TOGETHER, TOGETHER, EVERYONE

Reflections for co-creative participatory approaches

by Rebecca Baugh

CONTENTS

Hello and welcome! The intention of this booklet is to share some of my reflections from the project 'Space-making, Playing it Forward' with the aim of contributing to the pool of insights for co-creative participatory approaches in design and planning. The reflections can lend to the work of practitioners, educators, policymakers, academics, students and more, specifically regarding the thinking and behaviour of experts. I hope this supports in enabling you to bear the fruits that you desire!

'Space-making, Playing it Forward' investigates how co-creative participation through a language lens and decolonial underpinning can make socio-spatial justice a more tangible reality. The project is grounded in the Dutch, Rotterdam context and underpinned by participatory action research (PAR) regarding fieldwork and co-making/co-creation of a storybook about the Rotterdam neighbourhood, Bospolder-Tussendijken (BoTu), also referred to in a broader sense as Delfshaven. The evaluation and specifying learning phases of the research have been detailed in this collection to be scaled up and down in other projects.
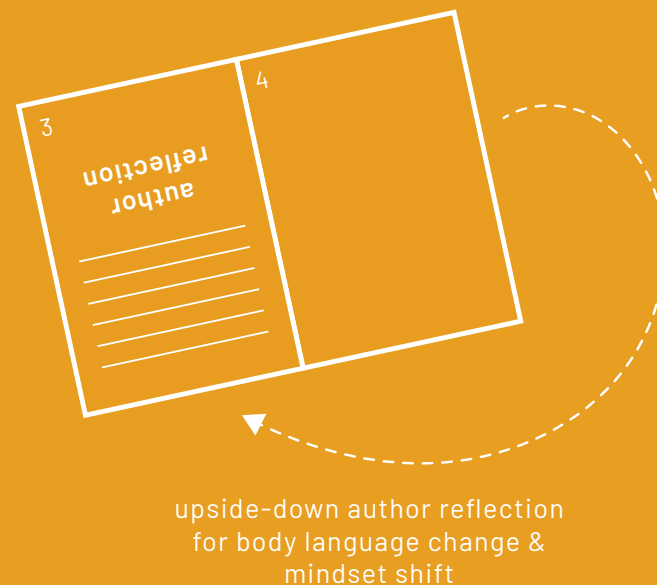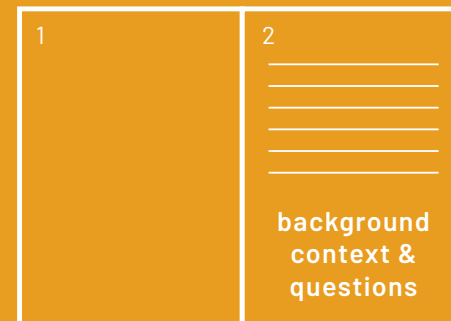
All images are either translated from participant analogies by Rebecca Baugh (no or further citation) or by works created by the participants themselves (citation).

How to use

There is no particular sequence to how the reflections have been ordered, nor consecutive steps for how they should be followed. This is a conscious decision to encourage us to make our own connections, for co-creative participation requires high degrees of local contextualisation. Therefore, the reflections can be adopted and adapted to work for the involved people and the specific context at hand. Similarly, the sequence also allows us to arrive at diverse conclusions, and exemplifies the pluriversality of our thought. Some reflections may be relevant for specific contexts while others may not be. While piloting the collection, participants mentioned how the collection could be used in workshops. In addition to workshops, the collection can be used as a reflective tool throughout and become an embedded part of the co-creative participatory process.

Regarding how to read the collection, the cards present the essence of the reflections with subsequent question prompts. The booklet then details my more elaborate background context about each reflection, the question prompts, and my personal reflective responses to these questions. Coincidentally, my lens widened as I researched, read and considered other perspectives, resulting in an iterative process of learning, which I hope happens for you as well. The margins around text have purposefully been left wide to provide space for you to comment, question and add onto what is expressed. Essentially the format invites you to appropriate the collection as you see fit and mirror your thinking (although this can also happen on other sheets of paper, white boards, digitally and so forth).

STRUCTURE OF EACH REFLECTION

1

2

background context & questions

3

author reflection

4

upside-down author reflection for body language change & mindset shift

'[care] involves an all-round commitment to not exploit or do harm as well as a dedication for people to thrive'
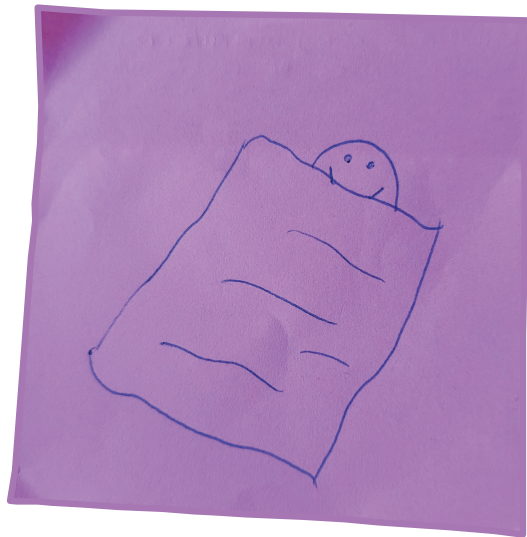
Humanity & caring
by Karima

What is care? A common definition of 'care' is that of Joan Tronto and Bernice Fischer, who explain that "on the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes every-thing that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world" so that we can live in it as well as possible'[1]. This involves an all-round commitment to not exploit or do harm as well as a dedication for people to thrive[2]. Caring also emphasises radical interdependence, meaning exploration and recognition of our shared relational ontology, our interconnectedness in a 'life-sustaining web' [1, 2, 3, 4]. As a result of care reflecting our mutual interdependence with each other, care is essential to who we are and how we are perceived in our public and private lives, "the better the care, the greater the prospects for human development"[5].

