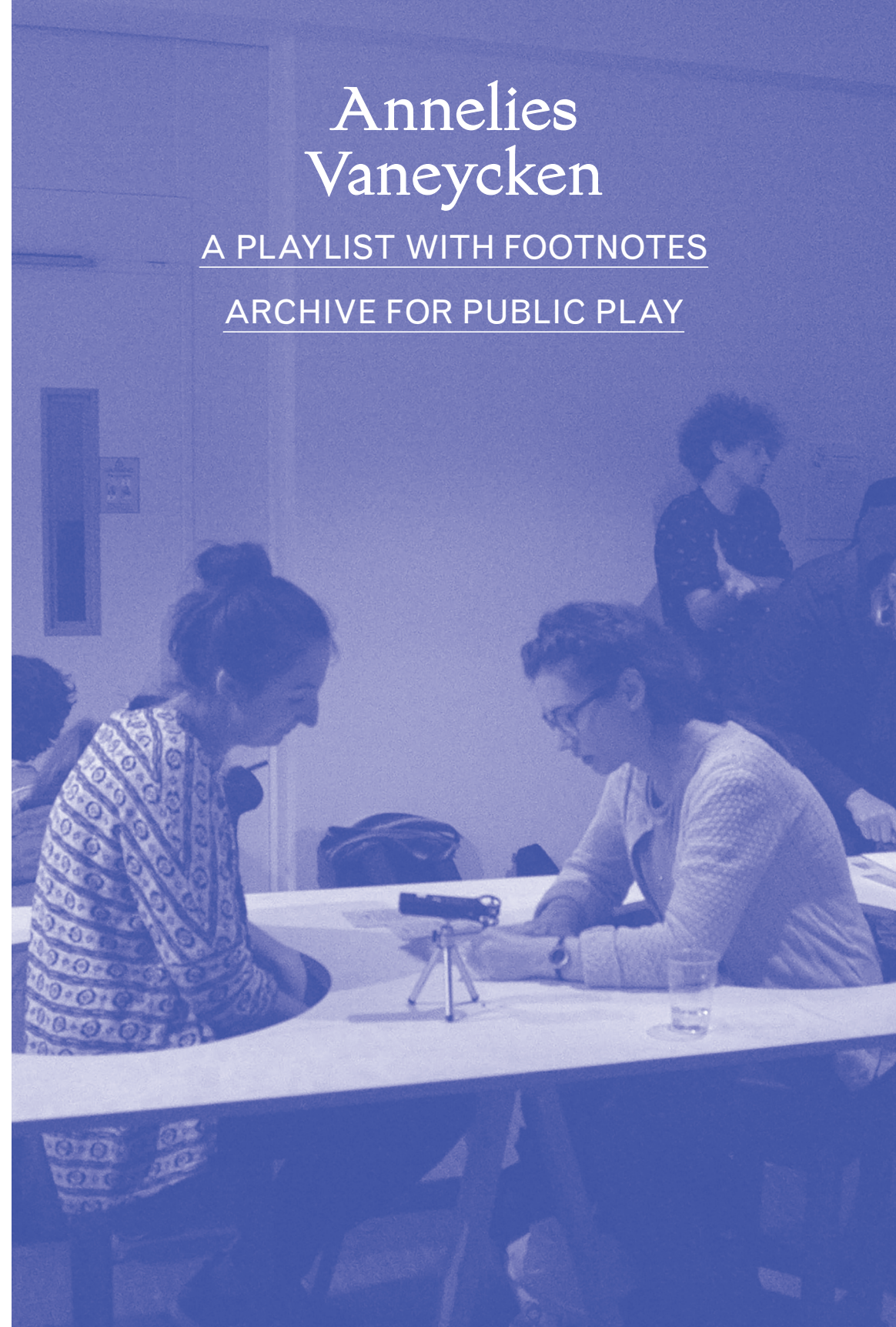


# Annelies Vaneycken

A PLAYLIST WITH FOOTNOTES

ARCHIVE FOR PUBLIC PLAY



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## A PLAYLIST WITH FOOTNOTES

