TRADING RULES, CHANGING ROLES

A growing compendium on ambiguity in rule- and role-making when designing and performing Participatory Design workshops with children by Office for Public Play during TRADERS Open School at Z33 House for Contemporary Art, Hasselt (BE).

During the TRADERS Open School, the Office for Public Play installed her office in Z33 House for Contemporary Art in Hasselt, Belgium (24—28 April 2017). During her 5-day working residency, she zoomed in on a particular moment, The Car Wrestlers, from one of her past Participatory Design workshop sessions with children; and perform a ‘public analysis’. Making the process and outcome of the analysis public does not only imply that the process will be made visible to ‘the
public’ but also invites various publics — other artists and designers, peers, as well as citizens — to participate in reflecting on what happened. This is done by focusing on ambiguity in rule- and role-making when designing and performing Participatory Design workshops with children. What is the role of ambiguity as enabler for the negotiation of rules and roles when designing and performing Participatory Design workshops with children? is the main question that directed the analyse and reflections on the situations generated from The Car Wrestlers. The analysis was generated through dialogues, re-enactments, visualisations and writings. The Office for Public Play encountered and exchanged with the publics in her urban office and during walks out in the streets. The shared discussions and reflections generated new insights and knowledge for all participants involved. The outcome took the form of a growing compendium on ambiguity in rule- and role-making when designing and performing Participatory Design workshops with children.

Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.04</td>
<td>10:00-17:00</td>
<td>Z33</td>
<td>Public analyse</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.04</td>
<td>10:00-17:00</td>
<td>Z33</td>
<td>Public analyse</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.04</td>
<td>10:00-17:00</td>
<td>Z33</td>
<td>Public analyse</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.04</td>
<td>16:00-17:00</td>
<td>Z33</td>
<td>Interactive presentation</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Annelies Vaneycken</td>
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<td>28.04</td>
<td>10:00-12:00</td>
<td>Z33</td>
<td>Reflective discussion</td>
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<td>Sven de Visscher &amp; Annelies Vaneycken</td>
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Office for Public Play is the research platform for Annelies Vaneycken’s PhD in Design at HDK Academy of Design and Craft at the University of Gothenburg (SE). She is also a Research Fellow in the EU Marie Curie project TRADERS, responsible for the PLAY track. Her practice based research project explores the role of (role)play in reconfiguring participatory design towards designing for children’s critical consciousness and emancipation. www.officeforpublicplay.org
The city could be otherwise is both a statement and question wrapped in one. As a statement it prompts alternatives that challenge the hegemonies, or mental blockages, that have led to accepting situations of gross economic inequality, ecological degradation and social crises. As a question, it queries our agency as citizens: to what extent can we give shape to the ‘otherwise’—are we passive observers or active agents for change? For designers and artists, it prompts a reflection on the state of socially engaged theory and practice in urban contexts. The Open School aims at a creative re-thinking of the city, trading practices and ideas, peers-pushing-peers in a place of learning and experimentation through dialogue and action. Participants will be encouraged to take different roles and stances, questioning if and how the city can be otherwise.

The city has increasingly become the battleground for neoliberal forces driving the commodification of social life and the expansion of speculative instruments into all possible arenas. Urban governance has increasingly turned towards participatory means—bringing new cultural forces such as art and design within processes of decision-making under the pretext of ‘deepening democracy’. However, critical perspectives stress that this expanded engagement is not fomenting radical change but rather replacing critical debate and exchange with a consensually established frame; in essence evacuating the political from urban decision making. According to Zizek [1], this ideological closure ‘takes the precise form of a mental block’, which impedes one’s ability to imagine a fundamental social change, in the interest of ‘realistic’ or ‘mature’ attitudes. Without assuming a critical position to challenge this mental block, artists and designers, warn Palmås and von Busch [2], are very much at risk of becoming collaborateurs within this consensual frame in collusion with the power and political agendas of the elites, thus betraying their initial interests and those of their peers.

TRADERS Open school challenges this consensual frame and mental blockage by focusing on how the city can be ‘otherwise’: broad speculative thinking grounded in concrete action. We don’t aim to give an answer to such questions, nor to give general solutions for the city, but rather to problematize it and, by doing so, to test different approaches. We position the school within a broad idealism, convinced that sooner or later, the city will be otherwise.


