



Melting pot

*living quality from
a child's perspective*

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June 4, 2010

Design Academy Eindhoven Man+Humanity Masters thesis



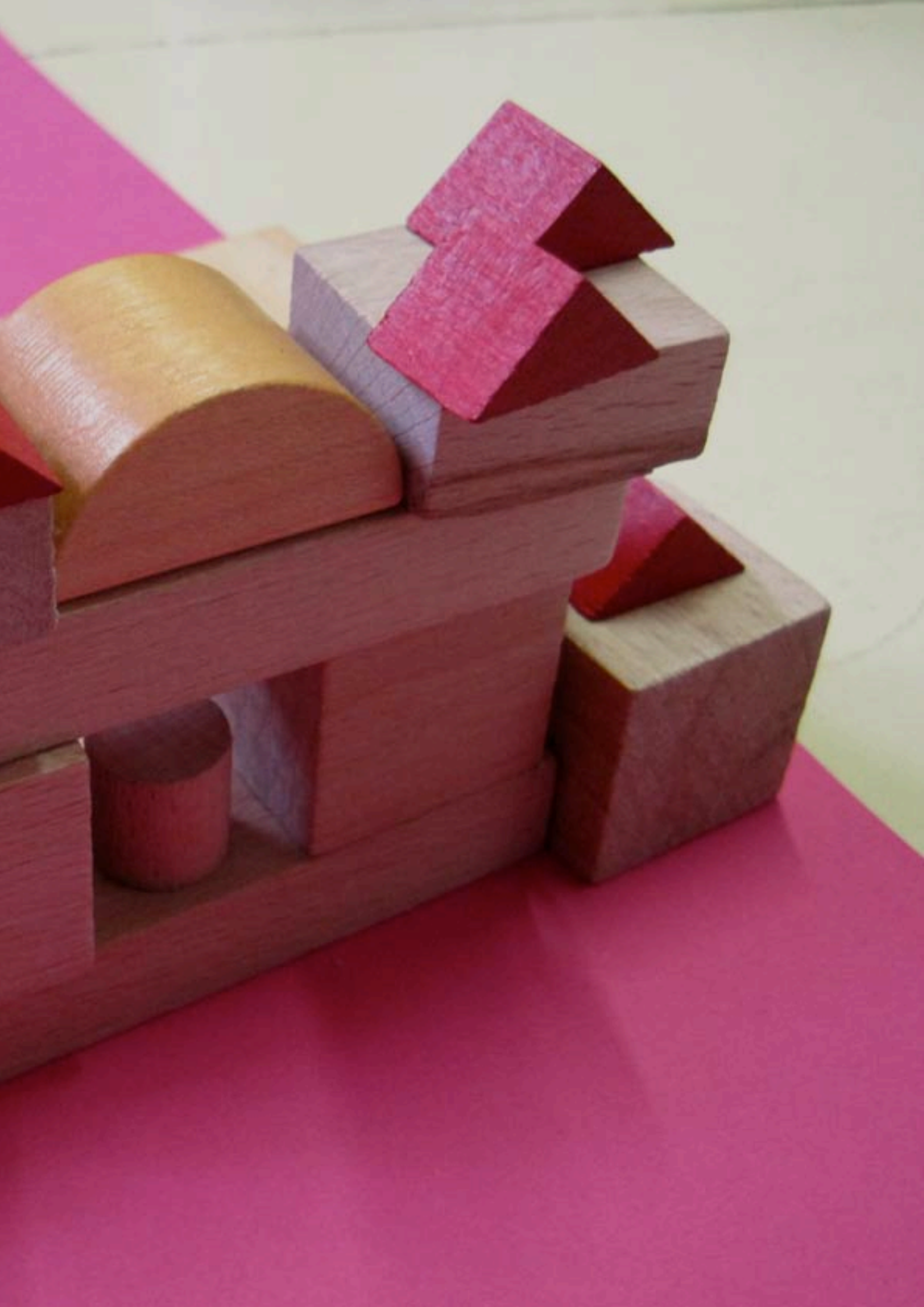


The Melting Pot process is a collaboration of designer, social worker, and children as a means of improving the living quality, or well being, of the greater neighbourhood. It is focusing on neighbourhoods being shaped by the people who live there...

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*"We shape our public spaces, thereafter
our public spaces shape us"*

-Winston Churchill

Before arriving at the Design Academy I had a small handmade craft jewelry company. We made everything by hand, and I was contributing to a system of my own. Despite the empowering nature of making something for myself, I wanted to come to the maters program to design what kind of designer I could be, how could I begin to extend by creativity to impact others.

I began my journey at the Design Academy Eindhoven with the notion that these two years would be about people, empowerment, and change. The rest of the dots were still blurry, but I did know that I wasn't coming here to design the next product. I knew my goals related closely with the social worker, both having the instinct to help people. But I also know that social workers deal with very strong protocols, and are not known as agents of change, but rather have the ability to maintain the status quo.

There is an autonomous development in design to my desire to work closer with people., about discovering the role and the impact design can have in the social domain. My enthusiasm for this design field is shared by numerous other contemporary designers, all discovering new and relevant layers. It is my wish that this thesis provides a clear picture of a holistically collaborative means to not only empower children, but to become, together, a medium of social initiatives.

Introduction

Traditionally design has dealt with the intention of making objects and systems, and now it is looking to tackle broader challenges of sustainability and well-being. Design is becoming key to not only materializing, but also designing our lives. (1) With this shift, “designers are facing new kinds of design task beyond their traditional expertise that call for tools and practices to facilitate design collaborations.” (Mattelmaki) and alongside that, the task to design those tools for collaborations. When designing for sustainability, one must consider four sustainable dimensions; economical, institutional, social, and ecological. (1)

It is my personal belief the root of sustainable development lies in people, thus the social dimension. The role for design within the social realm offers the unique opportunity to understand **the role of design process beyond product development and service design**. My passion for the design process lies in the potential to not only design **FOR** people, but designing **WITH** people - designing collaborations that include people as relevant contributors.

The role of a designer is shifting to the experience that people have with products, services, or even spaces. Design is also used to design the processes and systems behind these experiences. (2) Working in the social domain means a designer is dealing with the everyday experiences of people, how they interact their surroundings, and their own well-being. It is important as designers to consider the experience people have in their neighbourhoods, the factors that create that experience, and strategies to manifest change. Design has always been involved in change (practical access to service design), and it requires a clear awareness of user’s needs, wants, motivations and contexts to understand potential solutions.

Design is a tool used to envision new possibilities and to materialize them. This thesis project looks to refine the role for designers, and expand the potential for change when working within the social domain. A neighbourhood is a place where people live, it is a level of social organization which fosters natural and regular interactions. This project is about working from the inside of the neighbourhood, with the people, in order to create change in the neighbourhood that is relevant to their own living quality. (3) Working with children is the starting point of this project because shaping a neighbourhood for a child offers a comfortable place for other residents as well. Ezio Manzini speaks about a city that’s right for children is the best definition for a city that could work well for everybody.

I’ve joined an organization called the T+Huis to base my research, which is a house converted into a home for the community. They employ social workers to develop programs for the

(1) Fuad-Luke, A; design activism: beautiful strangeness for a sustainable world. London 2009

(2) Moritz, Stefan; Service Design: Practical Access to and evolving field. 2005

(3) Walljasper, J; Where everybody knows your name. 14 March 2010 <<http://onthecommons.org>>



children in the neighbourhood. Working with the T+Huis has given me the opportunity to discover the role of two different experts in the neighbourhood; the children who live there, and the social workers who are committed to empowering the children and improving their living quality.

This paper will begin with a discussion on social work and their goals. What it means for a child to be empowered, and frames the discussion of living quality in a neighbourhood. Then a discussion of social work in the design process and the possibilities of co-design. The result of this background exploration is a process that focuses on the collaboration of designers, social workers, and children as a means of creating initiatives in the neighbourhood. The Melting Pot, social workers, designers, and children, create a shared point of view and the potential for social innovation is fostered, envisioned and nurtured.

The T+Huis

The T+HUIS is an organization which applies service design in a deprived neighbourhood: a marginalized district called Oud Woensel, in Eindhoven, The Netherlands. The T+HUIS services express themselves through weekly and free activities for the children between 3 and 14 years old.

The T+HUIS organization differentiates itself because its employees are mainly students from all kinds of studies and backgrounds. The T+HUIS provides the structure for the students to develop and implement projects with the children.

This is a win-win-win situation, the students learn to use design methods during their internship, the children have free activities through which they learn social and educational skills, and the neighbourhood increases in its sustainable value.

RUIJTERSTRAAT

 T+HUIS
where you feel at home

VOLLEDIGE
VERGUNNING



chapter 1

research and understanding



Wanting to find a means of making an impact in a neighbourhood, the importance of connecting with an existing organization and people also committed to improving the well-being in neighbourhoods became clear. It is for this reason I work closely with the T+Huis during my research, and specifically with the social workers who work closely in the neighbourhood. In this chapter I begin by framing the relevance of working from a children's perspective, and explore the domain of social work. This chapter shapes my definition of our common goals of empowerment and living quality, and takes a look at what kind of approach to be taken in the bigger picture.

1.1 Social work

Social work is a profession that aims to improve the lives of people. As quoted from the National Association of Social Workers, (NASW) "social workers operate from values that recognize each person as relevant to society and believe that when needed, society should help each person to achieve their own potential." (1)

Social workers have tangible social science skills, and have distinctly constructed and formulated approaches to processes and practice. Working within structured governmental systems, there are strict criteria and forms that social workers use in order to identify the level of a persons risk. (2) Within the T+HUIS the social workers work 'in the field' with groups of children developing programs and teaching children skills to deal with day to day life. Their goals are the same as the NASW states; empower-

ment and improving living quality for all. They strive to be innovative and creative in their approach to working with children.

Social workers from the T+Huis, like other social workers, understand the values of empowering and supporting children to ensure safe and healthy development for their future. They look to empower children and improve their living quality by organized safe activities focused on:

- promoting teamwork
- fostering leadership
- nurturing creativity
- improving self esteem

Other like-minded social people and professionals create initiatives with similar goals to improve the lives of people and ensure they reach their potential. Programs come in all shapes and sizes, and develop through different motivations.

As seen in the Figure 1, the approach to materializing the project varies. Ranging from an organic grassroots approach from the bottom-up, and from a bureaucratic or governmental approach that is top-down. I argue that in some way, despite a close connection to the target group, social workers also use a top-down approach. They come into an intervention or program with an idea in mind of what to solve and how, then they find a way to implement it, or follow it through.

Figure 1: Comparing social initiatives from different approaches

initiative from	expected outcome	approach	contributors or facilitators
government program	policy strategy	top-down	policy makers or public service agents
individual (with specific skill set)	engage people	grassroots	individual
psychologist or educator	well-being of individuals	bottom-up	psychologist or educator
social worker	improve living quality	bottom-up	social worker
designer	solve problems and well-being of people	top-down or bottom-up	designer and network or stakeholders they brought together

I believe the approach could be similar, however a shift in perspective needs to be taken. It is apparent to me that governments realize nowadays that they have to re-invest in building the relationship with the community. There are countless examples of small and large organizations supported by local governments. If we

begin to look at initiatives approached from the inside-out, it puts the residents, in this case the children, at the centre of the purpose. This allows outside stakeholders and contributors to influence or impact the initiative from the same level, and create partnerships and collaborations, all coming from the children's point of view.

At the T+Huis, one of the social workers, Merle, set out to plan a ten week drama program. She and others worked tirelessly to create an exciting, entertaining and educational program for the children. They prepared a play about being comfortable sharing

emotions. They were well prepared, and on the very first day, it turns out they had to completely pass on the plan they created. They learned quickly the children weren't necessarily interested in the program or play they had created, and all the assumptions they made about what the children would enjoy were wrong.

Retaining the original goal of the program the social workers were able to shape the play to be created and presented in a way that the children were interested in. What the social workers realised was that it wasn't until the end of the ten week program that they gained an understanding of what the children were all about, and that they still needed a lot of support to reach their potential. How could this process have been improved, and focused more on the children reaching their potential? What aspect of their lives is important to understand in order to improve their own well-being?

