

Projecten e

(Dis)placed

* Sum Na M

#Tastoe

A Tender Pt

Aan tafel - v

Abolition PI

BE PART St

Behold the

BOK public

Cash Crash

Chernobyl I

Citizens of

Common D

Cover Slut

Crime and I

De Wereld

Departmen

Desire Line

Die malle Ja

Don't eat th

Drift. An Ar

Fly Over

Foute Belge

STADSATELIER

10 years of artistic practices in and with the city



STADSATELIER

10 years of artistic practices
in and with the city

“To find a new world, maybe you have to have lost one. Maybe you have to be lost. The dance of renewal, the dance that made the world, was always danced here at the edge of things, on the brink, on the foggy coast.”

Ursula K Le Guin, *World-Making*

Introduction	6
Preface Marieke De Munck	8
Between dream, reality and machine Evelyne Coussens in conversation with programmer Maarten Soete	15
Why I hate participation Simon Allemeersch	23
23 mottos for collaboration Elly Van Eeghem	27
From participatory to relational practices Evelyne Coussens in conversation with curator Marieke De Munck	81
rehearsing the rehearsals that already exist Robin Vanbesien	89
Deep hanging outs, intimate housing, killers: a small lexicon for participatory projects Sarah Késenne	129
BE PART: a collective learning journey beyond <i>participation</i> and towards <i>commoning</i> Chiara Organtini	147
Authors	160
Acknowledgements	167
Colophon	168

Dear reader,

This publication consists of a map and a field guide that features a collection of images alongside some more in-depth texts. It was created for the 10-year anniversary of the STADSATELIER ('City Workspace'), a residency programme from VIERNULVIER that supports artistic, relational practices in the city. We look back – reflecting on our successes, what we have learnt and where we have failed – as well as forwards.

The map tries to make the ecosystem of the STADSATELIER visible in a subjective, poetic way. You will discover locations where artistic practices and public actions have taken place and are still taking place. You will come across remarks from residents or passers-by, as well as quotes from artists and policymakers. The map also shows a few principles we apply and the mottos we use. Important things we've learnt from each other or picked up along the way. You may get lost on the map, we too know exactly where we are not. The *not knowing* is our – and

therefore also your – guide. Ask questions. Look around. Listen. Focus your attention. Reflect.

In the field guide you'll find several more in-depth texts, written by artists, associates and witnesses. They are not exhaustive, but give a small insight into what we have done. We also collected some DIY (do it yourself) and DIT (do it together) contributions from artists and partner organisations. Let these inspire you to get started yourself.

“Leave the door open for the unknown. The door into the dark. That's where the most important things come from, where you yourself come from, and where you will go.”

Rebecca Solnit, *A field guide to getting lost*

Enjoy the journey!

“I believe that all organizing is science fiction
– that we are shaping the future we long for
and have not yet experienced.”

adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy*

About the curator

In the autumn of 2016 I started my first full-time job ever, as a curator for the *City & Transition Program* at VIERNULVIER Arts Centre in my hometown Ghent. I had just turned 40. The house in question was a ‘large institution’. Little did I know what that meant. My professional years before that had been an organic blend of disparate things – and then again, not. At the heart of my work is an imagination that is aesthetic, social and political in equal parts. ‘The broad field of art’ is my domain, but in reality I see ‘the whole world’ as my playground. I foster a great interest in connecting people, in architecture and urban life, in the question of where someone belongs. The so-called ‘extra-ordinary’ is something I’ve been very familiar with my whole life, finding ‘frayed edges’ stimulating. A love for the less-heard voices in the social and artistic debate has guided me on my journey as a curator and in doing so helped shape the STADSATELIER.

About the why and how of this publication

10

When VIERNULVIER joined the European collaborative project BE PART – Art Beyond Participation in the autumn of 2019, the need quickly arose to create more visibility for the often ‘invisible’ artistic practices associated with the STADSATELIER. These artists work in a context outside the familiar cultural spaces, usually over an extended period of time. They try to find a balance between the often slow process and the final ‘product’, and work together with diverse communities of interest. This makes it harder to communicate their work to a traditional theatre and concert-attending audience. The international exchange that took place during BE PART gave us the opportunity to reflect on these practices and to document them in a publication that offers more insights not only to our own audience, but also to our international partners.

As far as possible, we’ve made this a collective exercise. We organised two *study circles*, each with around thirty artists who were closely or indirectly involved in

the STADSATELIER. The goal was to exchange practices, explore each other's work and share artistic 'residue'. Emerging from this diverse group was the smaller working group ATLAS, which considered the publication and its possible activation in more detail. We met regularly, did a city residency in Ljubljana, experimented like crazy and ate a lot of cake.

In **Matter and Desire**, **Andreas Weber** rewrites ecology as a tender practice of forging relationships, yearning for connection and expressing these desires through our bodies. Being alive is an erotic process: the constant transformation of the self through contact with others, and the desire for ever more life. We did what **Donna Haraway** advises: we made 'kin' – created kinship. We simply like *making and being together*.

From the discussions with the ATLAS group, a plan emerged to turn the publication into a map with an accompanying field guide. *Mapping* is a survival strategy of mine. To be able to focus during meetings, to not forget anything, to find my

way through the chaos surrounding me, I'm constantly mapping everything out on paper. These are maps of the world I experience. Rather than a chronologically or geographically accurate method of documentation, they are landscapes of the imagination. And it is on one of these kinds of maps that we tried to capture the ten-year journey of the STADSATELIER.

About the STADSATELIER practices

As **Felix Guattari** describes in ***The Three Ecologies***, STADSATELIER thinking and working cuts across three levels: the human mind, social relations and our environment. Each supported artist starts from an artistic ambition, directly flanked by a political and social motivation. The practice of artists, collectives and partner organisations collaborating with the STADSATELIER shows strong social engagement. The work is context-specific, relational and often explores a topic that affects society (social, political, ecological, economic, etc.). Human interaction

and co-creation are the most important artistic strategies here. The practices are also transformative: they encourage critical reflection and offer new perspectives (for action).

13

We choose to experiment. Come up with an alibi. Pretend. Be on the move. Pay attention: to the environment, to each other, to ourselves. This doesn't always work out: failure is legion. And that's a good thing. Because there is great value in every attempt.

In **Etcetera** in 2015, **Anouk Nuyens** wondered: "How do we ensure that the 'fluid' zones are also recognised as (temporary) authorities?" This publication contributes to this.

Marieke De Munck, Ghent, 1 May 2023

‘Between dream, reality and machine’

**Evelyne Coussens in conversation with
programmer Maarten Soete**

The **STADSATELIER** was created in 2012 with the arrival of five **Stadsresidenten** at the former Vooruit Arts Centre (today's **VIERNULVIER** Arts Centre). **Maarten Soete** knew from the start that creating a proper place there for the five artists would be challenging. The same questions that were asked back then are still relevant today. Can a large institution become a home for small-scale, context-specific practices? What are the tensions between the logic of a large arts house and the flexible, often invisible work of artists working in the city?

The concept of '**Stadsresidenten**' ('City Residents') emerged during a period of transition. For its centenary in 2013, the originally 'red' stronghold of Vooruit wanted to reconnect with its socialist mission, but this time with a contemporary vision. Building on the old values of community development and emancipation, it aims to become an active platform for the transition to a sustainable and fair society. Although Ghent's Vooruit had evolved into an arts centre with an internationally attractive programme in the decades before, the link with its activist roots had been diluted. Vooruit wanted to renew that commitment and position itself as a radically progressive place at the heart of the city and society. This urge was shared by the then Minister for Culture **Bert Anciaux**. At the start of the new millennium, he had made it clear to the cultural sector that, after two decades of detached postmodernism, it had to take up its social mission once again and seek connection with the citizens. To do this, Vooruit needed to change course: the house had been completely geared to (international) performances for an art audience, and much less to projects related to the city.

And that's not all. A few years later, the arts centre would morph into an Arts Institution and belong to a special category of art houses with the statutory obligation to fulfill the five functions of the Arts Decree (development, production, presentation, participation, and reflection). But the Vooruit that had traditionally focused on presentation had little experience with production, let alone with participation or development. The upgrade to Arts Institution would force Vooruit to broaden (and deepen) its range of activities: to not just present artists but to also work with them, give them development opportunities, and to look for a (broader, more diverse) audience for them. It is at that confluence of policy-related, institutional *and* societal impulses that the Stadsresidenten came about. With the Stadsresidenten – and later the STADSATELIER – Vooruit was given the opportunity to reinvent itself and make a credible investment in development, production, participation and reflection.

At the time Vooruit started looking for ways to embed this new direction, there were several individual artists working in Ghent. This included **Ewout D'Hoore**, **Simon Allemeersch**, **Elly Van Eeghem**, **Maria Lucia Cruz Correia** and **Michiel Vandevelde**. Soete knew them through his previous roles at the Bâtard and Theater Aan Zee festivals, as well as the then social-artistic organisation Rocsa. He was faced with a dilemma.

Maarten Soete: “I wondered whether it would be better for them to have few resources and be left in peace to develop their practices in a neighbourhood, or whether to offer them the framework of an institution with people, resources and marketing impact. Could the institution properly take care of them?”

Soete made a commitment to support the five artists through Vooruit, which in turn strengthened its ties with the city through their practices.

**What connected the five original Stadsresidenten?
Why did you choose these artists specifically?**

MS “They were, and still are, artists who foster a commitment to the environment they work in. A commitment that relates to the environment in a different way than the previous social-artistic work. As part of that, the artist was often asked to subscribe to another story: the story of a community or a ‘target group’. This was difficult for the Stadsresidenten: they wanted to develop their own practices for everything but did so in a naturally inclusive way. They also take more of a research- than production-oriented approach. The two ‘types’ of practices are of course not mutually exclusive. With the Stadsresidenten, I saw the opportunity to combine the best of both worlds. Vooruit supported the individual research of the five artists, while productions that would come out of this research could be co-produced with the social-artistic organisations and their strong community ways of working.”

Did the support provided by Vooruit come with conditions?

MS “I was terrified of imposing a framework or topic. It was the artists who set the agenda, not the other way around. They carried out their residency without any obligation to produce, and they got the time and freedom to work where they wanted to. Of course, I made sure they were people whose artistic practices in one way or another related to the city, considering that was the context within which Vooruit’s new commitment was crystallising. They were also artists who developed other processes than the ‘traditional’ participatory approach at that time – there were some fascinating debates taking place on the topic of ‘participation’ back then. Someone like Simon Allemeersch considered the people he worked with not as participants, but simply as his co-producers. We would later call what the Stadsresidenten did ‘participatory’ art practices: art practices with a participatory way of working. Starting from the artist, from their tools and ways of working, however ‘different’ and experimental they might be.”

That pluralism wasn’t easy in a large house.

MS “There were two problems. The first was visibility, both in-house and to the outside world – the press, the art audience. You have to remember, Vooruit could attract up to a thousand visitors in one evening. If then somewhere in the city seven local residents are putting their hearts and souls into

something fantastic, it's difficult to generate the right publicity for this. The second problem was that Vooruit's production machine at that time wasn't set up for those small, flexible and non-uniform productions. Vooruit's machine was an events machine that needed to know a year and a half in advance what was going to happen. If you didn't provide this information, then you got no space, no communication, no technical support. But with the Stadsresidenten a flexible process was exactly what I wanted to achieve: pop up with something here, have a small gathering there... But that proved to be very difficult. For small and spontaneous productions, the machine was too sluggish. And the moment we wanted to put out something topical or unexpected, the calendar was already full up."

In short: the Stadsresidenten cost money without generating any income, image, or visibility. Did these concerns play a role in the evolution of the five individual Stadsresidenten into the more collective STADSATELIER? It seems like an attempt to not only get more voices but also become more visible.

MS "Firstly, we wanted to focus on those art practices in a more collective way, on a larger scale. By also bringing the artists together and asking them to curate evenings themselves, to which they would also bring along their supporters and sources of inspiration. That's how the STADSATELIER could become a true artistic platform. The transformation into an Art Institution ensured that we were able – and forced – to focus on participation and

development, and that there was therefore also a budget to give more people a voice. But an 'atelier' is of course also a physical place that you can visit. So there was a real need to make that work visible for a wider audience."

You didn't get to see for yourself how the STADSATELIER flourished: at the end of 2015 you left Vooruit and, shortly afterward, Marieke De Munck continued your work. Do you feel that the initial question – is there a fully-fledged place for art practices like those of the Stadsresidenten within a large institution? – has been answered?

MS *(pauses for thought)* "I still dream of a fully-fledged workplace that allows art practices with a participatory way of working to flourish within a large institution like today's VIERNULVIER. Because in terms of content, it's a perfect fit: the identity of that house is fully in line with the nature of those art practices: activist, empowering, and focused on change. Furthermore, there are resources, people and expertise to give that kind of workplace wings. With the current organisational model, it should still be possible – even within the big machine – for a dedicated delivery team (artistic, production, technical, communication) to fully serve this kind of STADSATELIER and the needs of its artists. I'm convinced it's possible."

‘Why I hate participation’

Simon Allemeersch

Rosa gave a loaf of bread to her neighbour. Margriet was carried outside by her neighbours. W. took care of the man who was in hospital until that man died. F. continued to support organisations, despite feeling like he was never taken seriously. Astrid cooked for the guests who slept on her couch. A. took in his formerly homeless friend. E. stopped using her cellar because a family was sleeping in it. F. took care of his wife until she died. C. did the same for his wife. The women from tower block three visited after the biggest robbery and brought materials for cleaning up, or to replace what had been stolen. Ch. helped the artists, and he thought it such a good project that he had the project's logo tattooed on his left arm. Fr. felt that empty flats should be used to house people without homes. J. baked a cake for exhibition visitors, something she had been doing for others for years. Residents let the exhibition visitors into their flats and explained the work before sending them onward to the next flat.

Nobody asked these people to participate.

Those who live will try to interact meaningfully with their surroundings. Perhaps that intention is not always noticed by others in said surroundings. Or perhaps that interaction does not always correspond to the expectations of those in the surrounding area.

Solidarity among people in precarious situations is often invisible, too. Those who help their neighbours in a residential building will do so readily and without any fanfare. R. from Ghent's Watersportbaan neighbourhood says: "I do help my neighbour, but I keep it quiet. Otherwise, before you know it, I will have to help the whole block". Solidarity between private individuals is

a private matter – why should it be any different for the residents of a block of flats?

People participate because they are people. They do so *despite* the conditions in which they live, the lack of facilities and the lack of institutional involvement. Those who come along with their own little ideas of participation often treat these people as *bons sauvages* – ignorant creatures who have yet to see the light. But there are no ‘noble savages’: people have a memory and are shaped by past experiences, in a world shaped by a history of unequal spatial development and structural injustice.

The explicit request for the participation of those who have been working in difficult conditions for a long time, and the implicit message that societal problems are caused by their lack of participation, only add salt to the wound.

A specific request for participation (“*What do you think of this new ... ?*”) cannot be made without taking into account these past ‘broad’ experiences, or without the foundation of a prior understanding. Otherwise, the question will always come too late, and you will always get an answer you did not ask for. At best, this results in forced proximity.