Play is never boring

Play at work

Play Hide and seek

Play is necessary

**Play is generative**<sup>1</sup>

Play is out of time

Play is useless

Play can kill

Play is walking on the moon

Play is bigger than love

Play is asymmetric

Play is asphyxiating

Play is imitation

Play under the table

Play Tag

<sup>1</sup> The generative element of play relates to the collective making of our culture and society. Following Dutch historian and cultural theorist Huizinga's statements that play is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition in the process of generating culture (Huizinga, 2009), we may understand children's play not only as a means to explore and *understand* the world, our culture and society, but also as a means to *create culture*. Children develop understanding while playing; by creating their own worlds in which they imitate or re-enact what they encounter in daily life in new ways. In addition, children's imagination in this engagement of making, un-making and re-making generates new perspectives and possibilities. Play becomes a testing ground for try-outs and experimentation, where new realities—imaginary and hands on—are generated. When involving children in participatory design processes that deal with issues in/on public space, designers open up their design process and outcome to be influenced and partly co-created by children. These design processes generate new perspectives on how to (re-)build culture and society, including ideas defined by children.

Play is healthy

Play is in time

Play is dangerous

Play can distract

**Play is transformative**<sup>2</sup>

Play is observing ants

Play is better than everything

Play is organic

Play is uncontrolled

Play reenacts

Play on the street

Play Parachute

Play is fun

Play is automatic

Play is big

Play is seductive

Play seriously benefits you and others around you

Play is lifting an elephant with one finger

<sup>2</sup> Play includes a wide spectrum of different kinds. Roger Caillois defines two types of play. The 'ludus' type of play includes structured activities with explicit rules—mostly called games—while 'paidia' refers to unstructured and spontaneous activities or the playful types (Caillois, 2001). In his theory, both types are not perceived as two contradictory categories, they rather constitute a continuum that includes all kinds of play that shift between 'ludus' and 'paidia,' or between the structured and unstructured. Caillois states that in most human affairs there exist a tendency to turn 'paidia' into 'ludus,' and that established rules are also subject to the pressures of 'paidia.' Following this insight, play is an on-going process of creating, reforming and breaking **rules**.

Allowing this iterative process of creating, reforming and breaking rules in the context of participatory design, enables the participating child to take an active stance; to have control—and power—in being part of co-creating the participatory design process. Therefore, play creates possibilities for transforming predefined structures of the participatory design process.

Play is smaller than the sun

**Play is disruptive**<sup>3</sup>

Play is beautiful

Play can be violent

Play is breaking rules

Playground

Play Hopscotch

Play is positive

Play is becoming

Play is sweet

Play is painful

Players live longer

Play can be unfair

Play is moving the Chinese wall

Play is not being the best

Play is surprising

Play is ambiguous

Playscape

<sup>3</sup> In his search for alternative ways to define play; Brian Sutton-Smith explored play from the perspective of several 'rhetorics'. These metaphors help to open our imaginations to the full depth of the concept of play. In his study, Sutton-Smith states that these rhetorics—progress, fate, power, identity, the imaginary, the self and frivolous—contain a certain intrinsic ambiguity (Sutton-Smith, 1997). The ambiguous value of play allows multiple interpretations of meaning and use. Chantal Mouffe's ideas on agonistic public spaces (Mouffe, 2000) may connect to this **ambiguity**; hence play assembles different—and maybe even opposing—perspectives. Following Mouffe, we may also understand play's ambiguity as approach to disrupt conventional power structures and open up new perspectives and possibilities.

An ambiguous approach in participative design processes allowing multiple voices, also means allowing the voices of those that are not yet part in the public debate—like those of children. This multiplicity allow children to take part with their individual opinions, values and experiences and develop an critical mind. The inclusion of children may disrupt adults' power monopoly in participatory design processes and related processes of decision-making.

