

CONTESTED EXCHANGE

A Practice-based Exploration of
Museum Learning Communities



Graduation Project
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Foreword

This study was inspired by my learning experience in the graffiti scene, outside the formal education system. I would like to thank everyone who acted as a mentor over the years, your help had – and still has – a significant impact. You know who you are if you read this.

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Summary

This research discusses the frameworks of learning communities in museums and galleries for contemporary art. The notion of the museum learning community is contextualized within the broader definition of community and museum education. The research question is: “What are the frameworks of learning communities in museums and galleries for contemporary art, and what are their specific traits?”

The different museum learning community frameworks are illustrated by two case studies. The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam’s *Blikopeners* illustrates a learning community inside the museum and South London Gallery’s *Looking for Sierra Leone* exemplifies an off-site museum learning community. These case studies demonstrate the differences and similarities between these two frameworks in terms of motivation, techniques and pedagogies that were used, it also shows the opportunities and constraints in each project. The *Blikopeners* are strongly connected to the museum; it determines every learning goal in the programme. The participants bring change to the institution and meanwhile undergo a process of personal growth. As a result, the main focus of this learning community is instigating institutional change. *Looking for Sierra Leone* is focused on democratising the institution’s resources to build a relationship with its neighbours and is therefore regarded as outreach. In this relationship the institute is not separated, but a part of its surroundings; as a stakeholder amongst many other stakeholders.

The research is based on a strong connection between theory and practice. Therefore, the project *Mapping Osdorp* was organised to connect both. In this project, a group of Stedelijk’s *Blikopeners* stepped outside the confines of the museum and explored the neighbourhood of Amsterdam Osdorp through artistic practices – inspired by mapping and psychogeography. The participants concluded that the context of the institution creates a more directive learning process (geared towards a predefined goal), but is also focused on shared interests and learning about different perspectives. When a learning community resides outside the museum it is mainly focused on the process and there is more room to influence it as a participant, becoming a stakeholder. Moreover, there is a possibility to fail. The participants concluded that they would prefer a combination between these two learning community frameworks in a single education programme.

Learning communities are highly context-specific and each museum or gallery that is engaged in these practices has to be aware of the size, structure, location and position of the institution. Most importantly, working with community should be a bidirectional exchange or dialogical process. In this case, the community learns from the museum and the museum learns from the community. Museums and galleries frequently engage in (educational) activities for specific reasons and want certain outcomes from specific communities or individuals – while these communities are often not aware of the institution’s underlying aims. Museums and galleries should therefore be aware and critical about their own position and power, to prevent the creation and consolidation of (learning) communities completely for the institutions’ own benefit.

Introduction

This research discusses museum learning communities inside and outside the museum. Museum learning communities are defined as education programmes focused on a group of youths which are connected to a museum or gallery for contemporary art. The subject is extensively studied through a literature review, (practice-based) case studies and an education project that was conducted specifically for this research. The literature review describes the theoretical context of this study and the case studies demonstrate two tangible examples of museum learning communities from the field. Finally, the education project is a practical outcome of the theory and case studies which feeds the final conclusion. The research question is: “What are the frameworks of learning communities in museums and galleries for contemporary art, and what are their specific traits?” The bigger importance of this research is that, as the British academic and museum professional Bernadette Lynch states, “museums (...) have a clear and urgent choice to make in terms of which path to take: stay within the old parameters, behind the ‘wall’ of the institution, or step up and bravely embrace their civil society role at the heart of our divided metropolises” (Lynch, 2017, p. 25). Every chapter in this study is supported by a visual contribution, which visualises and situates it in the structure of the research.

This study arose from my own experiences both as a learner and an educator, and can therefore be regarded as a practice-based research. When I was 14 years old I started ‘writing’ graffiti. Learning how to make graffiti was my first major learning experience in a community setting, outside the formal school system. As a teenager growing up, this way of learning has had a significant impact on my perspective on education and learning. Aside from graffiti, I was part of a learning community in a museum when I was 18 years old. When moving to Amsterdam in 2012, I became a *Blikopener* at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. The *Blikopeners* are a group of young people between 15 and 19 years old who work for the museum: they organise tours, events and workshops. I mainly wanted to become a *Blikopener* to experience how it feels to work in a museum. This learning community, albeit in an institutional context, was highly important for me to feel at home in Amsterdam. By working in a museum I got the opportunity to build a professional practice. Furthermore, as a newcomer to the city, I was able to make friends and – through them – experience Amsterdam in a different way. The different frameworks of learning communities are therefore reflected in my own practice. The graffiti scene represents a learning community outside the walls of an institution and the status quo, which originates in a grassroots way. Contrastingly, the *Blikopeners* is a learning community inside the walls of an institution, envisioned by the museum and supported by official funds. These different perspectives essentially sparked my interest in the field of learning communities in museums, this study therefore arose from personal questions and critique when experiencing different roles in both the Stedelijk and the graffiti scene. The *Blikopeners* programme is also used in the comparative case study, since this research project arose from my own practice. It is therefore important to clarify my position in the *Blikopeners* project in relation to this study. Besides being a participant, I also worked as a freelance coordinator of a *Blikopeners* programme; this situated me on the ‘other’ side. Instead of being one of *Blikopener* participants, I worked with them. Currently I do not work for the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; this grants me the autonomy to conduct this research and reflect critically on the *Blikopeners*. My experiences in the graffiti scene, the *Blikopeners* and as a freelancer encouraged me to ask questions about the notion

of 'community' and explore fundamental concepts that lie at the basis of this term. These experiences are an inherent part of my research and will be referred to throughout the study. Additionally, my existing relationships with the participants in the *Blikopener* project led up to my education project. My connection with the institution stayed challenging in defining my position as a researcher throughout the project, it was therefore important to keep a critical distance by observing what took place during the research in a reflexive way. I strived to use my position to create an in-depth analysis of this field, as it is approached from these different perspectives.

The first chapter is a literature review and explains the theoretical framework of the research to answer the question: "What is a learning community and how is it established in contemporary art museums and galleries?" It describes different perspectives from which the term 'community' can be defined, supported by theories from a sociological, anthropological and political framework. Such as: Benedict Anderson, Anthony Cohen, Chantal Mouffe and Jean-Luc Nancy. Furthermore, this chapter shows how one can understand the concept of the learning community – supported by several thinkers in education theory, including: Lave and Wenger, John Dewey, Paulo Freire and bell hooks. It furthermore highlights the traits and characteristics of the learning process in a community setting. This chapter concludes with the definition of community, points out recent discussions about this subject in the museum field and highlights examples of learning communities in the context of the museum. The recent discussions are clarified by Claire Bishop, Elizabeth Crooke, Janna Graham, Anna Harding, Carmen Mörsch and Marijke Steedman. This chapter is shaped by literature research and field notes from practice. After the outline of the topic is clarified, it is time to discuss two illustrative examples of learning communities in the museum practice.

Chapter two highlights two specific case studies in the field of museum education. The chapter illustrates how the notion of 'community' can be defined in practice and compares a museum learning community within the museum and outside the museum. The case studies are the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam's *Blikopeners* (a museum learning community inside the museum, focused on the institution) and South London Gallery's *Looking for Sierra Leone* project (an off-site museum learning community project, regarded as an outreach programme). The *Blikopeners* project is closely connected to my own practice and experience with museum learning communities and therefore functions as a starting point of the comparison. *Looking for Sierra Leone* is unfamiliar territory and contains challenging, and opposing, characteristics compared to the *Blikopeners*. When researching museum learning communities outside the museum it became clear that there are just a few examples in the field that appeal to this research's criteria. The most important norm was that the basic parameters of the programme should be similar to the *Blikopeners*. *Looking for Sierra Leone* suited best because of the background of the institution and the structure of the group (in terms of the participants' age and size of the group). These case studies are compared in this chapter, and highlight the differences and similarities between a museum learning community in and outside the museum. To generate in-depth knowledge about the case studies (besides general institutional reports and publications), interviews were held with the people who initiated and ran the programmes: Marlous van Gastel (*Blikopeners*) and Ashley Whitfield (*Looking for Sierra Leone*). Additional (retro perspective) field research was conducted in these institutions in Amsterdam and London in addition



to the interviews. Due to my involvement in the *Blikopeners* the most information in this case study is first-hand. As the *Looking for Sierra Leone* project already took place, the analysis is primarily based on second-hand information. The case studies highlight two illustrative examples of museum learning communities. After analysing both theory and practice in the first two chapters, the findings are applied in the education project which is described in the third and last chapter.

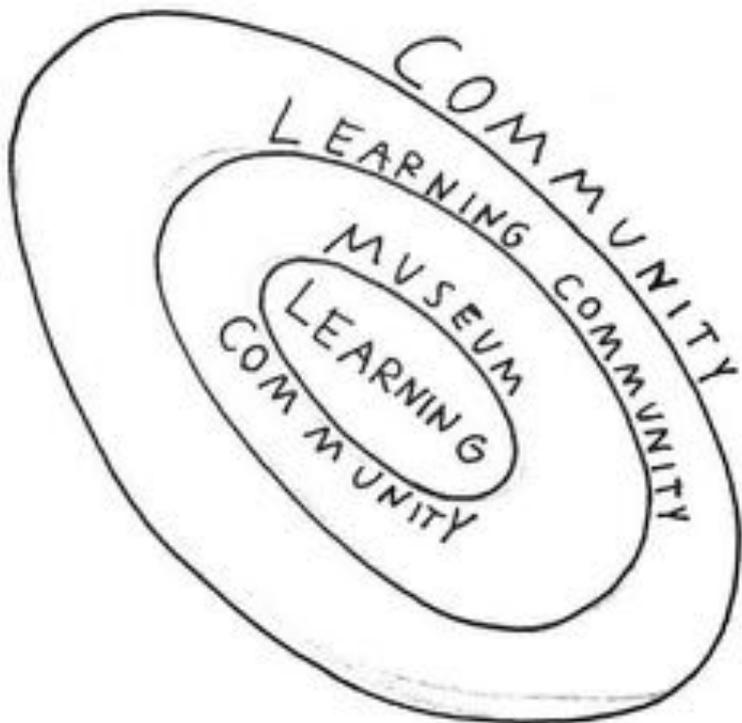
The third chapter is a description and reflection of the education project that was specifically designed and conducted for this research. The project was an experiment in which the *Blikopeners* experienced being part of an off-site learning community. The participants explored the neighbourhood of Amsterdam Osdorp by using artistic methods that are focused on mapping and geography. The choice for working with maps was deliberate, since map-making increased their consciousness of the surroundings. Focusing on the environment was vital for the participants, as they experienced learning in a community in a different spatial context compared to the Stedelijk. Through these methods they were eventually able to answer the question: “What are the educational consequences when the *Blikopeners* function as a museum learning community outside the confines of the museum?” The chapter explains how the education project was envisioned, when and how it took place and how the project informs the research. The project can be regarded as a collaborative practice-based research, since the *Blikopeners* collectively reflected on their experiences during and after the project. Together they sieved out the traits of learning communities both inside and outside the museum from practice. This chapter is based on interviews, observations and visual documentation such as photographs and drawings. The theory of the first chapter, case studies in the second chapter and education project in the third chapter finally lead up to the conclusion.

The conclusion discusses the different frameworks of museum learning communities. It proposes that working with community should be a bidirectional exchange or dialogical process between the museum and the community. Museums and galleries should be aware and critical about their own position and power, to prevent the creation and consolidation of (learning) communities completely for the institutions’ own benefit.

1. Learning Communities in Museums

In this chapter the term 'community' will be defined within the context of (museum) education. Community is a contested term since it is understood in a variety of ways, the definition therefore usually remains relatively opaque and subjective. This chapter explains different perspectives on the way community can be defined, supported by theories from an anthropological, sociological and political framework. It does not try to provide a clear-cut definition of community, since the term remains too complex and layered for a fixed description. However, this chapter will lead up to a working-model of the term that acknowledges its complexity and contradictions. As Irish museum theorist Elizabeth Crooke (2007, p. 172) explains: "Rather than attempting to reduce this diversity to a single definition, it is more useful to consider the multitude of characteristics associated with community". Furthermore, this chapter describes how people learn in a community situation. Since this research deals with learning communities in museums it is important to describe how the term community is used in the museum world, it therefore taps into recent discussions in the field. Finally, different examples of learning communities in museums will be described. As a result, this chapter gives an answer to the question how the term community can be defined from several perspectives, how learning occurs in community context and how learning communities are envisioned in the museum field.

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Map 1 - Visualisation of chapter one, from community to museum learning community

1.1 The Definition of Community

The opaqueness of the term 'community' means that it can be understood in a variety of ways. It is vital to explore how to understand the term before describing how the frameworks of learning communities are constructed in museums. The interest in the term is not restricted to a single field of study; this paragraph shows a condensed overview of how the term can be understood in the academic fields of anthropology, social sciences and political sciences. Finally, this leads to the conclusion how 'community' is approached in this study.

The word 'community' originates from the Old French *comunité*: commonness or 'everybody'. The French word refers to the original Latin word *communitas* (Etymonline, 2015). In Latin, *cum* means together or with and *munus* means gift (Steedman, 2012, p. 26). Several sociologist and philosophers have approached community from the perspective of the individual instead of a group. For example, social anthropologist Anthony Cohen (1993, p. 38) describes communities as a form of culture. According to Cohen a community is a meaningful, symbolic construct of people. It is formed around the relationship between a person and the community. Cohen sees a community as a group of people who distinguish themselves from the outside world by their specific behaviour. Therefore, the notion of community is constructed inside the brain. People construct community symbolically; it is a way of creating meaning and identity. If community is constructed inside the brain in a subjective way, it is irrevocably not a clear-cut entity. It seems therefore rather challenging to use the term in a way to describe a specific group of people. This is supported by political scientist Benedict Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities' (1991). His theory connects with Cohen's concept of the mental construction and the idea that people feel part of a community because of their behaviour and a 'sense of belonging'. Both Cohen and Anderson regard community as an imagined mental creation, which competes with the traditional definition of community fixated on structures, boundaries and physical space. French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy adds that a community is constructed by a complex set of social relations and the individual constructed feeling of 'being-in-common' (Nancy, 1991, p. xxxvi). Additionally, political theorist Chantal Mouffe states that community "is held together not by a substantive idea of the common good but by a common bond, a public concern. It is therefore a community without a definite shape or a definite identity and in continuous re-enactment" (Mouffe, 1993, p. 67).

Community tends to be approached as a feeling of togetherness. Whether one regards a community to be a clearly defined group or an individual mental conception, it is always centred on inclusion or being part of 'it'. The inclusion inevitably creates exclusion, because everyone who does not share the feeling of 'being part of it' is left out (Crooke, 2007, p. 171). The community has to accept you as a 'member'; you have to share specific behaviour, concerns or have specific commonalities in order to be one of them. This creates an interesting tension in the role of the term within the museum, since it will unavoidably exclude people by including specific communities. In this study community will be regarded as a social and mental construct which is manifested by the individual feeling of being part of a community. Before highlighting the details of communities in the museum realm, the notion of learning communities will be discussed.

1.2 Learning Communities

Since the term community can be understood from a variety of perspectives, learning communities are also conceived in several ways. Originally, one may associate the term with informal ways of learning from a grassroots perspective – since it is an informal learning process. When trying to define the term with regard to its meaning and educational characteristics, explanations can mainly be found in educational theory (focused on schools) and business theory. Definitions on learning communities in informal non-institutional contexts, i.e. the graffiti scene, are less common in the academic field. It is thus important to describe how a learning community can be understood in different contexts, as there are several definitions for the concept. This paragraph clarifies how the notion of the learning community behaves within the institutional context and how its traits can be identified. This will lead to a definition of the term that will be used in this research.

As described before, community learning is mainly studied in the context of schools. Some education researchers and psychologists, such as Ann Brown, state that a school should strive to become one learning community, where students learn to learn (Brown et al, 1993, p. 190). Other researchers, such as Chris Watkins (reader in education at the University of London Institute of Education), argue that a sense of community should be formed within the context of a classroom – rather than the entire school (Watkins, 2005, p. 19). He argues that social relations and learning processes bring better learning, performance and behaviour of students (Watkins, 2005, p. 3-4). In fact, philosopher John Dewey (1859 – 1952) already included this concept in his philosophy of learning and teaching in the 1930s, where: “teachers and students participate together in the process of learning and share experiences of learning. The shared work or learning holds the school together as a community and is the primary source of social control” (Kleine-Kracht, 1993, p. 1).

Anthropologists Lave and Wenger coined the term ‘community of practice’. Wenger (2015, p. 1) describes a ‘community of practice’ as “(...) groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” The concept originates from learning theory and is applicable to a variety of contexts, such as: business, organizational design, government, education, professional associations, development projects and civic life (Wenger, 2015, p. 4). They state that not every community is a ‘community of practice’, as it is defined by three factors: the domain, the community and the practice. First of all, a shared ‘domain’ defines the identity of the community. The members of the community share specific interests and create their own expertise, which is mostly valuable solely for the community itself. Secondly, Lave and Wenger believe that ‘community’ is formed when its members meet in joint activities (i.e. by sharing information or by helping each other). Lastly, members of a ‘community of practice’ are practitioners, together they create a shared ‘practice’ from their experiences in their specific field of interest (Wenger, 2015, p. 2). Wenger (1998, p. xvi) argues that the main traits of ‘communities in learning’ are: problem solving, skill-sharing, reusing assets and creating room for discussion. This ‘community of practice’ model is helpful to describe how learning in communities is constructed, in both institutional and non-institutional situations. Educational theorists like Brown and Watkins mainly discuss how to implement (or rather co-opt) the notion of a learning community in schools or formal education. Contrastingly, Lave and Wenger do not limit the definition and application of the learning community to the institutional

context. Their approach on how to describe and understand a learning community surpasses the boundaries of the institution and is also relevant for informal learning communities.

Since it has been defined how learning communities are constructed, it is now important to describe how they learn. In general, there are several perspectives on how people learn. According to Greeno, Collins and Resnick (1996, p. 16) the way people learn can be divided in three perspectives: behaviourist, cognitive and situative. The behaviourist perspective is “(...) an organized accumulation of associations and components of skills.” (Greeno et al, 1996, p. 16) This is closely related to the way most of the students learn in school: you learn something in the classroom and reproduce it in a different situation. The cognitive approach differs and is regarded as a constructive process; the learner has a foundation of knowledge and expands his or her knowledge by making and breaking connections. This perspective mainly stems from Piaget’s constructivist learning tradition. This concept was largely adopted by museum educators in the early 2000s, inspired by museum education theorists George Hein and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (Gastel, 2017). Finally, in the situationist or pragmatist perspective knowing is defined by “(...) the way knowledge is distributed in the world among individuals, the tools, artefacts, and books they use, and the communities and practices in which they participate” (Greeno et al, 1996, p. 20), therefore “(...) students can become engaged in learning by participating in communities where learning is valued” (Greeno et al, 1996, p. 26). This perspective originates from the academic field of ethnography and clearly aligns with the notion of a learning community. The learning philosophy of John Dewey, mentioned before in this chapter, is regarded as being one of the origins of pragmatism (since it stems from the first half of the 20th century). In pragmatism, knowledge is not neutral, but it is situated in a life-like context in which it is learned and applied (Dewey, 1916, p. 218-219). This way of learning resonates in the theories of Lave and Wenger, where learning engagement is closely connected to identity and personal interest. Greeno, Collins and Resnick argue that, from this perspective, learning environments should be focused on using “(...) a rich variety of social and material resources for learning and to contribute to socially organised learning activities, as well as to engage in concentrated individual efforts” and on “(...) development of students’ personal identities as capable and confident learners and knowers” (Greeno et al, 1996, p. 27-28). The pragmatist perspective is closely connected to critical and feminist pedagogy. Paulo Freire (1921-1997), a Brazilian educator, is known for his critical pedagogy, which is characterized by the rejection of the ‘banking’ concept of education. In this concept the teacher regards the learners as empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. He sees this as oppression, because the learners will not be able to develop a critical stance in this linear way of learning. Freire was convinced of the fact that hierarchy is always present, it is therefore important that the teacher is aware of this (Bishop, 2012, p. 266). As a teacher you can set boundaries and create a context, where you can collaboratively learn with the learners. His philosophy of learning also inspired feminist pedagogy, which is primarily defined by bell hooks (an American feminist and social activist) in her seminal work *Teaching to Transgress*. She states that feminist pedagogy can even be categorised as critical pedagogy. As hooks explains: “When I discovered the work of Brazilian thinker Paulo Freire (...) I found a mentor and a guide, someone who understood that learning could be liberatory” (hooks, 1994, p. 6). In feminist pedagogy the notion of the learning community is important, as hooks states: “There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone

influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes. These contributions are resources. Used constructively they enhance the capacity of any class to create an open learning community” (hooks, 1994, p. 8). She furthermore adds that “(...) seeing the classroom always as a communal place enhances the likelihood of collective effort in creating and sustaining a learning community” (hooks, 1994, p.8).