DATA

written memorisation
photo documentation
(video)
The Car Wrestlers

In order to get the children’s attention and collaboration, I (designer-researcher and workshop-facilitator) entice them by announcing that we will perform our next activity outside, in the neighbourhood. It takes a while until the message, disturbed by children’s noises and activities, has reached all the children. Slowly they assemble at the front door. I block the door so I can collect them in-group and give them information about where to go. – Note: This time, I decide where to go as it is late afternoon and there is not much time left before the parents come to pick up the children. Therefore, I choose the closest place where we would find parked cars and open space to work. -- I tell the children we will go just next-door of the building, on the square surrounding the church. I explain to them that the square functions as a parking space next to the main street; cars can leave unexpectedly or arrive at high speed so they will need to be attentive and look out for the cars. When I open the door, the children storm outside and I wonder if they have heard my message and/or if they have understood it in the way I had meant it. I intend to be extra vigilant and realise that I do not consider the children capable of taking care of themselves. On the square, I reveal our next mission. I had formulated the assignment in advance in written format (English translation):

Car Wrestler
What is the size of a car? How much space does a car take up? Take a piece of rope and delineate a piece of the street surface with the same circumference of the car size. What would you like to do with the space if there wasn’t a car there? Create a ‘notice’ that explains to the motorist why this space is so precious for children. — Supplies: rope / paper / pen

The children choose a car (the first and the ‘best’ one: a big BMW) and start unrolling the rope. I worry that the children might damage the paint of the car, if moving too wildly and too close, so I interfere with their choice, saying that they have chosen a really nice and expensive car and suggest they choose another car. They choose a big white van, a bit further away, and again I feel the need to interfere. This time, I make them aware of its large dimensions; I suggest they take a standard car, representing standard conditions. They choose a third car, I agree and finally, we have a car! Some children span the rope around the car. One child starts pulling the rope, some other children protest, then they retake. T starts pulling the rope again, followed by his friend B. Others protest and make a fuss. I decide to interfere by saying the measurement needs to be ‘correct’. I spoil their free play and fun. Once the rope is put ‘correctly’ along the car, I help them with cutting the rope and making a knot. The children start moving the looped rope to a nearby empty spot. The rope, detached from its square shaped car, becomes a shapeless flexible form that can be manipulated in any way. The shape depends on the position and movements of the children carrying the rope. Instead of making a square car-like shape, some children start running with the rope and use the attachment of the other children on the rope to pull and move these children over the square. There’s a lot of fun and screaming, and a lot of energy gets released, until the moment that the rope cuts and hurts a child. The other children and me help to release the child from the rope; then, the play continues. The children’s free play with the rope continues and develops into different stages. From time to time the observers intervene when things become rough. After a while of free play I reintroduce the question “What would you like to do with the space if there was no car?” and ask them to draw and/or write their ideas with chalk inside the space determined by the contour of the rope on the tiled square. The square becomes a blank page for the children’s ideas. For some reason I forgot to bring pens and paper (for the children’s notices, cf. written assignment ‘car wrestler’) but I had brought coloured chalk.

The Car Wrestlers
OFFICE

TRADERS Open School

Z33 House for Contemporary Art, Hasselt (BE)
Office for Public Play during TRADERS Open School at Z33 House for Contemporary Art, Hasselt (BE).
TOOLS

one question
story (written memorisation)
hetero-glossary
illustrations from Linda Holmer
a (reversed) role list
photos (without captions)
Forum Reading

Play is constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing but is also co-constructing, co-deconstructing and co-reconstructing; the prefix ‘co’ emphasis that the processes of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing happen with others.

In the Forum Reading workshop, the participants were invited to ‘play’ with The Car Wrestlers situation and narrative through ‘deconstructing and reconstructing, and rewriting’ the story as to how it would fit matters of their own participatory design practice (the practice is understood as ‘practice ideals’: how they envision their practice as well as ‘practice experience’: what they encounter in their practice) with the given question: what is the role of ambiguity as enabler for the negotiation of rules and roles when designing and performing Participatory Design workshops with children?

Approaching the given narrative as an ambiguous matter allowed the participants to appropriate the given narrative towards their personal PD practice concerns and this as means to start reflecting on those concerns (by the confrontation of the given question). After the rewriting, each participant was invited to share their personal PD practice interpretations with the group, and the group, in turn, was invited to take the role of spect-actor (Boal, 2000) and react on the new narrative.

The sharing of these multiple interpretations and the reactions/suggestions/reflections on each interpretation generated an individual and collective learning process as well as generate new meaning.

