

*Deborah Levy, in her book "The Cost of Living", is a woman busy with undoing the house which doesn't feel like her own anymore, a house she had been building as a married woman to accommodate her role of mother, wife — housewife. In the book the reader follows her moving to a new house, reorganizing its internal routines, spaces, collection/s accumulation/s of objects... in order to make space and time for a more authentic self: her as mother AND writer.*

This reading was surprisingly suiting the moment I found myself in, a moment in which I was asked to witness the developments of radical\_house and, at the same time, join the current core group to think together about its future.

We — here Simone Basani, Alice Ciresola, Heike Langsdorf and Miriam Rohde — had spent two 'Intensive Days', which Heike and Miriam had prepared during their stay at Massia<sup>1</sup>, a place in Estland inviting artists to share living and working time / places for a very low cost and contributing through voluntary work.

During those two days we started bringing our reflections together, but also began to

realize that we had lived with very different (artistic) perspectives — and often also very different possibilities for earning cost/s of living/s (including recognition for what we are doing) — onto one and the same 'project': radical\_house, just another house in the city.

Last year this place challenged itself as a long term project, using a Brussels residential house as both means and subject matter for exploring notions of privacy, ownership and community-making. In the fall 2020 a one year research, House of Practices, was granted by the Flemish Community.

Exactly one year later, after more than one and a half years of pandemic life, everyone and everything seems to restart, and the simultaneity of things happening with endless chains of social interactions seems to be present more extremely than ever. No surprise.

Trying to write down some more contouring reflections about radical\_house and House of Practices becomes rather difficult these days... As if our thoughts

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<sup>1</sup> MASSIA is a place for the professional and not-yet professional and welcomes individuals or groups from any field – artists, practitioners, scientists, activists, researchers, etc., who seek to research and determine their own conditions of work. MASSIA is for people who can motorize their own artistic production and knowledge production not only responding to the opportunities given by the institutional market. [www.massia.ee](http://www.massia.ee)

aren't yet due to formulating new questions and possibilities together... We need to meet a couple of times more, continue our conversation together and in a physically shared location.

Yet, while committing to my multiple daily routines, the conversations that have begun are contributing to my reflections about the past year, the present days and the possible future of radical\_house.

During our so-called Intensive Days, Miriam proposed to use our memory for recounting and noting down for each other what was still resonating: what was still present to us about the people using the house, the activities they generated and how what happens with a place obviously happens *through* us...

When I look back, I see people -- I see myself and others running things, using space/s, living and working in it.

What happened and can still happen is dependent on how people organised, used and reflected through radical\_house so far, and how they will continue to do...

Obviously, a house is a house, people are people, but what happens with spaces happens through people's contributions, undoings, through focussed or distracted attention/s, ignorant dwelling or also sheer neglect.

During this last year it was striking to see how personal -- often very individual -- needs, desires, resistance, doubts, hopes or maybe just a lack of working space, steered the use of the house...

If to say in a few words what the house & people 'did' during the last year it is maybe this: it made visible the inherently different perspectives, wishes, visions and needs people must have when a house is 'offered' to be shared by a person who is living in it. It made us try listening to those differences, and to our very different understanding of what a place can, should do (or not).

Today, I see a house, being a place where intimacy and artistic career coexist becomes a place where people can find both an informal environment to experiment, to ask and receive different kinds of feedback — resonances, reactions, impressions — from practitioners gravitating around the house.

This literally hybrid being of 'a house and people using it' appeared as a **bridge**, a place which can support transition between established places, between schools and institutionalized art institutions: a bridge never considered a place to find accommodation or rest but

always needed as something that provides a way to transport oneself to a place on the other side of where one is.

Furthermore I experienced a place where people came to ask for help, for the production of their project, or were searching time / space for **understanding** how practices are emerging, developed, crafted and maintained. But I also saw a place where certain, already very advanced practitioners, wished to **further challenge** their modes of practicing and presenting work.

And I witnessed a **maybe self-protective impulse** or acknowledgement: there should be more places around which people can gravitate in search for a desirable / alternative forms for working and living together.

Discovering a specific quality of a specific house seems to sharpen the senses for detecting the possible qualities of other places that can be used / shared. Not in the same way but in another — their specific — manner: how to share and how to relate and connect similar places? A possible bond of very different houses, to start with in Brussels, but maybe also beyond?

While reflecting about all of this, it appeared clear that some directions are

starting to become more visible. For the future organisation of the house it might become interesting to work with a couple of frameworks. **They are not meant to define certain modalities of working but considered a way for creating focus — welcome limitation —** and for dividing and distributing the conception, coordination, organisation and realization of activities according to energies, time, talents and interests...

How can places and practices interact, influence each other, transform each other — yet remain emancipated from one another?

How, as a group of people, can we run / serve a multitude of functions of a place together?

How are decisions taken and how can responsibilities rotate?

And not in order to reduce, but maybe to be a little provocative — **while believing in the need of complexifying the way we handle things:** who wants to do what and for how long?

*This text is composed out of bits and excerpts from a coffee-time conversation between Alice Ciresola & Heike Langsdorf, September 2021. The use of the "I" is consciously blurred as blurred is the notion of ownership, privacy and intimacy in and around radical\_house.*