Other thinkers detect additional traits extending from these. According to Mary Anne Raywid, an American education scholar, author and activist, learning communities are characterized by an intrinsically and socially infused learning process where respect, inclusiveness, trust, responsibility, empowerment and commitment are present (1993, p. 24). ‘Respect’ is important in the learning process, Raywid (1993, p. 32) states that showing respect to the learners instigates respect for the educator. Also, ‘caring’ is vital to the learning community. She states that ‘caring’ is different from ‘respect’ since it is particularistic and proactive: “It is particularistic in that it is deliberately extended differentially to people, specifically acknowledging and addressing their uniqueness, and it is proactive rather than expressed only as a response. To care is to reach out, to initiate positive interaction rather than waiting for the other to move” (Raywid, 1993, p. 34). A third quality of the learning community is inclusiveness, which is closely linked to responsibility: “The carefully nurtured sense of responsibility for one another makes it not only permissible but obligatory for each individual to reach out to fellow members of the community if any appear in difficulty” (Raywid, 1993, p. 35). Kennece Coombe (1999, p. 98), Senior Lecturer in Education at Charles Sturt University in Sydney, also argues that responsibility is an important part of a learning community: “[Students] need to be aware of the impact of what they do individually upon the dynamics of the community as a whole”. In addition, ‘empowerment’ is a trait of a learning community, because learners feel that they will be taken seriously and their feelings count (Raywid, 1999, p. 47). Lastly, ‘trust’ and ‘commitment’ are prevalent since it is a person-centred and social learning process, learners feel strongly committed to the community since they have the feeling that they are part of a ‘family’.

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In conclusion, then, learning in a community is defined as a social learning process where shared learning is apparent; because of its social nature, the learning parameters are defined by terms as: respect, inclusiveness, care, trust, responsibility, empowerment and commitment. The way of learning in learning communities is closely connected to the situationist and pragmatist learning perspective, in which knowledge is distributed in daily social situations. In this research, Lave and Wenger’s notion of the ‘community of practice’ is used to define what a learning community is, and the situationist perspective defines how learning communities learn.

1.3 Current Discussions in the Museum Field

Essentially, this study is focused on learning communities in the museum and gallery realm. As mentioned before in this chapter, the term community is frequently used in museums to describe the relationship between the institution and its public or development for new publics. Before digging deeper into learning communities in museums and galleries, the term community will be analysed in this context by developments in Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States. Museums are institutions with power and authority, they therefore have a role in creating identity and shaping history. This creates an interesting tension when talking about community in this field, since communities may emerge as a result of projects initiated by a museum or gallery. After clarifying this position, the manifestation of learning communities in museums will be addressed.

If we look at museums, it is essential to note that their nascence is closely related to the creation of the nation state. Museums give shape to the grand narrative of a nation through objects, as they present a shared history. The concept of the museum (in the Western world) started with so-called encyclopaedic collections in the 1500s, when the aristocracy collected objects to show their wealth and status and used the collection as financial security (Rijnders, 2013, p. 8). This developed into collections that mainly consisted of *naturalia* and *artificialia* in the 16th and 17th century. In the 18th and 19th century the first museums still had an encyclopaedic character. During the 19th century museums developed into nation-minded and publicly accessible collections. Collections were categorised and made public in different types of museums, such as: the natural history museum, the ethnographic museum, the decorative arts museum and the art museum (Rijnders, 2013, p. 17). In this study the focus is directed to the current type of contemporary art museums and galleries. As we are still in the middle of these developments, a description of the current museum climate is less objective and subject to change. In the publication *Radical Museology* Claire Bishop, Professor in the PhD programme in Art History at CUNY Graduate Centre, strives to explain the present state of contemporary art museums and the effect of austerity cuts on these institutions. In the last twenty years, Bishop sees that the museum has changed – from being publicly owned by the state to a more privately financed model. On a worldwide level, museums are more dependent on corporate sponsorship and donations. In Europe this is caused by governmental budget cuts in culture funding. The museum sector in the US always relied on corporate donations, but now sees the boundaries between the public and private interest disappear. For example, the MoMA in New York regularly reconfigures its permanent collection based on the trustee's latest acquisitions (Bishop, 2013, p. 9). In Latin America, the most important museums are all private, although there have been publicly funded museums since the 1960s (Bishop, 2013, p. 11). Also in Asia, contemporary art museums are established by corporations (Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul) or a wealthy maecenas (Bishop, 2013, p. 11). Bishop argues that this privatisation changes the focus of the museum from content centred (collection, position and history) to image centred (the level of new, well-designed and economically successful) (Bishop, 2013, p. 12). This tendency has a large impact on the museum's education programmes and relation to its public. Anna Harding (2005, p. 17), Chief Executive at the London visual arts organisation SPACE, argues that "the art world is currently polarised into two positions: on one side is a privatised art world of exhibitions with expensive admission charges, sponsors and elite corporate and celebrity receptions, obsessions with branding and spectacle; on the other

side is a tendency towards the democratisation of culture, brought about partly by governments seeing an instrumental role for culture and accounting for their spending in these terms.” Crooke (2007, p. 174) argues that we should “explore how museums and heritage have been used to express community and to look at the role of objects in symbolizing community and expressing senses of belonging.” She furthermore states that we should be critical about the use of the word community, since museum institutions have the power to “engage in community construction and consolidation” (Crooke, 2007, p. 174).

Grant Kester, Chair of the Visual Arts department and Professor of Art History at the University of California in San Diego, explains that:

During the late 1990s and early 2000s it was typical in the UK and the EU to define ostensibly advanced art on the basis of its perceived difference from, and superiority to, debased forms of publicly-funded ‘community art’, which were seen to rely on retrograde notions of community, culture and solidarity (...) the entrepreneurial model of arts funding that is emerging today marks a decisive break with key elements of earlier funding paradigms in the UK (Steedman, 2012, p. 14).

The increasing interest in community programmes in museums can be partially attributed to this change of the political climate (Crooke, 2007, p. 181). Museums had to frame their programmes within the social function of art to qualify for public funding. In this way, the arts were instrumentalised by the government to reach social inclusivity in society. On the one hand, artists were expected to reach out to minority groups that normally would not interact with so-called ‘high-art’. On the other hand, political arguments in favour of public art funding were framed in terms of transforming individuals from minority groups into productive citizens through the use of art (Steedman, 2012, p. 14). This subsequently had an impact on education departments in museums, which tend to now focus on social relevance. Eleonora Belfiore, professor of Communication and Media studies at Loughborough University, argues that this there is a European-wide shift towards instrumental cultural policy, which justifies public funding in the arts on the basis of its positive impact on society (Belfiore, 2002, p. 1). The difficulty of this mechanism is that: “Degraded to the function of mere tool, arts become a matter of ‘value for money’” (Belfiore, 2002, p. 21). Belfiore (2002, p. 22) argues that culture is not a means to an end, but an end itself.

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When looking at museums and community, the term has mainly been used to reach new audiences, build trust and re-establish the role of the museum in present-day society (Crooke, p. 183). Also, as stated before, the concept of community has been used as a tool for social engineering to realise a positive impact on society. Felicity Allen, former Head of Learning at Tate Britain, argues that gallery education is connected to radical art practices which are consequently linked to liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which had the intention “to shift art from a monolithic and narcissistic position into a dialogic, open, and pluralist set of tendencies that renegotiate issues of representation, institutional critique and interdisciplinarity” (Allen, 2008, p. 2). Although contemporary community learning projects are linked to these movements, Anna Harding (2005, p. 5) argues that “seemingly new practices oblivious to this [1960s and 70s community learning] heritage appear to the initiated to be reinventing the wheel, often blissfully unaware of a wealth of experience from which they might benefit.”

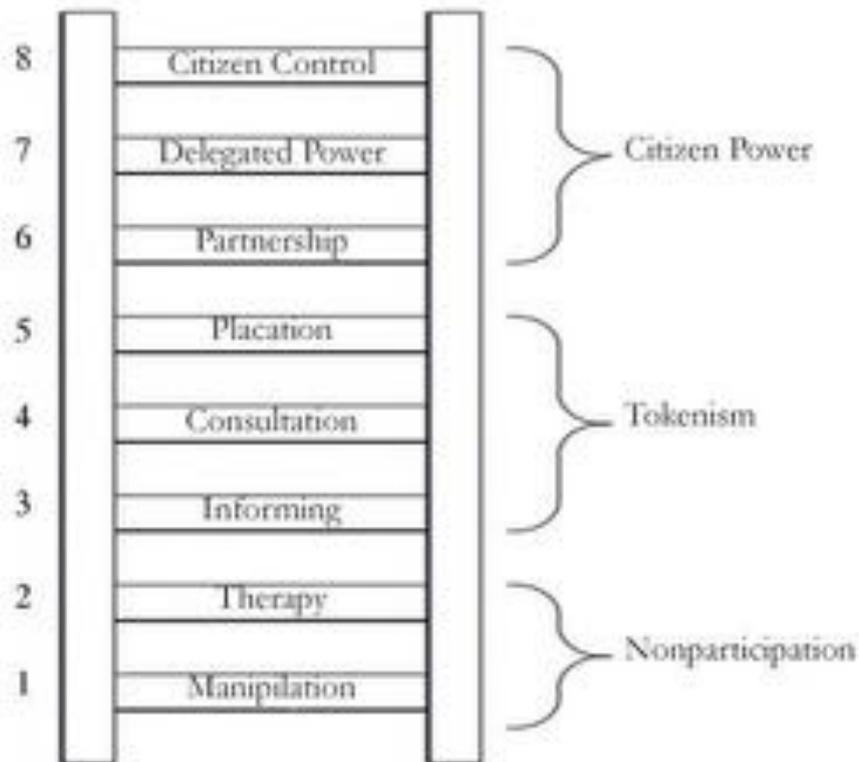


Image 1 - A Ladder of Citizen Participation.

Image by: Sherry R. Arnstein

Additionally, the second half of the 1990s in museum and (contemporary) art practice is marked by the renewed interest in education, also known as ‘the educational turn’. Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson, whom are both curators, educators, researchers and artists, argue that: “educational formats, methods, programmes, models, terms, processes and procedures have become pervasive in the praxes of both curating and the production of contemporary art and in their attendant critical frameworks” (O’Neill & Wilson, 2010, p. 12). According to O’Neill and Wilson this development contributed to a rise of educationally oriented exhibition models in museums. Janna Graham, a UK-based curator and lecturer in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, argues that some of these departments were ‘paternalistic, reformist and colonial, although some also used their education role to criticise the authorial power of exhibition practice (Steedman, 2012, p. 92). The museum and art field developed an interest for theories by Jacques Rancière (*The Ignorant Schoolmaster*), Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) and Ivan Illich (*Deschooling Society*). Ultimately, the rise of museum learning communities can be attributed to an intrinsic motivation of the institutions as well as an extrinsic motivation caused by the political climate. The developments in museum education theory increased the opportunities and interest in (democratic and critical) education in the museum and art world and the change of art policy granted more funding for community-centred art education projects.

Crooke states that the community cannot be understood uncritically, according to her there will always be a tension between museum and community.

Although working with the community is mainly used to reverse the hierarchy (in representation and interpretation of history and identity), museum professionals should question whether the chosen community is representative and how the

power of the museum is inherently present in this relationship. They have to be aware of the implications of their power and position. The UK-based artist Emma Smith explains that the gallery is often seen as separated or removed from the community. According to her this creates a position of superiority which creates a problematic power relation, since this assumes that the gallery or museum tries to provide service from this separate position to 'rescue' the community (Steedman, 2012, p. 26). These thoughts refer to Sherry Arnstein's seminal work *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*. Arnstein was an American health policy specialist who wrote about citizen involvement in institutional structures. The metaphor of the ladder functions as a guide to see who has power when important decisions are being made. It is divided in eight levels, from 'manipulation' at the bottom to 'citizen control' at the top (Image 1). The relation between the gallery and its public that Emma Smith describes is clearly situated at the bottom of the ladder (Arnstein, 1969, p. 2).

Marijke Steedman argues that it seems that dialogical art practices from the 1970s and 1980s, driven by artists, are being replaced by institutional models. This development has had an impact on how these projects are envisioned. In line with this, Steedman shares the position of Swedish curator and educator Maria Lind, who is concerned about the increasing external involvement in community art projects in institutions. Lind (2009, p. 70) states that: "Institutions (...) are forced to adapt their programs and/or work to the prevailing policy and/or market forces", which eventually leads to compromises and creates a gap between what they must do and actually want to achieve. In the key text "Alliances for Unlearning" Carmen Mörsch, a German art education practitioner and researcher, speculates on the functions of gallery education for the institution in which it takes place, and deals with the concepts of pedagogy and learning that are inscribed in these functions. She divides four different functions of gallery education: affirmative, reproductive, deconstructive and transformative. According to Mörsch, the affirmative and reproductive function are mainly present in traditional gallery or museum education which is focused on specific target groups. Affirmative education is focused on an expert audience, i.e. talks or panel discussions that are part of an institution's public programme, whereas reproductive programmes are focused on a new audience (unknown to art), to recognize the value of art. The deconstructive and transformative function usually do not have fixed and predefined addressees. Deconstructive educational programmes are self-reflective and often question the power relations inscribed in the institution. Transformative programmes are focused on changing society, which is linked to self-empowerment, activism and Freirean pedagogies (Mörsch, 2011). The deconstructive and transformative function are usually reflected in community (learning) programmes in museum education. Mörsch explains that an educational programme always is a combination of these functions: "In gallery education practice there are usually several of these functions active at the same time. A deconstructive or transformative gallery education, for instance, can hardly be imagined without some affirmative and reproductive aspects" (Mörsch, 2011). Finally, she proposes an alliance between artists, educators and curators to oppose the new regime of arts education (such as neoliberal policy which leads to museums and galleries struggling between education of the neoliberalised 'creative class' and critical, emancipatory education). To reach this Mörsch states that gallery education must be understood as "an independent cultural practice (...) while simultaneously questioning (...) hierarchisation of production and reproduction/distribution" (Mörsch, 2011).

1.4 Examples from the Museum Field

Having established the recent discussions in the museum field, we can now turn to some examples of learning communities in museums. To simplify the different forms of learning communities this study divides two practices: learning communities inside museums and outside museums. This separation is inspired by Anna Harding's book *Magic Moments* (2005), which describes artists working on creative projects with young people. Harding makes a divide between 'young people challenging museums and galleries' (inside the institution) and 'artists collaborating with young people in their community' (outside the institution).

Museum learning communities inside the museum, which are focused on the institution and its collection, are usually talent-development and peer-to-peer learning programmes facilitated by museum educators. These programmes are often rooted in the museum on a long-term basis. Some examples of these programmes are: the Whitney Museum's *Youth Insights*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam's *Blikopeners*, MAMA's *Rookies* and *Tate Collectives*. Learning communities outside the museum are mainly environment exploring programmes, focused on broadening the sensibility of the participants, and are usually facilitated by visual artists in collaboration with museum educators. These programmes typically have a temporary nature and are focused on a specific theme. Examples of these programmes are: South London Gallery's *Looking for Sierra Leone* (2011) or Serpentine Gallery's *On the Edgware Road* (2012). Before clarifying these two forms of learning communities, it is vital to explain how the museum and gallery field became interested in this way of learning.

Museum learning communities inside the museum originate from museums in the United Kingdom and the United States. A few of the most significant learning community programmes that are situated in a museum started at the Walker Art Center as the *Teen Arts Council* in 1996, followed by Whitney Museum's *Youth Insights* in 1997 and Tate Modern's *Raw Canvas* in 1999. Nonetheless these programmes are not the first of its kind. An early example is the *High School Explainers* project in the Exploratorium (San Francisco), which started as early as 1969 (Whitney Museum of American Art, 2015, p. 9). *Youth Insights* is an interesting illustration of these type of learning communities, in this programme high-school students work for the museum as guides and develop programmes for their peers (Stedelijk, 2010, p. 4). These programmes are based on a peer-to-peer learning methodology, which essentially means that information about the museum is explained by a group young people to other people of their age (Gastel, 2006, p. 49). In this way, the museum forms a community of peer-to-peer learners. In reality it operates on two levels. On the one hand young people attract their peers to the museum and guide them through the collection. In short this aim is focused on bringing more young people in the museum and providing comprehensible information about the collection. On the other hand, on an individual level, the participants in the peer-to-peer group learn how to work in a museum as a member of staff as it is a paid job, in this way they develop professional skills. These programmes therefore appeal to Mörsch's 'reproductive' and 'transformative' functions of education. The Whitney Museum can be regarded as one of the creators of these type of programmes, in line with this they recently initiated an extensive research on the lasting impact of these programmes which is described in the publication *Room to Rise: The Lasting Impact of Intensive Teen Programs in Art Museums*. The concept of these programmes has been co-opted by several

museums in continental Europe at the beginning of the 21st century, some examples are: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam's *Blikopeners*, Showroom Mama's *Rookies* (Rotterdam, NL), *Eye Exposed* (Amsterdam, NL), M HKA's *Jongbloed!* (Antwerp, BE), *Palazzo Grassi Teens* (Venice, IT) and Statens Museum for Kunst's *u.l.k.* (Copenhagen, DK). In the next chapter the case study of the *Blikopeners* will illustrate how a learning community inside the museum is constructed.

Museums and galleries in the United Kingdom are experienced in creating off-site museum learning community programmes. The history of many institutions is closely connected to the Victorian concept of education in the form of personal cultivation and improvement. In this era, the museum was aimed at civilizing the uneducated masses and used its power to enforce this on the working class. For example, the Whitechapel Gallery was one of the first publicly funded cultural institutions and was founded in 1901 to “bring great art to the people of east London” (Whitechapel Gallery, 2016). The initial founders of the gallery were interested in using their exhibitions to mediate between the various ethnic groups to encourage the respect for ‘foreigners’ by ‘locals’ and to show that their foreignness is only temporary since they will eventually assimilate (Mörsch, 2005, p. 199). Another example is the South London Gallery, which was established at Peckham Road as early as the year 1891. According to Marijke Steedman, these early models of Victorian philanthropy show parallels with today’s museum education practice, since: “The notion of bringing people into a situation from outside to lever change is reminiscent of some of the things that go on in galleries today when artist are invited to come into a context from elsewhere” (Steedman, 2012, p. 189). Marie-Anne McQuay, Head of Programme at The Bluecoat in Liverpool, argues that different histories – such as 1970s activism, 1980s community art (arguably the 1960s and 1970s as well) and 1990s relational aesthetics – all cross-over in the present-day museum or gallery (Steedman, 2012, p. 191). The Serpentine Gallery, which opened in 1971, is also specialised in outreach programmes. These institutions have been active without cease since they have been established, today they are therefore experienced in education programmes focused on working outside the walls of the museum or gallery. These learning communities outside the museum are usually aimed at exploring or researching a specific theme in an area in collaboration with a visual artist. The participants can range from a group of youths who were gathered by the institution to random people from the location where the artist is working in the neighbourhood. Examples of these projects are the Serpentine Gallery’s *On the Edgware Road* project and South London Gallery’s *Looking for Sierra Leone*. According to Janna Graham, these projects question the standard narration of the bourgeois educator. This is closely connected to the deconstructive and transformative functions as stated by Mörsch. Graham states that when you move to a specific location as an institution there is always a power relation between the institution and the neighbourhood and its inhabitants. She adds that projects outside the museum’s walls may have a one-directional narrative, as in ‘helping’ people from the neighbourhood to work with art, which has an after taste of museological colonialism. The question is whether the museum is the entity to determine that inhabitants of a certain neighbourhood should work with or understand art. The risk is to assume that a community wants to work with an institution in the first place. Graham concludes that when working outside the institution’s walls one has to be aware of the danger of imposing certain themes on the neighbourhood and its inhabitants (Graham, 2012, p. 20). This resonates with museologist Bernadette Lynch’s idea that: “The museum’s rhetoric

of service places the subject (community member/housing estate resident) in the role of ‘supplicant or ‘beneficiary’ and the giver (the museum and its staff) in the role of ‘carer’” (Lynch, 2017, p. 13). The education programmes named above are based on the concept of self-organisation. Interestingly, informal neighbourhood research certainly is already self-organised in spaces such as local cafe’s that exist as “meeting points for the more practical research questions of basic survival, but also as convergence sites for self-education, informal learning, language exchange (...)” (Graham, 2012, p. 21). In the next chapter the project *Looking for Sierra Leone* will be used as a case study to illustrate a museum learning community outside the walls of the institution.

