

E-mail conversation between Kathrin Böhm, Wapke Feenstra and Antje Schiffers from myvillages.org, in preparation for their joint residency at Grizedale Arts. Winter/Spring 2007.

*Dear friends,*

*I think we all agreed that we start our Grizedale research with the help of guided tours, right? I ´ve just started a list of possible questions we could present to those willing to guide us, to let them know what could be interesting for us. So cross out or add what you want!*

*To find out who could be asked to guide us – if we have in mind that we are interested in some women´s subject:*  
*a) could be couples, because they seem to have something in common, and then it gets interesting what difference there is between men´s and women´s places*

*b) only women*

*c) more or less of one age ( if so, I would be most interested in those of our age. If it is teenagers, it is more about dreams and plans.)*

*d) of a variety of ages*

*e) another OPTION: Asking men and women about women´s places – could be interesting if there is agreement.*

*As you can see, I try to be structured!*

*So now the list as a starting point:*

*Where do you live?*

*Where did you live as a child?*

*What was a typical place for spending a Sunday afternoon as a child?*

*And as an adolescent? And as a grown-up?*

*Are there disreputable places in your hometown?*

*Where did you go out as adolescent?*

*Where do you go out now?*

*Was there a place for rituals of puberty?*

*What should your ideal place look like? Is there any spot that comes close to this idea?*

*What would be the first place you show to somebody you just fell in love with? First place you show to a child?*

*To a group of 70- year-old japanese visitors who have never left Japan before?*

*Where do mothers or fathers with small children meet?*

*So far for now. I think it is really nice that Adam offered nurse´s support (maybe he was too afraid that he himself could be left alone with the two of them.) With these circumstances, really looking forward to it and curious what we will figure out! I don´t know why, but I always see something glittery and styled for disco.*

*All the best!*

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Hi thanks,

I like the questions in general but at the moment we need as a start a bit more focus on the place itself and the community of the Art institute of Adam.

I think we need to find out first more about the locations and the local persons that were involved in the Grizedale Programm and the situation of the place.

Is it so that some people (man or farmers or unmarried old ladies or...?) do more in the projects they initiate? How do they communicate to the audience?

How do they display there works and projects?

Local and international?



Are they interested in the mingling of private and public in this Grizedale. Why living there? What about the garden?

Can we plant just something there or are they the owners? Who owns this place; formal and informal.

About the new house, who will own that? What is the silence note to the visiting artists that comes there get because that speaks out in the way the place is build and will be decorated and install (ADSL, satellite?)

Will work out more later.

Now just some draft: we can interview them or make on every subject an own question so we use our different inlets in this case as a way of layer and differentiated the mapping of this place – an art place in the rural that connects local and to the art scene.

And from there go into other levels of mapping.

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Hello and thanks fro starting the Grizedale conversation!

I would like to step even further back from the location and start with asking questions about myvillages.

For me it is quite a big question whether we do something as a group there or not.

And doing something as a group is not really what we normally do.

We do our own projects which come together under the umbrella of myvillages, but

I think the only really collaborative work so far, was the actual start of myvillages.org.

Which was an initiative born out of a collective interest and ambition.

We could continue the Grizedale e mail conversation like this, by sending each other list of issues and questions we find interesting. And then look for overlaps and similarities between us.

We ll be doing this by showing our work to each other in Grizedale, which I m really looking forward to.

I have a number of issues I find interesting in Grizedale which come out of my practice:

They have to do with organisational structures, formal and informal interfaces between the organisation and the general public, the making of a social space through cultural programmes, etc.

I m also very much interested in gender issues especially when it comes to cultural production and expression, and I would like to understand much better who has been involved in Grizedale projects, what has been generated, etc.

I made a joke on the phone about the choice of artists for residencies for this year, and made it clear what I think of Jonathan Meese. Adam seems to have a gender agenda here (female functionality, male disfunctionality and artist ego) but I would like to find out more about the history of residencies and his curatorial idea.

In a way I want to meet Grizedale (during the residency) as an organisation, and not as three individual artists. That s why I would like to become clearer about our reasons for doing the residency. I think it should be partly self reflection, and the opportunity to produce/initiate something new as an outcome from this analysis.