People are asked to participate in a new policy project, while for years they have been living with the ghosts of large-scale social engineering and the memory of a stronger welfare state.

Residents are also faced with an uneven distribution of the demand for participation. After all, no one has ever gone from door to door in an upmarket residential area telling people to participate more as an answer to structural problems.

In this light, the demand for participation is nothing more than the disciplining of demographics deemed far too difficult, set up by a 'paper government'.

The real work should lie in creating conditions where people can be somebodies. Regardless of the ideas and desires of a government. Then, instead of requesting participation, we are going after the structural and institutional changes needed to create such favourable conditions. Now it gets interesting. We can borrow the term *createurs des circonstances* from the French educationalist **Fernand Deligny**. But, in fact, that is not a title to be taken or left – it is a responsibility we already have.

In the Soviet Union, there was a parallel reality. *Apparatchiks* described the successes of the system as best as they could, regardless of what was happening in people's everyday lives. Sometimes, when I am in a meeting, and there is talk of good practices, participation and the commons, it seems as if the glorious future of socialism has returned.

The only meaningful use of the word participation is: structurally speaking, how do institutions and governments participate in people's lives? How come so little knowledge is accumulated on the topic of people's social environments? What is lacking in the participation of governments and institutions?

‘23 mottos for collaboration’

Elly Van Eeghem

1.

NOT KNOWING YET IS A GOOD THING.

Don't be fooled by forms. If you can't be clear about *what* you will make, be clear about *how* you will work.

2.

FIND OUT WHAT IS ALREADY HAPPENING.

Don't depend on community workers to provide you with a readymade group of participants. Make your own connections (through on-site video screening, chance encounters in the street, etc.).

3.

PERSONALLY INVITE PEOPLE.

Make phone calls, visit people in their homes, send emails and postcards.

4.

DEFINE THE PLAYING FIELD.

Determine the boundaries within which the project will take place. They can be based on form, content and/or financial limitations.

5.

MAKE TOGETHER.

TALKING WILL COME AS A CONSEQUENCE.

Appreciate different ways of communicating. Talking with colour, wood, etc. Engage in materials-based conversations. Shape what we can apprehend with our senses.

6.

INTRODUCE STRANGENESS.

Make people question the obvious. Collaborative knowledge-making is not just the sum of our previous experiences.

7.

LET THE IMAGINATIONS OF OTHERS SPEAK.

It's not simply about your own abilities or skills, but about being open to all the surprises that others bring.

8.

DON'T WORK WITH MORE PEOPLE THAN YOU NEED.

Some people will not participate actively or manage to find their way to the workspace. Don't force them. Don't ignore them either.

9.

TAKE THE PRODUCTIVE DETOUR.

Do things together that you don't understand the use of (yet). Less efficient also means: small-scale and with more attention.

10.

TAKE A BREAK.

Working together closely consumes a lot of energy. Recharge your batteries. Reconsider your choices. Divert your attention. Return with fresh ideas and new plans.

11.

CONTINUOUSLY CHANGE THE POSITIONS OF INSIDER AND OUTSIDER.

A collaborative workspace can act as an eye-opener and reveal short-sightedness, including your own. Working with people from diverse backgrounds highlights and problematizes labels.

12.

SUPPORT COLLECTIVE IDENTITY.

While preparing plans or working together, speak consistently in terms of 'we', no matter how unclear it might be who 'we' precisely is (or is not). The first-person plural is contagious.

13.

BE VISIBLE ON THE STREET.

Simply: be there. Even though (seemingly) nothing happens.

14.

COLLECTIVE ≠ CONSENSUS.

Enable discussion and disagreement. Even if it makes you feel uncomfortable. Even if it short-circuits your initial plans. Respect the agency of others.

15.

WHO IS PARTICIPATING WITH WHOM?

As a maker, aren't you also a participant in a story that someone else is writing? You're never simply at the helm. You're only a link in a continuous production process of meanings. You will only understand a small percentage of what this collective work

means for everyone involved. Don't forget to take this into account every time you make a claim about the collaboration.

16.

AUTHORSHIP ≠ OWNERSHIP.

When you leave, your collaborators might carry it on, and do their own thing with it. Yet, in a project that is carried by multiple voices, authorship is hard to define. If it isn't related to who invests money, could it be based on time and a person or group's level of engagement?

17.

NEVER USE THE WORD 'COMMUNITY ART'.

Commitment is not a category of art.

18.

NEVER USE THE WORD 'AUTONOMOUS ART'.

Your work is part of a larger system of interdependency. Connected to people and things you didn't even know you were connected to.

19.

DON'T FORGET TO PASS ON YOUR ROLE(S).

You try to recognise the people that you could delegate responsibilities to. You try to follow your intuition in knowing when your leadership is needed and when not. You believe this to be true: you can only become unneeded by being there in the first place.

20.

KEEP AN ARCHIVE.

This is not necessarily a storage space for things you want to preserve, but a place to see what you've thrown away. A witness to the choices you made.

21.

'NORMAL' OPENING HOURS DON'T APPLY.

Know the schedules of the people you work with.

22.

LIMIT MANDATORY MEETINGS.

Spend most of your days with your local collaborators.

23.

EVENINGS ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE BEST SHOWTIME.

So-called normal theatre, film, or concert hours don't apply. Depending on whom you want to address, think of weekends, mornings, afternoons, etc.

From: *(Dis)placed Interventions: Making public space in urban landscapes* (2019)



















































































gent:

VRIJ AANPLAKKEN

Enkel voor aankondiging van evenementen
Pas overplakken als evenement



NICHOLAS



WE CAN BE
INVISIBLE



ementen. Maximum 1 affiche per evenement per bord.
voorbij is. Reiniging elke 1e en 3e vrijdag van de maand.

Info: 09 210 10 10 - gentinfo@stad.gent - www.stad.gent



2019-2020
www.zartbank.be



2019-2020
www.zartbank.be













‘From participatory to relational practices’

Evelyne Coussens in conversation with
curator Marieke De Munck

The STADSATELIER is in a constant state of transformation, as it should be for an artistic union that evolves to the rhythm of society. Curator Marieke De Munck, who joined VIERNULVIER in 2016 (when it was still Vooruit), talks about the changes she has witnessed and, above all, how she sees the future.

In autumn 2016, Marieke De Munck ‘inherited’ the Stadsresidenten that Maarten Soete had embarked with on this journey in 2012: Ewout D’Hoore, Simon Allemeersch, Elly Van Eeghem, Michiel Vandevelde and Maria Lucia Cruz Correia (see *the interview with Maarten Soete*). By that point, the group had already expanded a bit in the form of some initial collaborations with **Peter Aers**, **Veridiana Zurita**, and **BOUGIE** (an artist-run collective). De Munck likes watching this organic agility take place: in any case, she wants to evolve from a one-on-one relationship with individual artists to a more fluid collective that in the long-term establishes a reciprocal agreement – with each other, but also with the respective environments and the art house. A relationship where the arts centre not only supports the artists but also learns from them.

De Munck has conversations with the Stadsresidenten. Some tell her they want to take a different path, and with others, the artistic conversation runs dry. Some of them are going to be part of a new story as the Stadsresidenten become the STADSATELIER. Aside from the connection between De Munck and each individual artist, they consider whether they can build connections among themselves and in doing so form a group. They set up a **Stadskeuken** (‘City Kitchen’), where each month the artists come together not only to eat but also to share knowledge and experiences. New relationships and projects emerge. An extra ‘skin’ also forms around this: people from the artists’ network

connect with relatives they meet during those shared evenings. Together with several local partner organisations, the community of practice **Tot in de Stad!** ('See you in the City!') is launched. And because it all takes place close to VIERNULVIER, the STADSATELIER also creates a new dynamic within the art house.

The evolution from Stadsresidenten to STADSATELIER ties in with a broader trend that has become more and more visible in the arts sector over the last decade: a shift from individual to collective thinking. Have you also seen a change in the methodologies and artistic practices around 'participation'?

Marieke De Munck "Definitely. As well as the idea of 'working with target groups', in recent years there has been more and more interest in another perspective. The target group way of working is a result of a cultural policy from the early 2000s that aimed to use art and culture to 'sweeten' society and promote social cohesion. There is value in that, but at the same time, another generation of artists has come along who are taking a different approach. They don't work *with*, but *in* a community. They enter into a long-term relationship with a particular place, bringing along their craftsmanship, artistic vision and critical eye. By talking to the local residents or people who use the space, these artists investigate what is urgent. I wouldn't call that 'participatory art practices', but 'relational art practices' – with an often activist intent. (*pauses for thought*) Take the '**Draagvlak**' ('Generate support') project by **CAMPUSatelier**, an organisation in Nieuw Gent. In the heart of the neighbourhood, they built a wooden platform, a structure that can be used

by the locals. An idea that is both simple and ingenious: you take over a small area of public space and create a stage for neighbourhood activities, and at the same time it's a reflection on policymakers who overuse the phrase 'generate support'. It's playful, it's critical, and it's been developed by and together *with* the local residents. It's not been set up as a political project, but it does have a political impact. The same applies to a lot of STADSATELIER projects."

You emphasise that these practices are one hundred percent 'artistic', but it's not about the traditional definition of 'the artistic' as we have maintained for centuries in our Western poetics. So perhaps the question is no longer: 'Is this artistic or social?' – a question that has paralysed social-artistic work for a very long time – but rather: 'How do we currently define the artistic?'

MDM "That's correct. The form these artistic practices take is undoubtedly social, but the artist and their work are not defined by this. Take, for example, Peter Aers: part of his practice is to set up conversations. He does that in an artistic way that isn't just focused on social impact, but that impact naturally emanates from his approach. The relational is inclusive, it is simply part of the artistic poetics. It is an extension of the definition of the 'artistic', which is something some people still need to get used to, yes." (*laughs*)

The consequence of working slowly and cautiously in situ – exploring an environment, not focused on immediate output – is that the artist loses part of their audience: the art audience, which comes mainly to the black boxes.

MDM “Indeed. The artist loses part of their ‘official’ visibility and credibility, and there is often less press coverage too. But they gain the attention of a lot of other people that have never been to an arts centre before. That ‘gain’ is very valuable, but I do understand that large institutions sometimes struggle with this. The STADSATELIER practices are also not one-size-fits-all. The communication around these kinds of ‘invisible’ projects has its own set of rules, just like production support. For the institution, this all means extra effort for what looks like not a lot of return on investment.”

Your job title at VIERNULVIER has since evolved from ‘Artistic Manager’ (in 2016) to Curator & Artist Development (2022). From a clearly hierarchical approach to a position of providing care and fostering development.

MDM “For me, Artist Development means: supporting the artist’s practices and putting them first rather than my own business.”

At the same time, you do work for ‘that business’, which seems like a difficult conflict. Maarten Soete spoke here about feeling torn between the desire for flexible customisation for the artists and the ‘machinery’ of a large house. Do you feel that too?

MDM “Despite the good intentions, putting it into practice still reveals several pitfalls. In terms of both communication and production/technology, it’s not easy establishing a place for this kind of programming in-house. There’s a lot going on, but I understand that these are difficult processes for large institutions. My approach? I try as much as possible to ‘find the loopholes’ and to operate like a Trojan horse.” *(laughs)*

You’ve also come up with a new strategy for the STADSATELIER.

MDM “That’s right! For quite some time now, I’ve been pairing up individual artists with smaller partner organisations in Ghent: Manoeuvre, CAMPUSatelier, de Koer, Kunsthal Gent, and more. Together with each artist, we try and find the best fit: it’s not just about a ‘location’, but about the substance of the partnership. The artists carry out a residency at these organisations, during which they get the care and framework that is more difficult for a large institution to provide.”

Who benefits and how?

MDM “Everyone benefits. The artist gets a welcoming environment: a place with a flexible approach to sharing ideas and where basic care is provided: coffee, network, production support, etc. The smaller organisation gets an interesting artist who creates a new dynamic and also brings with them their own network. The artist also has the power of the large arts house behind them:

a whole support package of financial resources, a communication platform, and an international network. The large house creates a richer breeding ground for smaller organisations and also connects with their audiences, and can get them excited about its own programme.”

And as a curator, you don't have to worry about logistical and productional issues.

MDM “I'm still the point of contact and the artistic sparring partner but can rest assured that the artists get day-to-day support. In this model, everyone can play to their strengths, they lift each other up. This hopefully also makes it a sustainable model.”

You put an explicit value on the expertise and unique role of the smaller civil society organisations. In direct contradiction to the goal of Flemish cultural policy to 'slot' artists into large institutions.

MDM “That's a goal of people who don't know how unruly the practice is. The art institution also plays a crucial role in this model: it supports both the smaller organisations and the artist through knowledge, a network, money, and marketing. But definitely in a way that serves them.”

In your wildest dreams, what does the future of the STADSATELIER look like?

MDM “We've only just started with the new approach, so for now we need to wait and see how it turns

out and what we need to tweak. But if it appears to be working, then I'd be interested in scaling it city-wide. Imagine several of Ghent's cultural institutions coming together to pair up a bigger group of artists with the right organisations. Through smart connections, we can help more artists as well as smaller organisations. The large institutions in turn support civil society – not just by providing money but also by engaging with them on a content level, and by connecting their international network and perspective with the local equivalents.”

Finally: doesn't the more inclusive shift in participatory work – starting from the needs of places rather than defining target groups – risk forgetting those target groups?

MDM “To reiterate, I think there's a lot of value to projects with specific 'target groups'. It's just that at VIERNULVIER, my work starts from a different perspective. *(pauses for thought)* It's a difficult question. It has always been an ambitious – and in my view even arrogant – intention of the field of arts to want to make 'everyone' feel included. In recent years we've got stuck in impact thinking: how can we reach all people and solve all their social problems? I don't think that's our role. As the arts sector, we're the thorn in the side, the fly in the ointment. We cannot and shouldn't have to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. It'll only give us a stiff neck.” *(smiles)*

‘Bestaande repetities repeteren’

Robin Vanbesien

The rehearsals I will describe in this text can be seen as manifestations of collective social life, practicing a performative freedom that embodies resistance. Each of these rehearsals calls for social and political metamorphosis.

rehearsal #1

From May 25 to July 30, 2011, Syntagma Square in Athens was occupied as part of a broader popular protest movement against the Troika and the bailout programmes. On the square, the protesting citizens developed a culture of self-organisation, popular assemblies and direct democracy as a tool for decision-making processes. This would trigger the rise of a large-scale solidarity movement across Greece from 2012 on. Many groups of citizens and activists would set up solidarity structures all over the country, organising resistance around the basic needs of people in their communities.

As the philosopher **Judith Butler** argues, if we want to understand more deeply the power and impact of such manifestations of collective protest and resistance, we *'will need to consider more closely the bodily dimensions of action, what the body requires, and what the body can do.'*¹ During the occupation of the square, activist **Christina Papadopoulos** recalls an incident that supports this argument. One day, the police tear gas was so thick that it was impossible to breathe in the square. Since rinsing with water helps reduce the effects of the tear gas, some people started taking water from the fountains in the square. *'Suddenly there was a human chain from here up the stairs, into the street, of people holding bottles, small bottles, or big bottles of water, pouring water, and giving the*

bottles to each other. [...] We really managed to wash ourselves, clean the ground and breathe freely again.’² In Christina’s example, the material conditions that allow everyone to breathe became the object of collective action. As such, this action led to the formation of a politicised consciousness in relation to the body.