In summing up this chapter, this study will regard ‘community’ as a social and mental construct which is manifested by the individual feeling of being part of a community. Learning in a community is defined as a social process where shared learning is apparent. Because of its social nature, the learning characteristics are defined by: respect, inclusiveness, care, trust, responsibility, empowerment and commitment. The way of learning in learning communities is closely connected to the situationist and pragmatist learning perspective, in which knowledge is distributed in daily social situations. In this study, the concept of Lave and Wenger is used to define what a learning community is, and the situationist perspective defines how learning communities learn. Ultimately, the interest in community learning in museums can be attributed to changes on a political and institutional level. At the same time, the change of art policy granted more funding for community-centred art education projects and there was an increasing interest in (critical) education in the museum and art world. Finally, the term community cannot be understood uncritically, as there will always be a certain tension between museum and community. Although working with the community is mainly used to reverse the hierarchy (in representation and interpretation of history and identity), museum professionals have to question whether the chosen community is representative and how the power of the museum is inherently present in this relationship. They have to be aware of the implications of their power and position. The next chapter presents two museum learning communities as case studies, to analyse the characteristics of learning communities in the field.

2 The Blikopeners & Looking for Sierra Leone

In this chapter two forms of museum learning communities are illustrated and compared along the lines of two projects from the museum field. The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam's *Blikopeners* project illustrates a learning community inside the museum. The South London Gallery's *Looking for Sierra Leone* is used to demonstrate a learning community outside the institution. The *Blikopeners* is defined as a peer-to-peer learning programme for Amsterdam youths between 15 to 19 years old. It exists since 2008, when the former Senior in Education, Marlous van Gastel, introduced the programme. The *Looking for Sierra Leone* project was organized by Frances Williams and Ashley Whitfield from the South London Gallery in 2011-2012. They worked together with a group of fifteen 12 to 18 year olds. The group researched and developed their own perceptions of Sierra Leone in light of the 50th anniversary of the country's independence in 1961. Together with a filmmaker, the adolescents made a twenty-five minute film about the subject which was later shown in several different spaces. The projects are compared on different levels by using the subsequent questions: What is the motivation behind the project? What techniques, strategies, ideas and pedagogies were used? What are the opportunities and constraints of the project and what did it offer young people, the institution and any other stakeholders?

2.1 The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam's Blikopeners

'Blikopener' is literally translated as 'can opener', which is understood in Dutch as 'eye-openers'. The *Blikopeners* work for the Stedelijk and stem from a variety of backgrounds, study a range of different courses and live in the Greater Amsterdam region. Their job is to give tours (Image 2), organise events for their peers and share their opinion with the rest of the staff in the museum (Stedelijk, 2016). They do not have to know a lot about art to become part of the programme; young people who normally do not go to museums especially have a valuable perspective on art according to the Stedelijk (Munk, 2011, p. 5). The *Blikopeners* have weekly meetings in which they discuss current projects and developments.



Image 2 - The Blikopeners during a museum tour. Image by: Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen

2.1.1 Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, also known as 'Stedelijk', is Holland's largest museum for modern and contemporary art. The collection consists of 90.000 art objects from 1850 until now, such as paintings, photography, sculptures, video art and installations. Willem Sandberg, who was the director from 1945 to 1963, was the first person to introduce education programmes in the museum. His mantra was that art should be part of daily life. Sandberg strived to lower the threshold to visit the museum and envisioned it as an inviting, lively and accessible institution. One of his projects which clearly illustrates this is the creation of the first museum audio tours (Image 3) in collaboration with Philips as early as 1952 (Stedelijk Museum, 2016).



Image 3 - Visitors of the Stedelijk listening to an audio tour in 1952.
Image by: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

Today, education remains important. The Stedelijk states that it is one of its main objectives. The current education department wants to build bridges between art and the public, not in a top-down manner but in dialogue with the public. Today's programmes are focused on informal ways of lifelong learning, talent development and formal education for schools (Stedelijk, 2012). In the Stedelijk's policy, the *Blikopeners* project is considered as an informal learning programme in line with the museum's lifelong learning approach. The project originates from 2007, when Marlous van Gastel set up the programme together with Diversion (an Amsterdam based socially engaged creative projects agency). Van Gastel wrote her master thesis on museums and their relevance for society. She proposed that museums should focus on using new methods (such as peer-to-peer education) to reach a new audience and change the elitist position of the museum. Diversion read Van Gastel's research and showed it to Rixt Hulshoff Pol, the former head of the Stedelijk's education department. Coincidentally Van Gastel worked at the Stedelijk, so they decided to team up and set up the project. At that time there was room in the education department to propose new projects like the *Blikopeners*, Van Gastel was inspired by the *Youth Insights* programme of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York when she was on an internship there in 2004: "It was my dream, even then, to set up a similar project in The Netherlands" (Gastel et al, 2010, p. 15). The *Blikopeners* is the first peer education programme in a Dutch museum, although Showroom Mama was the first cultural institution to work with young people in a learning community setting (Gastel, 2017). As peer-to-peer learning programmes were more prevalent in the United States and the United Kingdom, it was mainly based on these practices:

It came from the professional network. In that sense it was a professional learning community. I had contacts in New York and we exchanged lots of things (...) but we always tried to bring young people with us to do develop it together with them. (...) Eventually there grew a network of institutions and young people. This was never theorised, but it was a professional learning community. This is where I found my knowledge, inspiration and ideas. It was a community of practice (...) I got my knowledge form practice and not by ordering and reading books (Gastel, 2017).

Initially it was a two-year pilot programme, funded by the SNS Reaal Fund, VSBfund and Mondriaan Fund. It was developed along the line of several predefined goals: removing the threshold to visit the museum and fulfil a significant role in the world of young people, structural implementation of the youths' voice in the museum on different levels and departments, working together with youths as employees or colleagues, researching and developing peer-to-peer learning strategies and reaching a bigger (young) audience. According to Van Gastel (2017), the education department's vision, which was inspired by Anglo-Saxon museum practices, made the project possible:

(...) We followed projects and read theory about them, which was very much the vision of the department. These theories were mainly based on constructivist learning by Hein and Hooper-Greenhill. I was bewildered that not a single museum educator knew about these theories. I thought: 'this cannot be true!' But now, ten years later, lots of things happened. But in my experience no one was familiar with this in 2006. Before this period there was not even an education department in the Stedelijk.

2.1.2 The Blikopeners

The *Blikopener* programme is based on peer-to-peer learning methodologies, which resonates with intergenerational and informal learning. The peer education methodology originally stems from the field of social work and is mainly used to spread awareness and discuss topics such as: financial problems, sex, racism and mental health. According to the Stedelijk, a peer educator is a concerned and active person that is a role model for his or her peers. The *Blikopeners* educate their peers about art and the museum. They facilitate learning in several ways: their audience consists of people that are younger than them, their peers and everyone else who is older than them. For the younger kids they act as a role model (peer-to-peer) and for adults it is interesting to see the *Blikopeners'* perspective on art (intergenerational learning). The Stedelijk states that these ways of learning are both prevalent in the *Blikopeners* relation with the museum's audience and in the institution itself (when working with mature colleagues, artists and designers). The *Blikopeners* is also regarded as a form of informal learning, since it exists outside a formal school context. The Stedelijk claims that the participants learn how it feels to have a job with responsibility and they are able to build a professional network. Furthermore, they are learning by doing and enhance their personal writing, presentation and social skills (The Netherlands, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2010, p. 5-7). According to Van Gastel (2017), the museum learns from all these adolescents: "It is also about breaking the museum open, generating ideas and seeing other people walk around in the institution." She thinks that you lose the essence of the project as soon as you forget the museum, since it is important that the *Blikopeners* are also around to revitalise the institution. Van Gastel argues that people usually think that the programme is focused on young people, although in reality it is as important for the museum itself (Gastel, 2017). In fact, the main goals of the programme are specifically focused on the institution, it is therefore debateable if there is a healthy balance between the benefits for the participants and the benefits for the museum.

One of the educational challenges in the programme is the degree of freedom for the *Blikopeners*. Among the participants there generally is a discussion about the group's autonomy in relation to the *Blikopeners'* coordinator. When I was

a freelance coordinator of a *Blikopener* programme, I experienced this tension in practice. At the time, it mainly arose because of institutional pressure, since decisions sometimes had to be made on a short notice due to deadlines. In this case, the involvement of the *Blikopeners* was usually neglected, since they were not always available and infrequently worked in the museum's offices. According to Van Gastel, this debate about autonomy is created by the tension between the idealism and opportunism of the *Blikopeners* and the constraints of working in a museum institution. The challenge is to bend the rules as far as possible, although 'no' sometimes is the only answer since some things are not allowed in the museum. *Blikopener* Amine El Ans describes that you have to fit into the Stedelijk's rules. He sometimes has the feeling that he cannot say everything that he would like to say, whereas *Blikopener* Coenraad Koper explains that he always feels free to share his opinion – although this might not always influence the outcome (Aljic et al, 2017). Koper adds that: "We are here [in the Stedelijk] in a building and that is what it is about in the first place. (...) I think that we are looking for the limits within the museum" (Aljic et al, 2017). According to Van Gastel it is helpful that the *Blikopeners* work for the Stedelijk: "I truly believe in the employer/employee construction within the programme, as opposed to voluntary work. It is really helpful that you can say: 'Together we figure out how we are doing this, but in the end I am paying you.' You can address someone about their work, which makes it less personal." (Gastel, 2017). The fact that you get paid is important if one looks at the current economic circumstances of young people; it affects the participants' motivation and the way they experience the programme. *Blikopener* Amine argues that this environment creates a specific relationship between the participants: "If you have to stick to the rules, you cannot always be yourself. (...) Maybe you do create a relationship, but on a professional level" (Aljic et al, 2017). Initially the programme was based on giving museum tours, since these cover all the elements of the *Blikopeners*. Van Gastel argues that the youths educate others by giving the tour, they develop themselves on a personal level (presentation skills and self-confidence) and they are present in the museum (which literally shows that the museum is also relevant for young people) (Gastel, 2017). As the programme further developed, the *Blikopeners* received a physical gallery space when the museum reopened in 2012. This 'Blikopener Spot' was curated by the *Blikopeners*, usually it consisted of a work by one specific artist and information about the programme. As Van Gastel explains: "We wanted to give it a fixed location in the museum. I always found that space difficult and I never succeeded in making it work. (...) I never planned it to be this way, to make an exhibition in a specific space. Instead, it [the *Blikopeners*] had to be in the entire museum and not in one place" (Gastel, 2017). Recently the tours disappeared into the background, although these form the basis of the project:

You learn a lot about being a host and representing the museum. Also, you learn a lot about speaking in public and all the skills you acquire because of that. Even if you will never give a tour again, you learn a lot by doing it. This really is the core part where all the levels of the programme have friction. That moment entails every aspect of the project" (Gastel, 2017).

As *Blikopener* Yoram van de Vall explains: "I learned to speak up to my friends and family about what I think of certain things. It became my second nature, probably because of the tours that you give as a *Blikopener*. You speak a lot in public. I used to have problems with giving presentations, it is easier now" (Munk, 2011, p. 6). Currently, the Stedelijk is training the *Blikopeners* to be gallery hosts. Instead of giving one-off tours, they will now provide structural information about the

museum collection in its galleries. Van Gastel thinks that the development of the programme is very dependent on the director and head of education that is in charge. The biggest constraint of the programme is to structurally embed it in the organisation, and to not see it as something separate but as an integral part of the institution. Van Gastel's fear is that the programme will eventually disappear because of the dependency on the museum staff's goals and interests.

According to Van Gastel the *Blikopeners* are focused on revitalising the museum from the inside, personal growth for the participants and teaching young people about the collection of the Stedelijk from a peer-to-peer perspective. The *Blikopeners* are paid for their work, which creates an employer-employee relationship between the coordinator of the programme and the participants. The programme is based on Anglo-Saxon museum practices and was mainly developed from practice instead of theory through an international network of museums that worked on similar projects. Van Gastel argues that the museum is key in this programme, since its core is neglected without the institution. The challenge is to structurally embed these projects in the organization in terms of the quality of learning and its durability.

2.2 South London Gallery's Looking for Sierra Leone

For the project *Looking for Sierra Leone*, Ashley Whitfield (South London Gallery's former Young People's Coordinator) worked together with a group of fifteen 12 to 18 year olds over a four-month period. Together with a filmmaker they researched and developed their own perceptions of Sierra Leone and created a film – in light of the 50th anniversary of the country's independence in 1961.

2.2.1 South London Gallery

The South London Gallery (or SLG) opened its doors in 1891, it is a publicly-funded gallery for contemporary art located at Peckham Road in South London's borough of Camberwell (Image 4). From 1992 onwards the gallery focused on recent developments in contemporary art. Director David Thorp began expanding the collection after a gap of ten years without new acquisitions. Due to these changes the number of visitors to the gallery grew exponentially (South London Gallery, 2016). The current director, Margot Heller, was appointed in 2001 and began to expand education activities and public programming: "For more than a decade the SLG has been characterised by the depth of its commitment to involving local residents in the life of the gallery, often on a long-term basis, by encouraging thousands of children, young people, and adults to both generate and participate in inspiring creative, social and training activities, both at the gallery and off-site" (South London Gallery, 2016). According to Whitfield (2017): "Galleries that find themselves in places like South London, or other areas that have a very rich and diverse community around them, always benefit from engaging with that community", she adds that "when the gallery is seen as very progressive or having a great track record in education it is typically because of (...) programmes: like *Sierra Leone*, *Art Assassins*¹ or family engagement (...)".



Image 4 - The entrance to the South London Gallery on Peckham Road.
Image by: Andy Stagg

2.2.2 Looking for Sierra Leone

Looking for Sierra Leone was aimed at young people from Peckham who wanted to find out more about Sierra Leone, since Sierra Leoneans are a vital part of the neighbourhood. Peckham is a very diverse neighbourhood in South East London, with a mix of sixteen different ethnicities. The participants partook in the project because: "It is about socializing, hanging out after school and having something to do" (Whitfield, 2017). Because the film was planned to be screened in other

¹ The Art Assassins are a group of youths aged between 14 and 21 years old who meet every Tuesday at the South London Gallery. They work together with artists to create events for their peers and a general audience.

cities, the field trips were also an important incentive for them to join the project (Whitfield, 2017). The aim of the project was to collectively expand and shape the participants' views and beliefs about Sierra Leone and to capture the essence of Sierra Leone in Southwark. It started with the question: "Sierra Leone at 50, what are we celebrating?" The participants interviewed people on the street and visited the BBC archives to look for footage related to the subject. Together with the filmmaker, the adolescents made a twenty-five-minute film about the subject which was later shown in several different spaces (Steedman, 2012, P. 236). The film maps the informal spaces for discussion on politics and history within the Sierra Leonean community of Southwark. The project was supported by the Big Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, Southwark Council and Outset Contemporary Art Fund (Looking for Sierra Leone, 2011).



*Image 5 - The participants exploring the neighbourhood.
Image by: Ashley Whitfield*

The programme started in February 2011 with a day of introductory workshops to explore the perceptions about Sierra Leone as a group. The participants wrote down associations about Sierra Leone on post-its, which were then put on the wall where a map of Sierra Leone was projected. Furthermore, they used movement-based assignments to talk about certain topics, think of movements such as: "Take two steps forward if you have experienced this, take one step back if not" (Whitfield, 2017). The second day consisted of filming and research in the neighbourhood (Image 5). The participants started the research by asking people in Southwark about what they think of Sierra Leone. Furthermore, they went to several Sierra Leonean businesses to ask specific questions about the country, such as: "When you think of Sierra Leone, what comes into your mind?" and "Do you think Sierra Leone is rich?" (Image 6). Two months later, in April 2011, the group went to the BBC archives to conduct further research. They specifically looked for material that is linked to Sierra Leone. They received an introductory presentation from a BBC employee who explained what was situated in the archives about Sierra Leone. On the 15th of April, the group celebrated the Day of Independence. It ended in April 2011 with a final group reflection about the project (Looking for Sierra Leone, 2011).

Whitfield regards *A Ladder of Participation* by Sherry R. Arnstein as an important work in her practice. In this model one finds 'therapy' at the bottom and 'citizen

control' at the top (as stated before in chapter 1.3). She argues that "a lot of education in the arts has been collapsed to a type of therapy" (Whitfield, 2017). According to her this creates a dichotomy "where you have a person who is a patient and a person who is a doctor or nurse", personally she tries "to get as far away from that as possible and leans as much as possible towards being a stakeholder amongst many other stakeholders" (Whitfield, 2017). This refers to what Janna Graham and Emma Smith highlight in the publication *Gallery as Community* (as cited in chapter 1.3), where they explain that a problematic power relation arises when seeing the museum or gallery as separated from the community since it assumes that the museum or gallery can 'rescue' or 'help' the community. This power relation is able to construct a parasitic relationship, where the museum or gallery may get more out of the exchange than the participants. In this regard, Whitfield tries to work according to the terms in the top of Arnstein's model. As Whitfield (2017) explains: "It was really about amplifying the community that was already there and really making the gallery accessible to those communities." Anthropologist Andrea Cornwall adds an important point, that "having a seat at the table is a necessary but not sufficient condition for exercising voice. Nor is presence at the table [on the part of institutions] the same as willingness to listen and respond" (Cornwall, 2008, cited in Lynch, 2017, p. 14).

Although one can be a stakeholder amongst other stakeholders, the coordinator is ultimately the person that is in charge of leading the programme. To be able to fulfil this role Whitfield uses the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'. This term was coined by Paulo Freire and it: "Aims to develop consciousness and lead to action to create change, through a process of dialogue and reflection" (Radical Education Forum, 2012, p. 30). The pedagogy is:

One which must be forged with, and not for, the oppressed. People do not go through the process of developing consciousness (...) by having things explained to them, but rather by engaging in dialogue about their lives and the lives of others. Learners are not receptacles to be filled, nor is knowledge a gift from those who have lots, to those who have none (Radical Education Forum, 2012, p. 30).