The participants were allowed to rewrite the while story or choose a particular fragment of interest. Through changing one/more rule(s) on the story, it would be able to transform the situation/story into a new one.

The participants were asked to impose their own rule on the story and by doing so reconstruct the story. In addition the participants were asked to reflect on what (new) roles the new situation/story opens up for both the child-participant as the PD-workshop designer and/or facilitator.

Participants
Pablo Calderón Salazar
Michael Kaethler
Jon Geib
Sean Chester
Giuditta Vendrame
Paolo Patelli

Outcome
On next page.
The Car Wrestlers
Rewritten

what?
freedom
of car choice
censured
thoughts
personal
issues
void
of emotions
participants’
frustrations
writer’s
ego

Sean Chester
The children are to play a game called “Car Wrestler” in which they move the outline of a car with a rope to understand the dimensions of the space that the car occupies. Then they are to leave a notice for the owner suggesting how this space could better be used for children. It takes a while but we find a nice struggle of road with freedom of car choice. Naturally, the children gravitate to do their familiar choice, a BMW and a large family van. But neither are too appropriate, so they use a non-descript third device instead. They measure out the car, but without pen and paper to leave a notice, coloured chalk will most unfortunately have to suffice instead.

Pablo Calderón Salazar
What would you like to do with the space if there was no car?
What would you like to do with the space if there was no?
What would you like to do with the space if there was?
What would you like to do with the space?
What would you like to do with?
What would you like?
What would you?
What would?
What?

Michael Kaethler
The reality of Participatory art/design.
It’s the third day I wake up with a hangover. Come children there is anything outside. You, stop! I raise my hands to make an “x” forcing the little balls and flesh out from the doorway. You, you and you, go find some cars, but no running in the streets and make sure to look both ways. STOP. Do this. Do this and this but also this. But not that or that or also that. I can’t deal with this shit anymore. What do I care if you get hit by a car. But hé, the bright chalk will look good in the photos I can use for reporting purposes. I am too old for this shit.

Jon Geib
The children choose a car (the first and the ‘best’ one: a big BMW) and start unrolling the rope. I worry that the children might damage the paint of the car, if moving too wildly and too close, so I interfere with their choice, saying that they have chosen a really nice and expensive car and suggest they choose another car. They choose a big white van, a bit further away, and again I feel the need to interfere. This time, I make them aware of its large dimensions; I suggest they take a standard car, representing standard conditions. They choose a third car, I agree and finally we have a car! Some children span the rope around the car.
The Car Wrestlers, public analyse workshop
actors
monologue
dialogue
trialogue

language
written (words, captions, definitions, ideas, reflections)
visual (visualisation, photo documentation, diagram)

play
— with written language:
glossary construction
glossary de-construction
glossary co-construction
glossary re-construction: heteroglossary
— with visual language:
ambiguity
The Car Wrestlers
170424

construction deconstruction reconstruction re-struction co-construction structure destruction instruction inter-struction intra-struction intervention collaborative cooperative compromise confront frictions frustrations disagreements opposition allies negotiation

Con—struction
Play fundamentally consists out an iterative process of constructing and deconstructing. Here, deconstruction is not seen as an end; something that comes after the construction process but the deconstructing functions as an invitation for re-construction; to re-construct is to construct again or to construct something else with the material that is already present.

The transition from deconstruction into construction and re-construction introduces a moment of stillness in time. This break allows for many possibilities: It can function as an opening to invite other people in a collaboratively making process; a pause to reflect; a moment to reorient the making process; or a fraction that closes one chapter to start something new.

In the process of re-construction, the deconstruction can be restored to ‘what was before’. Here, the ‘re’ invites to re-patch the previous construction phase into something identical. On the other hand, deconstruction can move the what was already there into a further continuation and into the new.

When deconstructing the word ‘re—construction’ it reads re—con—struction. Whilst the ‘re’ emphasises the interaction in the process of giving structure, the ‘con’ (derived from Latin “cum”) means ‘together’, ‘as a group’, ‘with’ when prefixed to a verb. The ‘con’ reminds us giving structure ‘with’ something: with what surrounds us: actors, objects and space. So, construction, deconstruction and re-construction — activities that aim to structure — are always situated in time and founded with (con) its environment: actors, object and space.

In order to emphasise the explicit and initiated engagement of collaboration and cooperation in such situated structuring processes, I introduce the word co-construction, with the ‘co’ referring to the intended collaboration and/or co-operation.