We need to know what supports the body and what our relationship is to that support – or lack of support. In this way, the body can be perceived as a ‘living set of relations’: the body cannot be completely separated from the infrastructural and environmental conditions of its life and action. As a result, in times of precarity, the political struggle stands with the material conditions and infrastructural supports that make life worth living: food, health, employment, mobility, education and access to institutions.

The collective action of distributing the water from the public fountains to everyone in the square, in bottles, from one person’s hand to another person’s hand, is a rehearsal of *allilengýi* (αλληλεγγύη, literally ‘close to each other’), which would later become one of the central mottos of the solidarity movement.

rehearsal #2

Mawda Shawri, two years old in 2018, sister of **Hama**, daughter of **Phrast** and **Shamden**, was shot dead by a Belgian policeman on a central motorway near the Belgian-French border. The next morning, a group of people – mainly women and children from the Kurdish-Iraqi community, who had taken refuge in a gymnasium in Grande Synthe – took to the A16 motorway, occupying it and bringing traffic to a standstill in an act of solidarity. In the days and weeks that followed,

the Belgian police and judiciary unleashed a cascade of lies and cover-ups. There was little critical media coverage and the dominant political response was to blame the parents. The eventual court case was riddled with bias and the main culprit was claimed to be the driver of the van in which Mawda was travelling with her family.

At the time of my writing, at least 364 people have died trying to cross the English Channel since 1999. This number has increased in recent years due to strengthened border security. This has also led to more attempts to cross through Belgian territory, resulting in deaths there as well. The Mawda case is a case of lethal police violence in the context of **Operation Medusa**, a police operation that since 2015 – originally on the orders of the Belgian government of Michel I – has focused on actively apprehending ‘transmigrants’ attempting to reach the UK from Belgian territory. Specifically, Belgian highway and customs police no longer focus on arresting people smugglers but actively enter motorway car parks to arrest people without valid residence documents. This hardening of border policy and surveillance leads to increased vulnerability of undocumented fellow citizens.

In a physical and political landscape where solidarity is constantly repressed, it’s important to note how remarkable the first act of solidarity by the women and children of the Grande Synthe community on the A16 motorway was. It stands out as a forerunner of the solidarity actions later undertaken by diverse grass-roots networks across Belgium. These solidarity actions would culminate in a sustained effort to uncover the full truth of the facts and to bring about recognition of the dehumanising violence and injustice that Mawda’s family had to experience.

Mawda's case has deep, systemic causes that cannot be adequately addressed or remedied by the current legal and institutional frameworks, which are themselves ultimately part of the problem. The quest for social justice that the solidarity networks are building does not appear as an abstraction, nor is it tailored to a legal code. It is something that happens *in the moment*, in and through the conditions in and around which people work. It is guaranteed through the embodied social fabric of the citizens concerned. The importance lies in the very practice of collectively rehearsing social justice, even if it unfolds outside of state law.

speaking to these rehearsals

Much of my work as a visual artist and filmmaker is about speaking to these kinds of rehearsals. They are not weak, fragile, passive or broken. Therefore, they do not need to be made visible, activated or integrated. Quite the opposite. They are powerful, strong, creative and playful. Yet they tend to be hidden by the dominant scenes of representation as they are associated with the communities of the excluded.

Even when social injustice remains unacknowledged, it nevertheless passes in, over and through things with a conspicuous presence, embodying what the writer **James Baldwin** called 'the evidence of things not seen'. Repressed social life continues to exist, albeit in the form of haunting ghostly apparitions. In response, in their call for social and political metamorphosis, these rehearsals seek to displace our needs and capacities, to lift the order of divisions.

In a way, these rehearsals are already forms of cinema in themselves. For me, cinema can be anything that

sustains a collective imagination and appeals to the senses. It can be a story around a fire, a collective walk along a river, a protest march in the streets, the ongoing creation, care, and maintenance of a grass-roots, intersectional solidarity organisation, and so on. As long as it is marked by a collective movement, a walk together, a shared journey from one place to another felt, lived, and worked for. Both of the above rehearsals are a form of embodied cinema characterised by an awareness and capacity to preserve, reclaim or redistribute values, rights, feelings, stories, memories, histories, lived cultures, and so on.

I'm committed to making common cause with these rehearsals. For me, lens-based filmmaking can function as a practice that speaks to them and holds them nearby. At the same time, such a filmmaking practice acknowledges why it's necessary to resist any attempt to objectify, capture or occupy them, and why it's imperative to remain attentive to the qualities of their hazy and undefined presence.

Speaking to, not speaking about. As the filmmaker **Trinh T. Minh-ha** explains: “speaking about” only partakes in the conservation of systems of binary opposition (subject/object; I/It; We/They) on which territorialized knowledge depends.’³ Instead, when we ‘speak nearby’ to each other, we leave possible gaps between us, we leave the space of representation open – for us and for the spectator. So, when speaking to these rehearsals in my films, I do not ‘document’ them. Rather, I restage these rehearsals within the shadowy margins and transformative power of the medium of film. In cinema, the notion of ‘worldbuilding’ is sometimes used to refer to the way in which the medium can create an immersive, fictional universe.

Here, in my practice, I understand worldbuilding as the transformation of the world through a transformation of our representational practices. The making of a film helps to rethink the ways we operate and the grounds and soils with which we do things. It is a speculative activity. What is filmed is not this or that, but what surrounds it, what it does, how it speaks to what we don't know, and how it reframes and rethinks what we think we know. It is a way of rehearsing the rehearsals that already exist.

- 1 Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, Massachusetts – London, England: Harvard University Press, 2015): p. 70.
- 2 Robin Vanbesien, *Solidarity Poiesis: I Will Come and Steal You* (b_books – Berlin, MER. – Ghent, Sarma – Brussels, timely – Brussels, 2017): p. 52.
- 3 Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red : Representation Gender and Cultural Politics* (Routledge – New York, 1991): p. 12.

Do It Yourself / Do It Together

King



Queen



Lover



Soldier who falls asleep



Soldier who kills



How to start a conversation on CRIME AND PUNISHMENT in eight steps.

STEP 1

Invite minimum 4 friends family members /strangers to join this conversation.

STEP 2

Read the CASE aloud.

STEP 3

Let every participant answer the question by making a list of the five protagonists, number one being the most responsible, number five the least. King, Queen, Lover, Soldier who kills, Soldier who falls asleep.

STEP 4

Every participant reads the list aloud. No other participant can comment on somebody's list.

STEP 5

Set a timer for 20 minutes.

STEP 6

Come to joint consensus on the list.

STEP 7

If after 20 minutes you have not reached a consensus on the list, decide in consent whether you need more time.

STEP 8

End the conversation with a sentence, starting with "THIS TEMPORARY COMMUNITY FINDS"

* sentence: a group of words, usually containing a verb, that expresses a thought in the form of a statement, question, instruction, or exclamation and starts with a capital letter when written.

* sentence: a punishment given by a judge in court to a person or organisation after they have been found guilty of doing something wrong.

Possible questions to address:

- ✚ Does this temporary community consider the Queen's death a crime?
- ✚ Responsibility and/or guilt?
- ✚ Can we end the conversation without a "sentence" and if so, what does that mean for our group?
- ✚ Should we exclude someone from our temporary community in order to pass "sentence"?
- ✚ What does the "sentence" reveal about our values?
- ✚ If we do not pass "sentence", what does that say about similar future misdemeanours?

(..)

THE CASE

These facts take place in the world today.

The king loves the queen, but he has to go on a journey for a long time. He suspects the queen of having a lover, so he orders one of the soldiers to kill her if she leaves the castle. He tells this to his wife before he leaves.

When the king has left, the lover insists that the queen should come to him. She says she can't as the soldier will kill her if she leaves the castle. The lover begs her and asks her to come anyway the next night. The queen talks to another soldier, he will protect her and help her sneak in and out of the castle unnoticed at an agreed time.

The queen meets her lover and returns to the castle in time. The soldier who was supposed to help her, has fallen asleep. The soldier who received the king's command sees her and kills her.

Who is responsible for the death of the queen?

How can we make sure that
knowledge and resources
are more readily shared?
What can the different institutions,
art organisations and artists con-
tribute towards a stronger ecology
of the arts in Ghent?
Can we see ourselves as a team
of complementary players?

#102

User's Manual Kunsthal Gent, draft 1.2.

Make a user's manual.

These quotes are selected for DIT/DIY on the occasion of 10 years Stadsatelier 404 from the User's Manual of Kunsthal Gent, draft 1.2, 2021. The User's Manual explains what the organisation is made of, how it is set up, whom it is for, how it can be used and what it can offer. This document is made for the users (this includes the public) as well as the staff and the artists. As would be the case for operating a machine or learning a subject, the manual may be necessary for getting the full use out of Kunsthal Gent. Content was gathered from User's Manual draft #1, personal notes, team and board meetings, interviews, artist talks, publications and specific artist contributions. <https://kunsthal.gent/en/about/users-manual>

Do it together.

#10

User's Manual Kunsthal Gent, draft 1.2. Artist talk Roxette Capriles, 2018

Things come alive
when there is friction.

#79

User's Manual Kunsthal Gent, draft 1.2. From a talk by Francis McKee,
CCA Glasgow, 2018

Any person may request to host
events in the space of Syllabus.

#23.3

User's Manual Kunsthal Gent, draft 1.2. From the contract between Jesse Jones
and Kunsthal Gent, 2020



Jesse Jones, *Syllabus*, January 2020. A monumental, 12m high semi-transparent curtain is being moved through the gallery, creating a space-filling moving image of a floating, giant arm. It is the left arm of the well-known feminist and activist scholar Silvia Federici, embracing not only the institution, but also creating a new protective space in Kunsthal Gent.

خلطة الزيت الزمبابوية (السبلة)

سماق حمري

THE ZAATAR MIXTURE IS ORIGINALLY MADE WITH OREGANO (SYRACUSA) WHICH HAVE ROUND FURRY LEAVES THAT ARE GREEN/ GREY OR GREEN/PURPLE IN COLOUR



دونه
مأكول
أو الرمادي

يمكن إستعمال
الزيت أو الدرافة
البرطنجري المدبته ولكن
طعمه ايجمه وطعمه
ليس بنفس الصمغ

الزيت بالمكونات الجيدة. زيت لذيذ ابرهه انا وده ناسف
وطعمه طعمه خشنة اما باليغز أو
على السبلة (3-4 قطرات)



وطف (البر النقي)
أو جيري (ناعم)

SALT
FINE FLOUR OR
OR COOK OIL
(EMULSION)



زيت
سماق
وكتونه

GOOD
QUALITY
OLIVE OIL
(I PREFER GREEK
OR SCULIMAN)

SUMMAQ (SUMAC)

MOST SUMMAQ IS GROUND WITH ITS SEED WHICH DECREASES ITS FLAVOUR AND MAKES IT BITTER. YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR SUMMAQ IN LEBANESE, SYRIAN OR PALESTINIAN SHOPS. ASK THE SHOP KEEPER (THEY MAY HAVE SOME TO SELL BY KILG WHICH IS BETTER QUALITY). YOU WANT TAN Q) SOVA SUMMAQ.

Basic Zaatar Mixture Recipe

By SAMAH HIJAWI

THE SECRET IS IN GOOD QUALITY INGREDIENTS. SO FIND, OR SPEND TIME LOOKING FOR THESE IN YOUR CITY!

OREGANO

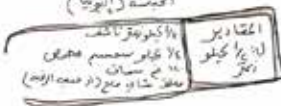
or Origanum
BEST SOURCED FROM COUNTRIES AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN BECAUSE THE PLANT IS STRONGER. GRIND THE DRY OREGANO IN A LOFFER GRINDER (USEN & WELL FIRST) FOR 4-5 SECONDS.



SESAME

THE MOST COMMON SESAME IS SOURCED FROM CHINA. THE BETTER SUMMAQ IS FROM NORTH-EAST AFRICA (ETHIOPIA, SUDAN, EGYPT).

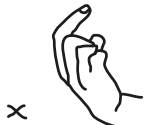
لصمغ تر السواد
سماق حمري
وذلك للزيت اللذيذ ان يكون
إتأ بده اوم السواد
الحمرة (الحمرة)



YOU CAN USE OREGANO OF THIRRE (SMALL SMOOTH POINTY LEAVES) BUT THIS TYPE IS HARDER TO GRIND AND IS NOT AS STRONG-TASTING.

Quantities for 1/2 kilo of ZAATAR
250 gms dried oregano (thyme)
250 gms sesame (toastify)
125 gms summaq
1/2 tspn salt (or more if you like it salty)

HANDALFABET





Deze ruimte is een oefening in het **onzichtbaar-aanwezig-zijn**, een tool die vorm krijgt door ervaring.

Het geeft mogelijkheden tot samenwerking in wederzijdse afhankelijkheid tussen makers, context en materiaal. Bovendien zet het het onvoorzien in gang en bevordert het de non-verbale communicatie tijdens collectieve maakprocessen.

1) CUT BAMBOO

- 2x 150 cm FOR TRIANGLE
- 2x 100 cm TRIANGLE
- 2x 180 cm BASE



ALWAYS CUT BAMBOO CLOSE TO THE JOINTS



REDUCE WATER IS NOT NECESSARY
 COVER WITH WATER IS OK
 FIND OUT THE HEED OF THE WATER SIZE
 COLLECT SPICES FROM THE WATER
 RESPECT BIOGEOGRAPHY
 REMEMBER TO BAKE THAT LIKE
 ON TOP OF THE STICK HOW YOU
 CULTURE CONCOCS REFINES
 RESPECTING ATTRIBING

COMPANION SPECIES

American Sulfurcroc

*fruits from global warming
 (a new species also does that)
 since ecosystems are slower
 to change for animal change!*



*Wood frogs have the ability to freeze during the winter, but manage to stay alive until spring
 - anti-freeze ability*

RECIPE TO HYDRATATE

Tabbouleh with quinoa, cucumber and tomatoes
 The base of this meal, quinoa, is packed with vitamins, minerals and fiber.
 Cucumber, which is 90% water, is perfect for hydration.
 The seasoning is made from onion, a natural antibiotic, mint,

COMMON DREAMS



FLOTATION SCHOOL

2) CUT MORE BAMBOO

- COVER THE TRIANGLE LEAVING A SPACE IN-BETWEEN



MAKE A FIRE

Search for Fungos fomentarios, on the back of birch trees this tinder fungus produces fist-sized polypore fruit bodies, which are shaped like a horse's hoof, and are amazing to keep slow-burning fires.

EDIBLE AS SOURCE OF ENERGY

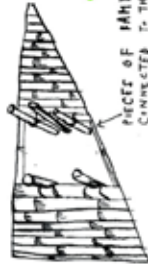
Abricot (source of fiber, vitamin A and vitamin C, provides long-lasting energy and is non-thirst provoking

3) TIE BAMBOO

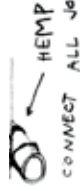


which acts as an anti-bacterial and parsley which can act on bone health.