Working closely with individuals who are committed, and have the skills to work with children in a neighbourhood is key to making an impact. Commitment is important to ensure initiatives can grow from the inside out, collaborating and connecting with others who are dedicated to the same goals. Understanding what is important to the children's well-being, but how does that begin to impact the bigger picture of their surroundings?

1.2 The presence of children

As the health of a city is intrinsically connected to the success of its neighborhoods (3), it becomes more and more important to look to those neighborhoods, and to discover the means to improve how people experience them. The Child Friendly City Initiative found, in their experience, that the implementation of children's views goes hand in hand with improved living conditions for all age groups(4). As the presence of children in a neighbourhood is fundamental for "establishing what's really important"(5), looking from the children's point of view allows you to begin from the inside.

Children's presence in a neighbourhood can be a signal for the health of that space. As I made the effort to walk and bike around the neighbourhood in Oud Woensel, I couldn't help but to notice children everywhere. Arguably, these children aren't exactly stimulated, they were often mulling about looking for things to do. Children "signal that sense of community"(5). In this particular community, which isn't alone in its state, it is possible to experience the safety that exists for these children to be out. However, in order to signal a

Nature Program

When I arrived at the T+HUIS, I began working alongside a small, enthusiastic group of social workers to develop a new program all about nature. The initial goal was to use nature as a means of fostering commitment from the children to the programs. We quickly realised the children came when they pleased, and no amount of telling them they had to return to care for their garden made them come on a regular basis. My focus from that point on was to find a way to learn what was relevant for the children, and how it could be woven into the T+HUIS organization. How could the nature program become a means to hear what the children wanted, thus fostering commitment and improving what the social workers could offer the children?

positive feeling there needs to be a focus on bringing more life into this neighbourhood, creating a livelier presence through these children.

“Futurelab” is an initiative to utilize children’s input to better their learning spaces, and to foster the children’s commitment to the project (6). They identify positive opportunities for involving children in the design process, and the learning possibilities for the children within that involvement. They also recognize the importance of designing WITH people in order to truly make something FOR people. The initiative “recognise[s] the need to give children more voice and enable them to have input into the design of services and environments that affect them,” Fostering this increases the children’s important presence in their neighbourhood, and positively impacts the greater well-being, or living quality. It is important to understand what makes a healthy, happy neighbourhood, but first to recognize the importance of reaching the children.

1.3 Empowerment

After a full garden season of the nature program, the social workers and myself evaluated the program and began to get the children’s perspective on nature and the program we had created for them. They seemed to enjoy the leaders, the activities, and the times that they came were fun. It dawned on me, how much are these kids able to express by gardening in a backyard? When they harvested the lettuce from the garden, they were beaming- they did that! The confidence that followed was enough to make the rest of the salad without any incidences. I asked myself, what did it mean to the children to be so proud of doing something?

Kids Safe Project

Michele Gaddis was a middle school teacher when she asked 160 students three heart-felt questions. Facing her own personal crisis, she asked kids:

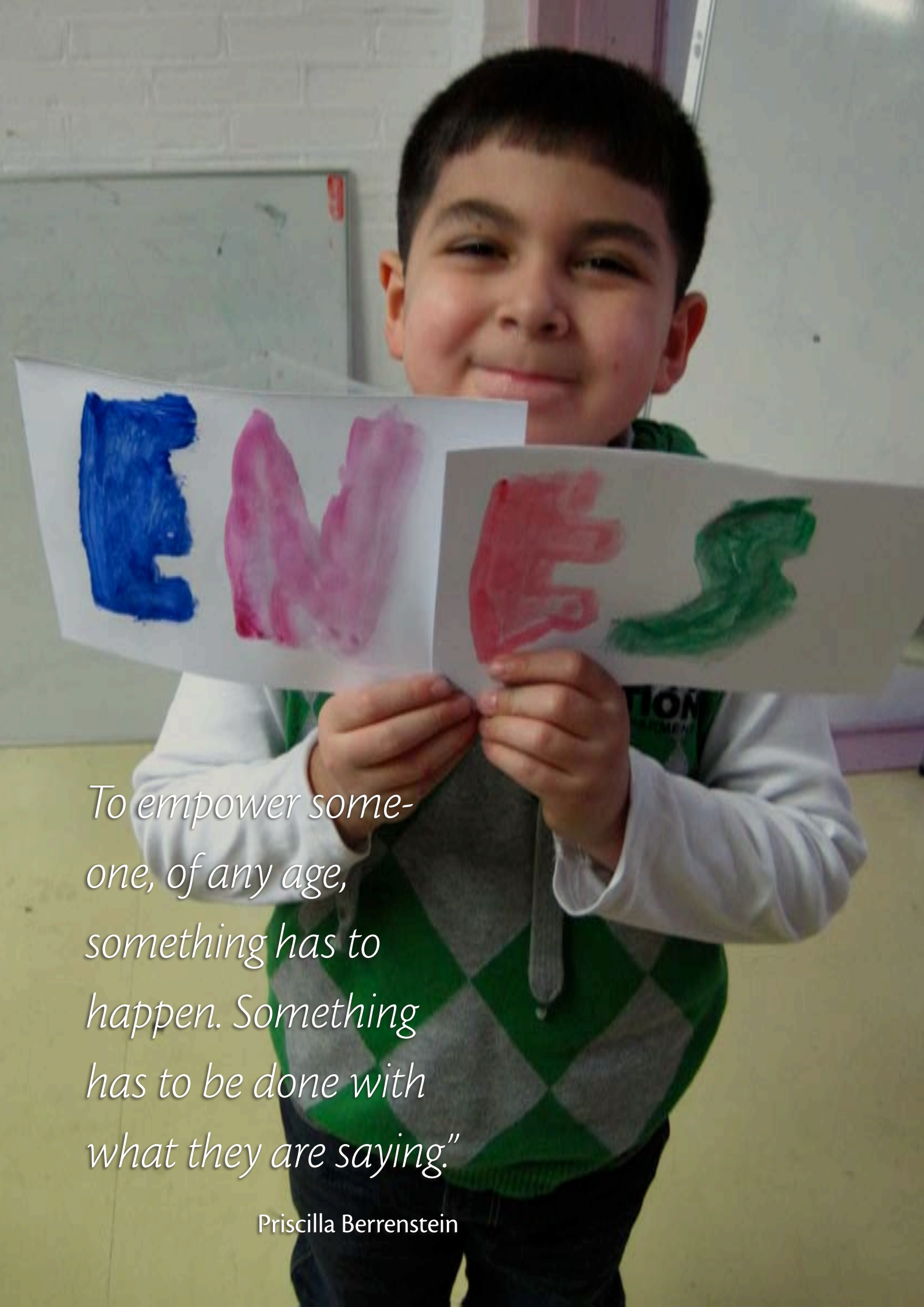
“How can I be a better parent and teacher?”

“What do kids really need?”

“What can we do together to help others?”

Michelle Gaddis learned that children want to be listened to, they want their ideas heard, and they want a way to do something with them. Once she asked the questions, the children were so empowered to answer them they organized themselves into supporting teams that gathered information and answered the questions. After gathering years worth of notes and the work the children did with each other, their honesty and courage became the inspiration for four volumes of Self-Help Skill Books for Kids. Ironically, they provide answers for adults as well. Shee believes this is the curriculum that builds the bridge for success between kids and adults. Her focus is to support children and families to be emotionally and physically safe. (7)

What could happen if the discussion began with what was important or relevant to the children, rather than making an assumption? Michele Gaddis asked the very same thing to her group of 3rd grade students, in Wailuku, Maui. (7) They told her that the missing link to the solutions of their problems was adults who listen to them. They wanted adults to listen to them and take them seriously. They saw it as a means of solving problems and violence in their own environment. They were so passionate about it that they formed their own committees and worked with Gaddis to create handbooks for adults on how to listen. These children themselves were given a voice, and were



To empower someone, of any age, something has to happen. Something has to be done with what they are saying."

Priscilla Berrenstein



...therefore, we defined living quality by stating that it is intrinsically connected to ones locality.

encouraged to do something with it. Simply because Gaddis listened and supported them, the children had the confidence to follow through with their ideas. That, alongside Gaddis' support and encouragement empowered the children to be confident to accomplish something for their own benefit, and that confidence extended to the benefit of others.

Children, especially in difficult neighbourhoods, carry a lot on their shoulders (from school, social and other socio-economic) pressures and influences. Often, they don't have the opportunity to express what is on their minds. Michele Gaddis' work illustrates the importance of children having a voice. When they are not given the platform to speak and share their thoughts, they often become frustrated and act out. When they feel that adults are listening, and truly willing to accept their thoughts, consider them, and make changes, then they become proactive and contribute, and have the opportunity to grow as people.

It is important to listen to our target group, to the people we work with, and to empower them to accomplish what is relevant

to them. By acknowledging the factors that exist around them, children can begin to understand how they can make an impact in their own well-being.

1.4 Living Quality

How is the well-being of an individual related to their surroundings? How does the living quality of a neighbourhood begin to determine how someone feels? Living in a happy environment can have a positive impact on the way you feel, and your living quality. It is important to understand this term, and all that it can encompass.

What is it to live in a neighbourhood with a high living quality? Qualifying living quality proves to be a difficult task. I was given the opportunity to work with a “Service Design for Living Quality” seminar at KISD, lead by Professor Birgit Mager. This seminar gave me the chance to work with a group of three students. After lengthy discussions on possible ways to quantify living quality, or formulate a way to analyse it, we came only to the conclusion that it wasn’t possible. Therefore, we defined living quality by stating that it is intrinsically connected to ones locality. (It must be said that the discussion of living quality comes after the discussion of basic needs. Improving living quality is not relevant until basic needs are first met.)

During a lecture at the Human Cities Festival (8), Luca Pattaroni, a Doctor in Sociology examined what makes up the human life, what he calls “the good life”. By designing a city around well-being, you begin to organically develop solidarity, a common view on what it is to “live the good life”. He explains that it cannot be declared, however a locality has some common standards for the diversity of experiencing the good life.

1- lived environment- creating an intimate link to the world, personal security on the basis of self confidence

2- meeting- the condition to live socially. spaces that allow for that, not distinctly public or private

3-using- the way we live our lives, the coordination to live together, availability to services and commodities (i.e. transportation)

Pattaroni is saying that a locality must represent what it is to be happy there. What is important to note is how he brings up both tangible and emotional factors to experiencing a positive living quality. Simply put, neighbourhoods should become happy places to live.

In order to know how a neighbourhood is a happy place to live, you must first know what the current situation is for the people living there. As a means of discovering how children perceived their neighbourhood, I did an activity with the children. Beginning like Michele Gaddis by opening up a dialogue, asking the





*Aleyna, 6 years old,
shows off how she
made a part of her
neighbourhood
more beautiful. She
chose to use nature
to make the plain
wall look prettier..*

mooi/niet mooi activity

In a simple photo experiment, children were shown a series of 40 photos taken from the vicinity of the T+Huis. Voting on what they collectively thought was a nice thing, or an ugly thing. There was enthusiastic reactions to the various things shown, especially after the children could recall where they had seen it before. Their energetic reactions to things that weren't good about their neighbourhood didn't seem to factor into our earlier conversations. It wasn't until the unpleasant things were pointed out that they became truly aware of the presence.

The original goal was all about seeing how the children saw their neighbourhood to begin to design a new program. What I learned was that it would take more than just one question to understand what was needed for a new program. The mooi/niet mooi activity taught me that children's ideas aren't always at the forefront of their minds, and they require a nudge here and there to be able to express their thoughts.

children from the Nature program what they liked about their neighbourhood, where they played, and also what they didn't like. As it turns out, they liked everything- their friends were there, the concrete centre square was a fun place to play, and their families lived there. All was well. Unsatisfied with their overly optimistic answers, I did a little experiment to find out if they also would acknowledge any negative aspects of their surroundings, what i call "mooi/niet mooi". (see side box)

The outcome of this experiment was an understanding that children don't base their affinity to a space only on the material condition, but rather what it offers, and how it feels. This simple photo experiment shows that there are both social and physical elements the children base their opinions on. However

they are not able to express it simply. These concepts aren't at the forefront of their minds, and therefore in order to get their point of view of their neighborhood, there is a need for a means to prompt them.