Play Musical Chairs

Play is progressive

Play is ultimate

Play is out of balance

Play is dangerous

Play causes good health

Play can be brisk

Play is teaching the teacher

Play is sweeter than sugar

**Play is contextual**<sup>4</sup>

Play is right on

Play is not functional

Play hero

Play Monkey in the Middle

Play is good

Play is outside reality

Play is risky

Play is cool

<sup>4</sup> Miguel Sicart pointed out that context comprises the environment in which we play. "Play does not occur in a vacuum but exists in and may originate from a messy network" (Sicart, 2014). These networks may consist of people (institutions), things (objects), spaces (locations) and culture (society). The interactions between these different actors entail a constant **negotiation** of visible and invisible rules that are inherent to each of these actors and contexts.

When working with children in participatory design projects, there is a need to address the roles of the direct and indirect actors such as parents, pedagogues and other staff members of educational and cultural institutions. Their collaboration may be beneficial for the overall process, but we also need to be aware of the control, influence and power exercised by these actors in relation to i.e. the construction of children as a predefined group, and how this influences children's behaviour.

Playing during adulthood makes you happy

Play is counting stars

Play can be nasty

**Play is performative**<sup>5</sup>

Play is larger than the street

Play is chaos

Play is play

Play is omnipresent

Play Jump rope

Play is doing

Play is intense

Play is escaping reality

Play is addictive

Playing causes a strong addiction

Play is jumping in puddles

Play is reality

Play is unbreakable

Play is unpredictable

<sup>5</sup> The performativity of play deals with the hands-on characteristics of play. Making through play is a performative act using our bodies, materials, objects and/or spaces to visualise, express and create situations. Play's performativity generates interaction, dialogue and negotiation between children and their play environment. In participatory design processes, this 'play environment' includes co-participants, the designer(s) and other direct and indirect actors.

This hands-on characteristic of play can be compared with the 'design-by-doing' approach, shared by most participatory design methods. Based on Donald Schön's notion of design as 'reflective practice' (Schön, 1983), participatory design processes consist of cycles of design experiments (doing, making, acting) followed by reflective analysis and evaluation. Play processes include similar iterations while creating, reforming and breaking rules. Therefore play creates a constant state of development or becoming. In addition, we can find similarities between children's play and the making of prototypes by designers. Both approaches allow them to experiment, test and evaluate their ideas in a hands-on way—each in their own language.

Play is everywhere

Play Freeze Dance

**Play is un-functional**<sup>6</sup>

Play is personal

Play is vibrant

Play is fiction

Play is dramatic

Players look younger

Play is climbing trees

Play is soft

Play is rough

Play is political

Play is pleasure

Play gives power

Play is addictive

Play makes you strong

Play is running away

Play can be crazy

<sup>6</sup> In his definition of play, Johan Huizinga describes play as an activity connected with "no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it" (Huizinga, 2009). This understanding of play "as an activity that exists only for its own sake" (Huizinga, 2009) and "one of the most significant (human and cultural) aspects of play is that it be fun" (Huizinga, 2009) distinguished his study as radical new from previous ones, in science, that proposed only deterministic and utilitarian definitions of play. The 'un-functional' element that Huizinga attributes to play, challenges designers to rethink traditional participatory design processes that tend to apply predefined structures on already set goals. By opening up the design process from the start to children, is risky and **unpredictable** but contributes to more appropriate ways of including children in participatory design. The role of the designer here is not one that defines and guides the children through a predefined design process but one that corresponds with a 'semi structure' allowing change and adjustment by decisions being made by children themselves in the design process.