5) ADD THE PLANT HERBS



- 4) SEAL WITH WAX
- SEAL THE ENDS OF THE BAMBOO WITH WAX.
- USE ANY KIND OF WAX YOU CAN FIND, AND MELT IT CAREFULLY USING A LIGHTER OR OTHER SOURCE OF HEAT.



SONG OF CARE

The Staves, Eagle song

"An eagle flew above us
Blankets wrapped around us
Lucky that she found us
Rooted to the ground
No one will believe us
Mountains as our witness
Blankets wrapped around us
The eagle flew above

By the lake
So high, so high

Call me in the morning I'll be alright
Call me in the morning I'll be alright
Call me little honey and I'll be fine
Call me in the morning I'll be okay
Call me in the morning I'm far away
Call me little darling and I'll be fine"

- CREATIVITY
- PHYSICAL STRENGTH
- HELPING EACH OTHER
- COLLABORATION
- SHARP TEETH
- CO-OPERATION
- PRACTICAL SKILLS
- RESILIENCE



TO MOURN BEYOND THE HUMAN

"This collection is about loss. It's about Grief. And it is about mourning. But it is also about understanding absence, sense of place, and the spectral haunting that comes from more than-human loss. It is about melancholy and transformation, and about different ways of knowing and being in the world that stretch beyond solely human bodies into sensuous experiences of the more-than-human world(s). It is about traces and memories and awareness beyond the human. It is about decentring subjectivities, healing environmental grief, and living connectivity and interdependency. It is about mourning that resists the artificial separation between bodies that cannot be mourned. It is about asking what counts as mournable body, and it is about thinking beyond the human."

Mourning Nature, Hope in the Heart of ecological loss & Grief, chapter from Ashlee Cunsolo

Do it together – een kleine permacultuur repair kit

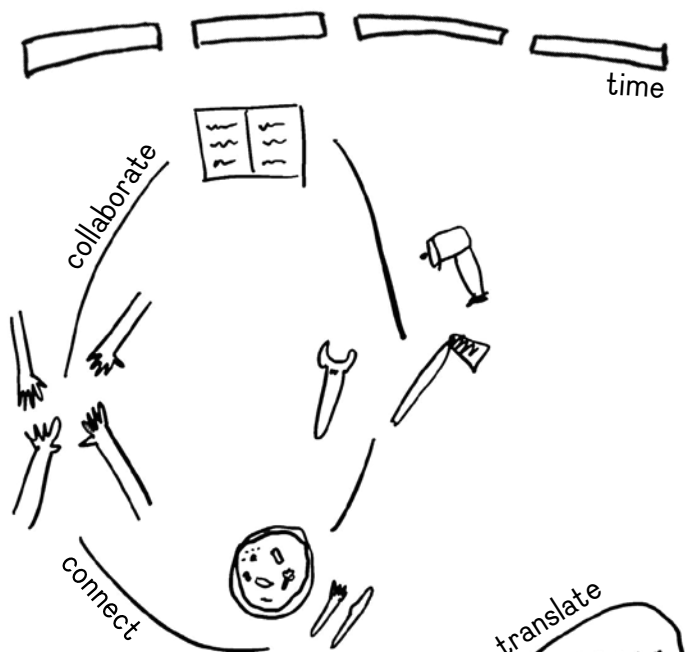
Volgens de Indische eco-feministe Vandana Shiva hebben we nog 42 teelten te gaan als we verder aan landbouw blijven doen volgens het huidige model van grootschalige mono-cultuur. Dat model berust op de ontginning van fossiele brandstoffen voor de productie van stikstof, fosfor en kalium (de beruchte NPK-combinatie in chemische mest) – en dus op externe, eindige input. Tegelijk zorgt de afwezigheid van biodiversiteit in dit model voor weinig weerbare ecosystemen die zich moeilijk kunnen aanpassen aan steeds moeilijkerere klimaatomstandigheden.

Vandana Shiva's observatie over de staat van een globaal, ziek ecosysteem resonanceert scherp met de ambities van de permacultuur. Permacultuur (ofwel 'permament agriculture') is een verzameling van bodemherstellende principes en praktijken die de (vaak inheemse) kennis van de werking en (zelforganisatie van de natuur tracht om te zetten naar een geheel van culturele, menselijke ingrepen in het landschap. Die ingrepen worden uitgetekend in een ontwerp dat focus op het ondersteunen van 'gunstige relaties' (*beneficial relations*) die reeds aanwezig zijn in een ecosysteem. In die zin is permacultuur een vorm van dramaturgie, of waarschijnlijk eerder omgekeerd: dramaturgie is een soort permacultuur. Beide *fosteren* reeds bestaande relaties met het doel om zo'n gunstig mogelijke verbindingen te creëren binnen een ecosysteem – en dat laatste kan evengoed een voorstelling, een organisatie, een praktijk of een kunstenveld zijn. Als het podiumkunstenveld een weefsel of een netwerk is van relaties, kunnen we ons afvragen: ter ondersteuning van wie of wat zijn de bestaande relaties (al dan niet) gunstig? Is het eco-systeem ziek? Wat willen we herstellen?

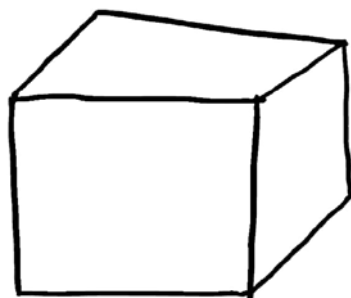
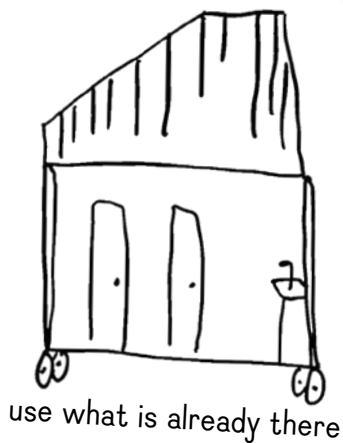
Uiteraard is de vertaling van een aantal principes uit de natuur naar een artistiek veld ook een beetje *tricky* – het risico bestaat dat we bestaande relaties gaan naturaliseren. Het podiumkunstenveld en de artistieke praktijken en organisaties daarbinnen zijn per definitie culturele ingrepen en zijn dus -net zoals de rest van de samenleving- georganiseerd volgens dezelfde assen van conflict, kwetsbaarheid en/of geweld. Mogelijk herstel situeert zich dan op verschillende relationele niveaus: tussen mensen onderling, tussen mensen en praktijken, tussen mensen en tijd, tussen mensen en niet-mensen, tussen mensen en lichaamsbeelden, tussen mensen en (institutionele) ruimtes. En net zoals de bodemsoort, windrichting en het aantal uren zon per dag per zon mee zullen bepalen wat gunstig is voor een plant op een bepaalde plek, bepalen de context van een praktijk of een organisatie en de lichamen die er al niet deel van uitmaken wat geldt als een *'beneficial relation'* en wat niet.

Permacultuur is gebaseerd op een aantal principes, die op hun beurt geënt zijn op bestaande systemen in de natuur en de vaak inheemse kennis van de werking ervan. Het tweede en derde ontwerpprincipes van permacultuur (volgens Bill Mollison) luidt: *'Each element performs many functions.'* En: *'Each function is supported by many elements.'* Hoe meer functies één element kan vervullen, hoe hoger het op de verlanglijst van een permacultuurontwerp komt te staan. Andersom wordt een systeem meer weerbaar (stabiel) wanneer één functie vervuld wordt door meerdere elementen. Vertaald naar een mogelijk herstellende dramaturgie voor organisaties en artistieke praktijken: hoe kunnen we structuren inbouwen die zorgen voor meer gedragenheid en collectief eigenaarschap? Permacultuur leert ons dat een ecosysteem (maar) zo sterk is als de meest fragiele schakel, daarom: hoe kunnen we verschillende kleine eco-systemen maken die het risico spreiden in plaats van één groot systeem dat heel veel input en werk vraagt? Welk(e) ideeën, methodiek, lichamen of verlangens willen we centraal stellen in een praktijk of organisatie? Welke elementen kunnen we inbrengen die een ondersteunende functie vervullen ten aanzien van dat centrale element? Remember: hoe meer functies één element kan vervullen, hoe beter. Maar ook: zorg er voor dat een functie steeds vervuld wordt door meerdere elementen. Een element in het ontwerp dat geen enkele verbinding maakt met andere elementen, hoort er waarschijnlijk niet in thuis. Hoe meer inter-connectie, hoe minder externe input er nodig zal zijn. Enjoy repairing!

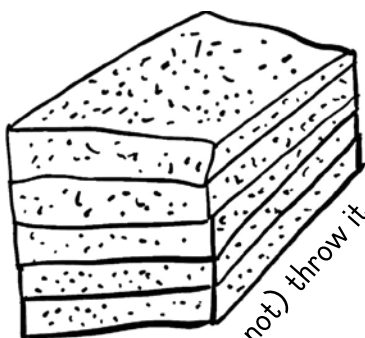
embrace the building



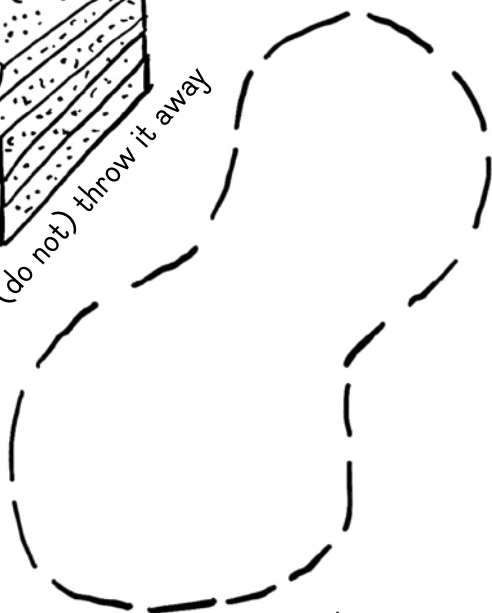
translate



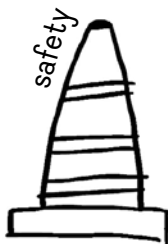
make it transformable



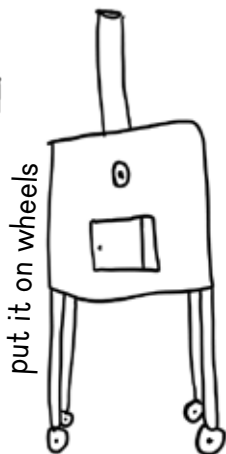
(do not) throw it away



define the playground



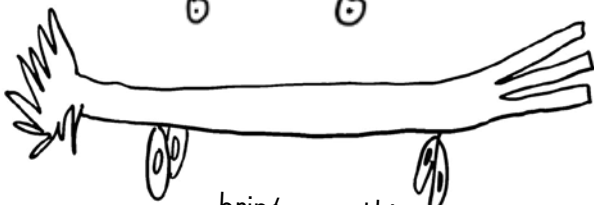
safety



put it on wheels



build with history



bring something unusual

...fermenteren....

WE WANTED TO RETIRE & LIVE LIKE HERMITS IN THE WOODS, BUT THEN AT THE SAME TIME ALSO DO A PARTICIPATORY ART PROJECT WHICH IS REALLY THE OPPOSITE BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE. SO WE KNEW THAT EITHER WAY WE WOULD FAIL SO NOW WE'RE LEFT WITH THE QUESTION: HOW TO SHARE THE BEAUTY OF THE HERMIT LIFE & ACTUALLY BE A HERMIT AT THE SAME TIME.



YEAH IT REALLY WORKED OUT LUCKILY. THE PIECE WAS ABOUT THE FAILURE OF THE IDEA OF THE WEST. I WAS PERFORMING IN THIS 300 YEAR OLD CHICKEN COOP ON A 1500 YEAR OLD FARM & I WAS SINGING THESE COWBOY SONGS I THOUGHT WERE OLD WHILE THESE ROOSTING CHICKENS WERE SHITTING ON ME WHILE I SANG & I FELT LIKE IT MEANT SOMETHING.

IT WILL BE THIS RITUAL & WE WILL BURN PEOPLE'S NATIONAL NUMBERS (OR I'LL EAT THEM) & THEN WE'LL DO THIS DANCE THAT'S REALLY FUNNY TO LURE PEOPLE IN & THEN WE'LL LEAD PEOPLE THROUGH THE JUNKYARD OF LOST EXPECTATIONS & AT THE END PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO GET RID OF THEIR FAILURES & TRAUMAS & WE'LL DRINK CHAMPAGNE & EAT STRAWBERRIES & SING THE PIXIES.



RULES FOR THE PARTY

Everything will be free.

Everything will look rich.

Everything that is self-made in the past hours/days/weeks, will be given away. For free.

At least one person will wear a mask on the back of his/her/their head, which he/she/they made themselves/themselves.

There will be one cake (at least) and one spicy meal (at least).

The party will have trees.

At a certain point, one large object will slowly approach through the trees towards the central end of the party.

There will always be space for accidental passers-by.

Everyone needs to remember one secret observation of the past hours/days/weeks and keep this secret.

People will bring, and leave, a gift.

The sun will have to go down slowly.

Some people will have prepared meals, others will bring something to drink.

Some people will have to be present, others will be missing.

Some people will have to be present, or just returning from work or activities outside.

Some people will have to have loved ones, others miss a similar relationship.

Several people must have conversations, or greet others from a distance.

When it's finally dark, everyone will have to understand that this day has ended.

safer

spaces

hollow

words

bubbles

scented

floating

like

burst!
your event
just got
safe-washed!



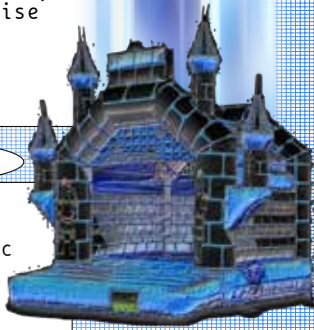
how to organise
a nightlife that is
actually safer
than a marketing
checklist?

May Abnet:
it's not a quick fix!

this little page is a beat in the minute
a minute in the complex torrent of time
a pause in muddy shoes at sunrise
in the middle of a dancefloor
in the middle of a field
of dizzying debates,
exhausted or hopeful

many bodies need to party!

can you remember or imagine
parties as community-building
culture-celebrating microcosmic
world-making? can you feel the
plastic rumble and the energy
generated inside an afternoon
birthday springkasteel
containing sugar-high kids?



how do we care for bodies?

ear
damage
can
be
forever

free
toilets

free
period
material

PMR
access

first-aid
system

drug-safety
testing

drug-free
zones

smoke-free
zones

music-free
zones

strobe-free
zones

safer
access/exit

guardian
angels

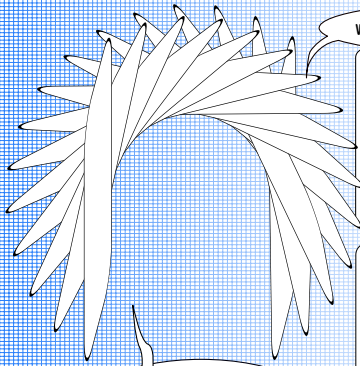
safe
sound

non-alcohol
drinks

free
water

not just
metaphysical
ones....

