



« Align », invisible workshop, Panaji, Goa, India, May 2019

invisible

Creation 2019

Idea: Yan Duyvendak

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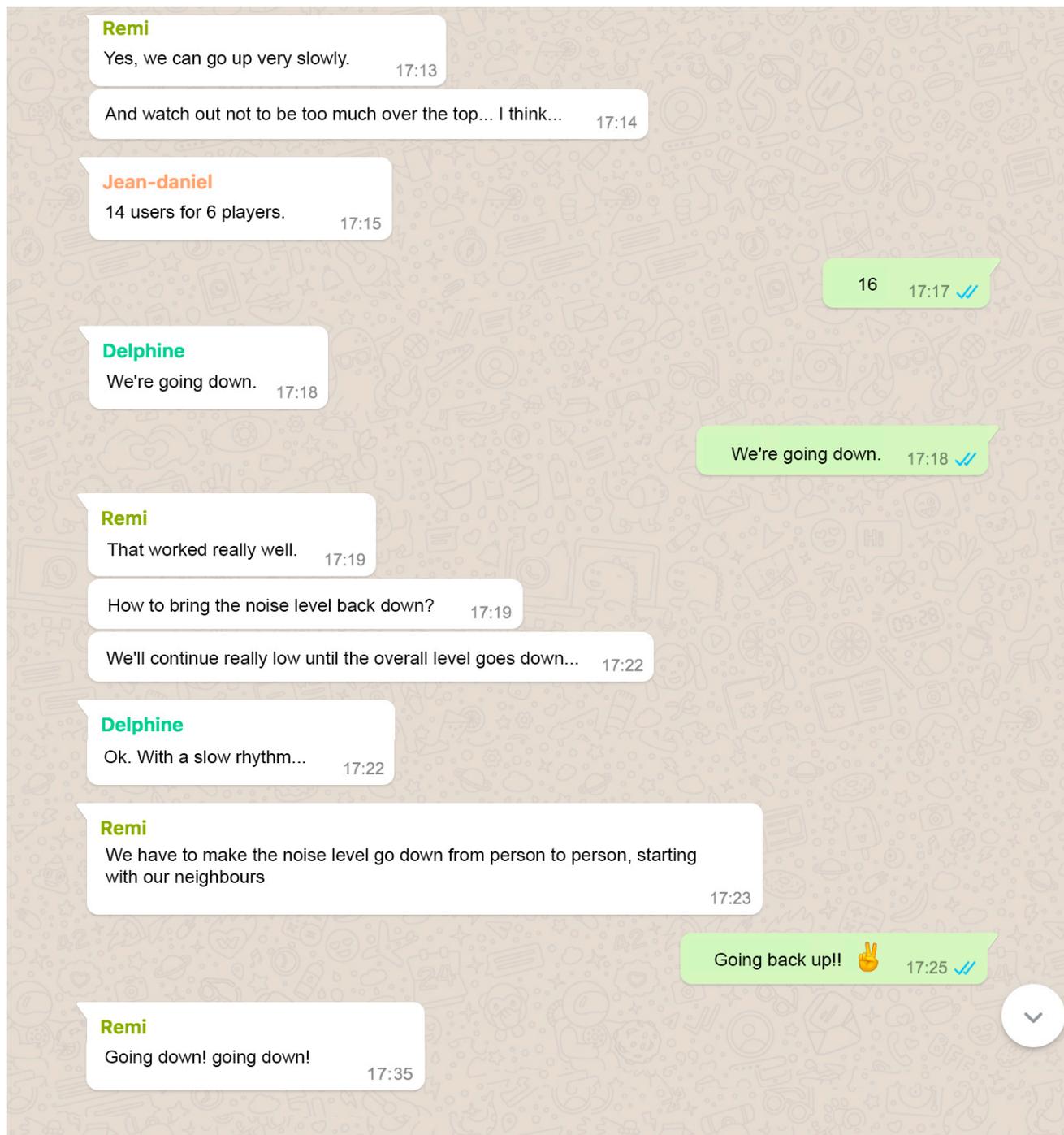
Production: Dreams Come True

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invisible is a game which sends you, starting from a short score and account of a previous experience, into your public space to play a collective game. With a small group of 8 to 12 people, you carry out minuscule interventions. Together, you create a tiny situation, perceptible but invisible, of which you are at the same time the initiator and the spectator - the spectator of a subtle disarray, a strange, comical, political or surprising disturbance. Like a secret committee, you briefly create a kind of poetry of the absurd, whose origin is known to you alone. By playing the game, you will likely become aware of all the potentials intrinsic to being together.