Play is rebellious

Play is manipulation

Play creates understanding

Play is engaging

Play hides power

Play is glaring

Play is teasing

Play breaks rules

Play is making culture

Play is original

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## ARCHIVE FOR PUBLIC PLAY

Being intrigued by Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting *Children's Games* (1560) and the insight of how little evidence of popular culture—in particular those of “free play” in public(spaces)—survives, the ‘Archive for Public Play’ was born. By ‘free play’ I mean the unstructured play that children initiate themselves, without control or supervision by adults. Passing knowledge on self-initiated play from one generation to another, has mostly been done in a non-formal and oral way. Unfortunately, most of the time, there is no transmission at all and because there are no traces left, this free play knowledge becomes forgotten. In order to retain this knowledge on free play, the ‘Office for Public Play’ has set-up of a cross-cultural and cross-generational archive.

An archive, consciously or not, inevitably implies collecting. In his book *Ways of Curating*, Hans Ulrich Obrist describes a collection as “It is also, inevitably, a way of thinking about the world; the connections and principles that produce a collection contain assumptions, juxtapositions, findings, experimental possibilities and associations. Collection-making, you could say, is a method for producing knowledge.” Obrist's statement expresses one of the major intentions of the ‘Archive for Public Play’ as a method for producing knowledge on children's self-initiated play and their relation to cities' public spaces. In addition to producing knowledge and treasuring self-initiated play as cultural heritage, this collection of personal stories, photos and instructions serves as means to explore and facilitate the inclusion of children and young adults in participatory art and design project working in/on public space.<sup>1</sup>



*Children's Games*, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1560, Oil on panel, 118×161 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

During the Growing with Design exhibition, the ‘Office for Public Play’ had set-up its office at A-venue with the mission to collect contributions for the ‘Archive for Public Play’. This table-shaped installation invited the visitors to generate content for the Archive for Public Play by memorizing and narrating their favorite free play activities from childhood. A set of simple guidelines informed, invited and instructed the visitor how to act. The visitors, who decided to participate were asked to step into one of the two holes inside the table. He or she would then face a clerk who recorded the story, memorized and narrated by the visitor, as well as general information like name, title and a code for the contribution.

<sup>1</sup> The research platform ‘Office for Public Play’ has been established in order to address and problematise possible roles of free play in participatory art and design projects/processes in/on public

space and seek new ways in which artists/designers can facilitate collaboration with children and young adults in participatory art and design projects/processes in/on public space. [www.officeforpublicplay.org](http://www.officeforpublicplay.org).

As a way to thank the visitors for their participation, they were given a small gift: an extract of the 'Archive for Public Play' with previous contributions in poster format, size 50×70cm. On the spot, the clerk would type out the story, print it and stick it to the front window of the exhibition space. This presentation allowed passers in the street to read the stories and hopefully inspired them to try them out in public space.



Installation of 'The Archive for Public Play' at A-venue, part of the 'Growing with Design' exhibition.

The next pages show photos of the installation at A-venue and extracts of the 'Archive for Public Play.' 'The Archive for Public Play' can be consulted via [www.officeforpublicplay.org/archive](http://www.officeforpublicplay.org/archive). —





These photos show how one of the contributions of the 'Archive for Public Play' was re-enacted in public space, involving passers in the street.



[www.officeforpublicplay.org/archive](http://www.officeforpublicplay.org/archive)

The current interface of the online archive resembles the criteria-less encyclopaedic interface of Bruegel's painting 'Children Games.' It shows similarities with a 'cabinet of curiosities'—a space that contains different kinds of artefacts without ordering them—just like a collection of mysterious play content, transferred in a time machine to contemporary settings and contexts. In the next stage, when more data has been collected, the interface of the online platform will be redeveloped into a more user-friendly navigation system.