Meghan Cope, an Urban Geographer from University of Buffalo set out to discover how children viewed their physical surroundings. (9) Using various activities and physical tools that encouraged the children to communicate their point of view, Cope and her own student's project "[saw] the neighbourhood through the eyes of the children." They had the opportunity to discover how children in inner cities view their physical surroundings, and what makes them feel good or bad, and how the children themselves impact the neighbourhood. The results were an understanding of the potential children's perspective, and the opportunity to empower their own deep grasp of their neighbourhood.

The children's point of view was expressed through projects that aimed at the children to convey their awareness within their surroundings, and their ideas for it's potential. The results showed that when prompted, the children show that they have a strong understanding of their neighbourhood, and a clear point of view on what could be done.

This rich knowledge of the children's instinctive understanding of their own living quality offers the potential to obtain that knowledge. This expertise requires encouragement and methods to bring this out from within the children. Once shared, this understanding allows a designer to gain a clear picture of the locality, but also allows social worker to improve their orientation in

Urban Geography

About 30 children in grades 3-6 who attend an after-school boys and girls club in Buffalo are using photography, journals and original artwork, as well as standard geographic tools such as maps and handheld Global Positioning Systems, to learn about the neighborhood surrounding the club.

The diverse projects are helping Cope and her students learn more about the microgeographies—the small-scale social/spatial interactions of everyday life—of children’s urban experiences, uses of different spaces and perceptions of neighborhoods. Some of the projects done were:

- The Ideal Play Space, in which the children were asked to make a three dimensional model of their ideal play space. The model that they made featured a camping area prominently, again emphasizing the children’s desire for wild, green spaces.
- The Neighborhood Quilt, in which each child decorated and sewed together canvas squares to depict their own homes and their neighborhood, demonstrating their understanding of basic geographic concepts.
- The Spaces of the Club, in which the children came up with their own ideas about how they would modify the inside of the club. Suggestions will be developed into an action plan and presented to the club director.

Cope’s research also demonstrates the critical role that children themselves play in constructing active, connected communities

which to apply their skills (10) with the children. In this case, the locality I speak of is the neighbourhood in which the children of the T+Huis reside. The borders are fluid, and never clearly defined as a neighbourhood is as much a state of mind, and being that strict borders. Neighbourhoods are a strong place to begin change, and tackling larger issues. Jay Walljasper discusses that they are a “level of social organization where people interact more regularly and naturally.” (11) With the right tools, this makes it a strong place to start a ripple effect of improving living quality.

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- (1) <http://www.socialworkers.org/>
 - (2) Watson, David and Janice West; *Social work Process and Practice*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2006
 - (3) Verwijnen, J., H. Karkku. *Spark! Design and Locality* (contributions by J. Thackara and E. Manzini) 2004, Jyvaskyla
 - (4) Schulze, S. and F. Moneti; *The Child Friendly Cities Initiative*. *Municipal Engineer* 160, Issue ME2, June 2007, pg 77-81
 - (5) Cope, Meghan; *Patchwork neighbourhood: children's urban geographies in Buffalo, New York*. *Environment and Planning*, 2008. Volume 40, pgs 2845-2863
 - (6) Dr. Time Rudd, Futurelab; *Reimagining outdoor learning spaces* January 2009 <<http://www.futurelab.org.uk/resources/publications-reports-articles/handbooks/>>
 - (7) Gaddis, Michelle; *Kids Safe Books*: <http://www.keepkidsafebooks.com/>
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 - (9) Goldbaum, Ellen; "Children's Geography" reveals how kids impact their inner-city neighbourhoods. *UB Reporter*, Sep 2, 2004.
 - (10) Watson, David and Janice West; *Social work Process and Practice*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2006
 - (11) Walljasper, J; *Where everybody knows your name*. 14 March 2010 <<http://onthecommons.org/content.php?id=2714>>



chapter 2

tools for communication

It is important to hear from people about their experience, and their context. In this chapter I explore different approaches designers take to encourage users to express themselves, and to envision possible new solutions. It is important to find a means to unpack the entire picture of a user, in order to create together relevant possibilities. Creating this possibility for expression and creativity is about offering the scaffolding around which the user can build their point of view.

2.1 communicating with the people

How can design open up possibilities to improve living quality in a neighbourhood? Stepping away briefly from the direct focus on children, no matter what the challenge, designers need to **find a way to understand the user's context**, in order to create something that is relevant for them. Urban Think Tank is two architect-designers with enthusiasm and passion that spreads like wildfire(1). They were invited to apply their approach to urban planning to help re-design a new flourishing neighbourhood. Urban Think Tank's approach is simple, understated and powerful- **they talk to people**. They spend time walking around the neighbourhood, they find out who has a key role, what people really do, how they really live. It's powerful because they have found their own way to truly understand the living quality, and it's about the experts of that neighbourhood, the people living there.

As "Social Architects" they propose a method that serves as a connection, "a synapse of sorts between the opposing forces of

(left) Dori prepares his deserted island puzzle before drawing what he would like to bring with him.

Hoogravens invites you!

(text from Utrecht Manifest 2009, A Reader- Hoogravens invites you!)

Local authorities, housing corporations and residents are wrestling with the legacy of the post-war building boom in the Netherlands. Neighbourhoods that once embodied the promise of social harmony are by now suffering from impoverishment and disintegration. Demolition followed by the construction of new buildings seems to be the only remedy. But is this really the ultimate strategy? Or are there alternatives that do more justice to the social ambitions of the original design? In the Utrecht Hoogravens neighbourhood, Utrecht Manifest Symposium involved residents, corporations, local authorities in the transformation project Hoogravens invites you! This urban design project was lead by the architects from Urban Think Tank, Alfredo Brillembourg and Hubert Klumpner (1).

top-down approaches and bottom-up approaches. Acting to attract and create common ground for these two forces, architects can eliminate divisiveness and enable the two forces to interact powerfully and productively.” I would argue that they are beginning to work from the inside out by working with people and allowing that to inform the bigger picture. Listening to the residents, and using the insight to inspire their future designs means they are turning to the experts of the neighbourhood, “the people who live there”(2) to feed their movement towards change.

However, due to the nature of architecture and urban design, they are the ones who ultimately implement the ideas.

In the case of the T+HUIS, working so closely with the children could offer **the unique opportunity to introduce the “user” into the entire process**, including the implementation phase. To not take back the process at the point of envisioning and implementing the solution. In order to empower the children, you must encourage them to see their input through the entire process. Urban Think Tank use their own method of gathering input from the inhabitants. Talking to people. It is their strength and it allows them to understand their context, and what the people may need.

The U.K. based firm thinkpublic works in the field of service design within the public sector (3). They used a different tactic to work closely with the end users. They were asked to tackle the difficult task of creating or improving services offered to Alzheimers patients and their families. Thinkpublic worked with the Alzheimer Society, and began their process looking into the needs of the target group. They set out to interview dementia patients, analyse the information and design a service to aid individuals and their loved ones to better deal with this difficult disease. Teaming up with the BBC, they taught dementia patients how to use filming equipment, and sent them out to interview each other. This was for two reasons. The first was to gather a larger quantity of data with more interviewers than just the thinkpublic team. The second reason was to allow them to be more open to speaking to other patients, important as they understood that talking to someone with common experience, the patients were able to open up and speak more freely. The final video was edited and used as a tool in the follow-up ‘Co-Creation Day’ event held to identify the main concerns and possible solution directions. The Alzheimer’s 100 project process illustrates possibilities for the design process to be a means of gaining insight from individuals during the design research



Interviewing each other about their experience with Alzheimers

phase, **their peer-to-peer method was the platform to unpack the knowledge of the target group.**

2.2 service design approach

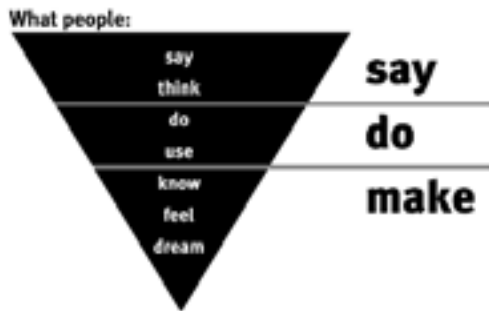
The more structured approach that thinkpublic took is within in the realm of service design tools. Service design is an area of design aimed at understanding the interaction between a service provider and customers, and analysing and improving the quality of the customer's experience. In a similar way, one could argue that social workers are offering a service to the children. They are offering programs that relate to their well-being in the hopes of improving their overall living quality, or experience. Could looking to service design methods and tools inspire the approach of a social worker?

Much like social workers working closely with their target group, it is very important in designing a service to have the input of the end user throughout the process. In the beginning to understand clearly what they need, want, and require from the service, and then what is the best possible solution to achieving the goals set forth.

There are methods and tools within the service design that aren't exclusive to the domain, however they can be inspirational and adopted when working with social workers and used within the neighbourhood. The process as defined by Professor Birgit Mager depicts service design as a cyclic process, and makes use of many co-design tools. In a social context, service design not only looks to the end users needs, but requires to also take into account the knowledge and importance of other invested or knowledgeable parties.

It is valuable for product designers to gather input from the users, it offers them insight into their needs and desires, and ensures the products are of interest or use to the end user. It is becoming more commonplace to include users into the fuzzy front end of the design process. This is the phase of the design process that is more about research before the development of

a product or service. It is considered fuzzy not only because it is the unknown aspect of the early stage, but also due to there missing a good framework and method. Design could offer tools and creative thinking to the process of empowering children and change in a neighbourhood. **It's about tools to connect with the children, and methods to unpack the surface of their story**, and gain a deeper more holistic, or overall grasp of the children. As the Urban Think Tank architects use an informal approach, the use of pre-conceived tools allows for a focused look at the entire context.



Liz Sanders explains that there are three levels of expression, what people say, what people do, and what people make. “When all three perspectives are explored simultaneously, we are able to understand the experience domains of the people we are serving through design.”(4) Therefore, the tools need to allow for these three levels of communication.

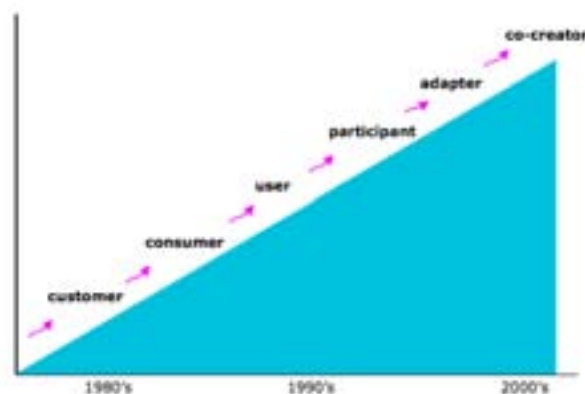
2.3 generative communication

The transition of the design role requires a profound role in the social realm. As designers, we are focusing less on product-based well-being, and more about their environmental and social qualities (4). How does a social worker and designer work with the children to reach these important themes?

As design is now tackling broader challenges of sustainability and well-being, designers are facing new kinds of challenges with design research “moving closer to the front end of the design developments process.”(5) Design research is now moving to uncover new possibilities and generate ideas by placing itself at the “fuzzy front end” of the process, working closely with the target group early on in the process.

This shift mirrors how social workers work, closely with people. However currently social workers lack tools and methods to go beyond only connecting with the target group- tools and methods to foster confidence and empower them to create change.

SHIFTING ROLE OF THE USER WITHIN THE DESIGN PROCESS



Generative research, as Liz Sanders calls it, is **acknowledging the value of people we design for, as it is a means of generating and fostering input and experience from them.** It becomes more than just a conversation, but the means to gain a complete, overall perspective on the individual and their context. In the case of the T+Huis, using generative type tools is the chance to encourage the children to give their inputs. Liz Sanders explains that using “generative tools” encourages the user to openly speak and express themselves by indirect means.