....



why care about space?

just as you don't fix gender inequality with equal pay, making spaces safer requires deeper and longer-term thinking, dismantling and rebuilding here and there

safety also relates to the perception of safety. and trust!

safer-spaces are rejected by people with contrasting political beliefs who present it as a breach of freedom or as the expression of "woke culture". they think that people have become "oversensitive"

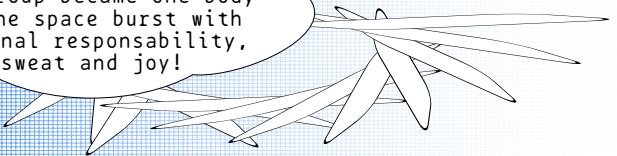
history justifies the need for safer spaces. the concept originated in gay and lesbian bars in the 1960s, as places where queer people were somewhat sheltered from police repression at a time when homosexuality was illegal

today, creating spaces that question racist, sexist, classist, ableist, ageist violence remain an act of resistance and courage. organising safer (queer) nightlife, events, cafes and even bookshops might propel you onto cyberbully playgrounds, TV airtime, newspaper columns and doorstep protests by fearmongering populists

creating a safer nightlife is a complex collective and context-based conversation. it asks us to care for bodies, to invent temporary solutions and to understand systemic discrimination and violence. where does violence come from? what is a policy? what is policing? what kind of regulation can we trust?

a nineties raver told me she prefers a community regulating itself "naturally" instead of safer spaces that recreate a form of policing. another person said our police system exists because crime is "human nature" and will always occur. he wants more police, not safer spaces

...and on that one beat, the group became one body and the space burst with communal responsibility, sweat and joy!



MAKE

time

That is the most important thing.

room for difference

Every place is bulging with contrasts. Work with them instead of reducing an environment to cliché images.

What other village stories are there to tell?

your own position known

You do not observe neutrally, but are part of the dramaturgy. How do you make that position known?

the invisible visible

If desired, some things thrive better in the shadows.

Many actors in the village remain un(der)represented. How can dramaturgy make these stories important?

THINK

together with others

Knowledge of a space is distributed among various people, organisations and things. How do you bring these together?

You will most likely need those alliances later on.

about what's next

What after you possibly leave?
We sometimes think too much about how to arrive and too little about how to leave.

What futures are there for the village and how can the village be the future?

LISTEN

to stories

Dramaturgies are constantly in creation in conversation in the bakery, at work, during bike-rides and small meetings over coffee.

to the birds

That can be relaxing.

AVOID

stereotypes & contradictions

An N-road is as common as a farmer's field.

The countryside is not a bucolic, cultural wasteland.

There is no clear dividing line between village and town, they constantly blend together.

definitions

Both dramaturgy and village are murky concepts, use them with forethought.

DEPART

from what is already there

Dramaturgies arise anytime, anywhere, without your intervention... How can we engage with this inherent multiplicity?

tout court

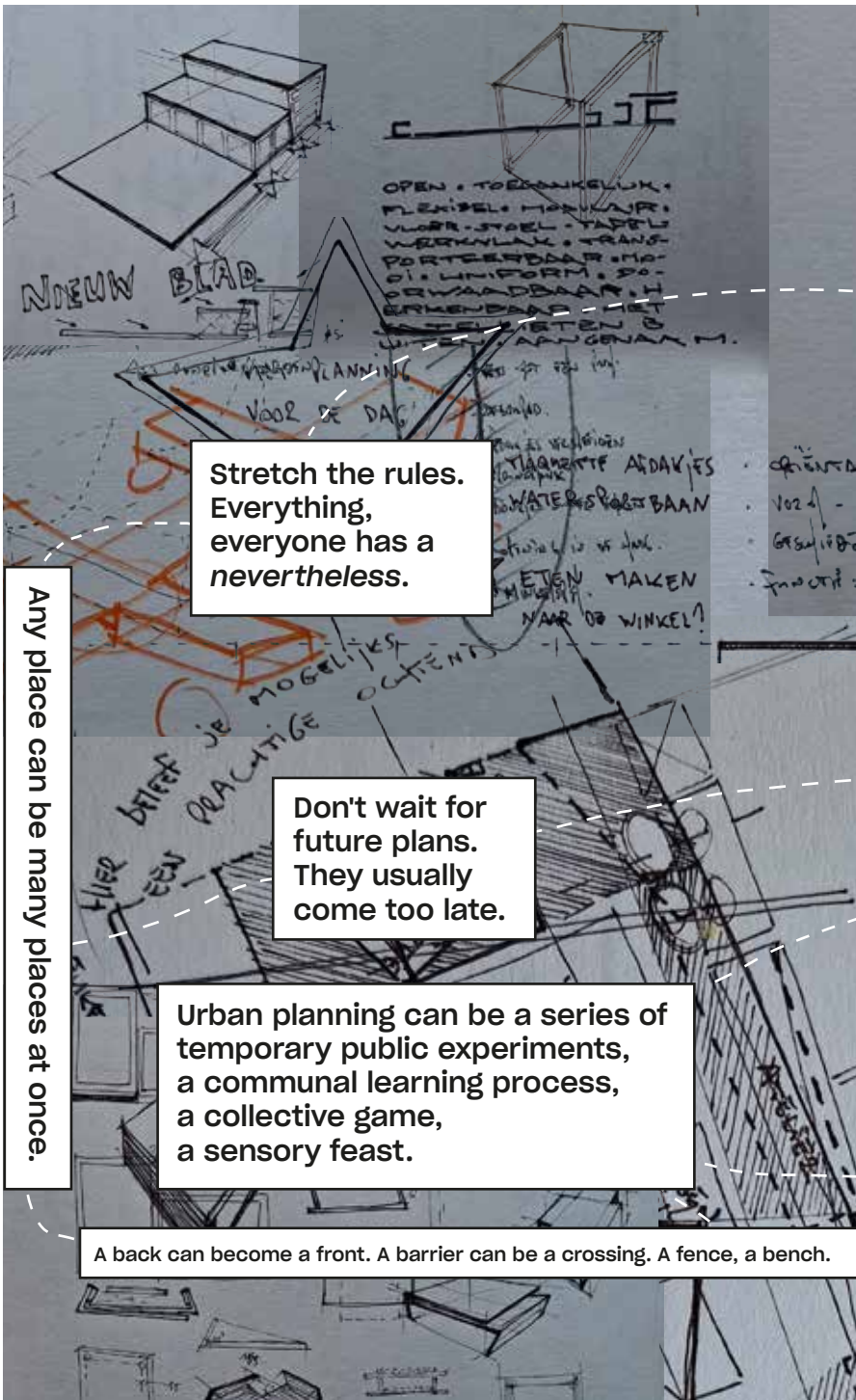
Distance is the beginning of everything, whether that distance is mental or physical.

HOW TO DEFEAT NEOLIBERALISM

1. Gather 10-15 people you like to be with.
2. Open a bank account for which everyone gets a card.
3. Wire all the income made by members of the group to the common account.
4. Make all your expenses from the same account, including food, rent, mortgage, clothes, insurances, etc.

5. Meet every week for breakfast to share what is happening in your lives and discuss your common finances if needed.
6. Do not make rules unless you experience the real need for it.

If you need help or advice in setting up your Common Wallet contact Christophe: toff@contrepied.de



Stretch the rules.
Everything,
everyone has a
nevertheless.

Any place can be many places at once.

Don't wait for
future plans.
They usually
come too late.

Urban planning can be a series of
temporary public experiments,
a communal learning process,
a collective game,
a sensory feast.

A back can become a front. A barrier can be a crossing. A fence, a bench.

MAKING PUBLIC SPACE

STEP-BY-STEP
(AGAIN AND AGAIN)

See the unfinished city.

The rules are not what they are. They can be bent, reinterpreted.

Jump into the opening of the meantime. See the in-between spaces. Ask questions as you go.

Don't have conversations only to be allowed to create something afterwards.

A bridge, a shelter. A dumping site, an open-air museum.(...)

Create something and see what conversation it generates afterwards?

Het Miniatuurmuseum

Het Miniatuurmuseum is een volledig modulaire tentoonstellingsopstelling te gebruiken in huis, op kantoor, in het feestlokaal of eender waar elders. Het bouwen van en invulling geven aan uw Miniatuurmuseum bestaat uit twee stappen, die hoogst waarschijnlijk deels gelijktijdig plaatsvinden. Met beide kunt u vandaag beginnen!

Wat te doen:

1. Bouw uw museum!

De kamers van het museum worden gemaakt uit de kartonnen kokertje die het hart vormen van elke rol wc-papier. Stapel de kokkers op elkaar in het tempo waarmee u ze verkrijgt. Doe dit ergens waar ze niet kunnen weggrollen. In een nis, in een kast, op een plank tussen twee boekensteunen. Zonder enige moeite of extra kosten zal uw museum ontstaan en groeien!

2. Vul uw museum!

Elk object dat volledig of deels in een koker past, is geschikt als potentieel museaal object. Neem hiervoor gerust de tijd, het is niet erg als sommige of de meeste kamers lang leeg zijn. Tegelijkertijd is het aan te raden de objecten die u in uw museum ten toon wil stellen, louter instinctief te kiezen. Kijk bijvoorbeeld eens wat u nog in uw zakken heeft na een lange wandeling of een avond op café. Ook een verfrommeld bonnetje kan kunst zijn, indien u dat zo besluit. Wat u toevallig op straat vindt, is vaak zeer geschikt. Wat thuis in die la ligt waar alle spullen liggen die nergens anders een plek hebben, evenzeer. Stel uw eigen oordeel uit en trek u niets aan van dat van anderen! Maar wees ook niet verbaast als uw gasten plots blijken te hebben bijgedragen aan uw collectie!



do it together - how to round up

An end is a beginning

When it is time to round up
gather all participants of a process,
a project, a workshop
around a big piece of paper
on the floor

make colored pens available
so that thoughts can be collected

prepare one or several questions
as entry points to reflecting back

like:

How do you feel about
the process you had?

What was an aha moment in which
you realised something new
- about yourself or your work?

What does the group still not know
about you?

make as many rounds as needed
give everybody 2 - 5 minutes
to answer a question
take as much time in total
as you feel is necessary

take a break

then gather everybody
around the paper again

Play spacious music
a drone, nature sounds
or anything you like
that helps you focus

the conversation continues
on the paper, in silence
interact with what is
being written
it's a silent conversation
take as much time
as you feel is necessary

then
ask everybody to go around and
read all that was written

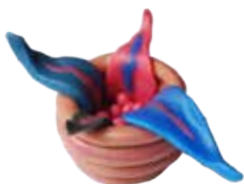
hand out scissors
and golden envelopes

announce:
„Cut out what you want to keep from
this conversation. We will burn the
rest of the paper.“

ask everybody to share with the group
what they put into their
envelope, why they want to keep it
and add:
„Send this envelope per post to
someone you would like to share this
process with.“

then
be together around a fire





during



the



summer



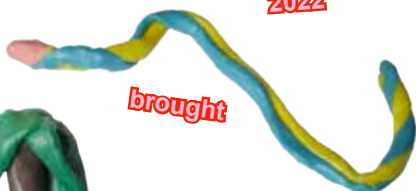
of



2022



I



brought



everywhere



plasticine



I



went



kneaded



we



our



togetherness



into



the



figures

**‘Deep hanging outs, intimate housing, knillers:
a small lexicon for participatory projects’**

Sarah Késenne

Arts & Society is the title of a course at **LUCA School of Arts** in Ghent. It covers political concepts and participatory strategies in contemporary art. The somewhat pompous title stems from conversations about curriculum reforms and is met with resistance from a lot of my visual arts students. The modern traditions of individuality, self-expression and autonomy that they are educated in no doubt have something to do with that. In the 2021–2022 academic year, I asked the students taking this course to hold interviews with the artists who once carried out a residency at the **STADSATELIER** of the **VIERNULVIER**. Considering that many of the students arrive with very little experience of *arts and society*, these meetings between the students and the artists were beneficial. So occupied with the search for their own artistic language, many of them don't seem to reflect on the social and political dimension of art until their third year. This has changed in recent years, but decolonisation and feminism, for example, are still a matter of informal self-study. As one student so laconically put it: "The academy is white."

By having the students carry out these interviews, I wanted them to first differentiate between various political approaches to art and make them realise that their criticism of the *preachy* activist art cliché isn't enough. How can you show that overly homogeneous definitions of political art are insufficient, that more study and engagement are needed, and that there's more to it than the simple distinction between *arts* and *society*? The interviews also coincided with several questions I had about the relevance of the course and the way I spoke about participation and the social-artistic until recently.

What can we learn from ten years of practices within VIERNULVIER's STADSATELIER? What is the status of these previous participatory experiments with a view to the current conversations about positioning and intersectionality?

Deep hanging out

Deep hanging out is a method used by an artists' collective as part of the artistic project **School of Love**. This initiative developed from a project week at Ghent's KASK & Conservatorium School of Arts into fortnightly gatherings. Two years later, it moved beyond the institution. In October 2021, School of Love, together with students from the *Broederschool Humaniora* in Sint-Niklaas, explored questions about the place, role and importance of love as an intention, gesture and practice within a school context. The interview revealed that, at the start, the open gatherings were intentionally left undefined. "The idea was not to know too much about what School of Love was about. We wanted to let it present itself to us."

According to the collective, school was closely linked to the question of how you can share your inner thoughts, and at the same time actively listen. In that sense, you can see *deep hanging outs* as an uninterrupted and unguided kind of speaking, which was also considered a spontaneous and unpredictable way of learning. "*Deep hanging outs* are a form of check-ins where everybody can talk without being interrupted. We do a round so everybody gets a chance to speak. Whenever people feel ready and once everybody has had the time to speak, the conversation itself can begin." So *deep hanging outs* are not about boredom as a spiritual source of creativity, but about a deep form of intersubjectivity.

What is really fascinating is the way the undefined and non-strategic School of Love speaking – without interruption – isn't necessarily *more* horizontal. There is even an assumption that power dynamics are inevitable in group discussions. Because if School of Love aims to support uninterrupted speaking, this means that speaking is in fact very often disrupted. I have always remembered how **Jacques Rancière** warned in one of his texts about the way *les assemblées*, large informal group meetings in resistance movements, are often hijacked by political groups that are knowledgeable about conversational techniques. Conversations about democracy aren't necessarily democratic, just as it is an illusion to think that an informal artistic educational setting (like School of Love) wouldn't have issues with roles and power relationships.