What is the power of care?

How does caring affect how we think, behave and interact?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: Communities in Delfshaven demonstrated care towards each other in multiple ways. Here are a few: by helping with heavy shopping trolleys; financially supporting each other through rotating savings and credit associations; and expressing how the language of their heart is care and humanity that they try to embody with what they say and do. A seasoned researcher encouraged me to care and to feel, 'Je mag jezelf laten raken' (English translation: 'You can let yourself be moved'). One day, as I was doing fieldwork, I was struck by a passionate feeling, an ardent sense of care for Bospolder-Tussendijken and Delfshaven. I realised that although this physical feeling came from my core, its origins were born from the area's communities and their mutual care for me. Communities in the area entrusted me with their stories, asked about mine, showed concern for my safety, and celebrated my birthday. In addition to weekly fieldwork that involved lots of social conversation, I was also connected to the area through sewing lessons. I became invested in the long-term health and prosperity of BoTu and its people, I care.

I feel that it is through this reciprocity of respect and care that together we can work towards a brighter future. Care presents us with an antithesis to current modes of living based on heteropatriarchy, coloniality, and capitalism [3]. Likewise, care opens up new ways of producing knowledge that challenge current and dominant status quos. Through, for example, the act of simultaneously thinking and feeling, sentipensante [6], of an intertwined way using brain, hand, intellect and heart [7].

'visibly curious, through speech but also enthusiastic body language'

Curiosity as described by a participant

Political theorist, academic and life peer Bhikhu Parekh [8]argues that no one culture possesses all that is valuable to human life nor can one culture nurture the broadest range of human capacities. A key to fulfilling human potential though, may lie in multicultural societies. A way of realising this potential is being curious, being curious enough about knowledge and experiences that are often and have historically been 'othered', dismissed and/or made invisible [9]. Being curious though, pushes the bounds of our imaginations, it prompts reflection of our own limitations, inspires us to search for new knowledge and experiences to disrupt harmful cycles, and equips us with the tools to remould and create more just realities realities[8, 11].

What are the effects of curiosity in how we interact and learn?

How can we express curiosity?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: As a researcher, I was visibly curious, through my speech but also enthusiastic body language, to learn from and with other people. These actions demonstrate what researchers[10] describe as 'intellectual humility'. Intellectual humility expresses that although we may have lots of existing experience, knowledge and skills, we acknowledge that there is always so much more to learn[10]. I tried to embody this type of curious openness and humility, which I think translated to having more positive social interactions, a common effect of curiosity in relationships[11].

'questions that stimulate emotion can act as a spark for in-depth discussions'

What is home: 'loslatten' & not needing to perform
by Hester van der Stoep

Simple questions have the potential to inspire feeling and conversational spark. Vanessa Van Edwards [12] describes how questions that stimulate emotion can act as a spark for in-depth discussions. Likewise, in addition to the substance of a question, the type, tone, sequence and framing of them are also relevant [13]. For example, many members of the community in BoTu/Delfshaven expressed how they are often spoken to in patronising, superior tones by researchers, planners and civil servants alike. Perhaps, tones of open curiosity, of interest, of care may work to challenge dehumanising status quos.

How does the length of a question influence engagement?

How can we use questions to inspire deep thinking?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: Many of the questions I asked were quite short, simply phrased but so often, and quite surprisingly to me, were greeted by profound responses. Constructions of some questions focused on 'what does … mean to you?', and 'what are places of … for you?'. These types of questions actively sought for a multiplicity of interpretations and not to steer participant responses with specific information (I learnt that at times though, there was a need to steer the conversation). Doing so allowed for the building of pluriversal perspectives in 'a world where many worlds fit'[12], using simple, inclusive language. As a result the questions and responses contested singular narratives by establishing an understanding of what is meant as opposed to assuming 'universal' meaning.

'one owner excitedly spoke about the Niteshop's flyer ... as they are regular customers in the shop, they are visible, often converse with the owner and give back to the community.'

Niteshop Coop-zine
by The Niteshop

GIVING & TAKING

Decolonial thought in planning aims to prevent the 'extractives logics of urban development' by 'experts' who too often give little back [6]. To do so, we are encouraged to confront and change the ways we think, behave and live in the world [6]. For instance, this can include asking people what they want as opposed to assuming, which prevents the White Saviour Industrial Complex (WSIC) from rearing its harmful head.

Teju Cole [15] describes WSIC as a term to refer to people from the West, who with their good intentions, go to 'help' (this word can be very problematic!) people in Africa, Asia and South America who are deemed less fortunate. Their intentions, however, often cause more damage than good. This is in part due to a lack of examination into the complex workings and systems of power and history, and lack of evaluation as to our positions within said systems. As a result, people who are meant to be the recipients of supposed 'help' are not consulted enough about their wants or needs, nor is their autonomy to act fully recognized. The WSIC is not necessarily exclusive to white people, as it is a mindset and behaviour that can be adopted by many. Although the term is commonly used in describing interplays between people in the so-called Global South and North, manifestations of the WSIC, especially in contexts with long histories of coloniality, can manifest in Western Europe.