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This asks for a different role of the teacher, since the teacher-student relationship cannot be authoritarian. The pedagogy exists of three phases: getting to know each other (forming a 'class community'), an issue is explored and discussed and finally action by exploring the issue in or outside the classroom (Radical Education Forum, 2012, p. 30). Eventually it is evaluated, in this project it took the shape of a film. During *Looking for Sierra Leone*, Whitfield (2017) was particularly interested in: "the idea of creating environments, setting limits and boundaries that allow things to happen in those spaces, to create relationships." In terms of methodology she regularly organised dinners with the participants, usually with food that they were familiar with which helps to create a safe environment (Whitfield, 2017). Lastly, field trips were crucial for the programme because you share an experience: "The actual fieldtrip itself and what you might learn, and also just the experience of getting on a bus together going someplace" (Whitfield, 2017). For Whitfield, the programme was focused on building relationships. Even at the very start of the programme, she was able to learn more about Sierra Leone by showing interest in the community. She for example visited a Sierra Leonean tailor as a regular customer: "Showing my interest in what he was doing was important for the relationship. (...) Those are the ways that the relationships happen; it takes a lot of patience and effort." According



Image 6 - The participants interview a local shop owner in Peckham. Image by: Ashley Whitfield

to Whitfield, the most positive aspect of the programme was building these relationships and maintaining their longevity (Whitfield, 2017).

Whitfield explains that there was a drawback when a few negative moments occurred during the process of making the film. The filmmaker who took part in the project made discriminating remarks to some of the participants. According to Whitfield, that is the risk of working with people from the community: “As much as people might be interested in the community, sometimes the lack of experience or anything else is uncontrollable.” However, as the person leading the project, she could diffuse these moments quickly: “I try to create a very welcoming atmosphere, rooted in a series of ways of being together” (Whitfield, 2017). Also, looking back at the film, she would have liked that it was stronger at some points. Ultimately, she wanted the young people to do as much on the film as possible, but according to Whitfield: “It also depends on the person who is working with us. When working with someone who does community TV, you will end up with a community film” (Whitfield, 2017).

Whitfield clearly describes that *Looking for Sierra Leone* is focused on the personal growth of the participants, building relationships between the gallery and its surroundings and opening up the institution as a usable platform. The participants partook in the project on a voluntary base, in return they were able to give shape to their free time after school and attend field trips across the United Kingdom. Only the filmmaker and the museum staff were paid for their participation in the project. The most important part of the programme is building relationships, which takes a lot of time and skill from the staff of the gallery and the neighbourhood. Whitfield argues that the programme is based on theories from critical pedagogy and social sciences and is aimed at democratising the use of the gallery space and providing its resources to the neighbourhood.

2.3 Comparison

The *Blikopeners* and *Looking for Sierra Leone* are both learning communities, yet they are fundamentally different on several levels. The difference between The *Blikopeners* and *Looking for Sierra Leone* is manifested in the motivation behind each project, the underlying ideas, strategies, pedagogies, opportunities, constraints and benefits for the stakeholders. These case studies highlight the differences and similarities in their specific context. Therefore, they are not directly applicable on every situation but are illustrative for several underlying frameworks of museum learning communities.

The *Blikopeners* can be regarded as a learning community that is focused on the institution. When looking at how a learning community is understood in this study, the *Blikopener* programme mainly appeals to the following learning parameters: respect, inclusiveness, responsibility, care and empowerment. The notions 'commitment' and 'trust' are less prevalent in the programme. Since it is a job, being part of the *Blikopeners* is more focused on responsibility than commitment. As the participants are paid for contributing to the programme they have the responsibility to show up. Furthermore, the institutional framework of the programme may interfere with the notion of trust. One has to be aware of the professional rules of the institution, which may hold the participants back in sharing personal stories or being themselves. When looking at the *Blikopeners* within the framework of the 'community of practice' it is interesting to see that as a *Blikopener* you are not necessarily bound together by a shared concern or 'domain', since everyone joins the programme with their own intention. Eventually, when you are part of the programme, you do learn together in joint activities and therefore create a shared practice. In this case, the motivation to be part of the *Blikopeners* does not resonate with the notion of the 'community of practice', while the eventual working practice does correspond with it.

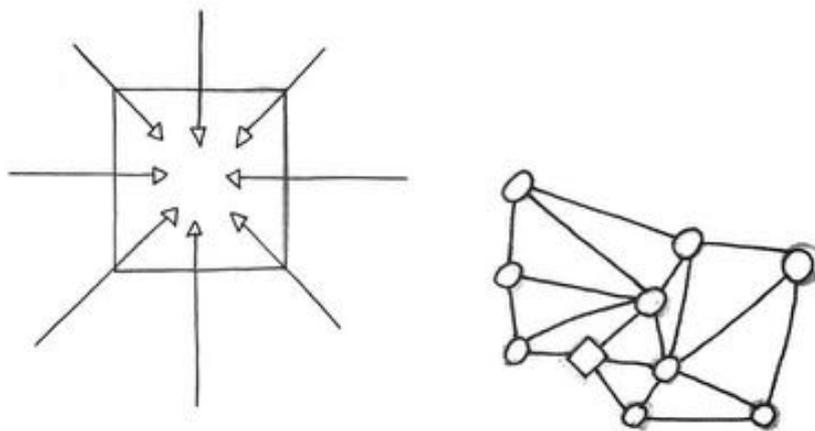
According to Van Gastel the institution and the learning community are inseparable, since one of the main motivations of the project is to revitalise the museum from the inside out. According to the Stedelijk the *Blikopeners* have a voice in decisions and processes that are going on in the museum, thus they are able to provide a fresh perspective on the institution. Some *Blikopeners* argue that they feel restricted by the Stedelijk's rules when giving their opinion, while others feel free to share their thoughts. Additionally, the project strives to lower the threshold of the museum by the *Blikopeners* who are engaging their peers in museum tours and events. The participants go through a process of personal growth, by participating in these activities and having a certain amount of responsibility. They learn how to speak in public, share their opinion and experience how it is to work with the opportunities and constraints of an institution. As a *Blikopener* you are an employee of the museum and get paid to work there. This creates an employer-employee relationship between the programme's coordinator and the *Blikopeners*, Van Gastel argues that this is helpful because you can give feedback to the participants without becoming too personal. Interestingly, most of the programme's primary goals are focused on the institution, instead of the participants (such as removing the threshold to the museum, developing peer-to-peer learning strategies and reaching out to a bigger audience). The question is if there is a healthy balance between the benefits for the museum and the participants. If this is not the case, the genuineness of the programme could be at stake. It is important to find a balance between the goals of the museum and the participants to prevent misuse

of the learning community for the museum's profit. The programme is based on Anglo-Saxon museum practices and was mainly developed from practice instead of theory. The main challenge that Van Gastel describes is to structurally embed the project in the organization in terms of the quality of learning and its durability, which strongly depends on the director who is in charge. Another challenge is the amount of freedom for the *Blikopeners* in the context of the museum, as a coordinator of the programme it is vital to bend the institutional rules as far as possible. The idealism and opportunism of the youths sometimes clashes with the restrictions and guidelines that are prevalent in the institution. This case study showed the underlying power structures of the *Blikopeners*, and during this research it became clear to me how these structures operate. Even when I was part of this programme, I frequently discussed the thin line between 'participation' and 'manipulation' with my fellow participants. Personally, I find that the programme does have an influence on one's personal development and bringing in a younger audience. On the other hand, the *Blikopeners'* influence on larger processes and decisions in the institution seems to stay trivial. This is partly caused by the fact that the *Blikopeners* are not always available in the office and thus miss decision-making moments. Also, certain decisions are simply made by employees that are ranked on a higher level in the institution's hierarchy. The amount of responsibility seems to be the biggest concern for the participants, as they would like to have more control of the programme and influence on important decisions within the institution and the museum's policy.

Looking for Sierra Leone is a learning community that is connected to the gallery, but is mainly based outside the institution. The programme appeals to several learning community parameters, such as: respect, inclusiveness, care, trust, empowerment and commitment. 'Responsibility' is fairly absent in this programme, since the involvement of the participants is primarily based on commitment (as they participate in the programme on a voluntary basis). Once they are involved in the programme, the participants do have a certain amount of responsibility to each other. *Looking for Sierra Leone* can be regarded as a 'community of practice' since its members share specific interests, in this case their 'domain' is Sierra Leonean culture in Southeast London. Together they meet in cooperative activities, which creates a sense of 'community'. Furthermore, they create a shared 'practice' by working together on a research and film in the neighbourhood. This programme therefore fully resonates with the notion of the 'community of practice'.

The programme is focused on building relationships between the gallery and its surroundings. The main motivation behind the programme was connecting the institution to the neighbourhood and opening it up as a usable platform for a group of people that lived nearby. The specific aim of *Looking for Sierra Leone* was to collectively expand and shape the participants' views and beliefs about Sierra Leone and to capture the essence of Sierra Leone in Peckham. This is reflected in the programme's theme and participants. The theme is significant since Sierra Leoneans form a vital part of the inhabitants of the district where the South London Gallery is located. In addition, the participants lived in nearby estates, at a walking distance from the gallery. They all engaged in the project on a voluntary basis and they mainly joined the programme for: having something to do and getting to know others, being able to travel and learning more about the programme's theme. In this case, the gallery used its resources to provide a learning experience for a specific group of young people. On an institutional level the gallery benefits

from these kinds of programmes since it contributes to a positive character. The programme is based on critical pedagogy, which aims to develop consciousness and lead to action to create change, through a process of dialogue and reflection. Therefore, the main aim of the project was to facilitate personal growth for the participants. In the project they mainly learned themselves and learned from each other, but they did not directly educate others outside the core group of the project. The difficulty in these programmes is that the relationship with the neighbourhood and their process-led nature also creates uncertainty. Since the participants commit themselves to the project on a voluntary basis, people sometimes do not show up or do not do what they are expected to do – it is dependent on their agency. The engagement of the participants is only based on a payment in kind. Although these personal relationships sometimes create constraints, building long-lasting relationships between the gallery and the surrounding residents is ultimately the most important trait of the programme according to Whitfield.



Map 2 - Visualisation of chapter two, the Blikopeners (L) and Looking for Sierra Leone (R)

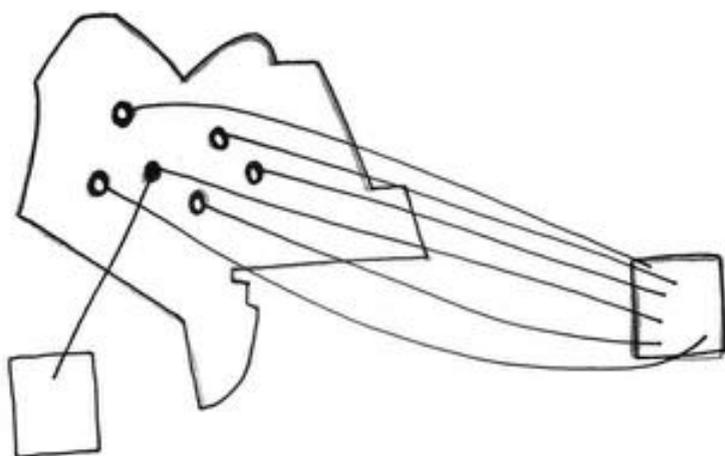
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The main difference between the learning community frameworks inside and outside the museum is rooted in the specific focus of each project and the relationship between the institution and the participants. The *Blikopeners* are strongly connected to the museum; it determines every learning goal in the programme. The project's aim is to revitalise the institution, while the participants undergo a process of personal growth through peer-to-peer learning methodologies. As a result, the main focus of this learning community is instigating institutional change. *Looking for Sierra Leone* was focused on democratising the institution's resources to build a relationship with its neighbours. In this relationship the institute is not separated but part of its surroundings, as a stakeholder amongst many other stakeholders. It was about amplifying the community that was already there and making the gallery accessible to those communities. Therefore, the project provided a platform where people underwent a process of personal growth. *Looking for Sierra Leone* is thus aimed at stimulating relational change between the institution and its surroundings. On the other hand, the gallery also personally benefits from these kind of programmes, since the social focus creates a positive image for the institution and attracts funds. Both projects were envisioned by the institution. In the case of the *Blikopeners*, the group is selected by the Stedelijk's staff and the learning goals are conceived by the programme's coordinator. The framework and learning goals of *Looking for Sierra Leone* have also been made by the coordinator. However, in this case, the participants were not strictly selected, everyone that was interested could join the project. The direct relationship

between the institution and the participants is therefore different in each project. Moreover, the *Blikopeners* are employees of the Stedelijk and are paid for their involvement in the programme, whereas the participants in *Looking for Sierra Leone* were volunteers. This creates an entirely different relationship between the coordinator and the participants and influences the learning environment. The *Blikopeners* regard their involvement as work, which creates a professional learning environment. Contrastingly, the participants in *Looking for Sierra Leone* regarded their environment as an after school project, or informal environment. The learning process of the *Blikopeners* may thus be labelled as being a professional one, while *Looking for Sierra Leone's* learning process is driven by informality and daily situations (although the structure was conceived by the programme's coordinator). As a result, these programmes can both be qualified as museum learning communities, but are entirely diverse in terms of motivation, techniques and pedagogies. The conclusion disseminates which museum learning community framework is most suitable under specific circumstances. Before leaping to the conclusion it is important to state how the members of a learning community experience the differences and similarities inside and outside the museum. Therefore, the next chapter describes the *Blikopeners'* experience as a museum learning community outside the museum in the education programme *Mapping Osdorp*.

3 Mapping Osdorp

Mapping Osdorp was an education programme in which a group of *Blikopeners* explored the neighbourhood of Amsterdam Osdorp by using artistic methods that were focused on mapping and geography. The outcomes of the research were documented in a collaborative zine. Essentially, the project was self-organised especially for this study. The education project is valuable for the museum field at large, since there is an absence of museum programmes which take place outside the museum's walls. In the previous chapters it became clear that museums and galleries in The Netherlands mainly focus on museum learning communities inside the museum, hence there is still a vast field to be explored. The education project functions as a case for the development of Dutch-based museum education programmes outside the vicinity of the museum. Tom Holert, a German art historian and writer, argues that alternative education concepts (that were conceived in the 60s) are the starting point for thinking about contemporary examples of alternative learning practices (Oppen, 2017, p. 14). Joy Rijkers, coordinator of the *Blikopeners* programme, fully encouraged the involvement of the *Blikopeners* in the education project. The outcomes of the project and research are, according to Rijkers, valuable for the future of the *Blikopeners*.



Map 3 - Visualisation of chapter three, the *Blikopeners* and Mapping Osdorp



Image 7 – The participants show where they live in Amsterdam.
Image by: Robin Vermeulen

3.1 Outline

A group of five *Blikopeners* (between 16 and 23 years old) participated in this two-day education programme on Saturday the 18th of March and Saturday the 25th of March 2017. The group consisted of several *Blikopeners* from different cohorts: Sara Aljic and Doris Hondtong from 2016-2017, Amine El Ans from 2015-2016, Kayleigh de Vos from 2012-2013 and Coenraad Koper from 2011-2012 (Image 7). These participants were specifically selected on the basis of their cohort, since every group experienced the programme slightly different. As the *Blikopeners* is a job, they were paid by the Stedelijk for their participation in *Mapping Osdorp*. I intentionally took the role of the initiator-participant and collaborated in the project myself as well, to form a process-led and democratic learning environment. As a group we worked in the neighbourhood and utilised community centre De Hood as our workspace. The project was initially aimed at exploring the local shops in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam Osdorp through artistic methods that are linked to mapping and geography, such as psychogeographic maps. During the project we decided as a group to focus on everyone's individual perspective on Osdorp, instead of the local shops. Together we described the theme as: "Showing each participant's personal view on the same route/environment, to illustrate how everyone looks at the world in a different way". The choice for working with maps was deliberate, since map-making increases one's consciousness of the surroundings. Focusing on the environment was vital for the participants, as they experienced learning in a community in a different spatial context compared to the Stedelijk Museum. Essentially, the concept of mapping also derives from my own artistic practice and interests. The psychogeographic mapping methods refer to the practice of the Situationist International (a group of avant-garde artists that existed from 1957 until 1972), comprised of artists such as Guy Debord and Constant Nieuwenhuys (who are both part of the Stedelijk's collection). Debord, a Marxist philosopher, defines psychogeography as: "The study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (Knabb, 2011). Debord, and the other members of the Situationist International, shared the desire to live free from the conditioning of the capitalist system (Matthews, 2005, p. 3), the practice of psychogeography is closely connected to this need. The research method, which is used to gather information for the map, is called the *dérive* (or drift) in which "(...) one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and

leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there” (Knabb, 2011). In short it is aimed at mapping a certain place such as a street, neighbourhood or city in a subjective way. During the project the group experienced the state of *dérive* and all produced an individual map based on our personal perspective on the neighbourhood. Eventually, we collaboratively created a zine of our findings (Appendix C). Osdorp was a challenging neighbourhood for this exploration, since it is located at the edge of Amsterdam and has a very diverse population (in terms of cultural background). Although it is located in the outskirts of the city, it is only a 20-minute bike ride or 30-minute tram ride to the Stedelijk Museum. Interestingly, it is a completely different context than the museum – where the *Blikopeners* usually reside. Apart from a music theatre, access to culture is almost absent in this area – specifically in terms of contemporary art. Some of the participants were familiar with Osdorp, because of family living there. One of the participants lived in the neighbourhood when she was younger, and she still visits her favourite restaurant there. The first day of the project was aimed at getting to know each other, exploring the neighbourhood and making the maps. The second day was focussed on gathering the explorations and making them public in the shape of zine.

The project is based on several education programmes from the field of museum education. Most importantly, it was based on the learning parameters of a learning community (as stated in chapter 1) and the notion of the ‘community of practice’. The Looking for Sierra Leone project was an inspiration, since it dealt with researching a particular topic in a specific neighbourhood and the notion of neighbourhoods as sites of community. Also, the zine as a form of documentation was inspired by Peckham Platform’s *Platform Press House* workshop series. In this project young people could create their own publications with stories and drawings. The workshops were aimed at working with craft and alternative press, such as punk and feminist zines (Peckham Platform, 2016). *Mapping Osdorp* is intentionally modelled after pre-existing education programmes to validate it for the research. If the programme would be totally new, based on entirely different practices and pedagogies compared to existing learning community programmes, it would not be possible to make an appropriate comparison that fits in the current theoretical framework of this research. The concept of mapping might seem conventional in programmes that take place outside the museum, but it was totally new to the *Blikopeners* to literally step outside the institution. The practice of mapping was therefore an appropriate way to create awareness about the different context that they were in. In this way the programme helped them to grasp the difference between working inside and outside the museum. Instead of working with art in the institution and explaining it to the outside world, art functioned as a way to understand the outside world itself. Furthermore, the community centre was solely used as a place to work on the tangible outcomes, as the main part of the project occurred outside.

The participants worked together in the project and I acted as the initiator-participant in this process; I strived to work with them on an equal level by fully participating in the project even though I initiated it. It was an important premise to be aware of the implications of my power and position, since I tried to create a democratic learning environment. Lauren Willis, the former Children & Families’ Programme Manager at the South London Gallery, set out different

factors of successful learning in informal settings – to create ‘an environment of constructive chaos’ (Willis, 2011, p. 163). These factors were taken into account during the project: create a welcome environment for the participants, know the environment you are working in, know the participants’ names and take time to get to know them well, remember personal details about them, encourage team spirit by working together, encourage a sense of belonging, go outside, respond to the learners interests, facilitate choice, get messy, take risks, let people speak for themselves, make time for ‘circle time’, give people responsibility, let the space be changed, allow people to do their own thing, work in small groups and have good snacks (Willis, 2011, p. 163-164). Furthermore, the programme is based on Freirean pedagogies, since we were collectively (the group of *Blikopeners*) working on a theme or problem (their perspective on Osdorp) in a ‘class community’ through visual representation (the maps) and performing an action to create personal - or even societal - change (the zine) (Radical Education Forum, 2012, p. 30). Bernadette Lynch argues that: “Working with young people in particular, a critical pedagogy as a *praxis-oriented social movement* must become the focus of museum engagement with young people, to encourage critical thinking, resistance and hope” (Lynch, 2017, p. 25). She adds that this re-engagement might include exploring “the right to the city ... construed not as a right to that which already exists, but as a right to rebuild and recreate the city as ... body politic in a completely different image ...” (Harvey, 2012, cited in Lynch, 2017, p. 25). Below you will find the learning goals of the programme.

