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Upcycling as a co-creative sensory research methodology: Incorporating a response-able pedagogy perspective

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BACKGROUND 'MAGNIFICENT RUBBISH'

- Aims of the experiment:
 - To generate an understanding of the meanings youngsters ascribe to the characteristics of a neighborhood in transition
 - To disrupt conventional research methodologies that tend to privilege talk and thought
- This presentation aims to look back retrospectively on this research practice:
 - not in terms of its outcomes (Springgay & Truman, 2018)
 - but in terms of its pedagogical potential: the potentiality of a response-able pedagogy (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017).

BACKGROUND ‘MAGNIFICENT RUBBISH’

❖ **Sensory ethnography** (Pink, 2009; Howes, 2005)

- Informed by an understanding of the interconnected senses

❖ **Arts-informed inquiry** (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014; Conrad & Sinner, 2015)

- A mode and form of qualitative research that is influenced by, but not based in the arts.

❖ **Co-creation** (Garrett, 2014)

- Co-produced, networked research activities in which the power role between researchers and participants are challenged and renegotiated.
- A move ‘**beyond text**’ to the tacit, unspoken, non-verbal
- Shifting **agendas**: from academic research...to public research, requiring new ways of engaging (with) research participants and audiences

SETTING



The 'Canal Bowl' - Leuven (Belgium)

RESEARCH TEAM

KU LEUVEN



CLSO



Faculteit Letteren



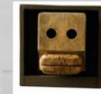
- 4 international students Faculty of Arts
- course Cultural Policy



Vizoog




artistic organization
specialized in upcycling



Flemish training centre
for children and young adults

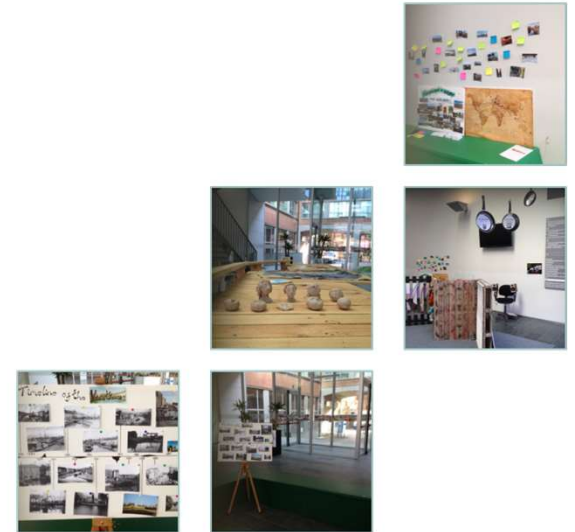
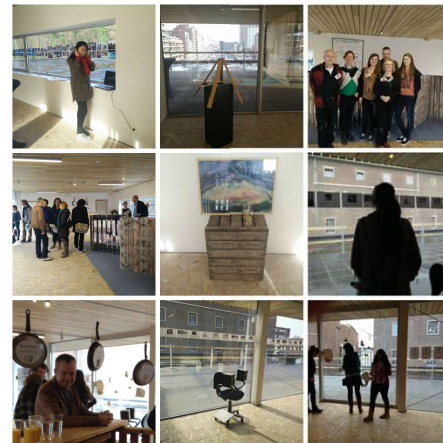
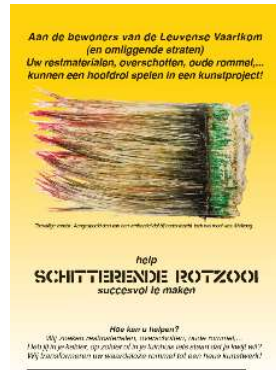
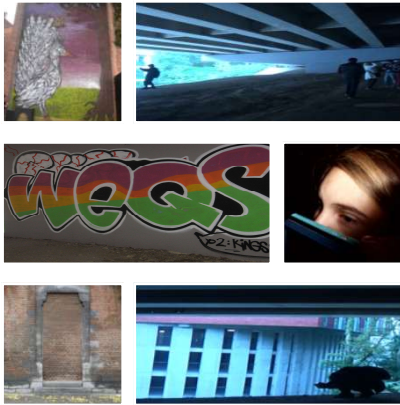
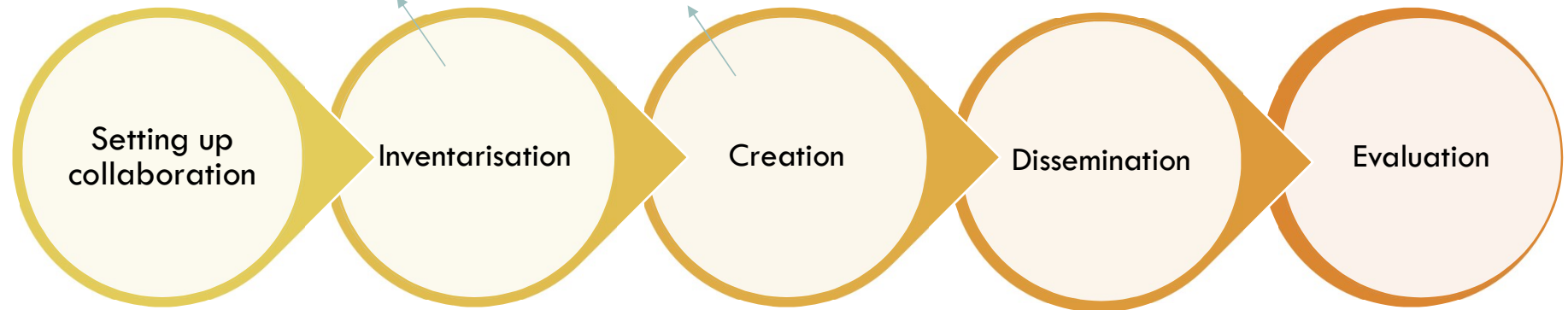