Is it necessary to give back as well as take?

What are the effects of taking? What are the effects of giving?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: During fieldwork, I tried to embed myself in the community, to make myself visible and give back even in small ways. Sometimes this involved having lunch at independent cafés and recommending said eateries to eager tourists. Sometimes this involved getting my groceries from the local toko and having conversations with employees and customers. Sometimes this involved actively listening to people as they shared their stories and other times it involved weekly sewing lessons in the area.

The Niteshop, an urban research movement, is a large-scale example of giving back to the area, as they are so embedded into the Rotterdam West community. For instance, when asked about the various flyers in his shop, one owner excitedly spoke about the Niteshop's CO-OPzine. Meanwhile, when asked about another flyer, he said he had no idea what it was about. The difference was that the Niteshop were regular customers in the shop, they are visible, often converse with the owner and give back to the community.

Equally, through this research and other experiences, it has become a necessity to ask people about what they would actually like. Many times throughout the research I asked myself how ideas and aims would be beneficial for the community, as I sometimes doubted their value for Bospolder-Tussendijken. I asked members of the community and listened intently to see if some ideas would indeed be useful and ensure a give-and-take process for this project resulted from the effort of a team.

'discomfort is a catalyst for learning and growth'
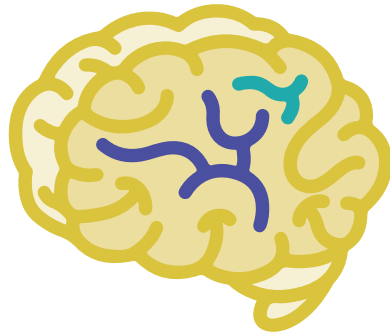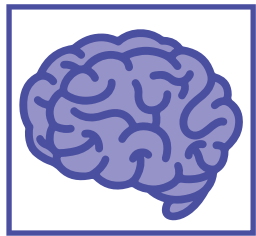
Restricted fixed mindset versus more boundless growth mindset

*It should be noted that there is a distinction between feeling discomfort and feeling unsafe. I am very much referring to the former.

EMBRACING DISCOMFORT

Embracing discomfort relates to continually fostering either a fixed or growth mindset, discomfort being conducive for developing the latter mindset. Carol Dweck, a renowned psychologist, has extensively researched both fixed and growth mindsets. A fixed mindset is a belief that someone's intelligence, talents and other abilities are predetermined without the possibility of developing beyond those limits. With a fixed mindset there is also an emphasis on succeeding or failing, whereas learning from past mistakes is largely neglected[16]. It is thought that a combination of these factors influence how we perceive and believe stereotypes. For instance, fixed mindsets play into the idea that Asian and White students are more "naturally gifted" in STEM than Black, Latino and Native American students, which prevents major cultural shifts from occurring[17].

Similarly, if we hear something that we want to hear or agree with, we are more likely to 'open' our ears. On the other hand, we more likely switch off when something opposes our existing perceptions and beliefs, which leads to poor listening and non-expansive thought[18]. Contrastingly, a growth mindset allows for the evolution of previously held beliefs by learning from past mistakes, observations, feedback and environments of the unknown [16, 17]. In doing so, there is creativity, new knowledge and experiences to build something new.

What does embracing discomfort mean for you?

What are the effects of feeling uncomfortable?

"For change to happen [and to create more equitable and inclusive societies] we need to sit in the discomfort"[19]

. I have often felt uncomfortable during the participatory research process. At times I felt shy about giving people the research 'spiel' at the beginning of the conversation, before they knew much about me or 'bothering' people as they went about their day. I decided to approach people though and contrary to my fearful assumptions, I was welcomed. In another example, from the beginning of fieldwork, I intentionally approached people from different ethnic backgrounds. I later came to realise that the same intentionality was absent for gender as I felt more comfortable approaching unfamiliar women than men. Nevertheless, to get more comprehensive understandings, I stepped out of my comfort zone and started to also engage in conversation with men. I now believe that discomfort is a catalyst for learning and growth.

'Asking people questions about what, why and how something is the way it is allows these frames of reference to be challenged and/or expanded'
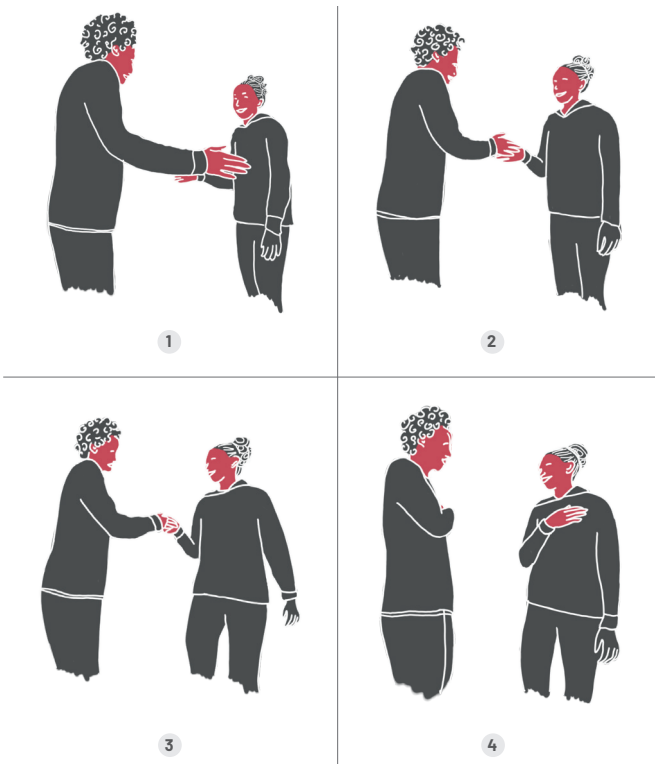
A greeting expressing respect & 'I see you'