My first ideas were that our project might be more of a new initiative or collaboration with Grizedale, rather than an art piece/project as a result of a residency.

I was also thinking of a more long term project/collaboration, rather than a one off thing.

I m interested in the networks that Grizedale is trying to establish, e.g. by bringing women from the village in Japan to Grizedale, and I was thinking of this of a nice starting point for more international village swaps.

I was also thinking of the products they designed for the village in Japan in relation to Höfer Goods, and in relation to our online village shop idea. Maybe we could start a global village shop, with a focus on female production and alternative economies.



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*Dear friends,*

*we'll have a look at the flights tonight to decide about the exact date - anyhow, your proposal is fine with me. Wapke, if you have a look at your OPTIONS for a flight too, we can combine it all and ask Kathrin and Lawrence for a lift!*

*But what we seem to agree on: We all seem to be interested in looking for a way of working together as a collective first time in our history. Adam's choice of male and female artists also was very interesting for me and could somehow be a starting point for our research - in the sense that it strengthens the interest in finding out about Grizedale, residencies, and the locals involved.*

*Just want to say: I have the impression that for a first step, we already find interests in common.*

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I think it is anyway interesting to think about how the myvillages discussions influenced the network, our works (whatever with who) and the works we collaborate in. (come back on our email set up for Grizedale later, also because I want to add in the whole space discussion, that the methods with cheese, wurst and talks and dealing with each others village stories was the biggest and most important collaboration we did. Als agree that we need now also other methods of roaming space to weave in.)

In general I think that it is interesting to think about links and not about limits, so make as much links as possible and keep all clear but connected. Also on our website think we can announce this more clear. I know that I got also more lectures on certain countryside-nature issues, because of myvillages and the tree archive. Got this question for Hardenberg (proposal for the East is now to be presented 5 march), because they know me and myvillages and thought but okay she is also rural, that is new to us but this commission is than good for Wapke. So I try to make a connection there and anyway always will mention myvillages as a partner in crime in the thinking and linking.

Grizedale. Also in the introductions we plan to do about the works we do outside the villages, we can think about what we learned with other groups. More than 10 years ago in NEStWORK I had bad experiences, but no hard feelings (anymore) to the people I worked with. Only learned from that, that putting a name (or more names) on works and not only having an umbrella is important to stay in the air in the art. The artworld is about ego's and playing with that is interesting but beating the history is a collective group work. This is also part of a Rural Art Space, any Art Space. Maybe there is in the village a connection in my village (and in gender?) for example I went to this villagetheatreplay where my brother in law played a character. He is accepted in the history of the village more than my sister that is born there and he was for years a male housewife, but nobody mentions this, he is seen as a farmer. This is about village/images. Art also has images. But we wil beat themALLL!!!!!!



How come dears? Anyway ..  
Have to get some propaan get cold feet.

.....  
Hello

just to keep you informed about overlaps with public works/myvillages activities.

Karen Guthrie, who is project organiser for a project called Creative Egremont by Grizedale, has invited public works to tender for a design project up there. We were shortlisted and finally got the job (after a failed video link but sucesful phone conference). It means that we re designing a mobile Archive for an existing and growing Flk Archive in the town. It s part of a bigger Grizedale programme, which also involves a radio station, a performance pavilion and a permanent building for the archive.

Andreas and I will be working on the project and we re thinking of employing someone new. The mobile archive will need to be ready by late July. Andreas and I might go up to Egremont in Feb.

If you can see any immediate and urgent overlaps with myvillages.org and Grizedale, please let us know. Otherwise we can talk it thourgh in March. I can see some opportunities for cultural soil drillings in Egremont.

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I understand that she would like to visit places of Grizedale projects and meet people who have been involved. To get an understanding of the actual intervention, where and who and how. And the transformation involved in it. And her ideas about cultural drilling.