In—struction
Whilst the words ‘deconstruction’ and ‘reconstruction’ are assembled variation of ‘construction’, the word ‘con—struction’ is an assembly in itself con—structing. Seeing ‘con—struction’ in its deconstructed form, lets us that the making process always happens ‘together with’ or in cooperation or collaboration with others — other actors, objects and spaces.

When removing the fourness in the ‘making process’, what remains is ‘structuration’. The word piece ‘structuration’ refers to the act of bringing structure or ‘structuring’ but this time as an abstract operation — abstract meaning in isolation from or without interaction and influence from other actors, objects and spaces. Here we can read the word ‘structuration’ as an abstract term whilst the ‘con—structuration’ refers to the making of structure within the lived; within the practice of everyday life.

When adding other prefixes to the abstract ‘structuration’ we arrive to new words and new meanings, e.g. ‘in—structuration’ and ‘con—structuration’. Whilst ‘destruction’ would mean to take away the structure, the ‘structuration’ intentionally brings something into a structure. The particular prefixes tell us more about what kind of structuring activity is going on but it doesn’t tell us more about who it is that brings structure, and on what base? Also what are the differences between ‘in—structuration’, ‘inter—structuration’ and ‘intra—structuration’?

What does it mean when structure is put onto something/someone; when structure is put within something/someone? What does it mean when structure is put amongst something/someone; when structure is put onto something/someone?

Neither do those variants reveal more on how the structure was put into action: can instruction be an (non-binding) invitation or is instruction always an intervention? When are instructions prescribing and when are they guiding? When do they dominate and when do they support?

Re—introducing the question: What is the role of ambivalence as enabler for the negotiation of rules and roles when designing and performing Participatory Design workshops with children? How to read activities inherent to Participatory Design workshops with children, such as its designing and performing, as a ‘construction’ activity? What types of ‘con—struction’ are at stake and what does this re—reading (analys) tell us more about the ‘how’ or the micro politics at stake in such collaborative and cooperative structuring activities?

Who puts what into structure? Whilst the collaborative process itself aims to bring structure to a community defined goal, there may be other structuring processes at stake in the overall process, such as: the designer aims to structure the child-participants while the children may — intended or not — deconstruct the designer’s structuring. But this also goes the other way around: the child-participants may have a particular structuring goal in mind that is disputed by the designer’s structuring intentions. So where do these intentions meet? And, how do they meet? Does one dominate the other or do they both make compromises, how much, and are those compromises hierarchical founded? Do both intentions become complicated or do they confront, or both? How to deal with such differences in intentions? How to transform its frictions, frustrations and disagreements into a process of negotiation? And can such negotiation processes overcome compromise (each opposition losses) through mutual exchange and learning where both parties gain?

Re—reading The Car Wrestlers
When saying, “The workshop-designer and facilitator invited/ instructed the child-participants to take part in The Car Wrestlers activity; what do we actually mean? Did the workshop-designer and facilitator invite the child-participants or did she instruct them? The task was presented as an exercise/assignment (instruction): the task was not an non-binding invitation since the child-participants already agreed to take part in the overall workshop where ‘The Car Wrestlers was a small part of. The task was not an assignment that was imposed on them — at least that was not my intention but I cannot foresee how they interpreted this. Whilst I had prepared the task as a written assignment that could have been read by the child-participants themselves, when the moment was there, I orally transmitted the task. What affect did this have on the child-participants? Did they (some of them) interpreted this oral transmission as a way of being informal with each other or did that very act put the workshop-designer and facilitator in the role of the school teacher that instructs the child-participants what to do. On the other hand, did they not use this word ‘invitation’, neither ‘instruct’ since what I tried to do was to make them curious as to why they engaged in doing the activity (how much is this manipulation?). Also the framework of a three-day scheduled workshop probably conditioned the child-participants to engage in all activities that were organized, no matter if they personally liked it or not. And so I wonder if they would take part in activities that they would radically disagree with.
The Car Wrestlers
170425 — in dialogue with Maria Tsaneva

A Conflict for Care?

Structure
Conflict
(being) Present
Care
Rules
Restrictions
Responsibility
Community

Creativity
Reflect
(being) Absent
Taking care
Protocols
Instructions

Care
Conflict

Maria Tsaneva studied BA in Graphic Design, Art Education, and MA in Design for Children’s Environment in Sofia, Bulgaria. She currently attends the Master program of Social Design at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. Maria both participated and organized several collective art projects dealing with the topics of participation and education in the city and its public spaces. Maria has work experience as an art teacher in two high schools in Bulgaria. She is interested in investigating and experimenting, as well as in the idea of using design as a tool to present social messages.