BALANCE BETWEEN OBSERVATION & ASKING QUESTIONS

Observation is an art, a skill. It is invaluable in trying to understand people and how we use space. Together with its merits though, a major limitation is observer bias, processing through our own frames of reference, which is inevitable [20]. Asking people questions about what, why and how something is the way it is allows these frames of reference to be challenged and/or expanded. Alison Wood Brooks and Leslie K John [13] explain how question asking stimulates learning, exchanging ideas, innovation, and trust building. Question asking can help build rapport between different people.

What are the lenses that you use to see the world?

How does asking questions influence how you understand the world?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: During fieldwork, as I sat on tram 8, journeying from Rotterdam West to the north-east, I grew to have a fuller understanding of who used the tram; when there was a market and what stop to get off at; how the city was changing as newly-built modern towers contrasted with 1980s residential blocks with banners bellowing 'SLOOP ONS NIET' (English translation: 'Don't demolish us'). Observation enabled me to gain insight. On the tram journey, everything that I observed was then interpreted through my lenses of seeing the world, my own frame of reference consisting of prior knowledge and experiences. Asking questions in addition to observation allowed me to garner fuller understandings.

For instance, many times on tram 8, at local cafés, and at the end or beginning of conversations, I noticed a recurring gesture, a handshake or fist bump followed by moving a hand to the heart. I assumed it meant something along the lines of camaraderie. From asking different people, this understanding was enriched with nuance as the gesture not only signifies, 'being in my heart' or respect but it also changes depending on varying ethnic and age groups. A man described how a fist bump was more typical for greeting Surinamese and Cape Verdean boys and men. Meanwhile in Turkish culture, your hand would be placed lower than your chest to greet older people. From my own experiences I have come to realise that although we can observe and then interpret, there is great humility and fuel for learning through asking questions and being enlightened, and even surprised, by someone's response.

> '*surprises [in conversations] can help to build a fuller understanding of the wider context*'
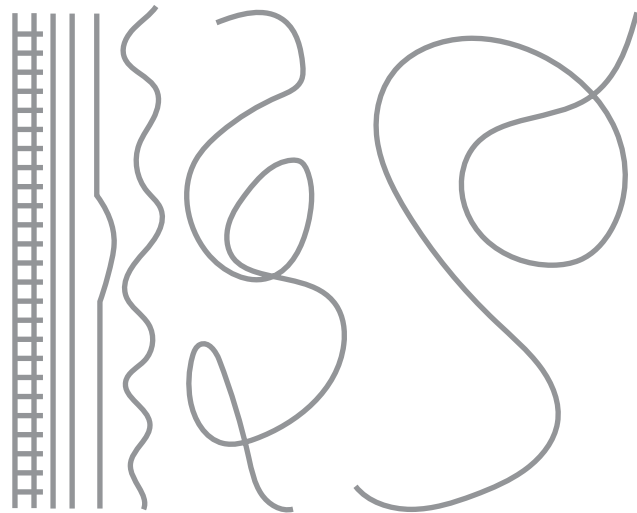
From rigidity to fluildity & surprise

FROM RIGID INTERVIEWS TO FLUID CONVERSATIONS

New knowledge is often the result of people in dialogue with another sharing experiences and perspectives, often through telling stories [21, 8]. This exchange exposes us to a broader range of human experiences, of their differences and similarities, and poses the potential for reciprocal learning [6]. Similarly, follow-up questions signify that we are actively listening, care about what is being said, and are curious to hear more about what someone is saying [13]. Studies have shown that people in conversation with someone who asks follow-up questions typically feel heard and respected [13]. Also, sharing personal information helps to create feelings of safety and a less official atmosphere, which sets the tone for people to be more forthcoming [13].

How do the effects of structured interviews and organic conversations converge?

How do the effects of structured interviews and conversations diverge?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: From research, I have found that fluid conversations seem to be more conducive to storytelling than rigid interviews that follow a strict sequence of question 1, question 2 then question 3 and so forth. This fluidity can sometimes lead to people going off on tangents that may initially appear irrelevant (which they may sometimes be and steering back on subject is necessary). Other times these tangents and the organic nature of discussions allowed for the possibility to be surprised by what is said. These surprises can help to build a fuller understanding of the wider context. For example, when I asked someone about whether they played sports regularly, they then told me quite an elaborate story about a hospital visit and how they are now committed to improving their health by exercising regularly. So yes, they play sports regularly!

Likewise, fluidity enabled for a focus on feeling and emotional experiences, emphases that were traditionally shunned by Enlightenment planning culture [22]. I found that as I shared information about myself, such as my family's parallel history of migration, or asked follow-up questions that responded directly to what was said, people opened up more.