The information thinkpublic gathered during their video interviews was brought together during a co-creation workshop. The day was about choosing main focuses from the research, followed by brainstorming with designers, caregivers, and patients (all the experts of the field together). They imagined the kind of program, or service, that would better get them in touch with the resources they needed. The process thinkpublic used doesn't only take the input from the end user, but it takes all the stakeholders that have knowledge or understanding of the context.

It is important in a social context to include the users throughout the design process, but also to consider all the knowledge bearers within the entire process. This means that knowledge gathering and analysis should not only come from the children, but it should acknowledge the skills and experience of the social workers as well.

The unique collaboration of social worker and designer and children will not one cultivate knowledge, but foster creativity and the unique opportunity to work together to nurture and implement the final solutions.



2.4 Tools in action

I tested different kinds of design methodologies and tools I tested with the children. It was important to discover how the children dealt with different kinds of activities, and how they were able to express themselves by saying, making and doing (6). Based on other design research methodologies such as role-playing, reflection, task giving, and one-on-one discussions, this series of trials were a means to find out what is specific to a younger target group, and what are ways to encourage their input. Some of these activities included the following:

(see Appendix 1 for more explanation)

Mayor Game: Does a role to play encourage them to express ideas easier? Crowning them mayor gave them the confidence to criticize their own surroundings through mentioning things they would do in their imaginary neighbourhood. This was a successful mix of reflection and creativity.



mayor game process and results

Neighbourhood tours: Does a one-on-one discussion focused on their surroundings allow to unpack the background of their input? Gino was easily able to express his emotions and stories when we were able to directly reference his neighbourhood.



tour from Gino

Building solutions: How do the children deal well with ambiguous objects? What does their imagination offer us? This activity inadvertently began to frame the roles of each contributor- as the designer could encourage their creativity, the social worker was able to address issues that arose from some of the children's scary responses.

(right) Enes building his solution to environmental problems.

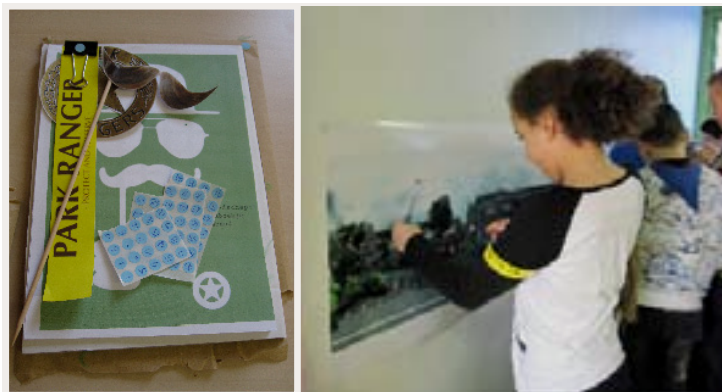


Puzzle Islands: Does a creative form encourage the children to take part in the activity? What happens when we make them consider positive and negative aspects simultaneously? The puzzle form encouraged the children to really consider their answers, and make certain they were all good. As they considered all aspects it fostered more responses, even countering each other. The children never worried about the logistics of bringing their favorite football field to the deserted island...



filling in the positive side of the puzzle

Nature rangers: Created by the students of KISD, we asked, 'Is it important to keep their minds on their own neighbourhood? Do they manage well with clear tasks? What is the benefit of sending home an extension of the activity?' The children dealt well with the role, and were enthusiastic, however, the complexity of the task was too much to easily comprehend. Talking directly about their neighbourhood was a positive platform for more discussions, and the take home questions had strong answers because it gave them the chance to reflect more after the activity.



ranger take home and wall graphic

Key Points

There were strong key points to come out of this series of activities. It gave a stronger understanding of with generative research can encourage communication, but also more specific details of working with a younger target group. Key points for the future form of the research:

- Children manage well with a role to play. It offers them the safety to criticize their surroundings indirectly.
- The activities allowed social workers to connect deeper with the children and allow them to discuss more relevant things about them.
- Fostering one-on-one discussions is necessary to really uncover more information.
- Considering positive and negative things simultaneously forces the children to think of the bigger picture, and brings ideas to the forefront of their minds.
- Take home questions encourages them to continue thinking about the subject area.
- Giving the children a starting point to create from, but making sure the opportunity to give their own ideas is offered.
- Giving them a chance to tell stories is a strong way for children to communicate their ideas.
- There needs to be cohesion to the activities to build an overall picture of them. Together these activities begin to shape their own stories from different levels.

The children express themselves through their imaginations (make), and this creates a platform for the social worker and designer to open a dialogue about their current situation (say). With the skills and experience of working with children, the social workers are able to observe and understand how the children are reacting, and their non-verbal communication (do).

2.5 method for empowerment

In this case, the children being a part of the co-design for initiatives or solutions in their neighbourhoods, we must take into account the importance of empowering the children by the act of them DOING. My hesitation of only applying co-design tools is it implies there is a point where the role of the user ends. In this case, the empowerment begins as the children create and also implement and nurture their ideas. The collaboration between social worker, designer, and children supports all the phases within the entire design process. Coming together, blending roles which blurs the distribution of skills allows them to support each other with their own qualities, skills and knowledge.

This peer-to-peer approach, or as I refer to it Melting Pot, can foster a shared culture for the potential to improve the living quality in neighbourhoods.



This peer-to-peer approach, or as I refer to it Melting Pot, can foster a shared culture for the potential to improve the living quality in neighbourhoods.



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chapter 3

the Melting Pot



The combination of children, social workers, and designers is important in order to make a significant impact on a neighbourhood, and on the empowerment of children in that neighbourhood. The process is aimed at shaping the neighbourhood for the people living there, by the people living there.

The method and tools were tested and evaluated with the T+Huis drama program. Throughout the chapter are anecdotes and images from this experience. Out of this experience emerges the realisation of the real potential for universality - my intention to not create one instance in Oud Woensel, but to design the possibility to implement it in other neighbourhoods.

This chapter introduces the goal of the design proposal, how empowering the children is a tool, and finally describes the kind of tools to be used in the Melting Pot process.

3.1 Social Initiatives

The combination of children, social workers, and designers is important in order to make a significant impact on a neighbourhood, and on the empowerment of children in that neighbourhood. This impact manifests itself through social initiatives; new and fresh approaches to improvements and changes focusing on the living quality, or well being, of the people and the neighbourhood.

The Melting Pot process is about blending together the differ-

ent contributors by **optimizing their skills**, and roles while they work together. It is important for them to together create a new kind of culture, while maintaining their own skills and knowledge. The balance of thinking and methods creates a practical and creative point of view. The new common culture they will create together will be what fosters the potential for future social initiatives. It is about creating together a shared cultural vision for the neighbourhood, sparked by the children's point of view, and empowering them as their input and ideas are implemented.

3.2 Empowerment as a tool

Part of that shared cultural vision is about including the children throughout the whole story. As mention in Chapter 1, encouraging children to see their input and ideas implemented empowers them in the future. A discussion within the design community is becoming more about including non-designers, target groups, and communities into the process. The Melting Pot process exists out of that collaboration by including all three contributors into the entire process. This means that in order to create initiatives and begin to shape the neighbourhood, **empowerment is it's own tool within the process**. It becomes the underlying goal and motivation for the final outcome. The process is designed in such a way that it couldn't foster those social initiatives without empowering the children.

3.3 the Melting Pot process

The Melting Pot is a process supported by tools and methods. It is revealed to the contributors in two different forms- one for the social workers and designers, and another for the children. Each format manifests itself incorporating the specific needs and varied cultures that each party brings into the process with. It is the scaffolding which the social workers, designers, and children use to build their own shared vision as they begin to shape the neighbourhood in their own specific way.

It begins with the leaders getting to know each other, and beginning the development of their own ways of working with the children. The story continues through research activities with the children, to developing initiative ideas, then finally implementing and nurturing them together.

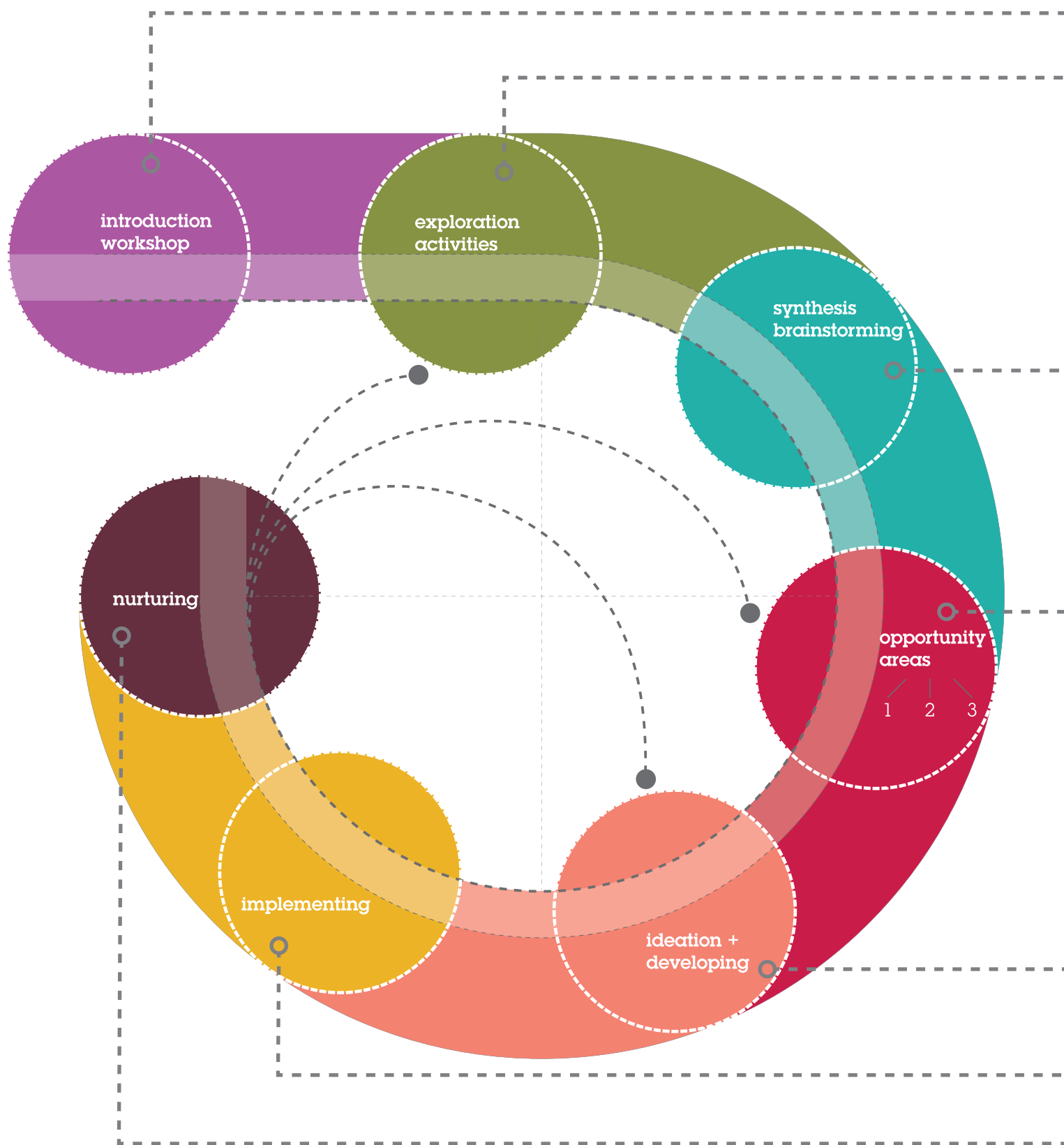
3.4 How it works

The Melting Pot is an organic cyclic process that unfolds in a series of stages. It's organic quality comes from the ability to choose how the cycle finishes. It allows for different groups of children, different kinds of initiatives, and varying contexts. It is based on a feedback loop that provokes initiatives to keep being created. It is not about searching for one all encompassing solution, but **building an understanding of different possibilities**. See appendix #2 to see how the activities described in here in Chapter 3 evolved into this process.