Measuring the space with their bodies.

Inventing a new game out of the materials they have.

Creating a new layer on an existing image/pattern, followed by another child creating another (second) layer on the existing image layer from the first child.

Maria Tsaneva: Conflict is the beginning of something new. For me, conflict is a good starting point for cooperation between children and adults. It is not a conflict as we know it in politics but an inner conflict between the things we know and expect and what will happen when the child-participant and the adult-designer come together — It shakes you. I like the word conflict because it is ‘contrast’ being the super ground for doing something. If I have to make it visual it is black and white.

Roles
- When playing a game there is no hierarchy; there is a division of roles between the individuals that seem to occur in a natural way. They like each other and this seems to drive the division of roles without hierarchy. There is empathy between each other when they play/work together.
- When working with children, there are things that you expect (framework/structure) and there are things that you don’t expect; both are part of re/de/con-structing the initial framework/structure.

Opportunities — Rules for the designer (from within)
- The designer needs to give a starting point to the child-participants. This starting point is a framework/structure for the child to interact with. By providing a framework/structure, in the form of a task, the designer creates a space of freedom for the child to set-up his/her own rules to create his/her own work/project/world. The given framework/structure invites the child-participants to respond, react and build upon (con-structuring).
- The designer needs to be present during the child-participants’ act.

Restrictions — Rules for the designer (from outside)
- The designer is conscious about time restricting the PD workshops with children.
- The designer takes the child-participants’ capacity and availability into account.
- Is the designer consciously working with his/her ethical role in his/her practice? What is the child-participants’ vulnerability?

The designer creates comfort (by being present): The children need to feel comfortable by the presence of the designer; the presence of the designer does not mean instruction (the designer has given his/her framework/structure in advance and now it is up to the children to define how working within the given framework/structure. The designer is an observer: The designer is present and does not intervene.

The designer gives or takes care: To care does not mean to take care — meaning that the designer gives them food, warm clothes or solves their quarrels — but to ‘care’ about their emotional wellbeing and make sure they are part of a good working/play environment.

The designer needs to remind the children about the initial framework/structure.

Contrast
The Car Wrestlers  
170425 – in dialogue with Maria Tsaneva’s Revive the park & Baseball Camp workshops
The Car Wrestlers
170427 A prefix-trade with Jon Geib and Cristina Ampatzidou

Jon Geib is a PhD candidate, urbanist and architect in the Department of Architecture at Chalmers University of Technology and a Research Fellow in the EU Marie Curie project TRADERS. Through an artistic research approach and formal collaboration with the Gothenburg Cultural Department, he explores artistic-cultural framings of dialogue and participation which foreground their dynamics and ambivalences, including those related to the design–user relationship when choosing to work with and within institutions in a post-Fordist context. He holds a Bachelor’s degree in Architecture from Chalmers University of Technology and a Master degree in urban design from Delft University.

Cristina Ampatzidou is a Rotterdam-based researcher and writer with a background in Architecture and Urbanism. She is a co-founder of Amateur Cities and a partner of Play the City! Foundation and the Architectural Film Festival of Rotterdam and has worked for several architecture offices in the Netherlands, including MAKS, Barcode Architects, OMA and the Powerhouse Company. Her research investigates the affordances of new media for ‘citymaking’ and the changing roles of professionals, policy makers and citizens. She collaborated with artist Giuseppe Licari on the projects Mental Charlois and Swinging the Lamp and she curated the program of public events for Licari’s installation Public Room. Cristina has been a guest teacher for the Urban Body studio in TU Delft and is a regular contributor in Uricabe and Bettery magazine. She has also been a founding member of Beforelight, an artist’s collective working exclusively on lighting design and installations.

Playing with Pre-fixes
(part 2)

What play and design have in common is the cyclic process of con-structure, de-structure and re-structure; they invite the child-participant(s) to intervene in the construction of the design process by de-constructing, re-constructing and co-constructing the existing structure into a ‘multi-structure’ that is workable for multiple individual actors.