The participants:

- Work together as a group to research the neighbourhood of Amsterdam Osdorp;
- Understand the basic principles of the Situationist International and other artists that work(ed) with mapping;
- Experiment with several types of visual/artistic methods aimed at mapping (such as psychogeography, photography and drawing) to make one’s perspective on the environment explicit and to document personal findings;
- Collectively produce a zine to share the findings of their neighbourhood exploration.

The education project was a practical intervention, based on educational design research methodologies, in which first-hand research data has been gathered. Educational design research is the appropriate strategy for this study since it is focused on developing theoretical insights and practical solutions at the same time, in real-life situations together with stakeholders. The goal of this research process is to generate usable knowledge. This type of knowledge can be directly applied in practice and is mainly focused on fellow practitioners and researchers (McKenney et al, 2012, p. 7). The research method can be typified by the use of scientific methods to create solutions in real world contexts through an intervention. In this scenario, the educational programme is the intervention. Although it is usually focused on one specific context, this research method is generalizable. As a researcher one has to be aware of the fact that the intervention should be able to

travel from the experimental to the real-world context. This programme should therefore be able to migrate from its experimental context in Osdorp to a full-size programme in the context of the museum field. This educational programme can be described as case-to-case generalization, since it adopts the characteristics of previous interventions/education programmes in this setting. Chapter 1 and 2 describe how existing projects have been conducted and were used to give shape to this intervention. The research is descriptive and primarily focused on the intervention, since it “strives to generate knowledge about characteristics and functions of particular intervention types” (McKenney et al, 2012, p. 24). This study focuses on specific aspects of the intervention itself. The intervention can be regarded as a pilot test, since it is executed on a small scale. Data was gathered by the use of: a group interview with the participants, observations, drawings, field notes and photographs.

The intervention shows how a museum learning community resides outside the walls of a contemporary art museum in an Amsterdam neighbourhood. In the intervention the different traits of a museum learning community were sieved out from the perspective of the participating youths, as the project aims to compare museum learning communities inside and outside the museum institution. As stated before in chapter two, the *Blikopeners* can be considered as a museum learning community which is focused on the inside of the museum institution. The choice for participation of the *Blikopeners* in this project is therefore deliberate, since they have the experience being part of a learning community inside a museum and were able to compare this with their experience as a learning community outside the museum space. After the project the participants were interviewed in a group setting and they compared their experiences. In this sense the education project embodies the framework of the theoretical research. Furthermore it gives this study a tangible shape besides the theory. Eventually, the theoretical (the literature research and comparative case study) and practical side of the research will complement each other. The next paragraph shows the reflection of the participants and the personal reflection of the project.

3.2 Reflection

The reflection describes the observations that were made during the project, highlights the experience of the participants and sieves out the traits of each learning community from practice. Field notes were made during the project, to grasp the learning process from my point of view as the initiator-participant. During the project I asked the participants to formulate their first thoughts on the differences between the *Blikopeners* inside and outside the museum. Also, a group interview was conducted with the participants a few weeks after *Mapping Osdorp* took place. At first I planned to interview everyone separately, but then the participants mentioned that they preferred to collectively reflect on the project. Through the interview the differences and similarities between the *Blikopeners* inside and outside the museum were described in more detail. Several points stood out during the reflection of the project's process and are described below, starting with the reflection of the participants and followed by my personal reflection as an initiator-participant.

Participants

During the project I asked the participants to share their initial thoughts on the *Blikopeners* inside and outside the museum. This is what they wrote down:

The Blikopeners inside the museum

- Rules
- No freedom
- Shared interests
- Different perspectives
- More directive
- Hierarchy
- Professional role restricts being yourself
- Borders
- Personal experience

The Blikopeners outside the museum

- Focused on the process, instead of the goal
- Looking further than art
- Room for self-expression
- Influence on the process
- The possibility to fail
- To be creative ourselves
- You get to know each other on a personal level
- No borders
- Personal experience
- Experience in the city
- Looking at differences, instead of similarities
- Finding or 'making' new heritage, instead of working with heritage that has already been found
- More time to talk about other stuff besides the assignment
- To meet people in a daily habitat
- To meet people that normally would not visit a museum
- Connections
- Inspiration
- Our daily life as art

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After the project was finished a group interview was organised with the participants. During this session I asked them about: the most important things they learned in the project, the differences and similarities between the *Blikopeners* inside and outside the museum, which form they preferred and the future of the *Blikopeners* programme.

According to the participants the two forms of museum learning communities have a few things in common. The most important similarity is the fact that these programmes contribute to creating your own vision, as Coenraad described: "It is

all about having the courage to have your own vision. In schools you usually have to reproduce the teacher's vision, I think that you have to create your own vision in the *Blikopeners* and *Mapping Osdorp*, you cannot just copy something". Amine, Sara and Kayleigh also think that creating your own vision is important in both programmes. This clearly connects with the traits of learning in a community as stated in chapter 1. 'Having your own vision' is related to the notion of 'respect' and 'trust'. Since the learning environment respects different viewpoints and you have trust in each other to be able to share your vision. Amine adds that 'collaboration', 'sharing experiences' and 'being open-minded' are additional characteristics that are prevalent in both learning situations. 'Being open-minded' is linked to 'inclusiveness', since you are open-minded and do not exclude people. 'Collaboration' is linked to 'care' and 'commitment', since you take care of each other and are committed to the learning process. Doris added that pleasure is vital in both contexts. She described that it was stimulated by me as initiator-participant during the project, since I mentioned that the most important thing about the project was to have a good time together. She thinks that the *Blikopeners* is also about having a good time and going to work with a smile.

The major difference between the two programmes is the amount of freedom and the experience of the (learning) process. According to Sara, the Stedelijk primarily focuses on guidelines that you have to take into account. Coenraad described *Mapping Osdorp* as being more creative: "The Stedelijk is a professional environment and therefore you have to act in a certain way. That was different in *Mapping Osdorp*, which resulted in a more creative environment." He did add that the assignment itself was aimed at creating something yourself (the map), which instigates creativity in any case. Amine said that the project created a better relationship between the participants: "Because we were allowed to be more creative I had the feeling that we could be more like ourselves. And if you really are yourself you can create a better relationship with someone else. If you have to stick to the rules, you cannot always be yourself. (...) Maybe you do create a relationship, but on a professional level." Coenraad noted that the major difference is that *Mapping Osdorp* was focused on the process instead of the outcome. He argued in the museum the outcome is more important. He mentioned that in *Mapping Osdorp* the group was focused on the fact if we could all contribute something to the process and if we were all committed to it. This again reflects the notion of 'collaboration', 'commitment' and 'responsibility'. Coenraad thinks that, contrastingly, the museum is about: setting a goal, coming up with different ideas and deciding which one is the best idea.

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I asked the participants what the most important things were that they learned in the project, some of them formulated an answer. Amine explained that the creative process allowed him to experience freedom. Kayleigh learned during the project that the *Blikopeners* can do more than one may expect. According to her, outside the museum it becomes much clearer how everyone thinks about things and which philosophy one has. Coenraad learned that it is enriching to work with personal interpretations and experiences, he argued that these are more interesting than an object in the museum. These thoughts resonate with the notion of 'empowerment', since the learning process highlighted each participant's qualities and let them experience a certain amount of freedom or power in the learning process.

Eventually I asked the participants which learning community framework they

preferred. Although the participants were quite critical about the *Blikopeners* inside the museum everyone did prefer this form, except for Amine. He argued that the *Blikopeners* should go to the people and their own neighbourhood, since lots of people do not visit the museum as they see it as an elitist institution. After discussing it further, they essentially concluded that a combination of these two types of learning communities would be the most desirable. Kayleigh explained that the *Blikopeners* is quite unique since you work behind the scenes in the museum and experience all these institutional processes. She argues that she learned a lot by being part of this programme inside the museum. Ultimately she proposes to look for the possibility of combining the programmes inside and outside the museum. She also added that the Stedelijk should connect with neighbourhoods and look for youths there, instead of trying to attract them to visit the museum. Coenraad preferred a combination: “Inside, because art tells a lot about people and there is a lot to explore about art itself. It is important to share experiences and to learn from each other. But it is also important to frequently go outside the museum to see other people, ideas and worlds.” Doris concluded that: “I think that in the museum it is primarily about the museum, that you work in service of the museum. And outside the museum it is focused on something that is yours and is about you, for your personal development.”

Initiator-participant

While the project unfolded I made additional field notes to keep track of the (learning) process. As mentioned before, the project was based on existing museum education programmes. This programme was initiated since I strived to compare the frameworks of learning communities in the museum. Beforehand, I expected the programme outside the museum to be more free and less bound to an institutional structure and goals. This hypothesis was based on my research on the case studies that are included in this study and descriptions of other education programmes. The programmes that were used as an example showed how to construct a learning environment where you give participants certain boundaries to create freedom within this confined space. This seems to be a paradox, but you need a certain structure to work in, and in this structure you can leave room for one’s own interpretations and choices. The challenge in this project was to create a framework that would leave this space for the participant’s influence. Participant Amine argued that *Mapping Osdorp* was about your own responsibility, because you could create your own boundaries and rules within the programme. This again reflects ‘empowerment’, since the participants had the power to make their own choices within the programme.

Personally, this is the first time I have conducted a project like this. The museum education programmes I usually work on are very much focused on the goal instead of the process. Contrastingly, this programme was focused on the process. It created entirely different dynamics: as an educator I was able to enjoy the process, as I was not preoccupied with reaching a specific predefined goal, which felt highly liberating and satisfactory. Amine described the difference as follows: “During this assignment we could do much more, we could let ourselves go. In the Stedelijk it is about: ‘Take this and that into account’. In this programme it was like: ‘Do your thing and we will see where it ends up.’” Coenraad explained that the difference in this programme is that it was focused on the process instead of the outcome. Before the programme started, I had no idea if anything would come out of it. It all had to happen in these two days, on the basis of the participants’ views,

decisions and involvement. It was challenging to let go of the process, and to not focus on the end goal.

As the participants had influence on the project's process, it was important to listen to the group. In this case I refer to listening in a broader sense than just 'voice': it is also about listening to body language, group dynamics and relations between people. The programme built up during the day. If people needed a break, we would take a rest. As a group we followed a specific flow that was created by being together in the same space. In this way, we tried to make the project as comfortable as possible for everyone. As the initiator-participant I tried to adapt to the situation as well as possible. I usually focus on the goal of a programme, since I am determined to reach a certain outcome. This time I let go of a clearly fixed goal and let the participants direct the process. For example, the project was originally focused on mapping the local shops in Osdorp. During the walk through the neighbourhood, the participants made clear that they did not have any connection with the shops whatsoever. They were more interested in everyone's own interpretation of the same walk, so I relinquished control of its focus. They had the room to go against the boundaries I created, they experienced a feeling of agency and acted against the initial plans. As Coenraad described: "The project was your idea, but you made it clear that we would do it all together. I have the feeling that we all had the same influence, and this is different compared to the Stedelijk – which may be caused by the professional environment. In *Mapping Osdorp* we experienced the entire project, in the Stedelijk you are only there for a few hours and the staff does the rest of the work during the week. Now we had more influence on the process, because we experienced it from the beginning to the end." Eventually this resulted in a theme that I could never have thought of individually. I decided to use this way of working since it opposes the regular learning method of the *Blikopeners*. Usually, when education programmes are focused on a specific theme, there is no space to go against it. This may be assigned to the limits of an institutional structure, but also depends on the modus operandi of the educator. Furthermore, everyone enjoyed the process because they did what they liked. Kayleigh described that in this project everyone was able to make their own decisions about what they wanted to say, draw or share. According to her, the museum is more predefined because of its collection. She explained that in *Mapping Osdorp* you can make your own discoveries about the neighbourhood and decide what you want to show and discuss.

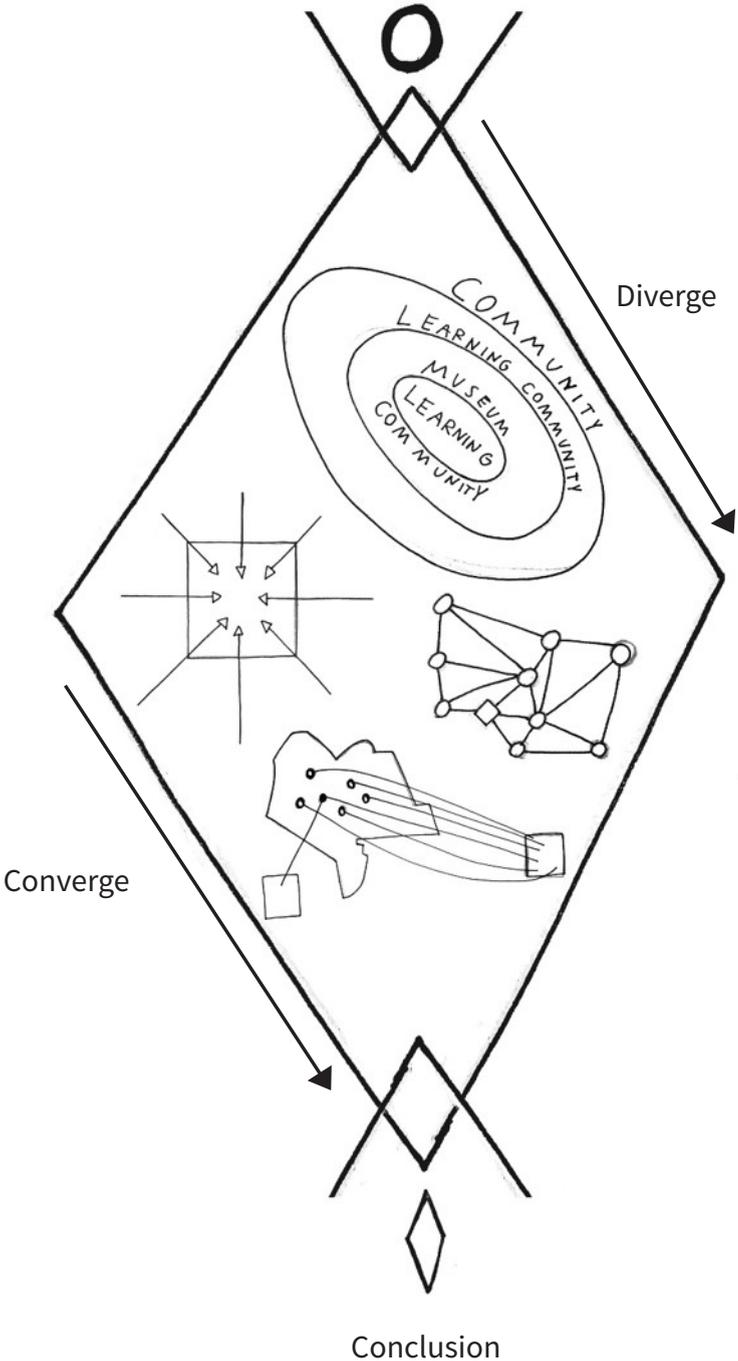


My hypothesis concerning the differences between the frameworks of learning communities inside and outside the museum became more clear and tangible after conducting *Mapping Osdorp*. It was vital as a researcher to experience these differences first-hand, since education is essentially revolved around knowledge from practice. The most important similarity is that both frameworks contribute to creating one's own vision. Contrastingly, the main difference is the amount of freedom and the experience of the (learning) process. *Mapping Osdorp* is focused on the process instead of the outcome, whereas the *Blikopeners* is primarily focused on predefined goals. As theory and practice have been discussed, it is now vital to draw out the final conclusion.

Conclusion

It is clear that the term 'community' is complex in nature and contested in the context of museum and gallery education. When working with the notion of community as an institution, it is important to reflect on the implications of its use. The underlying frameworks that were disseminated in this research show the richness of how learning communities can be understood. The way to conceive a museum learning community predominantly depends on the nature and aims of the institution in framing that community. As stated before, a museum should be aware of its position and power in relation to the notion of community. Being a museum educator it is thus important to regard how the notion of community is situated in relation to the institution. For example, the South London Gallery is a small institution compared to the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. The size, structure and location of the South London Gallery create a more coherent connection with the neighbourhood. The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, being a larger institution with an (inter)national scope, is less connected with its local surroundings and focuses more on the city as a whole and its (inter)national surroundings. In this case, the specific approach for each museum learning community has to be carefully considered. Where the South London Gallery connects with the local residents on a small scale in *Looking for Sierra Leone*, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam tries to organise a community on a bigger scale by attracting participants from every corner of the city in the *Blikopeners* project. In *Looking for Sierra Leone*, the participants were able to explore their own power because the gallery and museum educators allowed that framing. Contrastingly, the participants in the *Blikopeners* are framed into work that re-enforces the power structures of the institution. In learning, this means that the *Blikopeners* is mainly focused on specific outcomes and an endpoint, whereas *Looking for Sierra Leone* was focused on the process of learning itself. Both situations therefore illustrate social engineering on a meso-level, since the framework directs the learning process. Learning communities are therefore highly context-specific and each museum or gallery, or museum educator, that is engaged in these practices has to be aware of the size, structure, location and position of the institution. Most importantly, working with community should be a bidirectional exchange or dialogical process. In this case, the community learns from the museum and the museum learns from the community. Museums and galleries frequently engage in (educational) activities for specific reasons and want certain outcomes from specific communities or individuals – while these communities are often not aware of the institution's underlying aims. Museums and galleries should therefore be aware and critical about their own position and power, to prevent the creation and consolidation of (learning) communities completely for the institutions' own benefit.

Position/Practice



Conclusion

Map 4 - A visualisation of the research process

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Appendix B - Mapping Osdorp: the process

This appendix describes how the education project *Mapping Osdorp* unfolded. The first day was focused on exploring the neighbourhood, the second day was aimed at creating a zine to document our explorations.

Day 1: Exploration

Introduction

During the introduction everybody got to know each other, since we all stem from different *Blikopener* cohorts. We drank coffee, tea and juice before we started the programme. I explained to them how the day would unfold. I made my own position explicit and told them that I would not be a teacher but an initiator-participant. I invited them to intervene during the programme if they did not like the concept and told them to share any questions with the group in case they did not understand something. I made it clear that there was room to give shape to the day together. I quickly guided them through the programme's components: introduction to the theme, going for a walk, making maps and the final reflection. We put on music and everybody was able to change songs during the day. To document the day, I asked them to use the camera on their mobile phones as much as possible. I specifically asked them to all take picture, in this way the project has been documented in a democratic way from a variety of perspectives. The photos that show the process are made by the participants and myself.



Image 8 – Different maps were spread out on the floor

52

Theme and objective

I spread out different maps on the floor and asked the participants to look at the maps individually (Image 8). I asked them to all choose one map they specifically liked. We gathered in a circle on the floor and I asked them what they thought their map was about. They shared their associations with the group and other participants were free to react on these associations. Because I made the selection, I was able to give additional information about them if someone was interested. The participants got excited and started picking up more maps from the floor themselves (Image 9, 10). We discussed how we use maps in our daily lives, many people said they used their smartphones to find their directions through the city. After this discussion I picked out a psychogeographic map to tell them about the work of Guy Debord and how this related to the rest of the assignments that would follow during the day.



Image 9 - Together we looked at different maps

After the introduction I asked them the following question: “If you had to draw a map of everything that is going on in your life, where would you situate the *Blikopeners*?” We all started making maps (Image 11) and put them on the wall. We discussed the maps and learned from each other how the *Blikopeners* is situated in our lives (Image 12). We came to the conclusion that it is different for everybody: some people did not do anything for the *Blikopeners* in the last year, some *Blikopeners* were part of the active group and were fully immersed in the programme, some were part of one of the first cohorts years ago and are still active today. The *Blikopeners* meant something different for everybody.