Yes I think from looking at the ground and choosing some places to focus on we can work out the connection of this place to what is happening now - there. I am into learning this drilling spoke yesterday to an landscape architect. For every kind of ground there is another drill. This is to much for me to learn, I am looking for a general drill :)<<<<

I spoke yesterday to an sonologue (a lovely soundartists I've studies with who is called Justin Bennett) that grew up there at the north close to an central for nuclear energy. He met the Grizedale crew (Adam or Alistair?) at the streets in china hearing people talking in a way (English ) he knew from home and spoke to them and felt overwhelmed by their accent. <<<<<

I like this kind of stories, - this hearing about it - the village romours on another level we all know in art. Belongs to culture drilling it is the widest circle of the drill. we also can dig up stories how people know them. Anne Lise also knew about this place in the lake district where you could live at a farm and she is from Norway.

I would like to find out more about the idea of local produce, such as the so called traditions for the Coniston festival, or the things Grizedale took to Liverpool.

Sources can you \describe the way you want to map the local production and the way you want to look for for sources

1. sources of made products, existing products. What are they and how are they on display and distributed over Grizedale (also books and so on..)
2. sources of possible production in this specific place (material and skills or a combination of it.

Also interested in international networks associated both with grizedale but also other local organisations.  
How far is abroad? I remmebr Mr Armstrong who has been to China before he visited London.



So people don't go to the nest farm for 10 years, but go and see the Chinese Wall.  
stories and historical lines -  
reflecting on the own way of doing it makes maybe questions clear we want to ask and chair with adam.

Can we add more to our own way of putting ourselves into the village of art. Like the thinks we did the methods we use are :  
Gathering, talking, taking pictures, making stories, giving local products, coming back on certain stories, using our networks, flipping over to the non-cool more extreme to open up spaces that we value as our villages. Using the subjective perspective in connection to bigger issues like changing landscape. ... add more or structure a bit??  
What do we miss in our methods of networking and ..  
Would like to have an official and unofficial talk with Grizedale about how they set this network up. Why are they separated to the history of their place, the sculpture garden?? (or is there another history that intermingled wit this place???)

And following Antje's first questions they seem to be more about memories and personal spaces in the area.  
And of course the instant glitter proposal to counteract male expressionism. Would be great if we can add the network ideas tot hat place again and make a impression and expression of this place in a female way. I think our giving food to the audience is already very female but the glitter has to come in now.  
How to star when you are in a village, what does grizedale do at openings? Do they dress up?? Is there champagne or just beer??

And I guess we re all interested in the curatorial ideas that Adam has.  
Yes that is for sure.

that s it for now

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*going on: Planning for Grizedale*

*Maybe I explained my first approach in a wrong way: I am not interested in personal memories for our common project. I have been searching for a first approach to a place I have never been to - let's say, we all have never been to - and thought these guided tours might show us a lot of the different spaces and places in a very condensed and concentrated way. This was not meant to necessarily lead further, but provide a first step of orientation for us without already giving a direction to our research - I somehow tried to avoid giving a direction to it, as in my opinion "local produce" already is - to be as open to any all-of-us-together-idea as possible. (Not that I am against this interest!) Only wondered if it is to early for such a focus.  
So, nothing about memories in my special interest. Perhaps more about by coincidence finding a local way of glamour, or a locally missing glamour, or something like this.*

*Anyhow, I agree on Who-was-involved-in-which-Grizedale-project-in-what-way, mainly because I hope it can reveal something about participatory practice that also concerns our own such practice. And I like the idea of brainstorming and maybe structuring our myvillages-methods as Wapke suggested.  
How could we do this Who-was-involved-in-which-Grizedale-project-in-what-way? Does it include meeting the people once we have their name and address? Or?*

*Will re-read it all again these days for some further comments.*

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Hello All



A few responses to the issues and questions being raised.

## LOCAL PRODUCE

Within the whole debate of locality, local economy and creative industries (see the conference in Lancaster as an example) I am very disappointed when it actually comes to the local produce itself.

They are either often predictable (vegetable, local beer, jam, bread,...) or rather homey, crafty and cliché (woollen knitwear, strange woodworks, etc).