So for me, *deep hanging out* reflects the awareness of these kinds of conversational dynamics, and a desire to nevertheless work from a position of equality. “We think that it is often mistaken that horizontality means taking away the structure. We think horizontality is a commitment to not reproduce a structure of power dynamics. There is no clear leader or clear followers. When those power dynamics are taken away, our usual habit is to reproduce them. If you work horizontally, it is important to think about ways in which to distribute work or responsibility,” the collective believes. This sensitivity to the distribution of power within intimate conversations points to a new approach to collectivity. It is a way of thinking far removed from the kind of community-building art that was supposed to replace the social workers and youth services that had been cut back. This is in fact what sociologists **Hanna Otten** and **Pascal Gielen** warn against when they talk about the *social control machine*: a form of art to discipline excluded groups according to the values of the controlling groups.

In School of Love, the artists also wanted to work with the idea of political love. That led to a conversation with the students about the powerlessness that lies in love: loving as opening yourself up to transformation by another, as something that can bring your identity into question. When students went fishing for definitions of love, the artists answered that interviews always force you to come up with an immediate answer, when you'd actually prefer to let the question sink in.

The witness

This concept played an important role in **The Pain of Others** by artist and performer **Peter Aers**. Through various exercises, he put dialogue with the audience at the heart of this performance. Through a conversation performance, he explored how we can speak in a community and what the relationship is between the individual and the community. As part of this, he asked, for example, whether pain is something you can share, whether you can literally *feel for* someone. *The witness* here refers specifically to a third person in the conversation, someone who is mediating and listening while two others talk, which makes it possible to discuss difficult topics like death. Aers explained to the students that this approach stems from palliative care. Family members and terminally ill people sometimes find it easier to talk to each other via a third person, someone from the nursing staff who is also there, but only to listen. This is something nursing staff can receive specific training in. "When you feel like the people are talking, you hold back, but in a way that still makes them feel like they're speaking through you. We talk even though we know there is a third party listening, which creates more freedom because it's not a one-to-one conversation."

Student: “For me, it’s more like: if I express pain, then I also hurt the other person.”

Aers: “Sometimes people think you can take away another person’s pain by almost crawling into it and taking it over. But in fact, you often want to be alone with your pain: to go and sit in a corner and take your time.”

It seems to me that listening without thinking that you can understand or identify with another person’s experience of suffering, trauma or discrimination is beneficial not only in such sensitive conversations. Listening is also part of the answer to the question of how you, as an artist, can relate to discriminated people and groups from a privileged position. *The witness* recreates the image of urban public space as an internalised inter-subjective space where we train ourselves to listen. Awareness of roles in communicative and collective situations is used for healing and recovery. It is unfortunate that these reparative dimensions of decolonising and feminist theories still don’t get enough exposure.

(Dis)placed interventions

(Dis)placed interventions is a work and concept by artist **Elly Van Eeghem**, and relates to her eponymous years of research into the representation of urban development and co-creation of public space. As part of this research, she created a performance, a book and a series of urban documentaries about Paris, Berlin and Montreal. In her co-creative projects, she established relationships between forms of urban development in different cities. At the **Arts Centre VIERNULVIER**, she presented a performance that I remember for its aesthetic of city maps, slides and

overlapping. For Van Eeghem, *(dis)placed interventions* refer to the duplicity of an artist who *anchors* themselves long-term as a local in a city, neighbourhood or community, while they actually come from outside or from *far away*, leave again and therefore also detach themselves from that place.

(Dis)placed interventions refer to a recognisable avant-garde strategy of *displacement, rupture or intervention* in a given situation/location. *Displacement* is in contrast to *placemaking*, a position that is more about strengthening, rather than weakening, the identity of a place. *Intervention* further reinforces the political nature of the word, as a term from military jargon that has since been fully appropriated by the arts. In fact, I was quite surprised that Van Eeghem identified with the *displaced or intervened* because, in my view, her work reflects an enormous amount of respect for the community – which is perhaps also the reason for the brackets in *(dis)placed*. A belief in the social effect of art always seems to go hand in hand with a strong resistance to the institutional world of art. The ambiguity *(dis)placed interventions* creates is refreshing.

In the interview with the students, she seems to be a little uncomfortable with the formal and academic nature of the term, which might make you think it's taken from architectural theory. "I often have to explain that I meant those words in a humorous way. These kinds of pompous titles are often used in the upper-class museum/gallery/art world. And if you do a lot of work in working-class neighbourhoods, you, of course, choose something that isn't too difficult. The question about the title of this project has also already led to a lot of conversations, so it's working." To the students' somewhat hackneyed question, "Doesn't that make you a social worker?", she replied that she thinks the

terms *social-artistic* or *community art* are “terrible”. These are words that in her view resonate with the mainstream art world’s reaction to functional aspects of art. Van Eeghem’s work of course conflicts with modern traditions of autonomy and individuality, traditions that are still very much cultivated in the academy.

You can ask yourself today whether projects like this took sufficient account of the privilege of the artist developing projects in the context of social housing. For example, who has the privilege of moving between different geographical contexts and reaping the benefits of globalisation? For me, however, these kinds of critical questions are increasingly associated with an admiration for the commitment to work in an emancipatory and dialogical way. Van Eeghem also managed to get long-term funding for running the CAMPUSatelier studio. So you can’t say that these kinds of participatory projects are depoliticised, or don’t take power relationships into account. Perhaps we can also see them as experiments in roles and hierarchy, focusing on class rather than race and gender.

Intimate housing

Intimate housing is a phrase that goes back to a conversation between the students and theatre maker **Simon Allemeersch** about **Rabot 4-358**. This multi-media project highlighted the general housing shortage and need for social housing in Ghent, by telling a story about the demolition of three iconic social housing tower blocks on the outskirts of Ghent’s Rabot neighbourhood. Rabot has traditionally been a working-class neighbourhood where newcomers still often rent their first homes.

Allemeersch stayed in one of the flats, which he set up as a studio, between 2010 and 2013 (and later on for several periods). A group of residents and artists including **Jef Boes, Maarten De Vrieze, Eline Maeyens** and **Sofie Van der Linden** worked together in the Rabot studio, which was created and maintained in close cooperation with the non-profit organisation *Samenlevingsopbouw* (Society Building). The *Rabot 4-358* project culminated in a theatre performance and publication, and caused a minor scandal with the socialist city council.

Ten years after the project, there is a shortage of housing all over Ghent. This is something that can be felt even in the reasonably privileged environment of an art school. Art students can't find an affordable place to live, seem to be living increasingly precarious lives and are having to fund their own studies more and more. Meanwhile, there has been a suggestion to swap the individual studio spaces on our campus for multi-purpose laptop spaces. This means that our students, like those in other art schools, will have to start looking for studio spaces on the private market while they're still studying.

Intimate housing is something I link to what Simon Allemeersch describes as the “unminimalist” right to a form of housing, which refers not only to a roof over your head, but also to the right to a place where you can have hobbies, privacy and intimate relationships. “For poor people, the right to housing is interpreted very minimally and it doesn't work. It would be like telling homeowners they can live in their house, but they can't invite people over or have pets. They would never tolerate that. So we shouldn't accept this for people with less money either.” *Intimate housing* is a term that emphasises that the constitutional right to housing is

about *decent* or *humane* housing and shouldn't just be a privilege of the middle class. So social housing is about more than just meeting material needs.

This reminds me of the case authors like **Rancière** and **Schiller** make against creating a distinction between experiences of *educated* groups, and experiences of those considered *underdeveloped classes*. We assume that the first group has access to a *whole wealth of experiences* (physical, as well as analytical and intellectual), while we limit the second group's ability to fragmented and alienated experiences, because this group has to carry out manual labour. Unlike the (*highly*) *educated groups*, the others are regarded by society as mere *bodies*, without intellect or awareness. The notion of *intimate housing* cuts across this division by pointing out that even those living in social housing lead a rich social and deep inner life.

What is interesting is that the conversation with the students brings new relationships and connections to light. To Simon Allemeersch's surprise, the students indicate that they think it's more important for everyone to have a *safe space* than a roof over their heads.

There is a link between *intimate housing* and the current discourse about *safer spaces*: mental well-being and emotional, symbolic and discursive care within friendships and family relationships – students consider these to be more important than the material care provided by the state. On that topic, the artist wonders why you would then separate material care from mental well-being and care? "It's precisely about the fact that you can't separate the two – this would be a bit naive. Homelessness is not about *sleeping on the streets*, it's about the symbolic and physical/sexual violence people experience as part of homelessness,

for example in a shelter. I know people who would rather sleep on the street than in a shelter. If you really want to work with those in need, then you'll work in places that you will never be able to guarantee are safe spaces, like the Rabot studio. You're working in high-risk spaces and places that are steeped in conflict. That's something you have to try and deal with."

Like many of his colleagues, Allemeersch gets annoyed by the questions about *participatory art*: "I really hate the idea of participatory art. I prefer to see it as auto-ethnographic. It's not possible to give the residents of the flats an objective voice. I keep asking myself who I'm speaking to, when I'm speaking and what kind of audience I have in front of me. Social engagement is about the chosen form, so it is an experiment in form. (...) I see the people I work with not as participants, but as key figures and experts in the telling of my story."

I remember visiting the studio in the Rabot tower blocks with students ten years ago and seeing the questions Allemeersch had back then as a coming of age: artists having their first encounter with the contradictions of working in a social context. Everywhere back then, you'd read that artists didn't feel like social workers. Looking back on that now, I see that I also neutralised his privilege: my analysis was too focused on the self-evaluation and oeuvre development of the white male artist, and on the way in which this modern authorship clashed with the social worker role. This project was definitely a worthwhile experiment that questioned the roles that exist within artistic representation itself. Yet today we find them too removed from the social positions – for example those around education, race and gender – that also create a hierarchy in works of art.

It's important to see that participatory projects also suffered from the division between intellectual artists and *poorer bodies* that need to be governed. Understanding this isn't *leftist self-hatred*, but the basis from which to be able to move forwards together in the debate on art and society.

Kampung

Kampung is something that came up in the interview with Dutch-Brussels artist **Paoletta Holst**. The result of her research, the film **What Bungalows Can Tell** (2019), looks at the history of the village of Kaliurang (Yogyakarta region, Indonesia), built in the 1920s as a health and holiday resort for the Dutch colonial middle class. Today, most of the colonial bungalows are still intact, in the same way that the underlying racial and segregating design principles of the bungalows still influence daily life. Her research also produced the installation **Separated Within Reach**, which thematised the spatial segregation between the *kampungs* and the newly built European city districts. Paradoxically enough, the new city districts only existed thanks to the essential services provided by Javanese from the surrounding villages: housekeepers, nannies, cooks, gardeners, drivers and errand boys. *Kampung* is a Malay word that refers to a (gated) local city district or a small village in which the socially lower class of the population lives.

Holst tells the students that the project *What Bungalows Can Tell* was the first in which she took an artistic approach to relating her interest in architecture, built-up environments, spatial interventions and territories to the colonial past. In doing so, Holst wanted to show the everyday violence of colonialism and give

other voices access to Western historiography. “After several artistic research projects on the politics of the use of space in relation to heritage and migration, I realised that current social frictions around the spatial transformative effects of globalisation and local heritage formation have their roots in the colonial past.”

It’s interesting to reflect on this strategy: to relate, as a white artist, to decolonisation, through extensive study and analysis of colonial history. As part of the process to change its name, the Rotterdam art institution **Melly** also spent years focusing on slow education and long-term knowledge processes and discussion groups to decolonise the institution. However, this approach wasn’t well-received by everyone. Artist and activist **Quincy Gario** felt, for example, that the continued reference to slave trader **Witte De With** showed that the institution had little affinity with people of colour who have to put up with racism and trauma on a daily basis. The strength of a project like Holst’s, of course, also lies not only in a purely scientific, historicising approach to the colonial history of the Netherlands and Indonesia, but precisely in breaking through the idea of objective knowledge. It is precisely in the participation of Indonesian artists, curators and others in the editing of her films, and Holst’s hyper-awareness of her privilege, that reciprocity emerges that has often been lacking in the participatory art of the last decades.

The students certainly felt a connection with Holst’s practice and wanted to explore it by setting up their own activity in their home village. The conversation about this revealed Holst’s annoyance at their presumptions, but also her generosity towards their learning.

Knillers

The fact that the colonial past is complex and consists of a multitude of perspectives was also clear from the interview with Paoletta Holst when she talked about the *KNIL soldiers*, more commonly known as *knillers*. KNIL stands for the *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger* (Royal Netherlands East Indies Army), a unit that consisted of professional soldiers recruited both in and beyond the Dutch East Indies. A large proportion of these KNIL soldiers were from the Moluccas, an archipelago between Sulawesi and West Papua in eastern Indonesia. After Indonesian independence, they came to the Netherlands, where they were housed in former Second World War concentration camps while awaiting the promise of an independent Moluccan state. A promise that was never fulfilled. “The frustration over the lack of understanding for their situation and the complexity of their ambiguous and hard-to-place position, continued for several generations and even today still has an effect on and an important voice in the conversation on decolonisation. It shows that the colonial past cannot be interpreted in clear-cut terms of right or wrong.” *Knillers* are perhaps an early example of intersectional positionality, referring to a world of multiple experiences in which different identities and forms of discrimination overlap.

In the same way that **Documenta 15** by the curatorial collective **Ruangrupa** introduced terms like *lumbung* (a sustainable and communal rice barn) and *nonkrong* (a type of gathering) to the Western art world, with *knillers* and *kampung* we’re dealing with a vocabulary of Indonesian origin – although these are in fact hybrid and multilingual words. They are terms that immediately raise the question of the dominant positions of English and Dutch as barriers to citizenship, and how

to overcome those barriers. Holst says that she's also interested in informal contrast strategies that people use to deal with the influence of formal spatial and political power structures on our communities. This is reminiscent of what the American feminist **bell hooks** wrote about the appropriation of the slave trader's English within the slang of the black community. How and by whom could *knillers* and *kampung* be used to bring about a similar kind of appropriation in Dutch?

But the words also raise the question of how we can translate the Afro-American postcolonial thinking and vocabulary of black studies to the Belgian, Flemish and European artistic and academic contexts, where there are other issues, perspectives, diaspora and migration histories at play. This is also the motivation behind the book ***Afropean*** (2021) by author **Johny Pitts**, namely a search for a specific European identity of black people and diasporas on the old continent. Why is it that hardly any Congolese, Moroccan, Turkish, or Polish words are used in Dutch? Or why do I not know any?

Small feelings

New words can change the conversation in the public arena. For this concise lexicon, I wondered how we could distil new words from the ambiguity of the artistic processes and the conversations with the students – and not just from the artist's artistic and political intentions. What unforeseen small words and feelings surfaced during the interviews between young and more experienced artists about the projects from many years ago? What do these new words tell us about the ways in which art, politics, collectivity and the city have been dealt with in recent years?

If there are politics in unexpected approaches to art, in new relationships between social groups and artistic sensibilities, in the response from viewers about their role in works of art, then there is a lot of value in words that resonate with those discrete shifts in the way we think and feel. When I ask VIERNULVIER dramaturg **Kopano Maroga** about the role of the *white gaze*, they indicate that the issue of the white heteronormative audience often just isn't even relevant anymore.