(right) Kazoe created her own neighbourhood, and explains to all about it. Merle (social worker) writes down things she is telling her to use in the synthesis brainstorm phase



the Melting Pot process



● **Phase 1 - Workshop introduction**

Aimed to educate the participating parties about each others roles and qualities, and create a platform for them to discuss their own structure and ways to work with the children; to begin to establish their own common culture. The introduction of the process and each activity.

● **Phase 2- Research Activities**

Series of activities aimed at being an interesting program in and of itself as well as research by means of the children's imagination. The activities are designed in such a way to gain an understanding of the children's context, their persona, and their dreams and imaginations. The qualitative aspects of the activities make the users advocates for their own situation, without directly knowing, or criticizing it directly. the activities fit into the metaphor of the story. They also relate to the levels social workers analyse a situation- from either a macro, micro, or meso level. It is a platform for the social worker and designers to unpack further the motivation and environment of the children's input.

● **Phase 3- Synthesis Brainstorming**

a workshop for the specific purpose of understanding what is relevant and important to the children within a larger picture of what they are saying. It is a unique blend of arranging data in order to discover different points of view, and opportunities. It's about organizing, arranging, sorting and observing data to search for important and relevant insight from the children.

Externalisation - organisation and analysis - filtering - conclusions

It is about building informed hypothesis, opportunity areas, and a set of parameters for each one. (based on my experience, and the unpublished works of Birgit Mager, 2010)

● **Phase 4 - Opportunity areas**

It is necessary to filter opportunity areas through feasibility levels, then present it to the children for them to choose one area to develop further.

● **Phase 5 - Development toolbox**

Tools for encouraging creativity, communicating ideas, and ways to decide on one area forward, co-creating and envisioning possibilities with the children

● **Phase 6 - Implementing**

Establishing roles for all the contributing parties, especially a strong role for the children, as the goal is for it to be their initiative. connecting to network online to share stories, ideas, and insights. Using a network for bringing projects to life. considering outside stake-holders

● **Phase 7 - Nurturing**

working with an established organization and social workers that are committed to the neighbourhood allows for continuity and longevity of the initiatives. For the children, being involved in the entire process fosters their commitment to the projects that arise, nurturing their initiative.



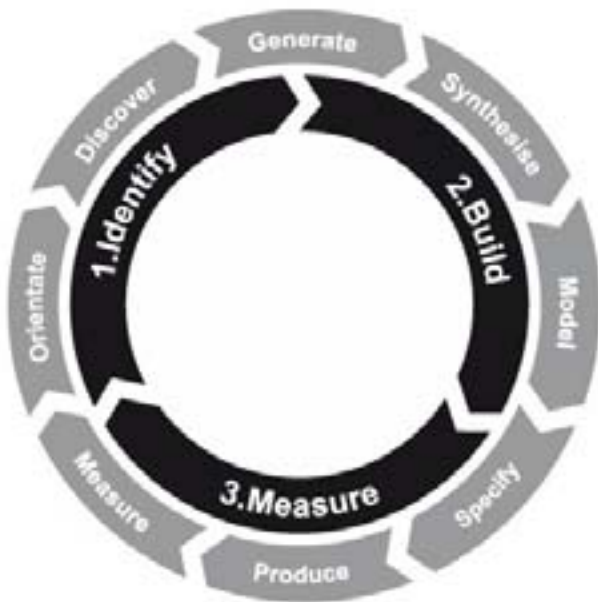


Naomi, a designer, speaks to Luna about her neighbourhood, and Merle, a social worker, listens to Kazoe's big ideas.

3.5 For the Social workers and Designer

The diagram itself communicates each stage. As seen in Appendix 3 within their handbook, it acts as a means to follow along with the overview of the process. Social workers are accustomed to a formulated approach to their work. By this I mean they approach problems systematically, analysing the situation, finding a solution and then implementing and evaluating that solution. The Diagram in the Melting Pot process acts as a formula for the social workers to grasp.

For designers who are a part of the process, the diagram presented is recognizable as a design process, with room for creativity and their own path-finding. It acts as a starting point for their own methods. It seems every designer has their own means of expressing their process, and most with common stages of discovery, defining, creating, implementing, and evaluating.



The Engine Design process.
<http://www.enginegroup.co.uk>

As a means for them to follow along, a handbook accompanies the process. Acting as a reference and as a guide, it is full of information on how to work with children, and instructions on running the programs. It is designed in such a way that it can be consulted easily, and used as a means to track information and data gathered during the programs. This handbook and its contents can be seen on the CD and description in Appendix 3

3.6 Metaphor for co-design

Co-design within the Melting Pot process is about generating and fostering input and experience from the children, to gain a clear

picture of their context, and of themselves. The Melting Pot, as discussed earlier, is the means of interpreting and understanding the information, however it is the metaphor that allows the children to communicate their “experience domain” to be understood and interpreted by all three contributors. The metaphor disconnects the children from directly speaking about their neighbourhood, rather it is connecting them to their dreams and visions.

Just like in the *mooi/niet mooi* activity, it is important in the Melting Pot process to find a way to bring the complete picture of their life and their context to the forefront of their minds. The exploration activity phase is key to the entire Melting Pot process. It is the platform for the children to communicate their own bigger picture indirectly through “making” and creating. It

is also the chance for the social workers and designers to get to know the children in a way they wouldn't otherwise have the chance. It is about immersing all parties into the present situation in order to gain a full picture. It is important to emphasize here the importance of collaboration during the Melting Pot process. Children are not yet experienced or skilled to create and develop their ideas, however they can be inspired and empowered by their collaboration and encouragement from the leaders in order to bring their ideas to life.

"Gamze had a great idea of 4000 swings in the park, [as a way of having everyone there and having fun] but once she said it, she immediately went back to reality and said that 4 would be enough. But I was able to say to her to keep the thought of 1000 or 4000 swings, to be creative. It really helped me tap into their creativity and ideas, and to keep their minds thinking about possibilities." Naomi

Children play a key role in the process as the knowledge bearers for their neighbourhood. In this context, they are both the target group for which the initiatives will impact, but also the experts with the knowledge and experience to share. The social workers and designers work together from different perspectives to uncover the knowledge from the children. Moreover the social workers are vital for nurturing the initiatives that arise from the process. Their background and skills of working with children, as well as their existing commitment to the improvement of the neighbourhood puts them in the ideal position to see the initiatives through. Designers in the process offer different perspectives and inspiration throughout the process.

There are different phases in the Melting pot process, beginning with the social workers and designer(s) getting to know each other, and developing their own way of working with the children together. It is important to build a strong foundation with the leaders, giving them an understanding of the angle they will each approach the children's input. The story continues through research activities with the children, developing initiatives ideas, then finally implementing and nurturing them together.

3.7 Story-line for a metaphor

In order to create initiatives from the process, a key consideration is fostering the children's commitment, as well as their openness to sharing. A means of getting their interest is important in order for them to become excited about the potential and to see their ideas come to life. As can be seen in the children's workbook in Appendix 3, it is presented as a story to the children. Having a story to follow and to grasp has more meaning than just an explanation- it encourages the children to follow through with the entire process. As the children see the process through, they are filling in their own story, and contributing to a larger picture. This, ideally, will encourage the children

to return to the program, be a part of the entire process, and ultimately benefit from the social workers playing a larger and longer role in the children's lives.

"First they thought, Fridge? Why? I don't put my mother in the fridge! But after explained they got it, it made sense and was easy for them to get ideas out." Merle

The story also encourages the children to open up and share. Just as thinkpublic used the method of having Alzheimer patients interview each other; this was a way to open up the patients through the comfort of talking to someone in a similar situation. This was the encouragement for the Alzheimer patients, as is the story-line for children to encourage them to open up. The story-line metaphor is there to ease and distract the children from being unfamiliar with giving information or ideas and thoughts. It is about comfort for them in giving their personal input and opinion of their own neighbourhood.

3.8 Exploration activities

The story and metaphor express themselves within the physical story book, illustrating the metaphor within their neighbourhood. The illustrations are about bringing the scale of the neighbourhood to a conceivable size for the children, playfully mixing with cooking utensils. The package created as a result of this thesis uses 'Cooking a Neighbourhood' as the chosen metaphor. The activities within the exploration phase encompass three aspects of the children's living quality experience:



Aspects of the children's experience
The activities are further explained in chapter
4 and broken down in Appendix 3

context "The most delicious neighbourhood"

scenario "Recipe for the perfect day"

personal "Keep fresh or recycle"

These three levels together offer the possibility to create a complete picture from the children. While the activities are occurring, they offer the chance for the leaders to open a dialogue with the children about how the imaginary situations they are creating relate to their current one. They become a platform on which the full experience can be unpacked. For instance, Kazoe from the drama program at the T+Huis wanted to create

lounge chairs outside her school to relax on, and when the social worker, Merle, asked her further, she found out that Kazoe really just needed “a place to be”.

“I cannot come up with the things they are coming up with. I don't know their world, I've never been in that world, and what would interest me. She is the only one that can tell me that, so it is good that she is the one telling the story. They give you the opportunity to get into their thoughts and their experience.” Naomi

3.9 Amplifying the vision

As the method provides a feedback loop to create numerous possibilities, it is important for these to converge on a common platform. The future vision for the Melting Pot is a network of organizations who implement the method, and create shared knowledge that can in turn encourage the method to expand with new metaphors and stories for the children. The

process is about empowering children, but the long term vision is about empowering organizations to improve the living quality in their neighbourhoods. Testing and evaluating the Melting Pot method with the Drama group helped realise the potential for universality, it was my intention to create not just one instance in Oud Woensel, but to design the possibility to implement it in other neighbourhoods.

The network begins as a distribution channel for the method. From there, users share experience and knowledge, and allow more more versions of the method. Inspiration from artists and designers, and other individuals or groups will be promoted, and connected to each other. There are many different ways the method could be received by a neighbourhood organization, through their own funding, or subsidies, however with my experience most don't have the financial means to purchase such a program. It is for this reason that the first iteration of the network is based on a partnership of local housing corporations and local government subsidising organizations in their neighbourhood to implement the program. From that point they will be connected to the network, and be able to benefit from the tools, the knowledge, and inspiration.

This network will grow as experience will begin to shape it. At this moment, it will begin with one program, Cooking a Neighbourhood, but the potential for other story and activity packages is acknowledged. A growing toolbox for different phases, and experience on co-creating with a young target group will enrich the method over time. Included in the Melting Pot will be other like-minded individuals who can inspire initiatives in different neighbourhoods, all connected through the network. The Melting Pot network will become the scaffolding for those with shared vision for the future of neighbourhoods shaped by the children living there to build their own initiatives, and improve the living quality. After all, no matter how big the network, it will always be about shaping our worlds through the eyes of our children, one neighbourhood at a time.



chapter 4 case study

T+Huis Drama program



The combination of children, social workers, and designers is important in order to make a significant impact on a neighbourhood, and on the empowerment of children in that neighbourhood. The process is aimed at shaping the neighbourhood for the people living there, by the people living there. This chapter introduces the goal of the design proposal, how empowering the children is a tool, and finally describes the kind of tools to be used in the Melting Pot process.

Introduction

This chapter presents the beta testing of the Melting Pot method. This testing explores two aspects of the process: pragmatic and results. During each workshop I analyzed how the components were used, adapted, or not used. The results are visible in the workshop 5- synthesis brainstorming. I joined up with the Drama program from the T+Huis, children and social workers that I had never worked with before. I invited another designer to join the process, as a neutral contributor to the process. I acted as the facilitator, and together we went through the Melting Pot process. In this section I will report on each stage we did with the children. The development and implementation phase are still in progress, and the results will show themselves as the program unfolds.

In the Appendix 3 CD, you will find the version used in during this run-through test. It is important to note that the components are undergoing their next iteration based on the pragmatic and results analysis.

Report and experience

I would like to take the opportunity to introduce the contributors to the Melting Pot process case study. It is important to note that this one example is testing of the beta version of the tangible tools and the method. The outcomes and experiences during this case study are not meant as the final design, but are a means to gain more knowledge and key findings in order to refine the proposal. A very big thank you to the leaders of the project for their enthusiasm and commitment to the project.