They often look "from the village" and I am interested in how this production can be moved to something that is locality specific but starts to use other production methods and values and also starts to address other issues, and therefore can become more political. E.g. female production, ecology, scale of production etc.

For our visit I am just interested in finding out what is considered local, by villagers and by Grizedale arts. By talking and listening.

And in terms of resources I mean of course cultural, social and material ones. But again, the question of what is local, is quite tricky. Because too many places share the same localness, see local beer and local sausages and local jam etc.

That's why I am more interested in means of production, and I think that's where some more interesting innovation and transformation could take place. Rural products don't have to be home made. That's just a cliché.

A lot of those ideas and questions are of course formed by the discussions we had with Park Products and with Höfer Goods. For Höfer Goods there is an ambition to change the scale of the goods, to move away from small nice things to something that has more of a public and social scale, e.g. a pond. Not sure if we will ever achieve this, but it's an ambition and the recognition that those local produce projects can easily become too nice and too friendly.

The other related issue is currency, and that's why I think an international village shop could be interesting. Could we set up an alternative global village economy, that trades from and within the rural space, but maybe introduces an alternative currency, such as invitations and stories.

## INTERNATIONAL RURAL NETWORK

So far we've been networking artists and cultural professionals. Would be interesting to open the network also to villagers and people involved in the projects. So the participation doesn't just stay locally but becomes also international.

If someone from my village would visit the UK, they would most likely come to London. Why wouldn't they come to Grizedale? Or Shrewsbury? Because it's assumed that you first visit the cities? Or because you don't know and of the rural parts?

Without destroying the planet even further by shuttling even more people from country to country, I am still interested in this more participatory international network that acts within the rural sphere.

## OUR METHODOLOGIES

I think that's really interesting to discuss it further, and maybe also to distinguish between methodologies we develop for the rural networking and our ways of doing things anyway. And we're all very different, so it's maybe interesting to look at methodologies that suit us all, or that seem necessary to adapt for the rural working.

Cross – networking is something we do anyway, I guess, in our own and collective work. So maybe it's about "opening spaces". Maybe we can make a drawing that actually traces our networks and links from the beginning of my villages. What lead to what, has been made possible through which link etc?

The Bringing Food From My Village is a clearer methodology to me, even though I always rather offer Schnaps than sausages. There's something harsher about the alcohol. The smoked ham has a bit of the rawness as well, as long as it has enough fat on it and actually looks like a piece of dead animal. I guess Wapke is using the cheese in a more cultural and associative way, when she recalls the story of the cheese and the links to imperialism and national identity.

I often remember the comments after Ditchling, that the village is actually quite a cruel place, and not at all an idyllic plot. So I guess what I want to say is that the Food Sharing shouldn't become too much catering and comforting but also be a reminder of a certain rawness and directness of the village.

I really enjoyed the day symposium in Shrewsbury, and felt much better than Ditchling.

Of course because we had to say much more. But I can see this open forum as one of our methodologies as well.



I completely agree that we should keep an open brief for ourselves. I don't want to arrive in Grizedale knowing that I want to do something about local produce.

That's just a general interest of mine which seems relevant there, but it doesn't have to become a subject.

I think it's clear that we all like the idea of guided tours, some by people from Grizedale, other by people who have been involved in Grizedale projects.

Maybe we start our days with talking to Adam and Alistair and Karen and other people who work for Grizedale, and then decide which of their projects we would like to visit.

I know that I would like to visit the Coniston Water Festival Project.

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Hi I think we have a lot of thoughts and inlets to start in Grizedale,

Want to add 2 things now:

1. In local produce; in relation to tourism the making of an external image of a place is important. Höfen has hardly tourism Grizedale has, my village has a bit (and the area is very touristy) this is a network of village images we as visual artists have to deal with. How does Grizedale handle this?

2. In Methods, The method of talking, telling stories and repeating stories is very important in art and in village life and in general history. It is a common machine for imagination and history. How do we deal with storylines and the fun of telling it. The gossip of a village and the catharsis of stories? The interaction when we tell stories is important I guess, because there you make a mental space that is connected to the rural and the art scene.