There is more energy to be found in the relationships with the hybrid, young diaspora audience on slam forums like **Mama's Open Mic**. The *white gaze* is simply not always a priority topic of conversation, says Maroga. This shows how significant language can be in transforming art from a place of exclusion to a place of joy. Equality therefore doesn't lie just in the big debate *in the name of democracy* or in the explanation we give about excluded groups. Equality can be shaped in different ways and isn't necessarily a sociological concept belonging to highly educated artists.

I was therefore particularly interested in the smaller words I was able to pick up on during the conversations between the students and artists, in the students' reactions to what artists said or the response of the art projects in terms of the critical conversation about participation. So I also wanted to approach the interviews as a practice in itself that gives rise to meaningful ambiguity.

There is no clear answer to the question of how to look at the social-artistic practices of the last twenty years from the perspective of current conversations on decolonisation and feminism. Looking at participatory art practices in big-city Flemish contexts, what we can say is that the power relations there were sometimes neutralised and that the good intentions

were sometimes also misguided. Within the international Flemish art scene, it is therefore grotesque to ask the same questions today as before, questions that often started from a Eurocentric perspective on diaspora neighbourhoods.

It is good to see that the critical conversation about authorship and instrumentalisation is never going to die down. We can therefore also say that the experiment regarding roles, authorship and relationality did also involve a type of self-exploration that is useful today. Now that the art sector is once again focusing more on the emancipatory struggle, the question emerges within the polarising public debate of how we can stimulate the conversation about solidarity, this time from the awareness of power relations? It seems to me to be an area that many of the STADSATELIER artists have found themselves in, and the question is whether a prominent arts centre like VIERNULVIER can again play a role in this. The art academy students struggle immensely with the question of how they can be an artist from their position of privilege, a question that I also keep asking myself as a critic and theorist. This exercise shows that listening, in the context of personal conversations, is certainly one important strategy.

This text is based on the interviews carried out by students of the LUCA School of Arts in 2021-2022, in particular Hanne Engels, Soumaya El Khadouï, Zoé Komkommer (interview with Peter Aers), Sara Pasternacki, Nona Stevens, Theresa Schwindt, Camille Seghaert (interview with 'School of Love' in a slightly different line-up than in 2023), Noor de Dapper, Charlotte Dams, Gonçalo Pimenta (interview with Simon Allemeersch), Rachel Okuan and Valentina Orsulic (interview with Paoletta Holst), Zee Labarque, Jason Alenus, Elena Brys, Idar Claessens and Eva Swennen (interview with Elly Van Eeghem).

References

- Gielen, Pascal, Otte, Hanka, 'Als politiek onvermijdelijk wordt. Van community art naar commoning art' in *Trends in kunst en cultuur*, Boekman Extra 13, February 2019, pp. 2-10
- hooks, bell, 'Language. Teaching New Worlds/New Words' in *Teaching to Transgress. Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994)
- Pitts, Johnny, *Afropean. Notes from Black Europe* (2021)
- Quinsy, Gario, 'The protracted renaming of Witte de With, and the capability of doing better' (2020) on Dipsaus 13/06/2020 (online)
- Raicovich, Laura, *Culture Strike. Art and Museums in an Age of Protest* (2021)
- Rancière, Jacques, *Het esthetische denken* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2007). Translated by Walter van der Star.

‘BE PART: a collective learning journey beyond participation and towards commoning’

Chiara Organtini

BE PART (Art Beyond Participation) is a four-year public and organisational development project (2019-2024) in the field of participatory art practices, carried out by ten EU and non-EU partners. Chiara Organtini coordinates the project, and asks herself a number of (self)critical questions.

From paper to reality: how to make sense by doing?

If BE PART was a person, it would be one of these diligent students busy changing the system with a backpack of ideas crystallised in formulas: firekeepers of good intentions who end up blossoming into sensitive and caring humans thanks to their encounter with an ever-changing reality, embracing the inner flow of transformation that makes them unpredictable, adaptive organisms. If it were buildings, they would be condominiums that are capable of surviving earthquakes thanks to its flexibility. Condominiums where conflicts need to be de-escalated to guarantee resourcing and the rearranging of a community based on a common challenge.

Although it was a cooperative project and a consortium of organisations, this didn't stop BE PART from becoming a learning opportunity for a transnational community with practices focused on the actualisation of the notion of participation. A group of people gently cracking the programmed architecture of actions to make space for the *seeds of the now* that were planted in the soil of this project that is so profoundly rooted in the socio-political present.

How to participate in such a fast-changing scenario and not just talk about participation? How to *reflect while doing* in the face of this notion and its necessary

preconditions at the high speed of a world shaking its own symmetries? How is the motivation for working with communities repurposed in times of forced isolation? And how to make it happen in an authentic and meaningful way? **Care, as a repairing act for a damaged present, and commons, as the practice of collectivity as an alternative paradigm to the capitalistic model, appear here as keywords but also as titles of the chapters of the BE PART Bildungsroman**, further unpacking the practice and notion of participation starting from its original meaning.

Participation as a buzzword: why and how?

Through our unique journey, we can map a spectrum of how the notion of participation has changed in the arts and in the sociopolitical sphere over the past five years, moving towards **the collectivisation of power and resources, social healing and the politics of care as driving current urgencies therefore pushing the discourse beyond the artistic realm, acknowledging the contribution of the arts to a general paradigm**. In a nutshell, trying to set structural changes in our artistic ecosystem that can contribute to addressing systemic issues.

Originally BE PART was conceived by a group of partners with long-held practices in developing and programming artistic projects based on the involvement of communities. These partners all believe that topics relevant to society should be discussed in dialogue with audiences in order to bring about long-term impact. In this way the project sparkles as a **practical and critical exploration of collaborative art-making and sharing as a means to reassess the ethics around participatory art practices**.

Five years ago, when the project was established, there was an increasing focus from organisations and academia on participatory arts and engagement. Therefore it felt necessary to inquire more on this, to protect participation from its potentially controversial uses for manipulative political aims and from unfair exploitative actions in these processes: this motivated BE PART to urgently **create and test new methods and support structures for co-created art that are more transparent, that focus on equality and are led by the respective needs of both artists and communities** highly aware of state or private agendas. Following this logic, the project planned to unfold the notion of participation by devising activities developed in collaboration with local citizens involved as co-authors. Going beyond the definition of multiple communities as 'participants', BE PART called them instead **co-creators** of the artistic processes with specific knowledge and experiences to share. It set out a framework developed collectively by artists, producers, curators, theoreticians, communities and audiences equally. Co-creators within BE PART are valued for what they bring to the making of work with artists and as such remunerated and credited for their contributions.

Throughout the development of BE PART, each partner has worked closely with their existing communities in order to identify and anchor its explorations in four relevant and interconnected common themes, which are:

- POWER, referring to the development of methods and recommendations for addressing **the issues of power imbalance;**
- POLITICS, to stimulate models of artistic production and support artistic ideas that move towards socially responsible and **politically empowering cultural projects for all;**
- PUBLICS, shifting the concept of audience development **and considering publics as active co-creators;** and
- PLACE, **exploring the phenomena of localities within participatory practice.**

The network has been accompanied by a group of artists (**Marwa Arsanios, Roland Gunst** and **Lotte Van Den Berg**, and, in its first year, the researcher **Fanny Robles**) whose aim has been defined as supporting the partners in practising criticality as a generative function for defining and assessing the motivations and governance of their practice. The filter of the critical network is intended to result in a guide to ethics and economics for socially engaged practices, which will take the form of a series of questions, acknowledging the unique context created when community, artists and organisations come together.

During the project's implementation, some fundamental points were reviewed, revealing what turns out to be a project architecture that is too closed-off: the critical network, as an undercurrent function, had in fact shifted away from a group of artists providing solutions and recommendations on how to act correctly, becoming instead an extended group of people (involving as well artists active in fieldworks) serving as mediators to provide partners tools and spaces for practising criticality. Rather than offering a fit for all formulas for participation, they were able to provide attitudes that could be tailored to each case based on the specificity of context and the people involved, thus engaging partner organisations more actively.

Leadership was not assigned to one entity (or person); rather, this function was embodied by a collective that facilitates the envisioning of the direction to be taken. Opposed to the shortcut of efficiency and self-sufficiency, this approach implies a slow pace and a long-term process that engages the organisations directly, who in turn commit to being part of a community. In this way, partners are not asked to enter into a pre-determined course of action.

Negotiating common responsibilities and sharing leadership has been a relevant trajectory of the project and one of the possible declinations on participation in different fieldwork across the network. Some fieldwork experimented with **participation more as a strategy in power shifting, leadership sharing and organisational change rather than as a step on the way to a formal artistic conclusion.** For example, **Artsadmin** has been working on the development of a youth programme in an attempt to progressively involve young people from

the Toybee studio's area in the life of the organisation, involving them in the programme and the governance itself with a view to increasing the young people's agency and leadership. This is intended as a means of disclosing possible employment trajectories while, as an institution, being an agent of change, reshaped and rejuvenated through the involvement of diverse perspectives. Similarly, **Urb Festival** developed a young curators programme that would take on a crucial role in the festival's direction, sharing decision-making power and resources.

Young people's voices were also valued in projects like **Cypher** by **Ridha Tlili** (promoted by **L'art Rue** in Tunis), who worked with young breakdancers in Sidi Bouzid, creating a documentary on their lives, in which their stories are interlaced with those of the rising revolution in Tunis. And projects like **Hidden Curricula** and **Everything Is Going to Be Alright**, through which **City of Women** investigated the shortcomings of the educational system and 'official knowledge', giving authorship to the teenagers invited to voice their views and desires on stage. Differently from the first examples but **far from the trap of participation as simple interaction or active role-playing, in these projects there is still a formal 'final artwork'. Interestingly, however, the authorship is shared with the people that contributed to its co-creation**, in turn raising interesting topics for BE PART, such as **consensus and fair remuneration**, the latter of which are too often determined based on parameters such as time or artistic skills and in this way mirroring the neoliberal value system.

Other projects instead **worked closely with local organisations engaged in civil rights, enforcing a trans-local fabric of actors on common themes** such as the right of LGBTQI+ communities (as in **Queer AI**,

developed by Urb Festival, or **In the name of Love** at **Homo Novus** in Riga) issues related to social justice (**Lady Unchained's programme** at Artsadmin) and environmental justice (**Maria Lucia Cruz Correia** in Tunis with **The Voice of Nature**), migration and travelling communities (the long-term project **Travellers** by **Cork MidSummer Festival**) and equity/disability (**Parade** and **Moun Fou** at **Festival de Marseille**). Tackling this issue, **participation is not intended as a representational asset, i.e. merely inviting these diverse voices on stage, but as a way to increase their agency and visibility, to create spaces for participation in their causes and common ground to enable a conversation toward a more diversified and equitable society.**

The reclamation of participation in a wider and public discourse has also been enacted through space-making processes aimed not simply at triggering use or interaction, but at the occupation of public space for relevant discussions on themes linked to the common good. In the case of **Rope** by **Ief Spincemaille** in Marseille, this is attached to the public right to the city and urban planning. Then there's the **Mobile Parliament** in Tunis, which hosts conversations on public space, control and democracy. Another example is **Guxxi Fabrika** in Riga, which explores the theme of labour, exploitation and consumerism.

The idea of working together and being mutually informed also led to projects that rather take the act of community-making as the main core of the action: one such case is that of the **ATLAS** project by VIERNULVIER. *ATLAS* is an artistic and social laboratory, an intergenerational and interdisciplinary community of students, artists and citizens based in Ghent. They share their own practices in different

international contexts, giving life to new maps of places and the project **How to be together** developed by **Santarcangelo dei Teatri**. *How to be together* was a collective, practice-based research project inviting people to come and live together in a temporary village, an ephemeral artistic intervention, in the public space. The residency was aimed at experimenting collectively with modes of togetherness and participation, creating a temporary community that could also reflect and produce knowledge on this topic, also mingling with local communities in the process. These two projects both viewed participation not only as a discourse but also as a practice, not merely working with communities but creating temporary communities through artistic work. They experiment with the assembly of a multitude of differences in lived experience at the edge of fiction and reality, therefore infiltrating the arts practice in the realm of commons and collective living.

What now?

From participation to care and commoning

BE PART's research is still ongoing, but there are pillars that we can already harvest. We already started from the desire of **'being part' rather than taking part**, highlighting participation as a form of **presence and ownership in a process**. The project has given rise to an increasingly clear definition of **participation, far from the idea of engagement** (in the making or the results) and inclusion, both of which assume the act of stepping into a frame that is preset by an author (or authority) embodying a paternalistic and monodirectional approach. Instead, we define participation as the **opening of spaces that can host a multitude of perspectives and people, where one can question the norm, the vocabulary, the hows, and the official**

narratives of the givens and biases, enjoying the pleasure of generating collisions and alternatives by practising togetherness. An approach that implies **getting rid of the transactional approach in the relationship between artists and organisations, arts and communities and humans in general, and replacing it with deep reciprocity** that requires trustworthiness, deep listening, and transparency to be also translated into structural changes and operational models for the art system.

The artworks become in this way a common ground where one can learn how to be and work together beyond the neoliberal product-oriented system, how to see artworks not as a product to be toured around, getting higher scores on the market by ticking the box of engaging communities. Responding to urgent societal questions, we are turning the notion of participation into the idea of care as the remaking of a damaged world, moving toward collective bonds and social healing by practising collectivity as an alternative to the neoliberal model causing the current crisis.

We faced diverse interpretations and modalities connected to this notion articulated in forms of common learning: decentralisation of power in authorship and control (also related to our way of working as arts organisations) revaluing gathering and rituals and revisiting the idea of a community from locally based or sociologically labelled targets into a community of practices and interests. Following the refrain ‘an individual cannot find a solution to a collective problem’, we want to **BE PART of the imagination of an elsewhere and an otherwise.**

*BE PART – Art Beyond Participation: towards a better understanding of the entanglements between power, politics, place and publics in arts practices, is a four-year audience and organisational development project in the field of participatory art practices implemented by ten EU and non-EU partners funded in 2019 by the European Commission within the Creative Europe programme for the promotion of cooperative projects. Coordinated by Santarcangelo dei Teatri (IT), it involves City of Women Association for Promotion of Women in Culture (SI), ARTSADMIN Lbg (UK), A Sense of Cork Midsummer Arts Festival Company Limited by Guarantee (IE), Association Festival de Marseille (FR), Kansalliskallio (FI), Arts Centre VIERNULVIER (BE), L'Art Rue (TN), Latvijas Jauna Teatra Instituts (LV), Scottish Sculpture Workshop (UK). BE PART sets out to create a European network of co-authors, supported by artists and organisations to collectively foster new approaches and structures for the co-creation and mobility of artworks.

Authors

Acknowledgements

Colophon

AUTHORS

May Abnet

May Abnet is a perpetual student and is involved in various collective performance, socio-artistic and nightlife projects. Before studying art and design at KASK & Conservatorium School of Arts, she immersed herself in medieval art history. At the moment, she is slowly starting to reveal Urban Studies to see how the capitalist city can be knocked off balance. May's long-term project is a poetic exploration of the urban ecosystem, using writing, remixed images, cartographic systems and performance to stimulate the thought process. In the meantime, she stands on a digital riverbank with a butterfly net, watching the red sun casting itself over the big city skyline and wondering: "How am I going to tell this story?"

