable, what should facilitation look like in a market of radically free ideas? How can we, as unqualified politicians in an *unthinkable* society, *think* about rules to promote? Do we want to push for result-oriented impact or do we want to promote everyone's personal evolution throughout the project? To what extent should we allow for the unexpected nature of experimental ideation, and to what extent should we push for action at the cost of more ideation?

Is the Unthinkable Experiment about us as a group of individuals, or about what we can come up with as a network of unthinkable thinkers? Or is it something else? Is two weeks' time too short to light a fire, or too much time in a life of ticking seconds?

There is one truth we were repeatedly confronted with – the number of ideas is indeed infinite, and infinitely inspiring too, even addictive at times. And so there must be infinite new truths to be discovered, that is a hopeful lot of unthinkable work to be done.

But let's take a step back. What are we all doing here? Are we here to learn, or even to just meet others? Why did we then choose to be here and not elsewhere?

Are we here to improve society? Then, what are the ingredients for that? Is it art and science, or is it merely the other that continues to inspire us? Is it then friendship that holds us together, triggering an instinct in us to co-create new beginnings?

Are we here in a quest to our own *identity*? Indeed, thinking away from structures and regulation can be an awfully scary experience, precisely because it brings us in an unknown space that we cannot control, and fear represents exactly that. In thinking freely, we no longer have a reference point to fall back on – think of structures, habits or the advice of relatives or friends. We no longer have a reference point and suddenly demand input from our surprisingly dependent (and domesticated) soul. We no longer have a reference point that helps us make

choices. A reference point that helps us define who we are by what it advises us to think and by what it advises us to do. We cannot even fall into the easy trap of groupthink, because this time, we are caught in an unthinkable bubble created for the first time. There is no reference point that will help us out – we are alone with ourselves, perhaps for the first time. The question then suddenly becomes: *who am I?*

Perhaps, the Unthinkable experiment *is* about you, about self-manifestation, about real adulthood – the rare form of adulthood in which one feels full ownership of one's choices in life.

Perhaps, as many philosophers have claimed over the history of time, our real identity does hide in our inner child – them who are still free from structure. How ironic does it get, that in a project with minimal structure, we have all pleaded guilty to playing the games we hadn't played since we were children, from ninja to tag. How ironic does it get, that group 2's initial ideation output precisely evolved around playfulness. Indeed, overwhelmed with structures and regulation in the real world, there is little place for self-manifestation, little place to really be yourself, little place to become the real owner of your thoughts, choices and action in life. There is little place to think the unthinkable.

As cliché as it may sound, we only live once, but every choice we make is a tradeoff in our limited lifetime – and out of all places in Belgium, Portugal, Austria, or elsewhere, we chose to be here. For most of us, that meant choosing to spend summertime with strangers, somewhere in rural Belgium, in an *unpredictable* experiment. Whatever reason we are here for, it must be meaningful, and it must light some inner fire within us.

To me, the feeling that overwhelms me is that of gratitude. I feel grateful to be immersed in an ocean of wisdom, warmth and with a rare sense of presence. I feel grateful to have met so many fascinating people. I feel grateful that these days have already been endlessly inspirational, and I know that whatever happens, something already happened.