Merle



Job



Dirk



Sanita



Priscilla



Naomi
*(a special thank you for
from outside with such
and open mind
and amazing passion.)*





Drama Program

The group of children that were a part of the beta testing was the Drama Program from the T+Huis. The program's main goal is to teach the girls confidence and different ways of dealing with conflicts. The play they are working on this season is about differences in culture. The Drama program was very enthusiastic to welcome some fresh activity ideas and a new look at the girls they work with. They are also very enthusiastic about this 'special program that will let them do something they choose. The girls range from 10-12 years old.

A big thank you to the girls of the drama program, who's big excited eyes gave me the confidence and motivation to keep doing, and always improve, what I do. And especially thank you for all the hugs!



Brandy



Saskia



Richelle



Shifali



Luna



Lydia



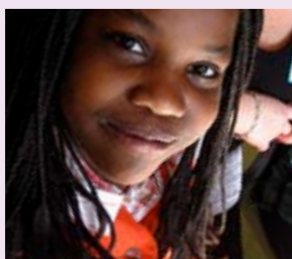
Kazoe



Gamze



Anita



Christianoe



Floortje

Day One: Introduction and Workshop

Introducing the method goals, the process, and most importantly introducing the leaders to each other. The workshop is a means of introducing each other's way of thinking, and to create a common approach to working with the children. The handbook is introduced and given to the leaders. It is a reference point for the process steps, and offers space to take notes as they speak with the children.

Structure:

1. Welcome introduction
2. Workshop to differentiate ways of thinking
3. Discussion on working with children and observation methods
4. Context orientation walk in the neighbourhood
5. Explanation of how the process works
6. Introduction to each of the activities

Evaluation:

The handbook version used had too much review information. I noticed that it could become more of a platform to discuss and compare the thinking of that particular group, instead of educational. It can become the chance to start the program on the same page, how they will deal with conflicts as a group, discover what is their common culture. It was positive for the leaders to have a handbook, and they were especially enthusiastic about being able to write notes during the activities with the children.

During the rest of the process the book was used very sparingly, because it wasn't user-friendly. They required a simpler way to take notes, more compact and less clutter within the pages. The second version takes into account these practical aspects of use.



getting to know their handbook



"It's great there is a place to write observations down, because I'll never be able to remember everything!"

-Dirk





Priscilla talks about working with children, and different techniques of observations





*Exploring the neighbourhood
together to open our own
discussions about the area.*

Day Two: Introduction, Keep Fresh or Recycle, and Take home package

Goals:

1. Introduce the program to the children, make the metaphor clear, introduce the project.
2. Building and awareness of their current surroundings. Bringing to the forefront of their minds the good, and the negative aspects of their lives. It is about the micro level of input.
3. To bring out their personality to the leaders, the chance to talk about things, people, and places that matter to them.
4. Explain and hand out the take home package

Structure:

1. Welcome the children, give them the stories to look through
2. Read the story, and explain the metaphor
3. Begin the activity, explain and encourage their experiences
4. Talk and question the children for background and context
5. Distribute the 'Take home package' and explain what to do with it

The Activity:

The fridge represents the place the children can keep the important things in their life. The recycle bin is the place they can put the things in their life and surroundings that they want to change. Drawing on the stickers then placing them in the fridge, the same with the cardboard pieces into the recycle bin.

Evaluation:

The story was very well understood and liked by the children, they loved the illustrations and the idea of cooking a neighbourhood. "First they thought, Fridge? Why? I don't put my mother in the fridge! But after explained, they got it, it made sense and they quickly began drawing." (Merle) The children were enthusiastic to have their own 'fridge' and were eager to draw on their stickers and fill their fridge. There was a balance of children who took their time to decide, and those who filled it as quickly as they could. The activity slowed the children down, and opened the discussion up about themselves and their context. They weren't as interested in their books to draw in, however the name tags on the books were important to them.




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Auto's / Co2

auto's
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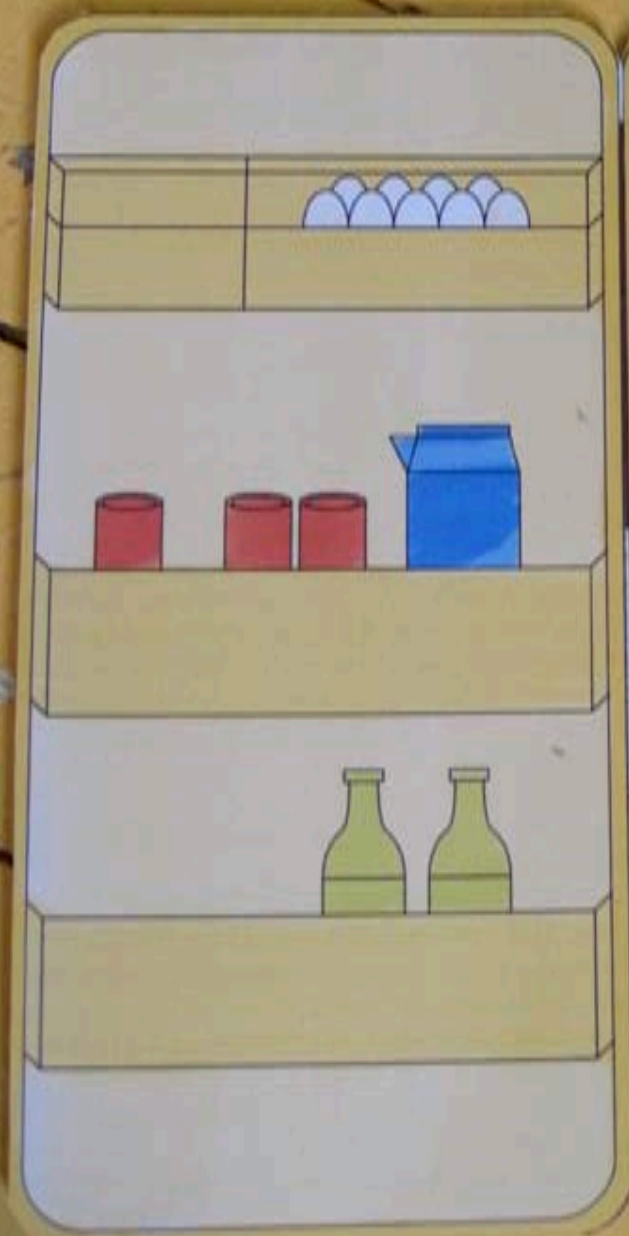
pap / stik


Verboden alcohol


lege flessen


Mieer natuur


stand
↓
slap
↓



Mijn vriend in



mijn huis



Gezin en familie



Verjaardag



School



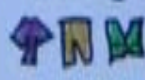
Vriende en liefde



eten



kleding





"..you expect some answers, simple, and standard things, but with this structure they keep surprising you because I am inclined to keep asking, and the chance to tell about myself. that opens them up and they can tell you how they feel. maybe it's not important for the activity, but it's the chance to get to know them better. In my own activity, i don't always have that opportunity."

Sanita- Social worker





"It helped that they were talking and drawing at the same time. They could wander, while doing something else. Because they were giving their ideas through drawing, they were able to talk about things."

Naomi-designer



Day Three: Ingredients for the Perfect Day

Goals:

To gain a sense of their scenario and their own persona - what happens in their daily lives, where they go, what affects them, and also what they don't get to do or see, and who they are. They work in groups to decide the ingredients, and then the recipe (story) that brings them together.

The Activity:

Explained as a puppet show, setting the stage for the perfect day. They were to plan as a group what the possibilities could be for the perfect day, then to draw the elements on paper. Cut the elements out, and tape them to the supplied pegs, and put the day in chronological order. Then, present their day to the group.

Evaluation:

It was surprising that so many children came to the activity, however it was a good chance to see the activity as a group. It brought up the chance for the social workers to deal with group dynamics, and the conflicts it brought. "the girls have to work together, and they have to learn give and take." Job. Even when one girl couldn't manage to work together, it gave the social worker the chance to deal with that, one of the biggest challenges with that particular girl.

The children on this particular day all made plays about leaving, and going on a trip. It could be attributed to the example given from one of the social workers that he would go on a trip. However, in some cases it showed that many of the girls wanted to escape, to get away.

The children didn't have much interest in the booklets. They did want their name tags, but the booklet wasn't important anymore since the leaders explained the activity. They were still making references to cooking their pieces, so the metaphor was not lost.





ZARA

diung

TYEU

I love my self



*A love story. Girl meets boys.
Girl falls in love with boy. Girl
goes shopping and walking,
and kissing with the boy. They
get married, and she buys her
dress herself at Zara.*

Puppet Show by Kazoe and Luna

Day Four: Cooking the Perfect Neighbourhood

Goals:

To learn about their context. where they live, what they focus on, and how it affects them. Also it is about opening up the discussion about the differences between what they are imagining and what currently exists.

The Activity:

The children take the blank board with the grid pattern. There are pieces with typical neighbourhood buildings for them to start with- houses, shops, restaurants, schools, supermarkets, roads, grass, sand, trees and flowers. The children are also encouraged to draw their own pieces, and components for their perfect neighbourhood.

Evaluation:

It was very positive as the children kept their focus on a close locality, giving the leaders the chance to easily have a discussion about the difference between the neighbourhood they were creating, and the one they lived in. Merle asked one of the girls “What kind of neighbourhood did you make?” Anita considered it for a few seconds, and then replied, “I want a delicious neighbourhood!” This showed me that the metaphor was still in their minds, even though they weren’t making use of the booklets anymore.





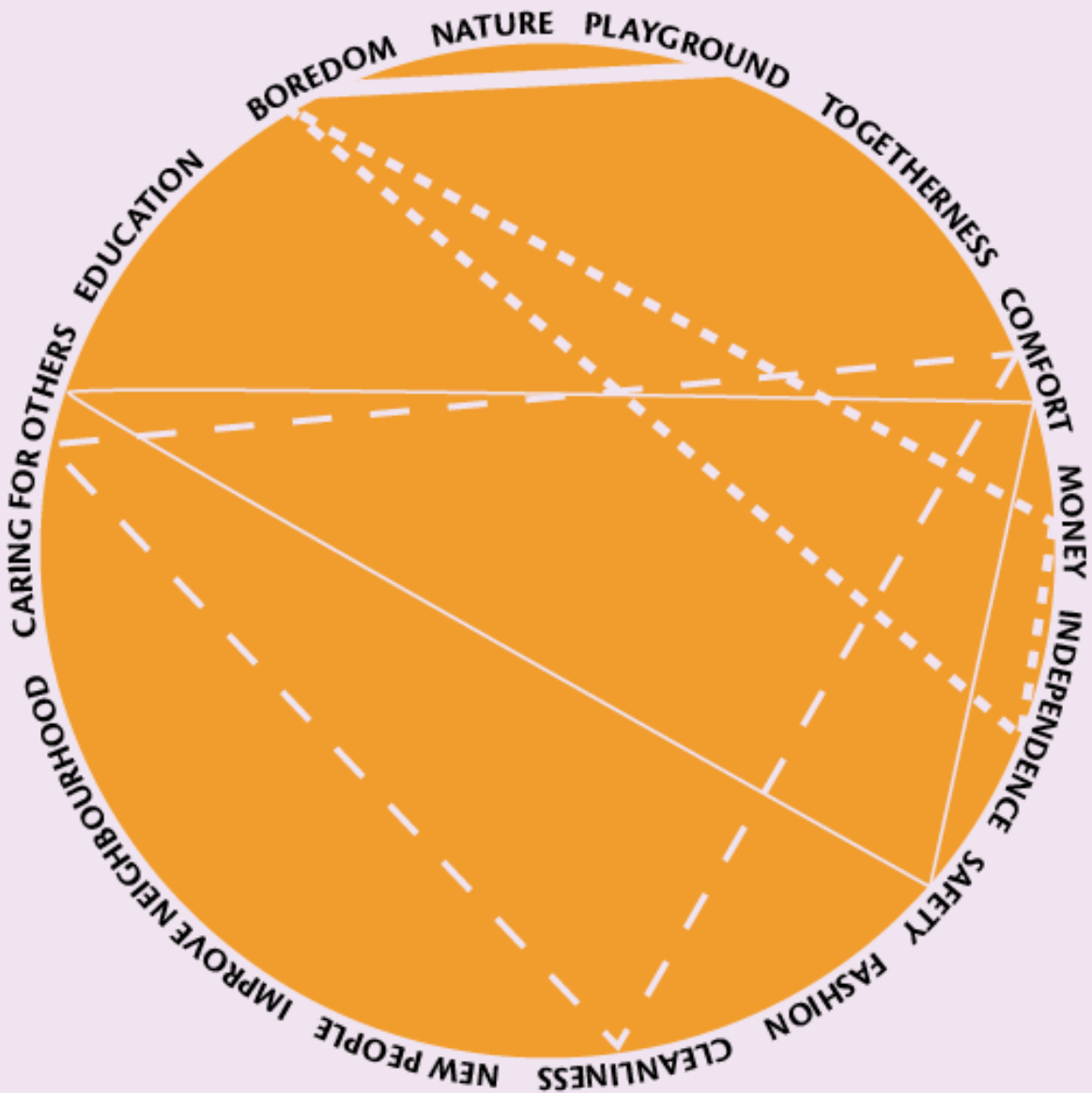
Lydia makes certain there is enough grass for everyone to use in her neighbourhood.