Meso, derived from the Ancient Greek mésos or ‘middle’, does not only mean ‘middle’ but also ‘intermediate’. Following this second meaning, we can understand a ‘meso-structure’ as a structure that intermediates or a structure that supports the coming between two things in time, place, characters, etc., or the en-counter as a moment where different actors, objects, spaces meet and interact by encountering and countering; through exchange of individual values and opinions.
The Car Wrestlers
170428 in dialogue with Linda Holmer

Linda Holmer is a lecturer at HDK Academy of Design and Crafts at the university of Gothenburg (SE). Part from teaching she is as an editor, writer, illustrator, art director and quite often unsure of things. Linda is interested in the space between being personal and private and how to collaborate with others in order to make fiction in illustrated books for reader of all ages.
Reversing Rules
What is the effect of reversing roles for the making of? The city could be otherwise! What would you trade roles and what would you exchange?

Reverse (verb)
“Move backwards.”
“Work in a contrary direction.”
“Make (something) the opposite of what it was.”
“Exchange the position or function of two people or things.”
“In (something) the other way round or up or inside out.”

Trade (verb)
“Buy and sell goods and services.”
“Exchange (something) for something else, typically on a commercial basis.”
“Give and receive (something, typically insults or blows)”
“Transfer (a player) to another team.”

A Role-list with footnotes

the child-participant is a professional
the child-participant is disobedient
the child-participant is naive
the child-participant plays
the child-participant participates
the child-participant organises
the child-participant is childish
the child-participant is an amateur
the child-participant is commissioned
the participatory design designer designs
the participatory design designer educates
the participatory design designer provokes
the participatory design designer is a professional
the participatory design designer forces
the participatory design designer manipulates
the participatory design designer mediates
the participatory design designer instructs
the participatory design designer facilitates
the participatory design designer manipulates
the participatory design designer facilitates
the child-participant educates
the child-participant designs
the child-participant provokes

Giuditta Vendrame is a designer and researcher based in the Netherlands. She practices the intersection between design, art, performance, installation, choreography, and technology. She creates works, projects, and performances that engage with citizenship, privacy, politics, and public space. She explores the notion of citizenship and its paradoxes, and how to make them debatable, by using different media such as film, performance, installations, and art. Her work has been exhibited and presented at Maunula House, Helsinki (2017), Bureau of Public Affairs, Brussels (2017), Kunst- und Kulturstiftung, Dusseldorf (2016), Migrant Journal (2016), Icon (2014), Grey Cube Gallery, Helsinki (2014). She is the recipient of the Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven (2015), Adhocracy Athens (2015), Performing Mobilities (2015), La Jetée (2015), Zivot Umjetnosti (2015), We Make Money Not Art (2014).

Paolo Patelli is an architect and a researcher, currently based in The Netherlands. Through his practice and collaborative research, he engages deeply in exploring with space, science, technology and art. He is Associate Reader in Science and Technology Studies at Eindhoven University of Technology. He is a member of the Arts et Politique (SPEAP) at Sciences Po. Together with Giuditta Vendrame, he is part of La Jetée.
Priscilla Suarez Bock is an illustrator based in Brussels. She likes to draw straight lines and angles, chases on sloped lands, flat hills and rounded people.
www.lasuarez.tk
Play and Game
Agency & Mindset
Cheating = Inter-vention
Negotiating = Inter-acting

Play and game: different strategies in rule (re)-making

There is a difference in agency between game and play; the agency of the gamer is different than the agency of the player. In games, the gamer engages with rules that are predefined by an external actor. When getting engaged in playing a game, the gamer knows that the rules have been externally pre-defined and by agreeing to play the game, the gamer thus agrees on the rules that frame definitive game play. However, agreeing on the rules does not mean that the gamer cannot change the rules of the game – playing is part of the game. The child will always transform existing rules or invent new rules for the game in order to win. In order to fit in his/her own agenda, goals and interest. Other terms for strategy for changing the rules of the game, means that the gamer changes the rules without discussing them; he/she may even hide his/her change of rules. In cheating, the gamer intervenes in the existing system and disrupts. Engaging in play or in game happens with a different mindset. In play, you do not cheat since the player is anyhow allowed to invent his/her own rules. In play, the player is expected to take suggestions, proposals and initiatives of the other players into account, the rules are negotiated amongst each other and with the players’ environment as a whole (not only its surrounding actors but also its objects and spaces). To play is to discover new opportunities with what surrounds you. However, the negotiation in play does not mean there is no hierarchy in decision making amongst the players.

When engaging in participatory design workshops, you can engage as gamer or as player. Because of the difference in mindset between the gamer and the player it is important to know – and be aware of – the player/gamer’s intentions and the expectation of his/her co-player/gamer(s).