Peter Aers

Peter Aers's work invariably starts with a philosophical or social question. An extensive literature review is then translated into a clear format on the floor: the conversation performance. Aers elevates dialogue to an artistic form: he creates a space of listening and speaking that is accessible to everyone, and where silence and unspoken reflection also have their place. As an artist, he initiates the conversation, but the voices of others are

crucial: their (sometimes conflicting) perspectives form the raw material of the dialogue. These interactive conversation performances develop in small groups, in which Aers ensures that the voices of atypical participants (for example, children or vulnerable groups) are also heard.

Rasa Alksnyte

Rasa Alksnyte is a transdisciplinary artist, photographer, teacher and mentor. Her mind is filled with curiosities and outside-the-box ways of working. She surrounds herself with energy that inspires others to play, experiment, cook or garden. In her work with children, Rasa tries to fill their heads with rainbows, homemade toys and sweetness. As a group facilitator, she helps participants to take small steps forward. Rasa Alksnyte works with anything that grows and grows and grows...

Simon Allemeersch

Simon Allemeersch is a film and theatre producer whose work portrays the dynamics between vulnerable people and the systems or institutions that threaten to crush them. He does this by creating a close connection with these people, building long-lasting relationships of trust and sharing his artistic authority with them. Together they shape the stories of the place not only in text

and play, but also in space, light, sound and image – the use of the camera becomes more and more important in Allemeersch's work. His performances, documentaries, books and lectures in essence all talk about social justice. For Allemeersch, the separation between the social and the artistic is a misguided one, because *you can't talk about one without talking about the other*. Every form of art is relational. And, certainly in the case of Allemeersch's oeuvre, drives concrete social change.

CAMPUSatelier

CAMPUSatelier is a collective studio in the Nieuw Gent district that takes a nomadic approach to work in, among others, the Watersportbaan district of Ghent, in Rotterdam and Ostend. CAMPUSatelier was set up in 2017 by Elly Van Eeghem and Maarten Jolie. They collaborate with artists, urbanists, architects and local residents. The studio works on the visualisation and perception of public space (squares, streets, parks, and car parks). It intentionally does this together with people from the neighbourhood acting as co-creators: inventors, designers, builders or users. It is they who contribute stories and ideas, act as a sounding board and help with construction.

Evelyne Coussens

Evelyne Coussens is a classicist, theatrologist and freelance

cultural journalist for various media. She likes to dig deep into other people's arts and tries to keep the conversation about those arts as broad as possible. She writes while thinking and thinks while writing. Her greatest joy in life – or at least one of them – is moving misplaced auxiliaries and getting rid of double spaces.

Maria Lucia Cruz Correia

Maria Lucia Cruz Correia is a multidisciplinary artist and activist who uses various forms to express her necessity: the reciprocal infecting and intertwining of humans and non-humans. In line with this desire, she not only relates to the arts, but also collaborates with scientists, schools, citizens and ... with plants, rivers and the sky. Her research – to be understood as setting up 'living laboratories' – rarely results in well-defined 'products', but much more often in collective actions or movements: walks, workshops, schools, action performances, etc. Starting from a clear analysis of the social and ecological catastrophe, she arrives at collective ways of working that don't depict, rather embody, the utopian change.

de Koer

de Koer is a vibrant and creative meeting place in the heart of Ghent's Brugse Poort district, a concrete city space that has become a dynamic

playing field for social and artistic projects and initiatives. For example, de Koer has a quirky programme of music and film, a group construction process, context-aware artistic residency, community building (for example with a community oven), a paint garden, and other group activities.

Marieke De Munck

Marieke De Munck is a visual artist, creative producer and cultural worker. Currently she works as curator at Arts Centre VIERNULVIJER. She is passionate about trees, public space and all kinds of *constructions*. She likes to explore untrodden paths and draw maps.

Samah Hijawi

Samah Hijawi's projects are deeply rooted in historical narratives that re-imagine our contemporary life outside the radicalised and polarised discourses that direct our lives today. In her most recent project, she researches the movement of food practices over time and across geographies, and the body as a site of food memory. The research materialises in food map posters and performative dinners that map out the stories and spectacular trails of migration of plants, herbs, and spices – to unfold the politics of the food on our tables.

Paoletta Holst

Paoletta Holst writes and conducts research at the intersection of visual art and architecture. She creates photos, videos, films or mappings in which she records the traces that (colonial) domination left in the urban fabric. Street names, buildings and statues hide an often painful history, which Holst makes visible: she exposes the architectural wounds and abuse of power, and questions how we can deal with this heritage. But Holst's focus isn't just on the past. Collaborating closely with students and residents, she explores the opportunities for healing and recovery, and together they investigate how the heritage of the future might look.

Sarah Késenne

Sarah Késenne is an art historian, critic and essayist. She is affiliated with the research group Art, space and context at LUCA School of Arts, in which artists and art critics come together to discuss issues about art in the public space, art and society, and the relationship with the public.

Manoeuvre

Manoeuvre is a co-creative space where art and society are brought together through crafts. The organisation is run by artist Chris Rotsaert.

They currently work in the area Sluizeken-Tolhuis-Ham, where artists and diverse communities come together in the studio. This is where the exchange of non-Western textile techniques, expertise in related crafts and artistic processes merge into a slow, visual practice. A variety of hands create objects like mats, handkerchiefs and textile books. In addition, Manoeuvre also creates stories about living together that foster connection. To do this, it also regularly visits other artistic or artisanal places in and outside the city: to pull all the threads together and (re)weave its own perspective, as well as that of the others.

Menzo Kircz

Menzo Kircz is a theatre producer on an endless tour of European living rooms and bars with his graduation performance *Onduidelijke Correspondenties* ('Indeterminate Correspondences'). Together with Mirte Bogaerts, he also set up *Other People*, common ground, a twenty-year research project into the practices of the performing artist. His work is driven by curiosity and the connecting of things and people.

Kunstenplatform PLAN B

Arts platform PLAN B supports artists from various disciplines to produce, present and reflect on their artistic practices in rural environments, questioning rural reality in all its guises. This is

done through location-specific projects that artists are either invited to set up or take their own initiative to do so. Recurring themes are the collective, the non-urban and the small-scale.

Kunsthal Gent

Kunsthal Gent is an international development and presentation platform for contemporary art in Ghent. Meeting and collaborating are what drive its hybrid artistic programme, in which the various partners and those involved respond to each other and to the spatial context. Guests include emerging, established, local and international names who present their work in exhibitions or develop their artistic practices there. Book presentations, screenings, workshops and talks take place regularly.

Bauke Lievens

Bauke Lievens works as an artistic researcher, dramaturg, teacher and circus producer. She strives to close the gap between circus practice and theory. Through *Open Brieven* ('Open Letters'), performances, gatherings, symposia and various publications, she tries again and again to start the dialogue and share her thoughts and analysis with the wider circus domain. A committed quest against romanticism and the old-fashioned narrative, out of the necessity to reflect on one's

own medium. Out of love for it. Since 2012 she has been a teacher and artistic researcher for the Drama course at KASK & Conservatorium.

Christophe Meierhans

Christophe Meierhans makes politically engaged performances that are often participatory in nature. Among other things, he has carried out research into the fundamental social mechanisms that make a person a spectator, and in various cities created interventions in the public space. Since 2019 he has dedicated his work to the ecological cause and tried to completely rethink artistic practices. He is also part of the Common Wallet collective, a dozen artists with a joint bank account, who share all their income and expenses.

Chiara Organtini

Chiara Organtini is a curator and creative producer with a passion for art and public space. She likes to challenge people's imaginations through physical experiences that create alternative scenarios. She often focuses on making space as a way to experience co-creation with communities.

Projectweek Publieke Ruimte

The Project Week Publieke Ruimte ('Public Space') is an annual focus week during which

various students, collectives, organisations and artists work on and in the public space. Editions have taken place in the Nieuw Gent and Neermeersen districts. Partners include KASK & Conservatorium School of Arts, CAMPUSatelier, de Koer, Manoeuvre and Artevelde University of Applied Sciences.

School of Love

School of Love started in the Autonomous Design department of Ghent's KASK & Conservatorium School of Art and was driven by artists and teachers Adva Zakai and Kristof Van Gestel. It is a fluid and ever-changing collective that continues to explore a non-romantic form of love and how we can treat each other in a more loving way, both within and beyond the arts. This research resulted in a semi-internal conversational practice, which is also regularly opened up to interaction with external groups or an audience. A range of different methodologies and disciplines are used, including writing, drawing, bodywork, walking in the city, workshops and performances. For the School of Love, love is a way to engage with the world, going against individualistic tendencies. In 2023, School of Love is made up of Olga Bientz, Roger Fahndrich, Laura Oriol, Martina Perovi, Irena Radmanovic and Adva Zakai.

Rest for the Wicked

The Rest for the Wicked collective by Ewout D'Hoore and Tandie McLeod is a Brussels platform that uses participatory art to build bridges. Working with a mix of local and international artists from diverse artistic practices, they explore topics such as the potential of failure, the commemoration of big emotions and the transformative power of small changes. The goal is always to create new spaces within the community or institutions, where playfulness opens up meaningful relationships that enable an inclusive humanity. By developing new rituals and magical acts, the boundary between participants and the audience fades and new perspectives become clearer.

Robbert&Frank Frank&Robbert

Robbert&Frank Frank&Robbert grew up together. The artist duo developed a strong affinity with the symbolic and political power of images. Looking for the poetic rather than the provocative, they create personal works that invite the viewer to take a closer look. By casting doubt on the status of the artist, Robbert&Frank Frank&Robbert are constantly developing new ways of creating and showing their art. Trial and error, perseverance and humour are key ingredients in the way they work.

Elien Ronse

Elien Ronse brings together various domains, including contemporary art, community work, political activism and theoretical research. Her work raises questions about relational mechanisms in late-capitalist society. Through partnership links, she aims to reposition normative social structures throughout the creative process. She is also involved in Manoeuvre and in partnerships like Cultural Center Truck Stop and the Para-institute for ART and precarity collective.

Robin Vanbesien

Robin Vanbesien is a visual artist, film producer and academic researcher who shapes the poetic and sensory dimensions of collective imagery engaged in social and political struggles. In his films he focuses on concrete emancipatory grassroots movements or networks. To do this, Vanbesien uses artistic poetics – solidarity poesis – in which the social and sensory coincide. Vulnerability and connection are paramount, but so are collective intelligence and transformative creativity. In collaboration with those involved, he questions the conditions and circumstances that guide the dialogue, exchange, visualisation, formation of images and balance of power in the film process. In doing so, he explores how

the film can already embody the necessary sensory, social and political metamorphoses during production.

Elly Van Eeghem

Elly Van Eeghem works as an artist in and with the public space. She is fascinated by the way we dream about the city, in contrast to the reality of contemporary urban development. She settles in a certain neighbourhood or city district for longer periods and, together with the residents, explores what is needed. The actions that come out of this are aimed at reactivating the ownership of public space – often in a playful way. Van Eeghem documents her work in photos, videos and architectural installations, which are works of art in themselves and can be viewed at regular art houses. This is her way of establishing the connection between the art world and the city.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The VIERNULVIER STADSATELIER supports and collaborates with various artists, artistic collectives and organisations. Over the past ten years this has been alternating/ permanent/temporary and individual/collaborative partnerships for shorter/longer periods of time with these fine people and partners: May Abnet, Peter Aers, Haider Al Timimi, Rasa Alksnyte, Leontien Allemeersch, Simon Allemeersch, Britt Bakker, Mirna Bamieh, Jorunn Bauweraerts, Vincen Beeckman, bodies of knowledge, BOUGIE, CAMPUSatelier, Igor Cardellini, Collectief Elan(d), Dominique Collet, Evelyne Coussens, Maria Lucia Cruz Correia, Dajo De Cauter, Vigdis De Cauter, Charlotte Dhont, Bart De Croos, Ruth De Jaeger, Katinka de Jonge, de Koer, Akin-Fatih De Vos, Jorik De Wilde, Nicolas Delalieux, Maarten De Vrieze, Helena Elshout, Fabián Espinosa Díaz, Lea Dietschmann, Ephameron, Malique Fye, Sarah Gevaert, Róise Goan, Renée Goethijn, Matthieu Goeurty, Tomas Gonzalez, Luce Goutelle, Roland Gunst, Samah Hijawi, Paoletta Holst, Rita Hoofwijk, Anna Housiada, Jong Gewei, KASK School of Arts, Rona Kennedy, Naomi Kerkhove, Adel Khelifi, Konnektor, Joram Kunde, Kunsthal Gent, Kunstenplatform PLAN B, Ömer Kurutepe, Hazel Lam, Nikolas Lestaeghe, Loop-S, Lucinda Ra, LUCA School of Arts, Lisette Ma Neza, Manoeuvre, Valentina Medda, Alpaslan Mercimek, Laura Muyldermans,

Ruben Nachtergaele, Anoeck Nuyens, Par Hasard, Max Pairon, Charlotte Peys, Pilooot co, Rest for the Wicked (Ewout D'hoore & Tandie McLeod), Chris Rotsaert, Andy Sarfo, School of Love, Jaco Sette, Chryssa Serva, Lieselot Siddiki, Michiel Soete, Takkenorkest / Ledebirds, The Post Film Collective, Karlien Torfs, Leentje Vandenbussche, Michiel Vandevelde, Nina Vandeweghe, Petra Van Dyck, Ely Van Eeghem, Sarah Vanhee, Robin Vanbesien, Matthias Velle, Martha Verschaffel, Ann Verstraete, Gosie Vervloesem, Bert Villa, Villa Voortman, Samaa Wakeem, Veridiana Zurita, ...

Thanks to everyone who we haven't been able to personally mention here, but who has contributed in their own way to all the initiatives associated with the STADSATELIER.

Thanks to the students of *Arts & Society* at the LUCA School of Arts for interviewing the artists. Special thanks also to the artists involved for being open to this and for making the time for it.

Thanks to the Autonomous Design students at KASK & Conservatorium School of Arts and all those involved in the various *Project weeks Publieke Ruimte*.

Special thanks to Leontien Allemeersch, Evelyne Coussens, Chloé D'hauwe, Ely Van Eeghem, Matthias Velle and all the authors for their help with the content and design of this publication.

COLOPHON

This publication was realised in the context of BE PART – Art beyond Participation. On September 7, 2023 it was presented at the BE PART closing symposium in Riga, Latvia.

Editing

Leontien Allemeersch, Evelyne Coussens, Marieke De Munck, Elly Van Eeghem, Niké van Os and Matthias Velle

Translation

Jonathan Beaton and Heather Sills

Proofreading

Evelyne Coussens and Katrien Depecker

Design

Chloé D'hauwe

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial 4.0 International License.
www.creativecommons.org

Kunstencentrum VIERNULVIER,
2023

www.viernulvier.gent

V.U. Kunstencentrum
VIERNULVIER, Franky De Vos,
Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23,
9000 Gent