WhatsApp thread of action #3 *Pump Up The Volume* created in February 2018 in Lausanne, Switzerland

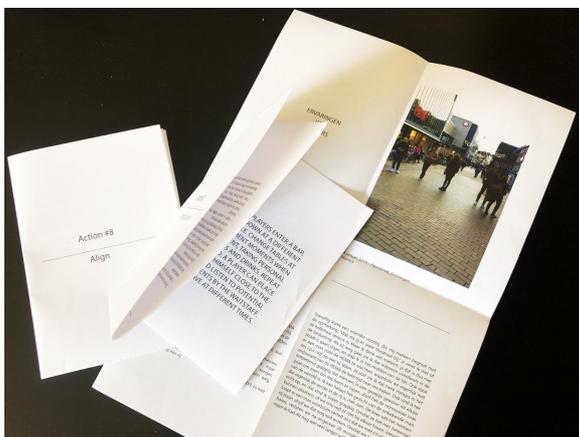
ACTIONS

The game is composed of 18 actions:

- #1 Counter quadriptych
- #2 Mobility service
- #3 Pump up the volume
- #4 It's Closed
- #5 Immobility
- #6 A couple in love?
- #7 A gift (organic cheese crackers)
- #8 Align
- #9 Fine Fragrances Festival
- #10 Cough-wave
- #11 Meerkats
- #12 Party like it's yo birthday
- #13 Sit In
- #14 Beach Swap
- #15 Your Turn
- #16 I'm in Your Head
- #17 Your Choice
- #18 Watch

Each action leaflet includes:

- the **description** of the action to [be performed](#);
- the **origin** of the action, [i.e.](#) where it was created and played [for the first time](#).
- one or several **experience reports**, describing how the same action unfolded elsewhere;



ENTER A PEDESTRIAN SHOPPING STREET, AT IRREGULAR INTERVALS. PRETEND NOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER. LINE UP SUCCESSIVELY, PERPENDICULAR TO THE STREET, WITH A PERSON STANDING IN WAIT. PLAY WITH THE LENGTH, RYTHM AND MOBILITY OF THE LINE. TO FINISH THE SCORE, LEAVE THE STREET SUCCESSIVELY, AT IRREGULAR INTERVALS.

Action leaflet #8 *Align* created in January 2019 in Groningen, the Netherlands

Experience report, June 11th 2019, – Pančevo, Serbia, Damjan

In the small town of Pančevo, we play *Align*. There is an occasional drizzle and the streets are empty. However, we can still find some elderly guy or a couple of lovers hanging around in the streets to start

our line. Or we just do it by ourselves. Some streets are wide and lined with trees, others are narrow and just urban. The lines that we create are stretched, tight, fluid, ephemeral. It's like a dance. Sometimes there are two lines at once; sometimes the lines break up as soon as they are formed. We no longer even check if the passers-by are paying attention: the only thing that matters is our active perception of the space and of our group, invisible yet present.



Align, invisible workshop, Pančevo, Serbia, June 2019

THE GAME

As is customary, the host institution lets the public choose the date and time of the “session” (there can be 1 or 2 “sessions” per day).

Cie Yan Duyvendak

Each session corresponds to a series of 3 or 4 actions to be performed. Several different series can be programmed and composed in function of the host institution's urban and social environment.

Duration: 2h30-3h (briefing and debriefing included)

Capacity: 8 to 24 players per series

Prerequisites: none, except for a taste for the absurd and the willingness to play

Schedule:

- The spectators meet at the scheduled date and time at an "invisible" place inside the host institution. After a 30-minute long briefing from the messenger, the players go to a public venue (station, coffee shops, shopping centre,...) to perform their actions and activate poetic and political triggers;
- The players must not be recognised as participants in an artistic action or game. However, they stay in touch throughout the action and communicate through a dedicated WhatsApp group created for the occasion;
- Two hours later, once the actions have been performed, the players return to the host institution;
- During the 30-minute long debriefing around a free drink, the "spectators" share their experiences and receive the bonus actions and the address of the blog with the 18 actions, which they are free to use as they wish. They are also free to keep the WhatsApp group open in order to keep playing.