Reactivating public space

The archive does not postulate a static character, but performs in the real world through re-enactments. This active stance contributes to create new perspectives on contemporary public space and stimulate critical thinking and debate. In addition, this reactivation may help to induce bonding with the place and thus appropriation, care and engagement. The archive is performed in public space during e.g. the 'Public Time' sessions organised by the 'Office for Public Play,' where children and/or adults collectively play in public space. By performing contributions of the 'Archive in Public Play,' the original contributions—sent in by a single person—lose its subjectivity and become many new realities. The ambiguous character of the archive's contributions allows different interpretations and re-enactments. Re-enacting free play in public space, creates new perspectives and meanings, and enables us to understand public space in new ways.

20150506\_29\_Bogota(COL)

I always liked to climb trees. I was never a fearless kid, but with trees I felt always a challenge, but also the possibility, of climbing and moving through them. In here I am just standing on a cute tree trunk, but it represents my relation to trees.

Pablo Calderón Salazar



20150924\_26\_Culter(UK)

Roadside Rivers

When I was young, around the age of 6 or 7 perhaps, I lived in a small village called Culter. At this age I was still in Primary School, and after each school day I would walk to Joyce's house. Joyce was my child minder.

Sometimes I'd walk with friends, sometimes I'd walk alone. The typical route took me right through the centre of Culter, down its main street. Many cars travelled through Culter, to reach villages further into the countryside; therefore it was a relatively busy road.

I had a certain play that I enjoyed on rainy walks home; the more rain the better. As it rained upon the road, water would seep to the edges and flow alongside the pavement.

To me, these flows of rainwater were thundering rivers, strewn with rapids and other obstacles. I would search to find a discarded bottle cap, and this would become my boat.

Balanced on the edge of the pavement, oblivious to the nearby traffic, I would sail my boat down this treacherous river, all the way through Culter. I would get lost in this play, immersed in my imagination. Joyce would ask me why I was late and how I had managed to get so soaked!

Nathan Clydesdale

20150430\_36\_SouthBend(US)

Snow Pharaoh

Not megalomania but enthusiasm drove me to push the limits in that golden age of snow fort construction. Higher?—of course. More elaborate?—always. Multi-level with a superlong slide?—oh yes! . . . but . . . this required . . . more . . . building material. I'd already scooped up the entire backyard, so operations had to expand. My sisters' and I's plastic pan-shaped sleds served as perfect collection vehicles. The front yard was expected, but the charge across the street into the wide-open schoolfield changed everything. Perhaps it was a first taste of the impossible, the first exhaustion—my 'Fitzcarraldo.' Sledload upon snow-piled sledload returned across that sleepy suburban street. Hours and days passed and I won't say it was unadvantageous to be the oldest sibling. Still, the burden of this earthwork was mine, and more often it was the momentum of the circumstances that commanded me.

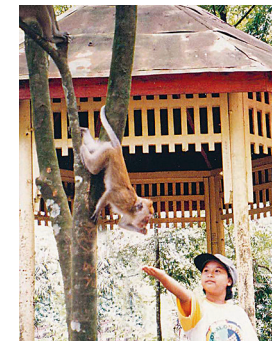


20150927\_26\_Jakarta(IE)

In my hometown, Jakarta, it is so hard to find place to play outside. Usually as a child, I played at school's field or played at my friend's house. But I never played outside alone, my parents never allowed me to play on the street by myself. It's too dangerous for a child to play outside alone.

But twice a year, during school holiday, my family and me always visited my grandmother in Jogjakarta—a small city around 400 km from Jakarta (around 10 hours by train). Unlike Jakarta, Jogjakarta is a small city, they even still use rickshaw and bicycle as their main transportation. So when we were there my brother and me always played outside. We played at the waterfall near my grandma's place, played with wild monkeys at the backside of the house, chasing dragonflies on the rice field, and much more!

Nesia Anindita



20150427\_24\_S.Cristina(IT)

Sometimes we transformed our swing in a circus by covering it with fabrics. We organised shows and our parents and grandparents had to come and watch us perform.