Day 5- Synthesis Brainstorming (results evaluation)

This phase is set up as a workshop with clear steps. These can be seen within the leader handbook in Appendix 2. As a group of four, two social workers and two designers, the data was externalized and sorted by first laying out each package of activities, from each child. Then all the pages of notes, and group reflections, were turned into key points for each child, and key points for the general group. Once all the data was arranged, it was analyzed and themes emerged for each child, as well as generally for the group. Once those themes were grouped, they were then analyzed, re-arranged, and re-organized through different modes. The following diagram illustrates the different kinds connections that were made between the themes:





PLUMB TO PLAY

I made, TALKED to I can't sleep, but need play

BOREDOM:
Nothing to do

NATURE
environments

PLAYGROUND
place to play

TOGETHERNESS:
friendship
community

COMFORT:
gezelligheid
happy place

MONEY

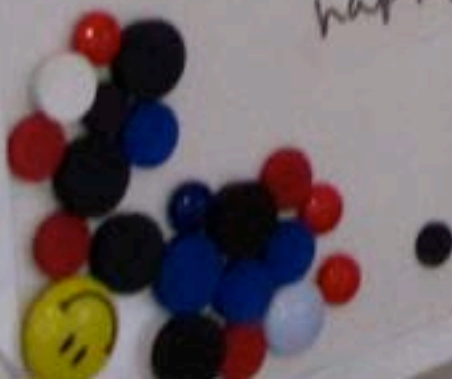
INDEPENDENCE
personal
freedom

SAFETY

FASHION

CLEVER

NEW



THE
1?
JANGBI
1 year
KPIs:
FINANCIAL
MARKET
CUSTOMER
OPERATIONAL
ENVIRONMENTAL
INNOVATION
WILLINGNESS
NEW PEOPLE

1. Make things
2. All in one
3. All in one



Out of these connections came three very clear, relevant opportunity areas that will then be given to the children in a series of questions. This format will open up a discussion on the topic in general, beginning with a context analysis, then the questions begin to narrow in on a possible solution. The three topics, and questions, for the drama group are as follows (page right)

Evaluation:

The main goal of the exploration activities was to get a holistic 'story' of the children's lives, context, living quality, and factors. The activities were successful in bringing out very relevant information, and allowed for general connections to be made, even from such specific details about each child.

During the Synthesis workshop, it was powerful having both social workers and designers, each playing a role, but feeding off of each other. Inspired by the designers creativity, the social workers were able to take the connections made and understand why that is for the children. This helped confidently make conclusions that were focused and closely connected to the children we worked with.

It is interesting to note how relevant and personal these opportunity areas are to this specific group of children. The age of the girls being between 10-12 creates very particular challenges in their neighbourhood. Namely there is a lack of things for them to do; they are too young to venture outside of the neighbourhood, and too old for existing entertainment like the playground. This leads to them often being on their own in their own homes. These themes clearly come out of this, wanting to bring people together, interacting with nature (and the potential for it to be somewhere for them to be) and having things to do. They also clearly express the desire to do things for other people, possibly because many of their families are still living abroad in the difficult situations they have come from.





"We could make a park with 4000 swings, then everyone could use one at the same time."

Gamze's perfect neighbourhood

"...those are lounge chairs outside of the school so that we can relax when we don't want to be in school. there needs to be somewhere to be"

Kazoe (10 years)



"...we will be friends with all the animals and use the fruits from the trees to eat from"

Saskia describing her perfect Day

index

Abstract

The Melting Pot process is a collaboration of designer, social worker, and children as a means of improving the living quality, or well being, of the greater neighbourhood. It is focusing on neighbourhoods being shaped by the people who live there, rather than outsiders imposing their perspective, impacting them from the inside out. The experts of the neighbourhood are those living there. The process is designed in such a way that it must empower the children as a means of achieving the final outcome; initiatives that impact the neighbourhood. Empowering the children is about obtaining their strong voice and fresh point of view, and working together through the entire process of bringing their ideas to life. Allowing them to be a part of “doing something with what they are saying”. (P. Berrenstein).

The Melting pot is a process supported by tools and methods designed to create a collaboration, empower the children, and shape the neighbourhood from the children’s point of view. It makes use of a metaphor as a means of encouraging the children to express themselves. The project as a whole is beginning to define how design can integrate the target group into the entire process, not only as a means of gaining insight, but as a means of empowering the target group for the future.

Naomi (designer) talks to Luna more about her neighbourhood, as Merle (social worker) hears about Kazoe’s idea for benches



Acknowledgements

One of the benefits of working within the social domain is the amount of people that I was able to collaborate with, speak to, and learn from. I couldn't have done this project without each and everyone of these people, and I want to make sure they all get the credit they deserve.

First and foremost a big thank you to everyone at the T+Huis. Being embraced so openly by such a diverse group made my job incredibly enjoyable!

Especially to Sara and Dennis, who at many points acted as mentors themselves, and were amazing connections to any questions I might have had-- or things I may have needed to do!

Dearest Priscilla, your commitment to my work absolutely made it possible. Job, I am grateful for you being the 'social' to my 'design' ("together we are social design!")

Of course all the social workers who contributed and helped along the way to implement all my research activities and crazy ideas, thank you for putting up with my over enthusiasm: Stefan, Sanita, Dirk, Job, Bouzi, Jim, Grietje, Jan, Mies, Edyta, Robert, Said, and Shonagh.

Thank you to Birgit Mager for being so open to working with her students, and to share her expertise in the field of Service Design. Thank you Gert Staal for your candid and open discussions not only about my project, but the bigger picture in which it fits. I am very grateful for the time Bas Raijmakers took to really listen and understand my project, and help nudge me in the final stages.

The very special Daniel Rossi. You were my illustrator, and my rock. For the meals you cooked, and the mess you willingly lived in, and the panicking you dealt with - Thank you doesn't even come close.

The beautiful Alice Schwab, the most amazing sound-board I could ask for. Thank you for all the times you knew I needed something even before I did.

Jonny Wray, your many discussions on how to deal with this crazy journey were indispensable. You were always there at the drop of a hat...thanks.

"You know Heather, we never worry about you. We know you will do just fine no matter what." The words of my parents that kept me going, gave me confidence, and even though they were far away, I could feel the hugs! Thank you for allowing me to call you in the middle of the night just to talk. I love you both with all my heart.

Thank you to my brother for helping me clear my mind during the summer, during one of the best vacations ever. Don't worry- I'll come home eventually. I love you big brother!

A very special thank you to my grandma, for the fuzzy pink socks that kept my feet warm during all the late nights. I couldn't have written this without them!

And of course, thank you to my classmates. Dana, Saxy, Lukee, Cedric, Alessia, Henry, and my Korean sister Youngshin. You have all inspired me along this journey, and I will miss you everyday.

Anna Crosetti, you made this crazy place manageable and understandable. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to all of us!

Damian, from the very beginning of this journey I knew you would keep pushing me to bring my ideas to life. Even though they typically came in the form of diagrams and drawings, this encouragement was just what I needed to be able to make my project believable. Thank you for all the contradictions, the brainstorming, and the inspiration you always brought.

Marieke, thank you for being so supportive, when things felt risky you helped me trust my instinct, and encouraged my directions. Thank you for following along my crazy path, and taking the time for such rich discussions. I can only hope I made you proud, and could offer even the smallest amount of inspiration back to you.

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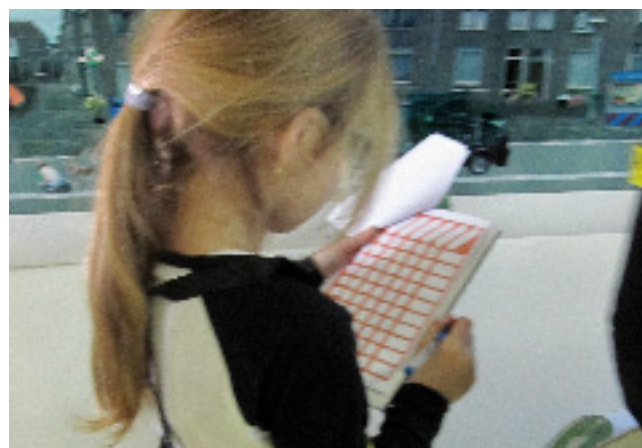
appendix one:
research process

My own generative research.

The Melting Pot process arose from a series of activities done with the children. These activities were meant to question things throughout my research- from how children worked with certain creative research methods or tools, to finding out how the children perceived their neighbourhood. As the process began to take shape, I realised that throughout this testing with the Nature Program, we had actually gathered data about the children. I then structure the input from the children and together we explored and developed a solution to one of their opportunity areas. These activities also gave me insight into how each tools or activity functioned as research.

On the following pages I describe five of these activities:

- the Mayor Game
- Tour of your Neighbourhood
- Building Solutions
- Puzzle Island
- Nature Rangers