Intentions – Will the player/gamer (the person who engages in the play/game) make his/her own rules in negotiation with what has been set, or does the change in rules happen in an isolated/parallel/hidden cheating process?

Intentions – Will the player/gamer take his/her co-player/gamer(s) into account when constructing an activity? Will they be engaged in enacting a predefined activity or will the activity be performed as co-construction?

Expectation – Can the player/gamer (the person who engages in the play/game) make his/her own rules in negotiation with what has been set, or does the change in rules happen in an isolated/parallel/hidden cheating process?

Expectation – Can the player/gamer (the person who engages in the play/game) make his/her own rules in negotiation with what has been set, or is he/she not allowed and does the change in rules need to happen in an isolated/parallel/hidden cheating process?

Game external control imposing control

Play occurs outside of the boundaries that have been defined by game

We could compare it the difference in interaction between different mobility actors when taking part in design. Shared space is a way to transform the trad- ition (pedestrian zone are separated from bike lane and separated from street with car traffic) or in ‘Shared space’ (there is no separation between different zones; the interaction is not prescribed by certain traffic rules but the actors themselves need to be aware and consider what the interaction is). The shared space’ approach demands more active thinking off all actors involved as well as it makes the users reflect on how they interact because they play this interaction is less predefined (it is not predefined by the traffic rules but still there are other social, cultural, moral rules that define how they will interact).

When translating the difference between game and play as “game is external control (imposing control)” and “play is control from within (shared control)” into the design and performance of PD workshops with children, there are PD workshops which are more defined (orchestrated) by external control (imposing control) and PD workshops which are more constructed (operating) from within (shared control), however this difference does not represent two opposing types but both forces are part of the same PD workshop, creating tension – a tension that is may opening up for negotiation.

When you share control in a PD workshop you shift to a playful mindset and approach where you recognise the environment (people, objects, space) you are with.

Types and levels of rules

There are two levels of rules, operating on different levels. There are the rules of a particular game, e.g. “count till ten with your eyes closed”, “don’t hurt your partner”, “do not push other children”. Within the ‘game rules’ general rules of playing games, e.g. “cheating is part of the game”, or “do not hurt others”, the ‘game rules’ shape/design the game, the ‘gaming rules’ relate to the morality of the game prac-tice; to the codes that define what is good and bad behav-iour whilst gaming.

When designing and performing participatory design work-shops with children there is a certain morality that defines what is good and bad behaviour of the child-participants and this will be a good and bad behaviour of the designer. How-ever changing perspectives and new concepts on child-hood – such as John Wall’s ideas on ‘childism’ (2010) – disrupt conventional morality codes and reveal blind spots that need to be addressed through ethical reflection. The change in perspective on childhood emerges a new role of the designer as one that is responsible to ethically reflect on/their design framework/structure (the workshop) and how this support putting those new perspective on childhood into practice. We notice that a lot of cultural and educational institutions and designers that work with children agree on the (new) values put forward in the UN-CROC and agree to give more agency (participation) to children. However, to question and evaluate if and how these ideals are put into practice is not yet happening to its full potential but is highly necessary. The designer should not only confirms certain ideas (the designer as ideologist) or put them into practice (the designer as practitioner) but the designer need to confront him/herself with the agency he/she has to be self-critical in how this ideals are put into practice. In other words, the role of the designer is to take his/her responsibility and be self-critical on how he/she realises this ideals in his/her participatory design practice. Knowing that ideologies are abstract elements it is already a complex process to “translate” these ideas into a material form that is situated within the constraints a particular con-text in “realty”. The designer is trained to translate ideas into shapes/material/form but it is also crucial for the de-signer to constantly ask him/herself how this shaping pro cess is confirming a ‘childism’ perspective.
The Car Wrestlers
170428 Reflection with Sven De Visscher

Play as cultural element
Play as a cultural element (huiinga) can be in two ways: One way learn us that culture is not pre-existing but happens in play settings and while playing. Culture arises from and trans-forms by playing, by im-agining to-testing out new ideas that have emerged from interacting with our environment. Besides play produc-tion culture (through creating and recreating culture), it also re-produces culture. Through play existing cultural norms are trans-mitted.

Play produces Culture
Play reproduces Culture

When reading and analyzing children is along the rope in the car Wrestlers, we can read in two ways: 1 — What does children’s play tell us about the making of new culture? what are the ways that you create in their interaction with their environment? 2 — What does children’s play tell us about what our culture currently is about? What are the ways they use (and transmit) through the interaction with their environ-ment?