“The great thing about this project is that young people get in touch, literally and figuratively, with what happens in this neighborhood and can act upon it” (coordinator Arktos)

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- Youth's sense of place is surprisingly absent in the literature (Fisman, 2007)
 - They still remain underrepresented in academic works related to understanding place
 - Public spaces are important in the everyday life of teenagers, these spaces “*are often the only spaces in which they have autonomy and which they can shape for themselves*” (Matthews et al., 2000)
 - The local environment is an important area for informal learning (Mäkinen & Tyrväinen, 2008).

walking exercises
(photowalks, soundwalks, artefact walks)

collaborative upcycling with
materials from the neighborhood



'MAGNIFICENT RUBBISH': A TROUBLED RESEARCH PROJECT

Initial aims of the experiment:

*To generate an understanding of the meanings youngsters ascribe to the characteristics of the neighborhood
To disrupt conventional research methodologies that tend to privilege talk and thought*

Challenges

- Privileging of the spoken word
- Participatory framing of the project: focus on 'inclusion' of vulnerable youngsters (giving 'voice')
- Linearity of the design

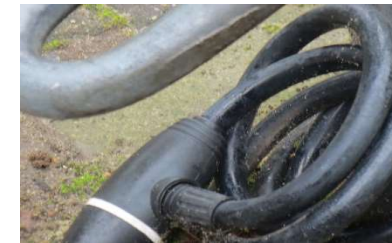


- Place as the backdrop to research or as topic
 - Focus on meaning-making: the articulations of participant's thoughts and feelings related to place

TOWARDS A RESPONSE-ABLE PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

- **Response-ability** (Barad, 2007, Haraway, 2016, Despret, 2016): ability/capacity to respond, to what matters. This ability is not only seen as human but also a relational capacity by which humans and more than humans are co-constituted through their relationships with each other
- **Response-able pedagogy**: type of learning that can take place when power relations, materiality and entanglement are acknowledged (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017)