"[the] close-up of a face, (...) leaves out all the important details"

Left: American portrait. Right:Japanese portrait
by Melissa Veronesi[23]

PRESENCE VERSUS ABSENCE: READ-ING THE AIR

In a study by Richard Nisbett and Takahido Masuda, which was recounted in Erin Meyer'sThe Culture Map [23], American and Japanese participants were asked to take a photo of a person. American participants generally took a close-up portrait of someone's face. Meanwhile, Japanese participants photographed a person in their environment, in which the human figure appeared smaller in relation to their surroundings. If we zoom out from the study and see how it overlaps with larger cultural mindsets, many religions and philosophies in East Asia, similar to intersectional feminism, traditionally focus on the interconnectedness and interdependencies between people and parts. As one participant explained, '[the] close-up of a face, (...) leaves out all the important details' (p.110).

Can we infer meaning through absence?

In what contexts can it be beneficial to 'read the air'?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: Although much can be discerned from what is explicitly said or referenced, we can also infer meaning from absence, reading the silence of the air. Silence is another communicative language (to be read differently from context to context) that can be illuminating. For example, from what was not said and through body language, I could gauge how cognizant people were of their environment, and the power/relational dynamics present in interactions – who dominates conversation and who is quiet, and why this may be.

> '**the recognition of shared experiences that can foster feelings of reciprocal understanding and subsequently safety**'
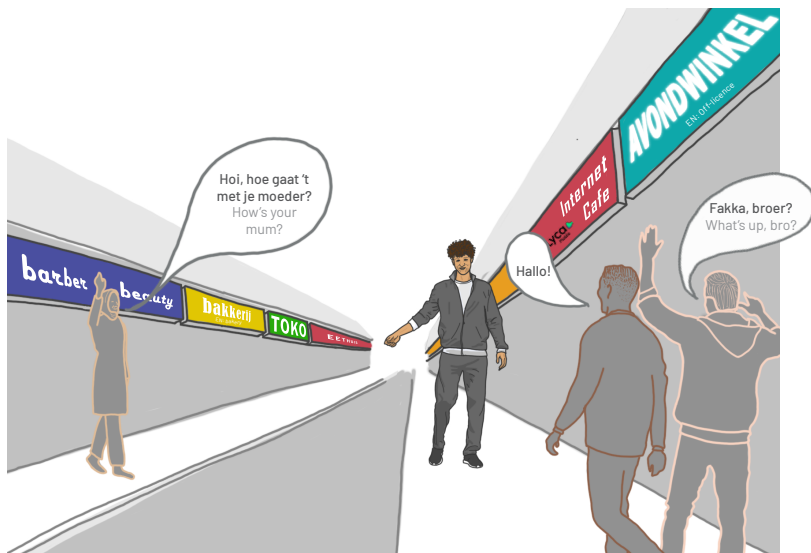
A Moroccan Dutch participant walking along and being embraced by a street

SAME, SAME BUT DIFFERENT: SEEING YOUR REFLECTION

This reflection is two-fold yet resolves around the same theme: shared experiences. The first meaning concerns seeing your reflection around you, which can be powerful. It can evoke a sense of safety as well as feeling understood and heard. Perhaps a good way of understanding this meaning is through the prolific and skillful work of James Baldwin [24]. In a number of Baldwin's works, he explores the interplay between community and self. In his play, Blues for Mister Charlie (1964), the character Richard gradually begins to find a sense of self as well as worth as he identifies with a collective Black experience. Similarly, in the short story 'Sonny's Blues' (1957) there is a moment of mutual realisation between two brothers. The brothers grasp that they are not solely bound by family or skin colour, but also a shared (racial) experience.
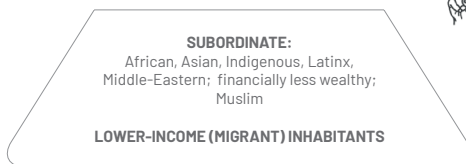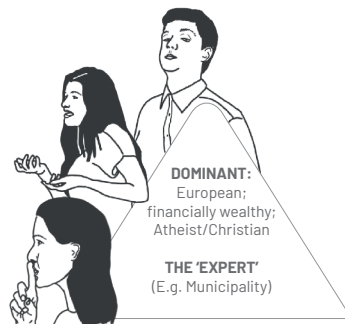
What are the impacts of seeing your reflection around you?

How does having shared experiences influence how we think, feel, care and act?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: It is in this essence that I mean 'same, same but different' – the recognition of shared experiences that can foster feelings of reciprocal understanding and subsequently safety. Whether these shared experiences are born from being of the same ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, values, interests or a plethora of other factors, there is comfort in being part of a collective. The term also acknowledges that there are opportunities to grow and learn from the unfamiliar. For example, in conversations I told anecdotes about my grandparents migrating to the UK in the 1950s; about 'aunties' and 'uncles', who are not necessarily blood related to me; of similar foods like plantain, okra, bammy and the ways they were cooked in the homes that I grew up in; of being othered based on reductive stereotypes of certain social identities. I could see my reflection in many of the people I interacted with, and they in me.