Image 10 – Kayleigh picked up a map she particularly liked and showed it to us



Image 11 - We all made a map about the position of the Blickopeners in our lives



Image 12 - Amine presented his map to the group

The walk

After getting to know each other and the introduction to the theme, it was time to go outside and explore the locals shops in Osdorp. Every participant led the group's 'drift' for five minutes, after this period of time we switched to another member of the group. By doing this we followed a route that was formed by the entire group (Image 13, 14). Everyone used a notebook to make notes during the walk and keep track of our route. During the walk it became clear that the participants did not want to work with the concept of mapping the local shops. Instead they proposed to map everybody's unique perspective on the same route we were walking, so this is what we did. This resulted in different perspectives on the neighbourhood, although we all walked the same route. Together we made maps of: Sounds in the environment (Kayleigh de Vos), architecture (Sara Aljic), transportation (Robin Vermeulen), emotions (Amine El Ans), use of (semi) public space (Coenraad Koper) and personal orientation in the city (Doris Hondtong).



Image 13 - Coenraad in action, when leading the group's drift



Image 14 - And here Amine took the lead

Lunch

We shared food and ate together, Amine showed us how to drink tea like his grandma does (Image 15, 16).



Image 15 – We shared food during lunchtime



Image 16 - Amine prepared his cup of tea “like his grandmother does”

Mapping

When we arrived at our workspace after the walk, everybody started making their maps (Image 17, 18).

While we were making the maps, local people from the Caribbean brass band walked into the room – since they keep their instruments there. They were really surprised by our presence and asked us what we were doing, so we explained it together. Then one of the guys told us: “Something like this never happened in this building, I really enjoy it. Museums have to do this more often; they have to go to the people. People who go to museum are part of the elite. That is why the museum has to go outside and connect to people that would normally not visit a museum”. Before they left they wished us good luck.

When the participants were finished we put the maps on the wall (Image 19, 20).

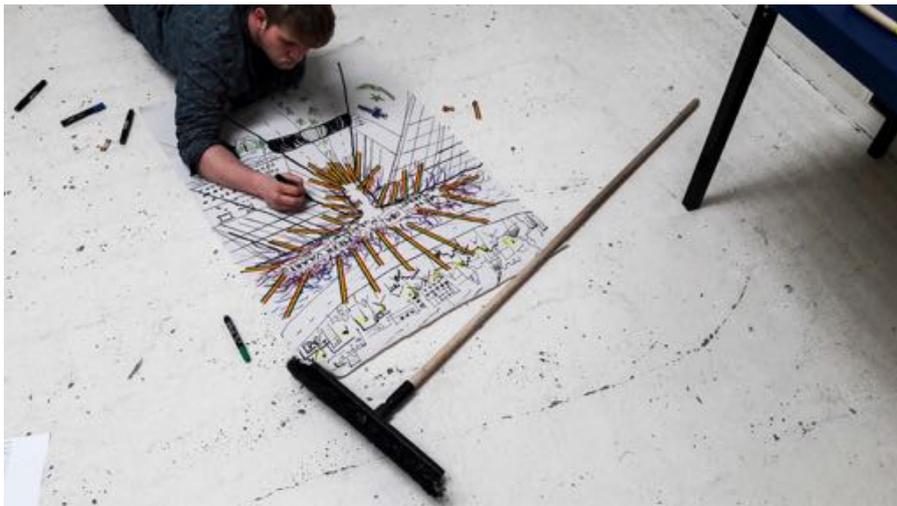


Image 17 - Coenraad while he was finishing his map of Osdorp



Image 18 – Amine at work, creating his map of ‘emotions’

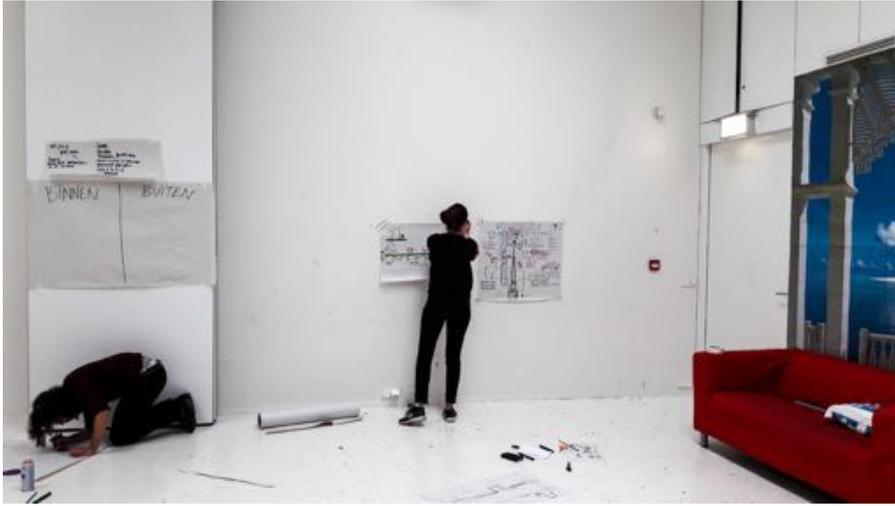


Image 19 - Kayleigh put her map on the wall

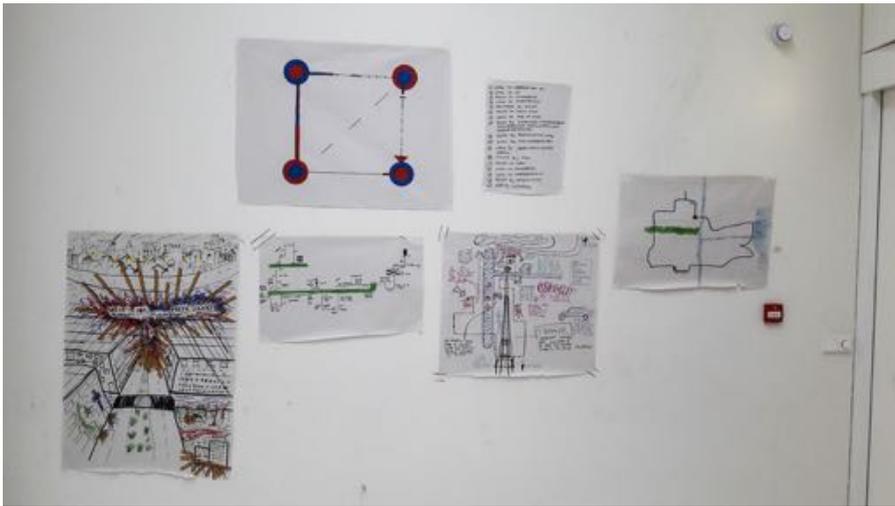


Image 20 - The different maps on the wall



Image 21 - Kayleigh explained to the group how she experienced the first day

After we all finished the maps I asked everyone to describe what they think the difference is between working with the *Blikopeners* inside and outside the museum:

The *Blikopeners* inside the museum

- Rules
- No freedom
- Shared interests
- Different perspectives
- More directive
- Hierarchy
- Professional role restricts being yourself
- Borders
- Personal experience
- Dry

The *Blikopeners* outside the museum

- Focused on the process, instead of the goal
- Looking further than art
- Room for self-expression
- Influence on the process
- The possibility to fail
- To be creative ourselves
- You get to know each other on a personal level
- No borders
- Our daily life as art
- Wet
- Experience in the city
- Looking at differences, instead of similarities
- Finding or 'making' new heritage, instead of working with heritage that has already been found
- More time to talk about other stuff besides the assignment
- To meet people in a daily habitat
- To meet people that normally would not visit a museum
- Connections
- Inspiration
- Personal experience

When all the pieces were put on the wall, we discussed the different maps together and the differences between working with the *Blikopeners* inside and outside the museum. Furthermore, I asked them how they experienced the day (Image 21). After discussing all our maps, we decided that the zine had to be focused on the way everybody looks at the world in a different way, although we might follow the same route. I asked them how we would continue on the next Saturday. They decided that we had to stick with the same group when producing the zine. After we discussed this, I finally explained them in detail what my research was about. This helped them to understand why we did this exercise outside the Stedelijk and to reflect on the project from a more distant perspective.

Day 2: Production



Image 22 - The pop-up publication studio

Introduction

The second day started with a recap of the first day, while drinking coffee and tea. We discussed how we felt about the process and the maps that came out of it. We concluded that it was great that we all made entirely different maps. After this we focused on the day's objective: to make a publication or zine.

60



Image 23 - Together we watched a tutorial video about how to produce a zine

Zine

Before focusing on the production process we discussed the notion of zines. I spread out different zines on the table to show the participants what kind of forms they can take. Most of the participants did not know about the origin of the zine. I explained how they developed and who produced them, from people affiliated with punk in the 70s and 80s to present day zine-makers. Although the production

process is fairly simple, I showed them a video that explained how to make a 12-page zine (Image 23). Furthermore, I showed them everything we could work with: a laser printer, scanner, drawing utensils, paper, spray cans, et cetera (Image 22).

Content

We discussed what to do first: decide on the content we wanted to show in the zine or decide what kind of shape the zine had to take. As a group we concluded that content follows form. Together we conversed about what we wanted to show and who our audience was. The maps were the most important aspect to include in the publication, including a description by each creator. We decided that we needed



Image 24 - Everyone worked on their individual entries



Image 25 - Coenraad when he was writing the first draft for the introduction

an introduction, to set the stage for the reader and to clarify our position and the background of the project. Then we concluded that a written reflection on the project's process was also important to include. We also decided to add a selection of pictures that we all took during the process. During the first day, while making the maps that situated the *Blikopeners* in our daily lives, the group decided to include these maps in the publication as well. We all thought that the written texts should be clear and concise, so we gathered the most important points of the process. While writing the texts we wanted to keep our future readers in mind: other *Blikopeners*, people from Osdorp and the (Stedelijk) museum staff.

Form

After discussing the content, we had to decide on the zine's lay-out. We discussed how many pages we needed for the content that we prepared. Also, the size of the zine was important to discuss because the maps had to be readable. We did a test print run to see if the maps would be visible enough. The group was convinced of the fact that the zine had to be pocket size to carry it around easily. We also discussed to print the maps on a bigger piece of paper and include them in the publication separately. Nevertheless, we finally chose to make an A5-size publication without unfoldable maps – since we wanted to make a zine that was accessible and easy to reproduce and share. Together we made a dummy zine, to see how the pages had to be arranged.

Production

Everybody started to write and draw the descriptions as a clarification for the maps (Image 25). After finishing this, we all presented our work to each other. Some people read their text out loud, others explained their drawings. After finishing all our entries, we scanned and arranged the work on the computer. To finish the zine, we wrote an introduction and reflection text together and made a selection of process pictures to include in the publication. After scanning all the entries, we made the final design on the computer. We decided to wait with the printing process, because we wanted some time to put the work aside and look back at it after a few days. After a week everybody gave their feedback on the first version of the zine and it was ready for production.

Printing and sharing

The zine was printed in a limited number of copies and is now available on-demand. These pieces were distributed in Osdorp, at the Stedelijk (for fellow *Blikopeners* and staff) and amongst family & friends.

What we talked about during the project (during lunch and tea/coffee breaks)

- History
- Representation
- Differences and similarities between cultures
- Living in the city
- Museums
- School/study life
- *Blikopeners*
 - o Differences between the different *Blikopener* cohorts
 - o Involvement in the programme
 - o Positive memories
 - o Things that have to change
 - o Things that we have to organise
- Work
- Relationships
- Partying
- Politics
- Traveling (alone)

Appendix C - Mapping Osdorp: the zine

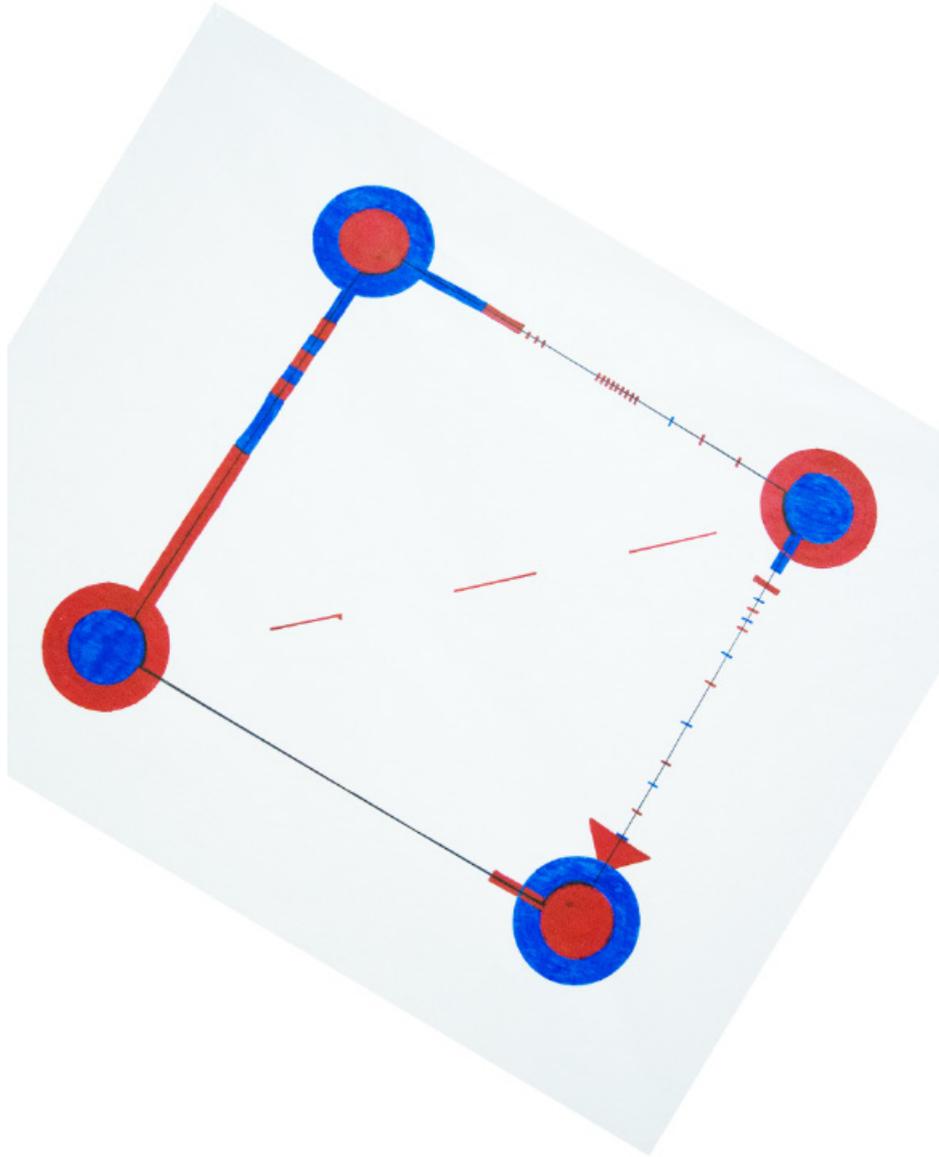


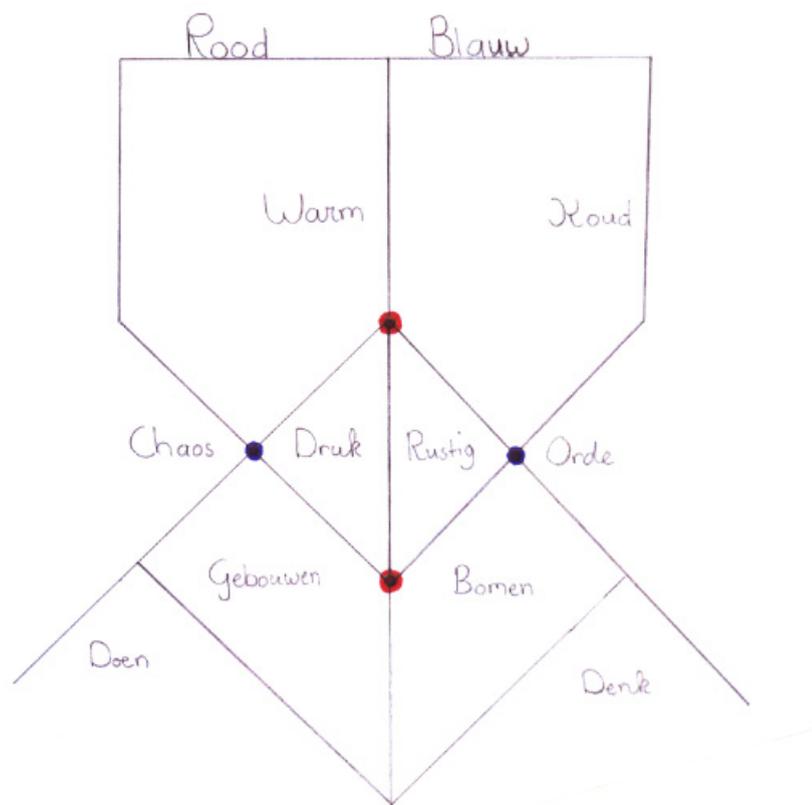


SARA ALJIC
COENRAAD KOPER
KAYLEIGH de VOS
AMINE EL ANS
DORIS HOND TONG
ROBIN VERMEULEN
2017



Blikopeners treden buiten het museum.
Samen trokken we door de straten, met
als doel Osdorp in kaart te brengen. Nu,
Vijftig jaar na de situationisten, ^{liepen} laten wij
ons inspireren ^{door} op hun gedachtegoed. Zij
lieten zich door hun gevoel leiden door de
stad en ontrokken zich zo aan de
dagelijkse sleur. Wij liepen in Osdorp
allemaal dezelfde route, maar ontwilldeN
allemaal een andere blik op de wijk.





Amine
El
Ans

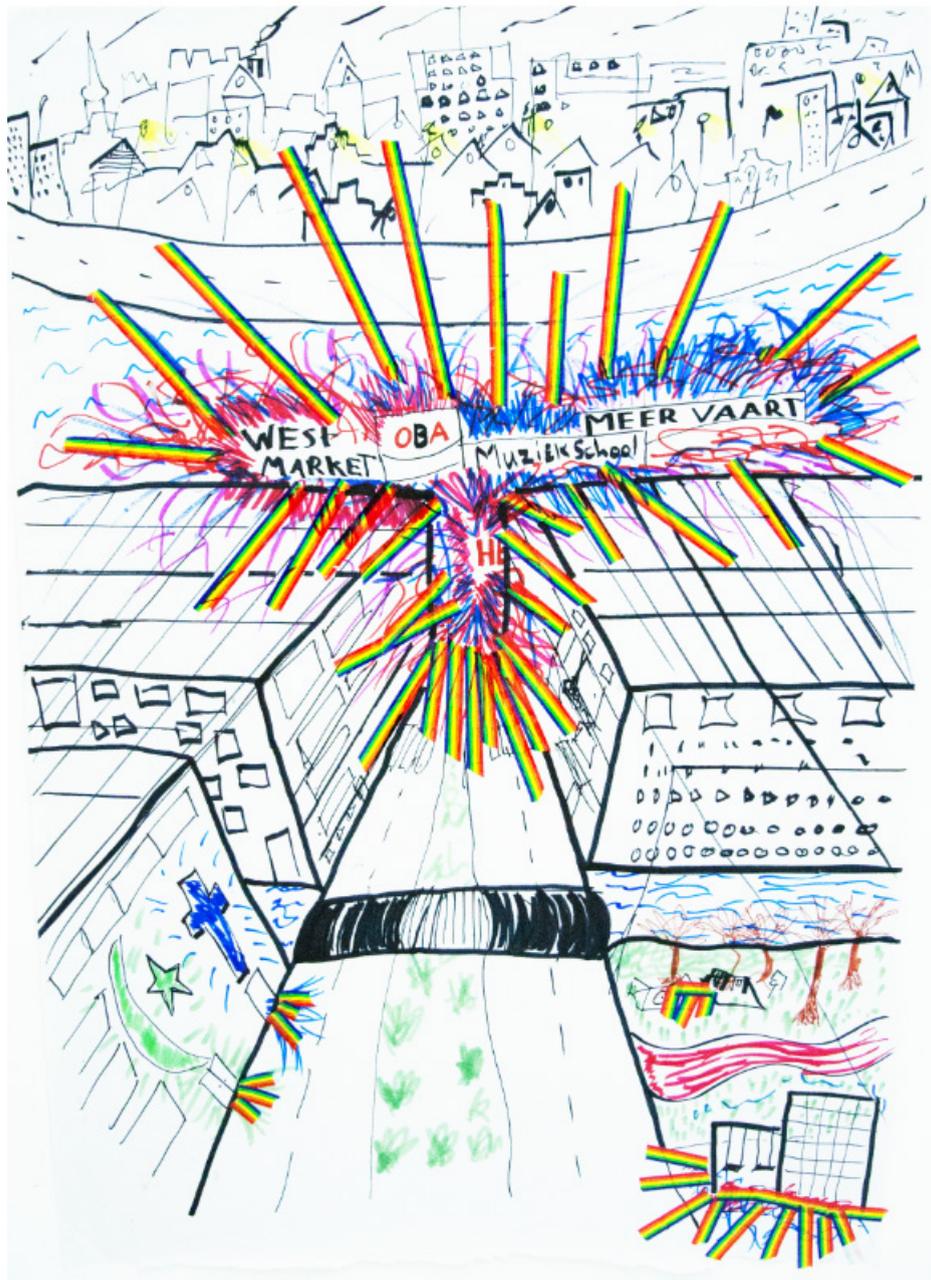




Er is leven buiten de ring,
ik kan het weten. Woningen,
plantsoenen en wegen zijn
graauw bij regen. Maar in
Osdorpcentrum vindt ~~je~~ ^{DE} vrijheid
~~van leven~~ een start. Hier kan
iedereen altijd vrij bewegen,
geloven en spelen.