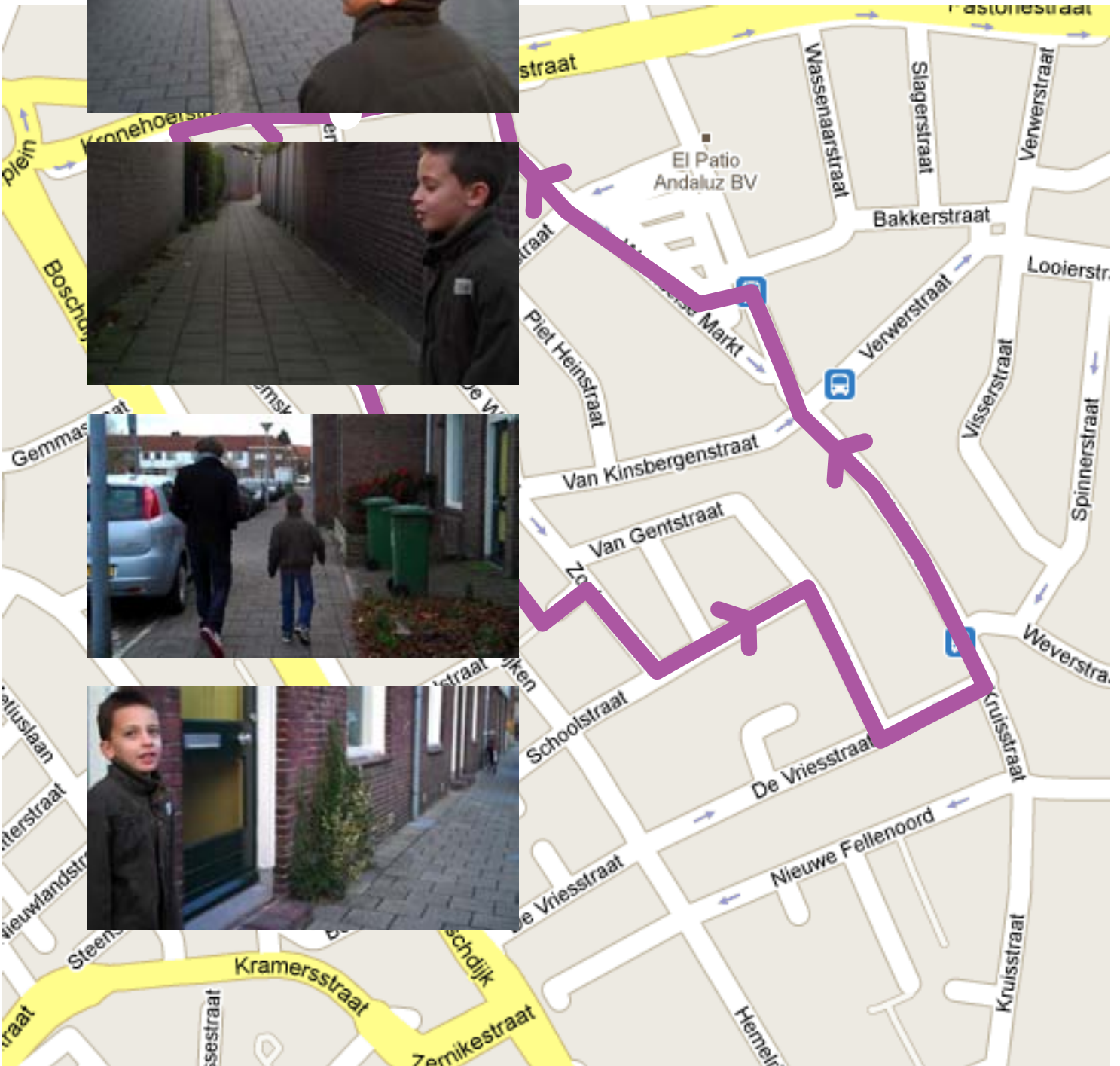
The Mayor Game

crowning the children mayors allowed them to create their very own neighbourhood. they enthusiastically created imaginative places to live, even with some practical solutions such as rule posters in the neighbourhood. From this activity I realised the strength in encouraging the children to communicate by their creativity. The metaphor was a strong way to engage the children into the activity. Giving them pieces to begin building with opened up their imaginations to make their own drawings in their neighbourhoods.



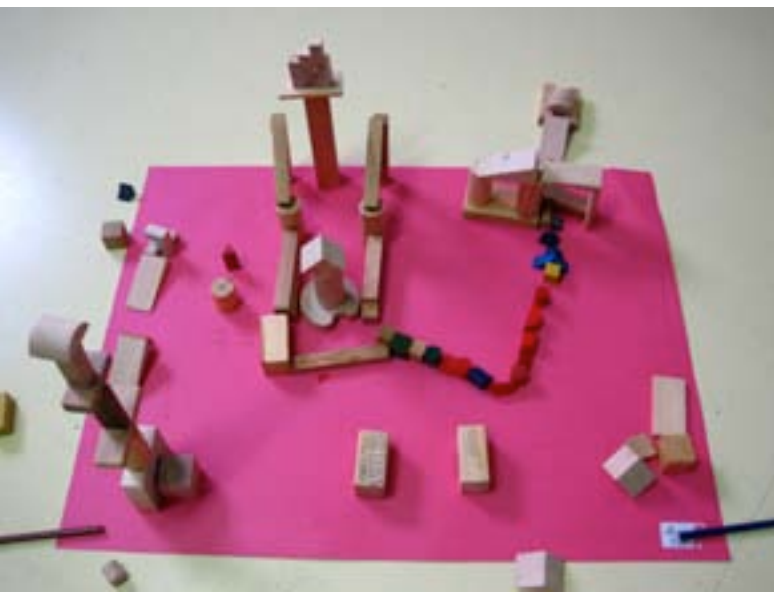
Tour of your Neighbourhood

We asked Gino to take us on a tour of his neighbourhood, to point out and discuss key areas- places he liked and didn't like. the one-on-one discussion gave us the direct opportunity to unpack the reasoning behind each of the things he pointed out. it allowed him to open up and be proud and scared of where he lived. Gino also shared wonderful ideas such as a giant fence to protect the neighbourhood so the kids can play freely.



Building Solutions

the goal of this activity was to find out how children worked with ambiguous objects such as blocks in order to imagine environmental solutions. what we discovered was that these research activities became a platform for the children to express things very easily, positive and negative. When one of the children shared his plans to destroy Israel with his factory, it wasn't a concern for the activity, but I realised the strength of the tools to allow social workers to get to know deeper the children, and to work with them on a deeper level. it was this day I realised the need for the different roles, and the benefit of the activities for both.





Puzzle Island

Creating a puzzle that depicts the things they would take with them to a deserted island, and on the other side of the puzzle the things they would specifically leave behind. The goal was to test how a different format could influence the children's ability to express. The puzzle gave them a lot of motivation to get their ideas out, and because it became a story to them, they were very careful in the items they selected. What I discovered was the benefit of choosing a positive side and a negative side, by thinking about both the children had a lot more ideas come to the forefront of their minds.



Nature Rangers

activity created by the group of students from KISD as research for this project. the goal was to see how the children coped with a role to play, and a task to accomplish. This activity they were Nature rangers and had to label things from the image of their neighbourhood that would be good or bad for nature. The task was a bit too intensive in steps, but it was very positive for them to work in groups, and also to have something to take home. The results of the questionnaire they took home gave them a chance to reflect and present the ideas that came to them later.

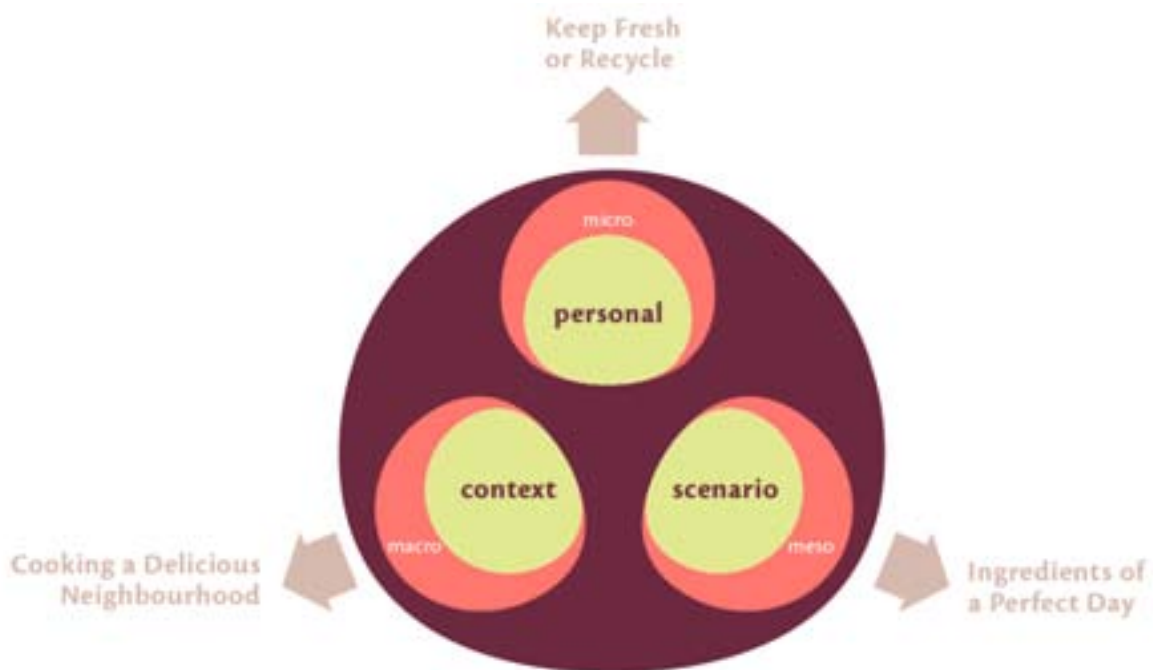


appendix two:
Melting Pot tools

Research Activities

The Research Activity phase is pivotal to the entire process. It is about getting the experience from the children, in order to further unpack their story. As explained in Chapter 3, the three activities uncover how the children experience their lives. They take into account the possessions that are important to them, how they live their days, and what their context is currently like, and of course how they wish to shape all of these aspects.

These three aspects relate to how social workers look at a situation, from a micro, meso, and macro level. Together the three areas create the holistic, or overall, look at how the children experience their lives; their living quality.



Activity One: Keep Fresh or Recycle

An individual activity to begin the process, the strongest connection to the metaphor to help build the connection. It gives a glimpse at what the children currently prioritize, and brings to the forefront of their minds the things in their life. The aim is for them to begin to reflect before they go to the next activities - to make them aware.

Activity Two: Ingredients of a Perfect Day

This activity is set up to be done in small groups, giving the opportunity to work together and for the leaders to discover the groups dynamics. The activity creates the platform to discuss what they currently do throughout their days, and what kind of activities and “ingredients” are present and missing. This activity is set up like a puppet theater to also encourage the children to create an entire story.

Activity Three: Cooking a Delicious Neighbourhood

An individual activity that gives the children responsibility, and a larger context to input their point of view, and ideas. This activity gives the leaders the chance to ask how and why it differs from their current neighbourhood, and ask further why things are the way they are. It also acts as an introduction to the scope of where they can create their initiative.



Keep fresh or Recycle



Ingredients of a Perfect Day



Cooking a Perfect Neighbourhood

Leader Handbooks

During the Introduction Workshop, the social workers and designers receive handbooks. These are their references for the entire process. Within the pages is the diagram to follow, material that refers to working with children, and observing them. They are designed in a way to be used during all phases, even as a tool for taking notes while they are doing the exploration activities with the children.

I believe it is important to see how the book evolved after just one process. Therefore, on the CD at the end of this Appendix you will find one of the two versions of the leader handbook; the one used in the testing, as at the time of publishing this thesis, the final iteration is still in development.

Leader Handbook - version one - This first one is the beta version used during the case study with the T+Huis drama group. During this experience many key points emerged. You'll notice the amount of content and detail included, very quickly I realised it was unnecessary, and only retained the main points. The form of the book was bulky, and therefore often left behind. The leaders expressed the usefulness of writing down as they went, and keeping all the information together, therefore that was taken into account for the next version. (note: one section is in dutch and was developed by Priscilla, a social worker. This more in depth educational approach was her own graduation work. The final version lacks a lot of the content because I choose to take a different approach than she did.)

Leader Handbook - version two - The second version will be more refined, simple and user friendly. Based on the needs of those who will be using it, it allows for pages to be stored in envelopes within each activity section. The reference material will be less educational and more of a starting point for further discussion amongst the group. The book offers itself as more of a reference piece, rather than step-by-step instructions.





het
koken
van een buurt

Naam van de kok

Naam van de kok

Storybook - Cooking a neighbourhood

Within Chapter 3 the metaphor is explained as a story. In the first implementation of the Melting Pot, the story is “Cooking a Neighbourhood”. The illustrations are based on a desire to scale down what could be a daunting scope or context into something easily graspable by the children. The cooking utensils are solid red, becoming more like monuments or symbols of the metaphor. The style is whimsical and playful, and as the final version is only the story, it is something that can be added to the organizations library.

As with the leader handbooks, there are two versions available to see on the Appendix 3 CD.

Children’s Story - version one - The first was based on the assumption the children would want to track their results and their process in their own books. In reality they didn’t want to deface the “beautiful books”, and were most often busy with the activities themselves, and comparing amongst each other.

Children’s Story - version two - For those reasons the books became elongated stories explaining to the children the idea of each contributing to their neighbourhood with their own qualities and skills. These books look to be used over and over again, to increase their importance, and to reduce the amount of throw-away components in the entire package.



about heather



Heather Daam comes from Canada, which explains why she used to be a competitive ski racer. Her fondest memories of the sport was most likely once she retired and began coaching children. She loves to make things with her hands - old fashioned (and suddenly trendy) things like knitting and crocheting. In fact at one point she founded a company that made wooden jewelry; and loved that everyday she got to work with her hands, and interact with people. Heather isn't quite accustomed to the rain in the Netherlands, but is getting used to keeping an umbrella by her side. She prefers to look on the bright side of things, and is often teased for being so happy and enthusiastic all the time. (She's also ok with that, because there are worse things to be teased about.) She is looking forward to continuing her journey with the T+Huis, the talented social workers, and the inspiring children of Oud Woensel.