TOWARDS A RESPONSE-ABLE PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



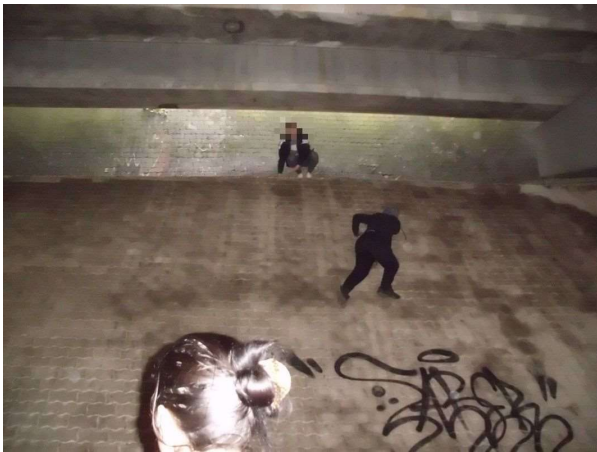
Learning to be affected
the process by which bodies learn to become more and more receptive to the world around, and to be “moved, put into motion by other entities, humans or non-humans” (Latour, 2004, p. 205).





Shared intra-activity between human and non-human apparatuses during the walk

TOWARDS A RESPONSE-ABLE PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE



The possibility to be surprised and intrigued through unanticipated encounters

(Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017)



The walks acted as something that cannot be mapped in advance, but capable of altering the course of the event in the event, activated by mobile cues, which affects how a person moves in the event itself (Springgay & Truman, 2018)

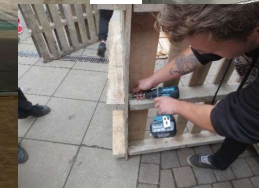
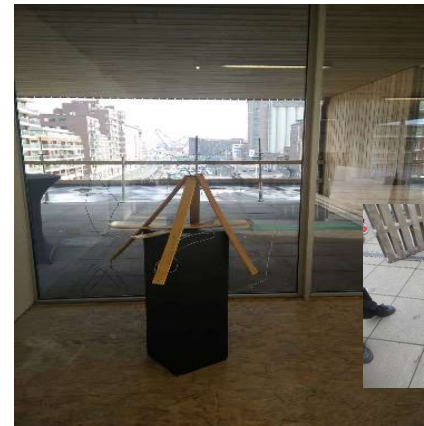
TOWARDS A RESPONSE-ABLE PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Opportunities for exploring the **vibrancy and intra-action of material encounters** (Bennett, 2009)

How waste and 'objects that people don't need anymore' can become an opportunity for creative upcycling and material thinking

to rethink the potential of discarded objects, not as finished but as continuous avenues for becoming.

'to think from the materials, not about them'
(Ingold, 2012)



Material not judged by the knowledge of what it was or what it should do but by the ability to engage with what it could do

“these boys really felt that they were doing something that would going to be seen by the neighborhood... they felt recognition, they felt involved.”

Intertwining of upcycled work, drawings, clay works, touch, sounds sights AND interaction with the physical context, the building itself, with residents, youngsters,... matter and meaning



“a feeling of recognition.. of ‘look, all these people just come here to see us, because we participated in this project’”



WHAT A RESPONSE-ABLE PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE DOES...

- Primary units of analysis: material/discursive practices (walking, touching, listening, creation) *instead of words* (Coemans, Vandenabeele, Hannes, 2018)
- Walking as a walking-with (Springgay & Truman, 2018) that offers the potential to question anthropocentric assumptions regarding the neighborhood under study, *instead of methods to extract young people's experience of place*
- ⇒ Examining place itself in its social and material manifestations, *instead of collecting data from and with human research participants* (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015)
- Participation as relational *instead of inclusionary* => Ethics grounded in a dwelling with things (Introna, 2009)