The Niteshop, an urban research centre based in Rotterdam West, takes this idea of 'seeing your reflection' to a larger yet delicate and thoughtfully considered scale. For example, from the art that decorate its space that range from innovative capri-sun cross-body bags to a hot sauce range, the sunflower seed carpet fitted around its floors, books for a range of age demographics that represent multiple colours and cultures that call the neighbourhood home, to diverse staff who are also representative of the area's diversity. Which brings me to the next point of seeing your reflection, your needs, your experiences being included, respected and used in decision-making spaces.

'living legacies of history can manifest in how knowledge is produced, our interactions with others and the power dynamics that underpin these interactions'

DOMINANT:
European;
financially wealthy;
Atheist/Christian

THE 'EXPERT'
(E.g. Municipality)

SUBORDINATE:
African, Asian, Indigenous, Latinx,
Middle-Eastern; financially less wealthy;
Muslim

LOWER-INCOME (MIGRANT) INHABITANTS

Power dyanmics resulting from various hierachies

"History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer, merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do."

- James Baldwin, 1965 [25]

As James Baldwin expresses, history lives within us. It informs how we are conditioned today as our behaviours are rooted in ideological, cultural and historical contexts [27]. The living legacies of history can manifest in how knowledge is produced, our interactions with others and the power dynamics that underpin these interactions, where embedded hierarchies of caste, gender, class and so forth come to life consciously or subconsciously.

In what ways do you see manifestations of living histories?

How do living histories affect the present?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: In particular group interviews (or better yet fluid conversations!) between people of different ethnicities and genders, those that responded to questions first were oftentimes a part of historically dominant groups. This example as well as other expressions of living histories of hierarchy are important to note as they contribute to whose voice is valued and whose voice is left unheard; what knowledge, experiences and stories are shared and which ones are not. These age-old ways of being conditioned are intricately interwoven into the very fabric of our society, adopting different expressions over time and space, often thwarting efforts to realise a more equitable and inclusive world [27, 28]. Hence, to achieve this dream, we are required to scour beneath the surface, deeper than what may initially appear [28].

So let's dig deep!

'if we want to realise and see change, how is this possible if we do not allow ourselves the opportunity to reflect on our approaches?'
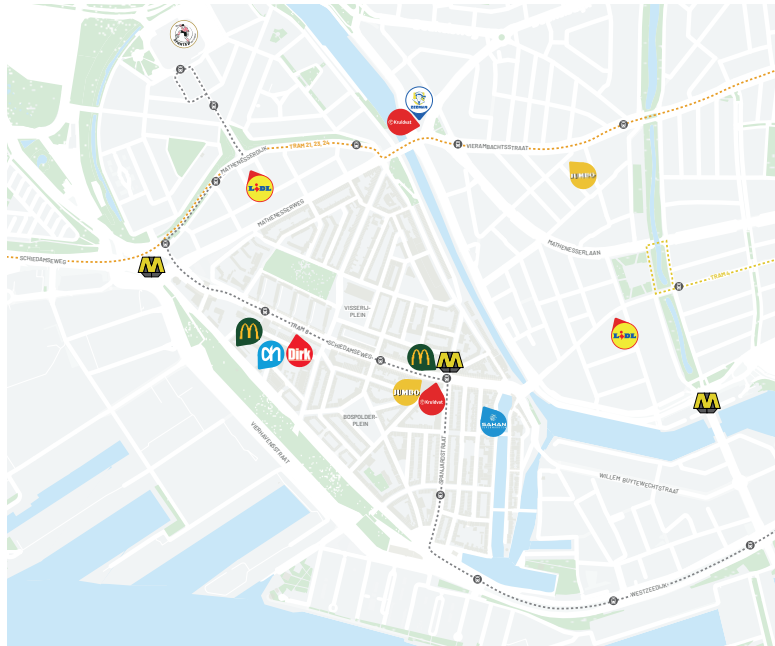
A co-created map for collaboration
by Michael Abraha, Dagmar de Jager, Alissa Udo,
Sevda, S. Olgun, Rebecca Baugh

SPACIAL DESIGNS VERSUS DEVELOPING APPROACHES FOR DESIGN

Paulo Freire, author of The Pedagogy of the Oppressed [29, 30], coined the term the banking model of education to describe many educational systems. In such systems, he describes how dominant cultures and ways of thinking are ingrained in students, where there is a focus placed on performance, which works to maintain the status quo. This is as opposed to encouraging critical thinking that is needed to reveal the connections and discrepancies within systems and how to unpack, deconstruct, and create new, more just ones.

Relating the above to fields of urbanism and architecture, Jeremy Till [21] explains that normative traditions of professional and academic legitimacy are often based on principles of completeness and logic. A reliance on adopting these principles makes it easy to disparage the ideas that result from the openness and fluidity of normal conversation or that critique dominant ways of doing and thinking. However, new knowledge is seldom created by the monologues of individuals and is instead the consequence of collectives in active dialogue with each other [21, 8]. Therefore, if we want to realise and see change, how is this possible if we do not allow ourselves the opportunity to reflect on our approaches?

What are our aims?

Are they achievable with the approaches that we currently have?