NOTE FOR THE PRESS: The "success" of the initiative (as defined below) largely depends on the surprise generated by the actions. We therefore ask the journalists to refrain from divulging their contents. However, they are welcome to talk about the game's apparatus, its theoretical framework, its effect on the individuals and on the group, and the often animated debriefing once the players have returned from the game.

"So ends
The story of a journey
You have heard and you have seen
You have seen what is common, what continually occurs
But we ask you:
Even if it's not very strange, find it estranging
Even if it is usual, find it hard to explain
What here is common should astonish you
What here's the rule, recognize as an abuse
And where you have recognized an abuse
Provide a remedy!"

Bertolt Brecht, The exception and the rule, 1930

PRINCIPLE OF THE GAME

Any game is a combination of having fun, letting go and tensing up, being bored, messing around, finding solutions together and creating or breaking rules. And it makes you want to keep playing until your parents tell you that it really is dinnertime now. Only by playing a game can you really experiment, perceive, understand and assimilate its subtleties.

invisible works just like that. It is by no means a theatre performance and does not follow the same kind of rules, even though it is part of a theatrical line-up. It is a game in the strict sense, and works only when a dozen people agree and decide to connect – very quickly – in order to play together. The stakes are two-fold:

- On the one hand, to create slight alterations in the public space – invisible or at any rate uncategorisable. These alterations can be poetic, political, absurd or comical. What really matters is how they impact the players themselves;
- On the other hand, the players develop an enhanced awareness of what is going on around and inside of them.

Here are our own conclusions, as developers of the game:

- *invisible* requires participants that are not spectators in the strict sense;
- The game makes us aware of how fast we can become very strong as a group, just by performing minimal actions;
- “Success” is achieved through collaboration;
- “Success” is defined as a fluid notion encompassing energy, excitement, calm, consistency, enhanced awareness and dynamics, to everyone’s satisfaction;
- This “collective success” pursues a political result (in the sense of living together in the *polis*, i.e. the city). Collaboration is necessary to achieve a change;
- The game allows the players to experience empowerment in their own way and at their own pace;
- Being part of a secret group is exciting;
- Playing is exciting;
- Observing the world around and inside of us is exciting;
- Getting the chemistry going is both difficult and exciting;
- We all have internalised societal control.

CREATION

invisible was created:

- during a one-year long research project on observation and political activism at the Haute École de Théâtre de Suisse romande – La Manufacture Lausanne (2017-2018);
- then during three creative workshops in Groningen, the Netherlands (Noorderzon Festival and Grand Theater); Panaji, Goa, India (Serendipity festival); and Belgrade, Serbia (Staying Here With You) (2019);
- by 32 people working together, less than a third of whom were artists, while the others were working or unemployed people, teachers, social cases, scientists, etc., based on an idea by Yan Duyvendak.

invisible is based on:

- anthropological and sociological principles (Claude Lévi-Strauss and his idea that the observer becomes an integral part of what is being observed, and that both are transformed by the process of observation; Erving Goffman and the notion of “framing”, i.e. of placing, observing and identifying social situations in order to stage protests);
- Psychologist and philosopher John Dewey’s definition of art not as a necessarily aesthetic experience, but as enhanced awareness – a definition that is radically different from the idea of the artist-hero;
- the invisible theatre or theatre of the oppressed developed by Augusto Boal in the 1950s under the Brazilian and Argentine regimes, and his notion of “spectactor”;
- elements of political actions (standing up or sitting down, speaking up or being quiet when the opposite is required);
- political procedures (estranging, disturbing, defocusing, altering, displacing, copying, enhancing and downplaying, isolating and connecting, decreasing and multiplying);
- the principle of scores (i.e. prescribed action) established by Fluxus, an artistic movement that tried, in the 1960s, to erase the borders between life and art.

CREDITS

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Production: Dreams Come True, Genève

Coproduction: La Comédie de Genève (CH), Grand Theater / Norderzoon – Groningen (NL), Arsenic - Centre d'art scénique contemporain – Lausanne (CH), Pro Helvetia New Delhi / Serendipity Festival, Goa (IN), Staying here with you – Belgrade (RS), La Manufacture HESSO - Lausanne (CH)

Supports: Ville de Genève; République et Canton de Genève; Pro Helvetia – Swiss Arts Council; Fondation suisse des artistes interprètes (SIS), Loterie Romande, Ernst Göhner Stiftung

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