Osdorp heeft in **hart** 

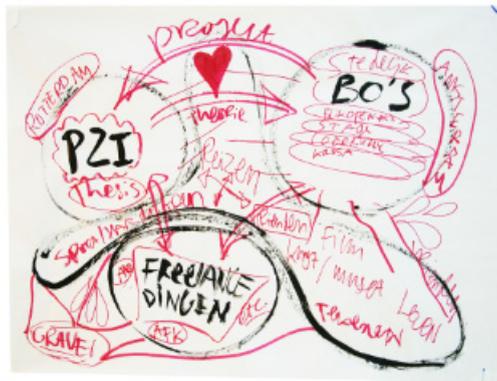
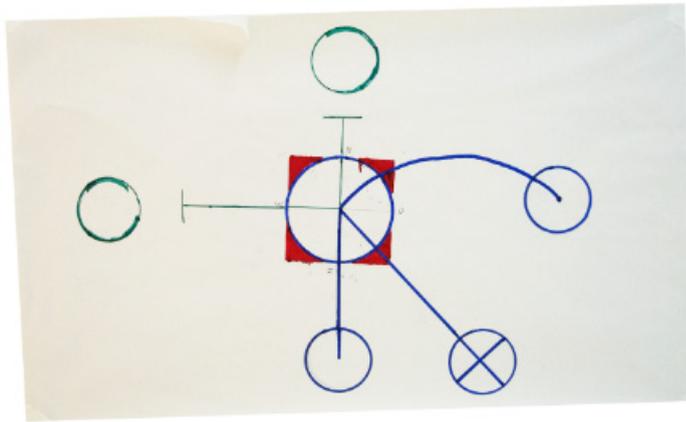
Coenraad





Wat voor rol
Speelt de
Blikopener's
in jouw leven?

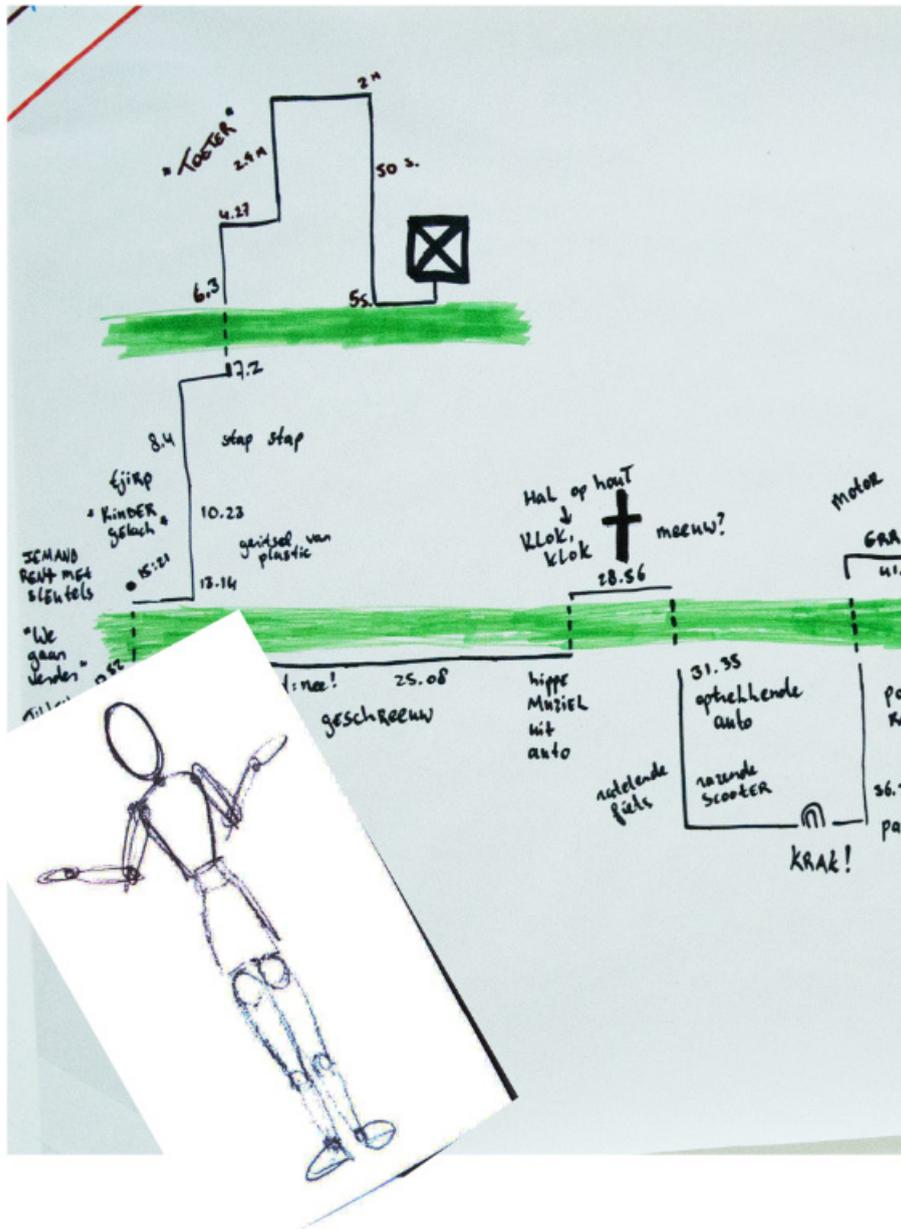


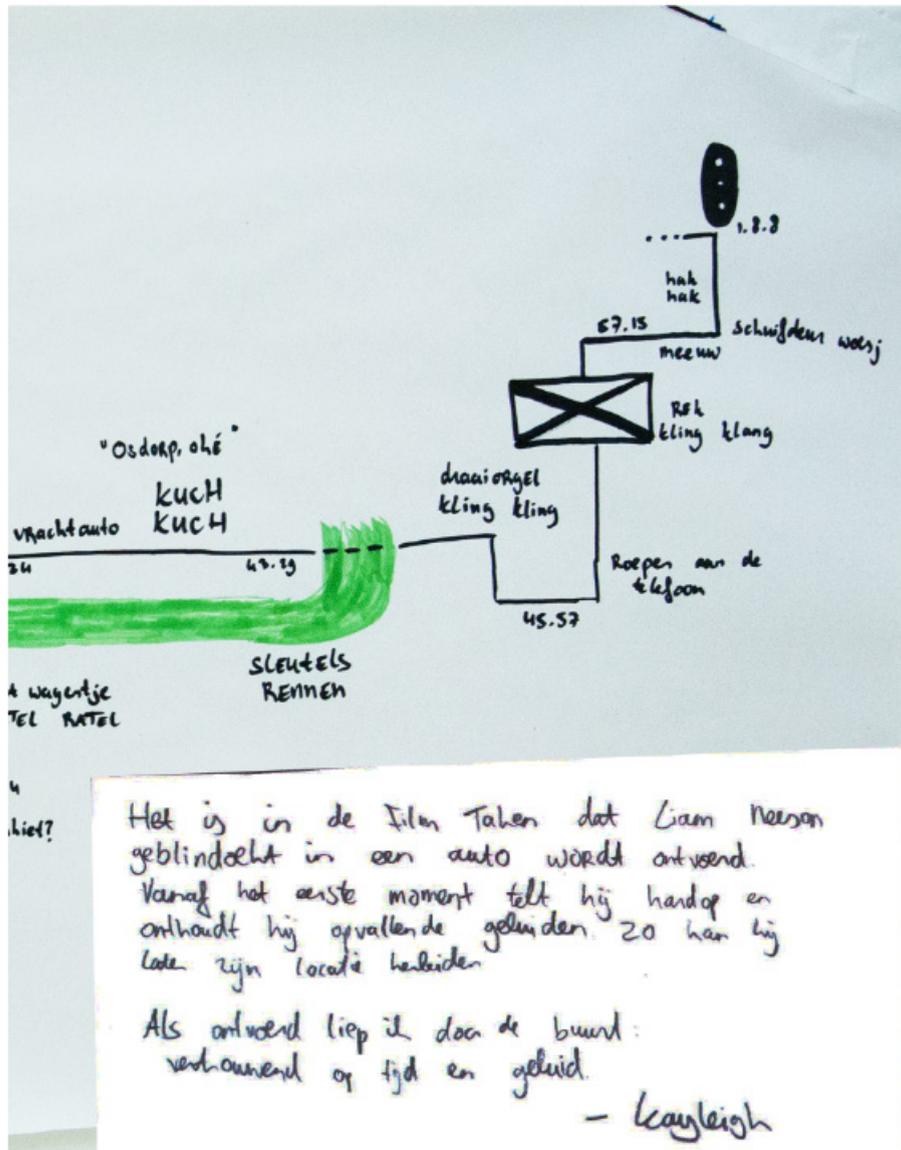






HOE BEWEEG
JE door
de Stad?
WELKE WIELEN
GEBRUIK JIJ?





- ① LINKS NA OSDORPER BAN 554
- ② LINKS NA KAT
- ③ RECHTS NA STANDBEELD
- ④ LINKS NA GROENTETUIN.
- ⑤ RECHTDOOR BIJ SCHAAP
- ⑥ RECHTS NA DAILY STYLE
- ⑦ LINKS NA HUIS-OP-HUIS
- ⑧ RECHTS BIJ SCHOONMAAK-UITZENDBUREAU-
TOTAALONDERHOUD-STAATSCHAPPELUIKE
DIENSTVERLENING
- ⑨ RECHTS BIJ PROTESTANTSE KERK
- ⑩ LINKS BIJ TEE STANDBEELDEN
- ⑪ LINKS BIJ UBURG/NIEUW BIJLTIER
GEBOUW.
- ⑫ RECHTS BIJ FEBO
- ⑬ RECHTS NA HEMA
- ⑭ LINKS NA DRAAIORGEL
- ⑮ LINKS NA VLOERTEKENING
- ⑯ RECHTS BIJ BIBLIOTHEEK
- ⑰ STOP BIJ SLOTERPLAS

"Welke schaal, denk je, is het meest bruikbaar voor het maken van een kaart?", vroeg de maan. "Een verhouding van 1 centimeter op 1 kilometer ongeveer", zei Sylvie. "Een centimeter!", riep de maan. "Wij hebben indertijd al snel gekozen voor 1 kilometer op 1 kilometer. En vervolgens probeerden we 100 meter op 1 kilometer. En toen kwam het allerbeste idee dat je maar bedenken kunt! We hebben serieus een kaart van het gebied gemaakt, op een schaal van 1 kilometer op 1 kilometer!". "Hebben jullie die kaart vaak gebruikt?", vroeg Sylvie belangstellend. "Nee, we hebben hem nog nooit uitgevouden", zei de maan. "De boeren protesteerden: ze zeiden dat hij het hele land zou bedekken en het zonlicht zou tegenhouden! Dus gebruiken we nu het gebied zelf, als zijn eigen kaart, en ik verzeker je dat dat bijna even goed functioneert."

BINNEN DE MUREN VAN HET STEDELIJK
KWAMEN WIJ ALS BLIKOPENERS OP JUNGE
LEEFSTIJL IN AANRAKING MET EEN
PROFESSIONEEL INSTITUUT WAAR WE
SERIEUS WERDEN GENOMEN OM ONZE
MENING. HET WEGVALEN VAN DE MUREN,
HET DAK EN DE MINDER ZICHTBARE
GRENZEN VAN HET MUSEUM ZORGEN
VOOR EEN OPEN SFEER WAAR ~~MEER~~ NADruk
HET PROCES BELANGRIJKER IS DAN HET
RESULTAAT. DAAR DOOR IS ER WEINIG ANGST
VOOR FALEN EN ONTSTAAT ER EEN
EXPERIMENTELE EN CREATIEVE SFEER.
ZO KON DE OORSPRONKELIJKE OPDRACHT
TIJDENS HET PROCES VERANDEREN.
WAAR WE EERST EEN GEMEENSCHAPPELIJKE
FOCUS OP WINKELS HADDEN, KONDEN WE
TIJDENS HET PROCES ALLEMAAL EEN
EIGEN RICHTING VINDEN.





Appendix D – Interview: Mapping Osdorp participants

Date: 12-04-2017

Wat zijn de overeenkomsten tussen de *Blikopeners* binnen en buiten het museum?

Robin: Ik zie hier verschillende dingen van Coen: samenwerken, kritisch kijken, open blik houden, ervaringen delen, een eigen visie creëren. Dan zie ik hier wat Amine heeft opgeschreven: open-minded, dat verwijst eigenlijk ook naar een open blik houden. En dan: creatieve ideeën. Dit heeft misschien ook te maken met een eigen visie creëren, of bedoel je dat anders?

Coen: Ik bedoel dat ten opzichte van anderen. Creatieve ideeën krijg je ook heel erg bij het samenwerken. Ik vind dat wel echt een ander punt. Het gaat erom dat je een eigen visie durft te hebben. Vergeleken met de middelbare school, waar je heel vaak een visie moet overnemen van de docent, vind ik dat je bij de *Blikopeners* en bij *Mapping Osdorp* een eigen visie moet creëren. Je kan niet zomaar iets overnemen. Creatieve ideeën passen daar wel bij, maar meer onder het hebben van een eigen visie.

Robin: Wie vindt dat ook?

Sara: Ik heb zelf ook 'persoonlijke visie' opgeschreven.

Robin: Hebben anderen ook het idee dat dit een rol speelt bij de *Blikopeners*?

Kayleigh: Bij *Mapping Osdorp* gingen we wel echt ons eigen product maken. Maar bij de *Blikopeners* heb ik vaak gehad dat je met zijn vijftienen bent en uiteindelijk een soort beslissing moet maken met zijn vijftienen. Dus een persoonlijke visie heb ik misschien niet per se daardoor ontwikkeld. Ik was het misschien wel eens of niet eens, maar ik weet niet of dit mij echt heeft geholpen met een soort bijdrage aan hoe ik naar de wereld kijk.

Coen: Ik bedoel ook niet bij het organiseren van evenementen ofzo, maar meer tijdens het praten over kunstwerken vooral. Iedereen heeft daar zijn eigen visie op, die soms wel een beetje overeenkomt.

Kayleigh: Bij rondleiden is dat wel veel meer ja.

Robin: Sara, waar komt die persoonlijke visie dan bij jou vandaan?

Sara: De opdracht was dat we allemaal zelf Osdorp in kaart moesten brengen, maar het maakte niet uit wat je deed als het maar vanuit jezelf kwam. En hier [in het Stedelijk] is het dan wel zo dat als je gaat brainstormen, dan moet je zelf altijd een paar ideeën opschrijven. En dat is dan ook zeg maar iets van: "o ja, misschien is dit wel leuk, dit past er heel goed bij". En een ander zegt dan weer: "dit is leuk, dat is leuk". Dan zie je weer heel erg hoe iedereen verschilt en zo zie je eigenlijk ook hoe je zelf denkt en hoe een ander denkt.

Robin: Maar in beide projecten wordt er dus wel heel erg naar elkaar geluisterd?

Sara: Ja.

Robin: Ik zie hier ook staan: de gezelligheid onderling, lol, gezelligheid. Kunnen jullie dat toelichten, wat is er zo gezellig?

Amine: Het is sowieso leuk als je met zijn allen bent, zelf een idee hebt en dat uiteindelijk gaat vergelijken met andere werken en ideeën van iemand anders, waarbij je jezelf een soort van openstelt, dat je open-minded moet zijn over dingen. En ik vind het altijd heel leuk om open-minded te zijn en dingen van andere mensen te zien en daar dan van te leren. Dat verbreed dan ook je persoonlijke visie.

Doris: Ik kan mij ook herinneren dat gezelligheid heel erg gestimuleerd werd [in *Mapping Osdorp*] en dat jij vaak zei: het gaat er vooral om dat we een leuke tijd hebben en dat dat het belangrijkste was. En dat is bij de *Blikopeners* volgens mij ook heel belangrijk, dat je een leuke tijd hebt en met plezier naar je werk komt.

Kayleigh: En sowieso is het volgens mij gewoon heel leuk aan de *Blikopeners* en deze groep [*Mapping Osdorp*] ook, dat je een soort zelfde interesse hebt in iets, maar eigenlijk vooral heel veel interesse hebt in heel veel dingen. Dat je die bij elkaar zet en een soort vrijheid maar ook opdrachten geeft, dat brengt gewoon heel veel gezelligheid en gelijkheid. Mensen die hetzelfde nadenken over de wereld en zo.

Wat is het grootste verschil tussen de *Blikopeners* in het museum en in Osdorp?

Coen: Ik vraag mij af waarom hier nu meer opgeschreven is dan bij de vorige vraag: omdat we op gang zijn gekomen, of omdat het ook gewoon meer is.

Robin: Amine, jij schrijft hier: creativiteit op een ander level. Kan je dit verklaren?

Amine: Ik vond dat we bij deze opdracht veel meer mochten doen, we mochten onszelf echt loslaten. In het Stedelijk is het meer van: “je moet rekening houden met, en dit en dat”. En hier was het van: “doe je ding, en we zien wel verder”.

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Sara: Daarom heb ik vrijheid opgeschreven, want zoals Amine net zei, je zit in je eigen bubbel omdat je jouw eigen ding aan het maken bent. Maar je hebt [in het Stedelijk] dus allemaal richtlijnen waar je jezelf aan moet houden: je moet een beetje zo denken en een beetje zo, en hiermee en daarmee rekening houden.

Robin: Vind je het erg dat die regels er in het Stedelijk zijn, of kan je daar wel mee leven?

Sara: Soms is het niet zo fijn, omdat je steeds met andere mensen of dingen rekening moet houden. Maar als we in Osdorp ook nog de regel hadden gekregen: “je mag geen tekeningen maken”, dan was alles heel erg anders geweest.

Robin: Misschien heeft die creativiteit ook te maken met vrijheid? Of je creativiteit de vrije loop laten gaan?

Coen: Ja, dat herken ik wel. Ik heb ook ‘minder professionele omgeving’ opgeschreven, dus dat sluit aan bij dat punt. In het Stedelijk ben je in een professionele omgeving en moet je jezelf op een bepaalde manier gedragen. Dat

was in *Mapping Osdorp* minder, dus dat zorgde voor een creatievere omgeving.