If not, in what ways can they be adapted and change to realise different outcomes?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: Throughout the thesis project, I was asked about my 'final design' that would work to conclude the research findings. Given the project's temporal scope, and the emphasis and time needed for co-creation this was not possible. Nevertheless, this line of questioning prompted me to reflect on the relationship between spatial design and developing approaches for design. The project explored what languages could be used for collaboration, and an opportunity presented itself to collectively re-design a map illustrating 'spreek-en infuur' (consultation and information hours) that was clear and accessible for social workers but was intelligible for its target audience. Hence, during a spreekuur, which doubled as a mini-workshop, participants annotated and commented on how the map could be revised so that it could be more widely understood and used. Changes in the coded and abstract design language of the first map mean that the modified map can now act as an intermediary object between various communities and urban development practitioners in co-creation.

‘by using other languages we allow ourselves to be exposed to nuance, realities, knowledge, and ideas’

Türkçe
Turks | Turkish

Sranan Tongo

ا ةيبرعلا
ةيبرغملا
Marokkaans Arabisch |
Moroccan Arabic

Nederlands
Dutch

ⵜⵓⵎⵥⵉⵖⵜ / ⵜⵓⵎⵥⵉⵖⵜ
/ ⵅⵓⵎⵥⵉⵅ
Berber / Amazigh

Kriolu /
Kabuverdianu
Kaapverdisch Creools |
Cape Verdean Creole

العربية ا
الارترية
Eritrese Arabisch |
Eritrean Arabic

Somaliyeed
Somalisch | Somali

Papiamentu
Papiaments

Snippet of the diversity of languages & alphabets of Delfshaven

Linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, posit that language shapes our understanding of the world, meaning that these understandings are limited by the tools that the language(s) we use offer [31]. Languages though are often credited as being an essential component of culture, where it acts as a vessel to communicate thoughts, beliefs and customs [32]. Thus, by using other languages we allow ourselves to be exposed to nuance, realities, knowledge, and ideas that exist and are expressed in other contexts to inform and deepen our own. Nevertheless, time pressures and other limitations result in some thoughts, beliefs and ideas needing to be translated.

In what contexts can we embrace multilingualism?

In what contexts is translation necessary?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: The project endeavoured to champion and showcase the range of languages used by communities in Delfshaven. Therefore, various participants were asked if they would like to co-author elements of the project in languages that most resonated with them. For some participants who were able to create themselves, this entailed drawing, photos, music, and graphic design to communicate their thoughts, ideas and experiences. For others who had less time, it was necessary to translate ideas using metaphors or analogies that they had described and then build onto them. Of course, this was influenced by my own frame of reference, however.

'some (...) learn best through group work, meanwhile, others do so through discussion or working alone'
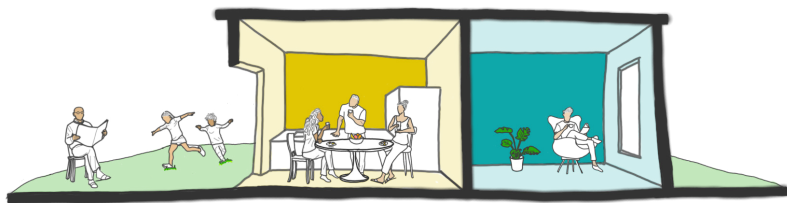
Home: being together and other times being alone

Differentiation is often spoken about in education and business circles, where it is acknowledged that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach does not equate to creating effective learning environments nor developing the most profitable or successful business strategies [33, 34]. For example, in classroom settings, some students learn best through group work, meanwhile, others do so through discussion or working alone. Nonetheless, at various points, teachers differentiate and accommodate this [35].

How and where can we differentiate in our approach to co-creation? What resources are required?

What effects can this have on engagement?

From speaking with people in Delfshaven, it became apparent that differentiation would be beneficial in a plethora of ways, here are a few: (1) multilingual communication in both the spoken and written form can be effective in involving diverse groups. Whereas if solely one community is engaged, monolingual communication may be more appropriate; (2) whether we engage in larger or smaller groups, as some people may rejoice in thinking and creating in more communal spaces, while some may appreciate the concentration that more intimate settings afford them; (3) the language we use in regards to metaphors, pronouns and adjectives, can help to express an understanding and interest in communicating with certain groups, which supports people feeling seen and recognised; and lastly (4) different modes of communication may be required. For example, in academic and work settings, emails are the common medium for connecting with others. However, this was not the case in Delfshaven, where I, a person who regularly communicates using WhatsApp texts, realised that calling or speaking to people in person was more personal and effective.

'prioritised trust-building'
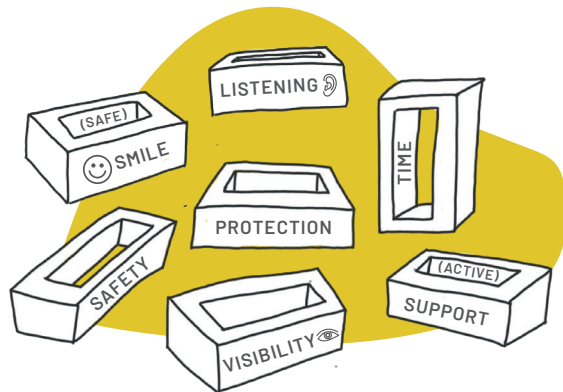
Building blocks for trust
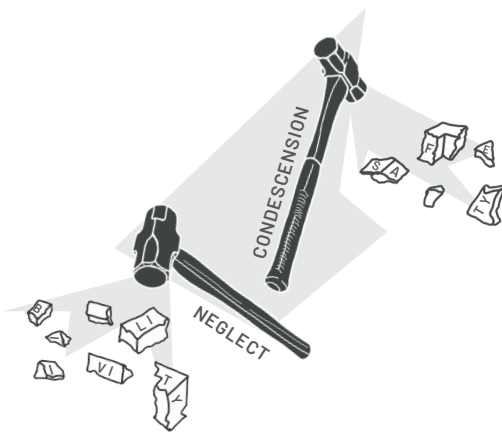
Destroyers of trust