Play is a medium for deconstructing our culture, understand-ing the current issues of our culture as well as understanding what is currently emerging as new values in our everyday culture. It allows us to create awareness on how we conserve our culture and how we direct/ change it.

Play as cultural element
Play as a cultural element can be seen as a data collection and categorising of existing cultural data for design purpose ‘what do the children want’ or play can be seen as a negotiation / discus-sion / shared learning (SAMELEN) in the context of time / space / others.

From what is the problem here (negative) to what do you needwant (constructive) and bring the ‘topos’ (hilal) in PD back in ‘place’ (topia), to die-utopia to permeve the ‘u’ in utopia and to ‘top’ the here now… what is going on as not on as an action or single activity but a practice of a specific culture (political/ temporal). It is about the social material and subjective structures and relations and how they are structured and normed? How much are these regulations fixed?

From what is the problem? To what do you want?
To what do you need?
What do you think that other people need?
What do you think that you and other people need?
What do you do?
Who do you think that you and other people need?

A short note on rules & Ambiguity
The PD workshops as a shared learning moment: The designer learns as designer (and transmit) through the interaction with their environ-ment. The children learn (they may all learn different things as well as something communal).

The child learns from the designer as designer / the designer learns as designer / the designer learns as teacher / the designer learns as facilitator, the designer learns as educator / the designer learns as parent / the designer learns as mother / the designer learns as researcher / the designer learns as participant(s).

Types and Levels of power
(1) Nuclear struggle with power
There is a difference between power and power. There is a difference between substantive power and destructive power. Power corrupting the participant(s) and power necessary to organise offerings of power and information (powering participant(s) and coordinating the partici-pant(s)).

Adult power
Child power
If there is adult power, there also exist children’s. If there is adult designer power, there also exist child part-icipant(s) power. The adult designer does not only ex-plicit and implicit control the child-participant but the child-participant also controls the adult-designer.

De—structive power
Constructive power
To move from destructive power to constructive power is done when rules are made explicit and discussed. By doing so, the power differences are shared. But, what is this shared? what is this togetherness? How many different togethernesses are there. There is a cause and argument for your (construc-tive) power. The difference between cause and argument is that the argument ‘the other’ into account.

Power vs. coordination
Power vs. organisation
Power vs. structure
If the PD workshop designer do not give the child-participants a predefined structure, then the child/participants cannot reform that structure. The child-participants can only take part in the making of a dialogical structure (adapt a structure to an already existing structure) when a structure exist, when it is given by the other if the ‘other’ does not provide any structure to interact with, there may not be any interaction at all.

Power vs. equality
We need to get rid of the ideal of equality. How is equal-ity practiced? What are ways to practice ‘equality’ in its different contexts and individual situations? We need to get rid of the ideal of equality. There are differ-ences and it wouldn’t be realistic, neither honest to not admit that there exist differences.

Transform produce Culture
Transmit re—produce Culture

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The child does not exist
There is not such a thing as the child, or what is the child.

The child can be used to describe many child ‘forms’. The child as a subject — represents an individual child that has her/his own needs/wishes/opinions that are dif-ferent from other children and may be similar to adults

The child as a culture — is an ‘image’ of the child that is common for and represents a temporary group formation (long term) an individual child is part of, e.g. the mid-dle-class child, the white child.

When we work with material from PD workshops with children (information and experiences gained from our interaction), we need to be careful not to generalise, be aware and make differences between the child as sub-ject, group or culture and that when a child performs (behaviour via observation) and speaks (information via designed tools) he or she may do this from expressing his/her subjective values; and/or what he/she things is expected to be done/ as a representative of a certain group; and is embedded with social-cultural norms that are unconsciously shaping behaviour and thoughts. We cannot understand what mistaken the child operates or expresses. When we address ‘the child’ there is a need to name and specify the children: their age, class, ori-gin, gender but also their background and the context in which they operate.

Roles: the educator, the pedagogue, the PD-workshop designer and the PD-workshop facilitator.

Pedagogue (noun)
“A teacher, especially a strict or pedantic one.”

Educator (noun)
“A person who provides instruction or education; a teacher.”

Teacher (noun)
“A person who teaches, especially in a school.”

The verbs learn and teach do not have the same meaning and should not be used interchangeably.

Learn (verb)
“Gain or acquire knowledge or skill in (something) by study, experience, or being taught.”

Teach (verb)
“Cause (someone) to learn or understand something by example or experience.”

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