Maddalena Aliprandi



20150922\_56\_Löbau(DE)

The gate swing

The metal gate to our garden was not in very good shape—it creaked and squeaked. You could hang on to both door handles and try to make the gate swing forward and backward making these terrible sounds. Over time we developed an arsenal of acrobatic ways to sit on the gate, hang upside down from it etc.—we had names for these ways—I remember ‘the spiral of death,’ ‘the screamer,’ ‘the singing cat.’ You were old enough to start with easy swinging when you were tall enough to reach the handles... Obviously the spiral of death was the pinnacle of this game, reserved for the older children. We also tried to make the gate squeek in order to get reactions out of passers by, which did work occasionally. Another thing was to have as many children as possible holding on to the gate and one would move it using a rope around the door handles. One day the gate was restored, no squeeks and new paint—it wasn’t the same after that, we stopped playing on it.

Lieselotte van Leeuwen

20150924\_36\_Mariestad(SE)

Lundbergskriget

Almost everyday, if it was weather, we were a bunch of boys from the neighbourhood, age 6–15, playing “landbandy” on the street outside my house. We usually started right after school and we did not stop until it was pitch dark. Everyone that knew how to handle a “landbandyklubba” was accepted and could join in. This activity went on for years, all year around.

I lived at the end of a street, next to the forest. Weekends I spent on my bike, just biking around with friends. Or running around in the forest, following and spying on random people walking their dogs. When it was season I picked a lot of mushrooms, I was quite good at finding mushrooms and I knew lots of different types that was good for eating. Quite often I traded the mushrooms for freshly baked cakes with my parents or a neighbour. My friend in the forest was 4 years older and when I was 7 and he was 11 something changed. He went to war. “Lundbergskriget.” The two fighting parts in this war was older boys from my area and other boys from the neighbouring area Lundbergs. I was too young to be part of this but I heard the stories from my friend. They were fighting with long wooden sticks and kids were actually prisoners in the forest, in caves and holes in the ground. So he told me. I was terrified. And thrilled at the same time. I begged him to bring me. He refused since I was just 7. But one day he said that he had a task for me. I was supposed to be the watchman for one of the trails leading through the forest. No one from Lundbergs was aloud to pass. I was standing at this trail for a couple of hours, maybe half a day. Nothing happened. I didn’t see one single warrior. Friend or enemy. I went home to have some hot chocolate instead. I had survived. Next day my friend asked where I had been. I had been standing at

the wrong trail in the wrong forest. I don’t know, but I have a feeling that I knew that all the time... I was only 7.

Pontus Johansson

20150501\_57\_Stein(NL)

These photographs were taken in 1961 (I remember this, because my older sister is wearing the clothes in which she celebrated her First Holy Communion that year). The weather forecasts that I watched on the television (still a novelty then) made a great impression on me. Together with my sister, I reenacted them by ‘painting’ with water on the white plastered walls of the outside of our home. We painted clouds, suns and landscapes and pretended to report the weather of the day. I had to be quick though. As soon as the water dried up, the drawings disappeared and I had to start my painting all over again.



20150925\_45\_Stenungsund(SE)

I was allowed to play with my big brother and his friends. We all decided a superhero power like being super strong or shooting laser with your eyes. Me, the little brother, always got the ability of running fast, which I also had to do for real. We “roamed the hills” from early morning until late evening, climbing trees, building fortresses and killing each other over and over again.

Carl-Johan Skogh



20150419\_39\_Melsbroek(BE)

Use waste—a plastic bottle in this case—as an imaginary boat and let it sail on the pond in the city park.



20150429\_28\_Baarlo(NL)

For my brother Colin and I, playing with sticks in the dirt was the wintertime equivalent of building sandcastles at the beach. Instead of using shovels and buckets, we used sticks and our fingers to build castle-resembling heaps and dig out moats. Poking holes in the ground and then watching them fill up with ground water reminded us of our sandy creations being washed away by the sea. The soppy sound of sticks stirring through watery mud proved to be the perfect background music for this activity.

Selina Schepers