Many Italian urban development schemes in the 1990s and early 2000s stressed the need for a participatory and integrated approach to urban renewal. This materialised in the form of Neighbourhood Contracts, which were enabled through Neighbourhood Labs [36]. One such contract and lab can be found in Ponte Lambro, a Milan neighbourhood, which experienced deteriorating qualities of housing and public space as well as increasing social inclusion [36]. To encourage inhabitant involvement, leaders and facilitators made themselves visible and prioritised trust-building in the following ways:

(1) established a Neighbourhood Lab in a local flat where sharing could take place between residents and Lab employees. The space fostered feelings of safety and home as the space could be appropriated for exchanging information, doing homework and/or having a coffee; (2) organised neighbourhood events, like the screening of the 2006 World Cup in a community centre to develop a culture of cooperation and re-appropriation of abandoned public spaces; (3) established the Neighbourhood Lab's legitimacy from the outset by producing periodic newsletters explaining the urban renewal processes to create transparency and accountability; (4) established an accountability protocol. Once the lab collected requests from residents, they also provided them with information on how, in what timeframe, and who (municipality, housing corporations, architects, contractors, etc) would process and realise their requests.

How can trust be built?

In what ways can we become more visible with those we engage with?

How can visibility support engagement?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: The building blocks of trust, as illuminated by many participants, discuss trust being built on visibility, time, support, smiling, protection, safety and listening. During the thesis project, being visible and spending time in the area was salient for building trust as well as deepening relationships through regular, casual and sometimes spontaneous interactions. This visibility and investment of time, also affected how interested people were in becoming more involved in the project – those who I spoke to regularly were more keen. This visibility and trust could be strengthened by a simple greeting – saying hello and/or acknowledging people, engaging in longer conversations on a frequent basis, or supporting each other. For example, one participant explained that they were part of a common fund, a rotating savings and credit association, which is built on trust among other members. Hence, give and take also influences trust.

'proposed together with a community coach, who then put me in contact with a network of social workers'
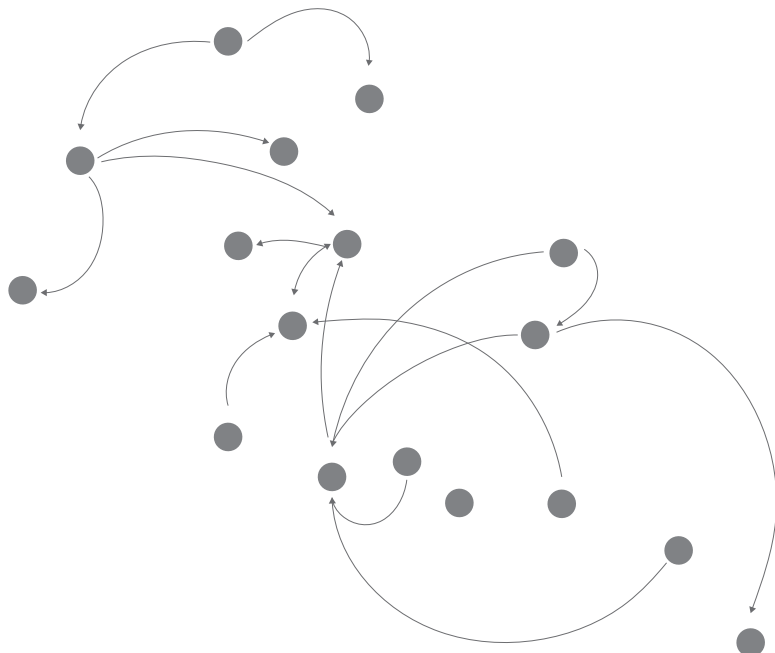
Participant network in Delfshaven

This reflection will be presented in tandem with a thank you to all the individuals and collectives in Delfshaven and beyond who allowed this project to come to fruition and simply be, it took a village. A participatory urban renewal project that took place in Ponte Lambro, a Milanese neighbourhood, was the result of a collaboration between local residents, the municipality of Milan, a regional housing agency, and the Ministry of Infrastructure that provided funding [37]. During a trust and community building event, the screening of the 2006 World Cup, different groups of individuals from the community were in charge of various organisational processes. For example, the local parish supplied the equipment that was installed by young people. In these various teams, individuals lent their skills and knowledge and came together, complimenting each other, to achieve their goals.

What does 'team' mean to you?

Who could be included in your team?

AUTHOR REFLECTION: As was mentioned previously, this project would not have been possible without a team and the multiple communities who contribute to the project in varying ways. The content of this project was the result of people sharing their stories, thoughts, creativity and time! For example, the idea to collaboratively redesign a calendar and map informing people about 'spreek-en inforuren' (consultation and information hours) was proposed together with a community coach, who then put me in contact with a network of social workers who suggested that I come to a spreekuur (which actually lasts multiple hours) to ask members of the target audience, social workers and volunteers to redesign the calendar. From these experiences, I am keen to work in teams more, and develop my skills to do so.

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