Amine: Dan heb ik ook: 'minder verantwoordelijkheid' opgeschreven. Je hebt minder verantwoordelijkheid, want als je in het Stedelijk Museum bent dan vertegenwoordig je ook direct het Stedelijk Museum. Dus als je iets verkeerd doet, kan dat een grote impact hebben op het museum. Waardoor je een pokerface moet opzetten in het museum, waardoor je jezelf niet kan uitstralen.

Coen: Dat is misschien meer persoonlijke verantwoordelijkheid, in plaats van verantwoordelijkheid voor het hele museum. Zou je dat kunnen zeggen? Ik bedoel bij het Osdorp project.

Amine: Ja, bij Osdorp ja. Dan ligt het er meer aan dat je persoonlijke verantwoordelijkheid hebt in de zin van: wanneer vind jij dat je een grens moet aantonen? In de zin van: je bepaalt je eigen kaders, het zijn je eigen regels.

Doris: Ja, ik heb eigenlijk een beetje hetzelfde. Ook ik heb 'vrijheid' en 'minder doelgericht'. Dat komt voor mij een beetje op hetzelfde neer. Het is ook spontaner.

Robin: Ik zie hier ook staan 'een begin, maar geen einde'.

Coen: Het gaat om het proces, in plaats van het resultaat.

Robin: Hier staat 'gelijkwaardige werkgroep', wat wordt daarmee bedoeld?

Coen: Het project was wel jouw idee, maar je hebt in het begin heel duidelijk gemaakt dat we het met zijn allen gingen doen. Ik heb ook het gevoel dat wij allemaal evenveel invloed hebben gehad, en dat is niet altijd in het Stedelijk. Wat ook te maken heeft met die professionaliteit en een bepaalde taakverdeling. Wat ook wel fijn is, is dat we het hele project meemaakten. In het Stedelijk ben je elke keer maar twee uurtjes hier [in het Stedelijk] en dan gaan de coördinator en de stagiaire veel doen doordeweeks en dan hoor je in het midden van de week pas weer wat er allemaal is gebeurd. En nu maken we het proces van het begin tot het einde mee, waardoor we er denk ik meer invloed op hebben.

Robin: Het is iets transparanter?

Coen: Daarom hoort dat dus ook bij die gelijkwaardige werkgroep. We konden er allemaal bij zijn als er iets gebeurde. Zo'n museum gaat de hele week door, en als *Blikopener* kan je natuurlijk maar één keer per week in het Stedelijk zijn, en dan hoor je wat er allemaal is gebeurd, waar je geen invloed op kan hebben.

Robin: Heeft iedereen het idee dat iedereen evenveel invloed heeft gehad? Of denken jullie: 'nee, dat heb ik helemaal niet'?

Amine: Nee, ik vond wel dat iedereen gelijk was.

Robin: Want jullie [Sara en Doris] zijn er één dag niet bij geweest. Hoe voelt dat?

Sara: Maar toen is er aan ons gevraagd om feedback te geven [op het zine] en er werd gevraagd of wij het er wel mee eens waren.

Robin: En was dat genoeg?

Sara: Ja, ik vind van wel.

Amine: We zijn lekker communistisch.

Robin: ‘Creëert betere band met collega’s’, kan je dat verklaren Amine?

Amine: Omdat we veel creatiever mochten zijn vond ik dat we ook meer onszelf mochten zijn. En als je jezelf bent, echt jezelf-zelf bent, dan kan je beter een band opbouwen met iemand anders. Als jij je aan regels moet houden, dan kan je vaak niet jezelf zijn. En dan kan je ook minder snel een band creëren met iemand anders. Misschien creëer je dan wel een band, maar dan meer op professioneel gebied.

Robin: En zoals jij zei stel je jezelf misschien minder open omdat je een pokerface hebt?

Amine: Inderdaad.

Robin: Wat staat hier? ‘Persoonlijke schepping’?

Coen: Ja, ‘persoonlijke schepping’ of ‘creatie’, dus echt zelf iets maken. Want in het Stedelijk maak je dingen met elkaar en vorm je wel die persoonlijke visie, maar maken bij de *Blikopeners* doe je volgens mij meestal niet zelf en altijd met elkaar. En in Osdorp gingen we wel echt zelf iets maken, en dat vond ik wel heel anders.

Kayleigh: Ja, en ook echt letterlijk tekenen. Dat is dan wel weer heel anders dan de *Blikopeners*. Maar zo zet je toch ook creatievere denkprocessen in werking, als je iets moet tekenen over hoe je iets in je leven ziet ga je heel anders nadenken dan dat je het zou opschrijven in woorden.

Robin: Maar dat zou je in het museum misschien ook kunnen doen, toch?

Kayleigh: Dat zou kunnen, maar dat gebeurt niet. Wat nog een punt is: in het Stedelijk zijn bepaalde werken om bepaalde redenen in het museum gehangen en die redenen komen in rondleidingen of evenementen terug. En als je de wijk in gaat maak je echt eigen beslissingen over wat je waardevol vindt om te tekenen of terug te laten komen. Dus daarin heb je ook weer een hele grote zeggenschap, zo kan je veel meer je eigen ding doen. Dat is heel prettig. Daardoor kan je iets ontdekken, dat nog niet ontdekt is. Dat voelt ook heel fijn. Niemand heeft natuurlijk op deze manier die route gelopen zoals wij die hebben gezien. Je wordt een soort pionier.

Coen: Je kijkt ook naar iets waar niet zoveel mensen naar kijken op die manier. In het museum kijkt iedereen naar kunst.

Robin: Het hangt er om naar gekeken te worden en er is vaak een vaste route. En dan zie ik hier nog staan: ‘andere mensen dan in de museumbubbel’. Coen, kan je dat uitleggen?

Coen: Hier kom je veel van dezelfde soort mensen tegen. Maar denk bijvoorbeeld aan de jongen [van de brassband] die langs kwam. Je komt dan het dagelijks leven

van mensen tegen. We hebben natuurlijk niet met mensen gepraat, dus zo kan je het niet echt zeggen. Maar die mensen zien we wel in hun dagelijks habitat, dat vind ik wel echt iets anders dan in het Stedelijk. Je ziet wel echt mensen, maar dan ook in hun omgeving, buiten de bubbel van het museum.

Amine: Volgens mij hebben we meer verschillen dan overeenkomsten omdat er ook gewoon heel veel verschillen zijn. Ik denk dat dat het echt is, ik denk niet dat het komt omdat we op gang moesten komen. Er zijn echt enorm veel verschillen en dat is eigenlijk best wel jammer.

Robin: Waarom vind je dat jammer?

Amine: Omdat we veel meer zouden kunnen doen met de *Blikopeners*, maar sommige dingen belemmeren ons om die dingen te kunnen doen.

Robin: Wat voor een dingen zijn dat dan, denk je?

Amine: Ik denk meer gewoon: creatiever zijn, echt werken maken, iets opener zijn. Natuurlijk kunnen we niet alles realiseren, want het museum moet het museum blijven, het is geen playground.

Coen: Ik denk niet dat dat jammer is. Want ik denk dat heel veel dingen die we hier opnoemen van het museum komen en ontstaan door de dingen die er in het Stedelijk zijn. We zitten hier [in het Stedelijk] in een gebouw en daar gaat het hier ook om. En we zitten met een professioneel bedrijf. Er zijn wel dingen die anders kunnen, maar ik vind eigenlijk dat hoe we het hier doen, en omdat het over kunst gaat, best leuk. Ik denk dat het ook leuk is om andere dingen te doen, maar we zijn hier natuurlijk wel voor het museum en om over het museum te praten. Dus ik denk dat we binnen de muren van het museum best wel wat grenzen opzoeken. Er zijn natuurlijk wel dingen die beter kunnen, maar ik weet niet of die verschillen echt gaan over of het beter kan hier, of dat het verschillen zijn die je sowieso hebt tussen binnen en buiten.

Robin: Misschien is dat ook wel de crux van het verhaal. Het gaat niet zozeer om 'beter' of 'slechter', denk ik. Het is sowieso anders, maar is het dan ook per se beter of slechter?

Kayleigh: Ik denk dat je van beiden heel veel kan leren op je eigen manier. In mijn *Blikopeners*-tijd heb ik bijvoorbeeld juist heel veel geleerd over het professionele, van de regels, van hoe je dingen zo efficiënt mogelijk kan maken, brainstormen. Dat heeft ook weer hele andere kwaliteiten die je dan meeneemt, die we dan misschien weer minder in *Mapping Osdorp* zouden hebben.

Coen: Je wordt serieus genomen, je kan dingen organiseren. Dat zijn dingen die allemaal heel waardevol zijn. *Mapping Osdorp* zou leuk zijn om erbij te doen voor *Blikopeners*, maar als je alleen dit soort dingen zou hebben, dan zou je iets heel anders doen. Het zou leuk zijn als je een soort combinatie hebt.

Amine: Dat bedoel ik ook. Dit [*Mapping Osdorp*] doen we nooit snapje, we doen alleen maar dat. Dus het gevaar kan dan zijn dat we in die bubbel terecht komen van constant het professionele, terwijl kunst naar mijn mening totaal

onprofessioneel kan zijn omdat je in kunst geen fouten kan maken: want kunst is kunst. We zouden, wat Coen net zegt, het [programma's binnen en buiten het museum] moeten combineren met elkaar. Er moet een soort balans in komen.

Coen: Ik vind dat die mogelijkheid er wel is. Als je ideeën hebt is het niet zo dat het nu tegengehouden wordt. Dus ik denk dat het er zeker wel in zit en dat die mogelijkheid er zeker is.

Kayleigh: Er zouden meer van dit soort projecten gedaan kunnen worden. Je zou er zelfs twee kunne doen, om een los project op te starten in de wijk met een *Blikopener*-gedachte, maar dan los van het museum. Dat zou zeker kunnen.

Robin: Wat bedoel je dan met 'los van het museum'?

Kayleigh: Los van een vaste collectie waar je in zit, echt dat het helemaal los is qua regels.

Coen: Dat je bijvoorbeeld een project doet waar geen eindresultaat hoeft te zijn. Dus dat je daarom meer creativiteit creëert, in plaats van meteen allemaal regels. En dat je dan daarna zegt: hoe kunnen we dit omvormen tot iets van het Stedelijk?

Robin: Want wat zou dat dan toevoegen aan de instelling? Moet dat wel?

Coen: Het gaat ook om de ontwikkeling van de *Blikopeners*, dus dat zou naast elkaar moeten zijn. Je zou bijvoorbeeld de eerste maand van de *Blikopeners* dit soort dingen kunnen doen en daarna het reguliere programma draaien. Om de creativiteit te stimuleren, want daarvoor is dit dus heel goed. Ik weet niet of het veel toevoegt aan het museum, maar wel aan de creativiteit van de *Blikopeners*. Je zou dit niet elke week moeten doen, want je moet ook een resultaat hebben.

Robin: Dan gaat de *Blikopeners* in het museum misschien meer over werken met kunst, en buiten het museum over kunst ervaren en doen.

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Coen: Creatief denken bevindt zich buiten het museum, maar dat heb je dan weer nodig om in het museum aan de slag te kunnen gaan. Ik denk dat creativiteit heel belangrijk is. In *Mapping Osdorp* leer je jezelf misschien meer losmaken dan dat je iets van de buitenwereld leert. In het museum leer je vooral hoe het instituut werkt en van alles over kunst. En in *Mapping Osdorp* leer je vooral hoe je jezelf moet uitdrukken.

Kayleigh: Het is gericht op de individuele ervaring, maar je doet het wel samen.

Coen: Het gaat om je individuele vorming, vooral ook omdat het meer gaat om het proces dan het resultaat. Ik denk dat in het museum het resultaat belangrijker is. In de groep [tijdens *Mapping Osdorp*] zijn we bezig met: kan iedereen iets bijdragen, is iedereen er genoeg bij, hoe kunnen we allemaal iets hieraan bijdragen? Terwijl het in het museum veel meer gaat over: dit willen we, we zeggen allemaal een idee, wat is het beste idee. Ik weet niet of dat bij alles is. Maar bij Osdorp konden we meer tot een compromis komen, waarin we wel allemaal onze eigen weg konden vinden. Terwijl ik denk dat je bij de dingen in het Stedelijk vaak niet tot een compromis komt, maar tot het beste idee. Dus je brainstormt met zijn allen over

een evenement of een workshop, tien tot twintig ideeën, en dan komt er misschien één idee uit. Of een tussenvorm tussen twee ideeën uit, maar je gaat niet kijken naar alle ideeën en hoe kunnen we daar een grote workshop of een evenement van maken. En hier konden we allemaal heb ik het idee, wat invoegen en onze eigen dingen erin kwijt. Zijn jullie het daarmee eens?

Doris: Ik ben het daar niet helemaal mee eens denk ik. Ik denk dat je in het Stedelijk ook allemaal ideeën samenbrengt en daarover gaat praten. En soms komt van het ene idee ook het andere idee. Dus ik weet niet of het zozeer is van: die is leuk, die is niet leuk en die gaan we doen. Ik denk dat het in het museum meer gaat om het museum, dat je echt soort van in dienst staat van het museum. En dat het buiten het museum van jezelf en voor jezelf is, voor je eigen ontwikkeling.

Kayleigh: In het museum moet je altijd denken aan een doelgroep en beredeneren of zij wel komen. Bij dit project waren er niet direct mensen die vermaakt moesten worden ofzo.

Werk je met de *Blikopeners* liever binnen of buiten het museum? Waarom?

Kayleigh: Binnen. Omdat het juist zo bijzonder is om mee te draaien in het museum. Je werkt achter de schermen en krijgt te maken met alle processen. Dat is heel uniek. Niet dat het andere project niet uniek is, maar dat heeft mij wel heel veel geleerd. Het liefst zou ik een combi zien tussen buiten en binnen, dat er wordt gekeken wat de mogelijkheden zijn, ik denk dat dat zeker een meerwaarde heeft.

Robin: Wat zie jij als mogelijkheden?

Kayleigh: Meer binding met buurten en jongeren opzoeken in de wijk, omdat wij ze altijd naar het instituut proberen te krijgen. Ik denk dat daar veel opties liggen.

Robin: Dus naar de mensen toe in plaats van ze hierheen halen?

Kayleigh: Ja. Dat is eigenlijk wat wij hebben gedaan. We waren in de wijk, al hadden wij niet zoveel contact met ze. Het Stedelijk wil natuurlijk wel dat er contact gemaakt wordt met jongeren door de *Blikopeners*. Het is sowieso al bewezen dat het moeilijk is om jongeren naar het museum te krijgen, dus dan is naar buiten gaan misschien een goede optie.

Sara: Binnen houd ik van het brainstormen, waarin je in verschillende groepjes je ideeën opschrijft. Zo leer je precies wat een bepaalde persoon denkt en vindt. Hierdoor ontstaat vaak een discussie. Buiten is het weer heel fijn dat iedereen meer zichzelf is. Het is veel spontaner en ik merk dat er ook meer creativiteit ontstaat als je buiten bent. Het heeft allebei zijn nadelen en voordelen.

Doris: Ik vind het wel bijzonder dat iedereen de hele tijd zegt dat je meer jezelf kan zijn buiten het museum. Ik voel helemaal niet dat ik mij zo moet inhouden. Als ik bijvoorbeeld voor een kunstwerk wil dansen, dan voel ik mij niet tegengehouden om dat te doen.

Robin: Amine, ik heb het idee dat jij dit helemaal niet hebt.

Amine: Nee, ik vind wel dat je hier [in het Stedelijk] aan bepaalde regels moet

voldoen. Ik ben soms best een persoon die dingen kan zeggen, terwijl ik dat niet moet zeggen. Een beetje te losse woordjes. Ik merk dat ik mij in het museum wel veel meer in moet houden met dingen.

Doris: Maar ligt dat dan niet meer aan jou dan aan het museum?

Sara: Ja, dat is heel persoonlijk ook.

Doris: Komt dat niet meer uit het gevoel dat jij het idee hebt dat je dat niet moet doen?

Amine: Nee, want ik weet bijvoorbeeld zeker dat als ik over een kunstwerk zou zeggen dat het lelijk is dat dat niet kan, omdat ik dan het museum vertegenwoordig.

Coen: Zou je dat ook niet durven binnen de *Blikopeners*? Als je een rondleiding geeft vind ik dat wel iets anders.

Amine: Bij een rondleiding kan ik dat juist wel, omdat ik dan minder het gevoel hebt dat iemand naar mij kijkt of in de gaten houd van 'dat moet je niet zeggen'.

Coen: Maar dan heb ik het idee dat je het museum representeert. Want wie stoot je tegen het been binnen de *Blikopeners*?

Amine: Ik weet het niet precies.

Robin: Maar je zei, mensen kijken dan mee, wie zijn dat dan?

Amine: Mensen van hogerop die het project begeleiden.

Coen: En in Osdorp had je dat niet?

Amine: Nee, toen niet. Toen dacht ik: ik doe wat ik wil. Toen zag ik jou [Robin] als gelijke.

Coen: Ik denk dat dit wel iets persoonlijks is als ik het zo hoor, want ik heb dit helemaal niet. Ik voel mij hier [in het Stedelijk] net zo vrij, behalve dan dat ik niet altijd kan bepalen waar het proces naartoe gaat, heb ik wel het idee dat ik er altijd iets van kan zeggen als ik dat wil. Als het niet zo gaat als ik wil, dan zeg ik daar wel wat van.

Doris: Ik heb dat ook wat jij hebt, Coen.

Robin: In het Stedelijk werk je natuurlijk met een werkgever, het is ook gewoon een baan. Dat heb je in Osdorp ook niet.

Coen: Ik vind dit [*Blikopeners*] juist een geweldig project omdat het meestal niet voelt als een baan, behalve dat je wel serieus wordt genomen. Ik heb juist het gevoel dat ik juist kon zeggen: dit vind ik niet mooi. Ik had juist het idee dat mijn mening belangrijk is, omdat ik een *Blikopener* ben. Ik heb het gevoel dat dat het is, dat je serieus wordt genomen. Dit gevoel is per jaar *Blikopeners* waarschijnlijk ook verschillend. Het ligt ook aan de dynamiek van de groep en of er veel mensen in

zitten die kritisch zijn.

Robin: Ik zie hier nog een opmerking staan.

Coen: Binnen, want kunst vertelt veel over mensen en er is heel veel over te ontdekken. Dat vind ik heel belangrijk, dat je elkaars ervaringen deelt en van elkaar leert. Maar ook naar buiten regelmatig, om andere mensen, ideeën en werelden te zien. Hoewel de diversiteit van *Blikopeners* en kunst ook zorgen voor creativiteit in het museum. Dus ik zeg uiteindelijk binnen. Omdat we een hele diverse groep van *Blikopeners* hebben en dat we heel veel achtergrond en ideeën terugvinden in het museum door met elkaar over kunst te praten. Ik denk dat we soms naar buiten moeten. Je ontmoet in het museum, binnen de *Blikopeners*, juist mensen van andere achtergronden en met andere ideeën. Ik denk dat het museum dan een hele neutrale plek is, waar alles bij elkaar kan komen. Behalve dat het dan een linkse bubbel is. Maar ik vind het een neutrale plek, omdat het gewoon een bedrijf is. Het is een soort centrum. Ik vind wel dat je naar buiten moet gaan, maar niet alleen naar Osdorp. Misschien dat je het project dan een keer in meerdere soorten omgevingen moet doen.

Robin: Dan zie ik hier nog een, ‘verschillende soorten mensen en plekken’. ‘Je komt meer op je pad tegen’ en ‘je omarmt het onbekende’. Kan je dit uitleggen, Amine?

Amine: Je komt in het museum in een bubbel terecht. Buiten het museum vind je veel meer mensen, en kom je andere plekken tegen. Dat opent veel deuren: je wordt er wijzer van, je wordt er creatiever van. Je gaat iets onbekends doen, dat is zo raar. En ik houd van raar. Bij het onbekende is alles nieuw, dus je moet super alert zijn.

Coen: Als je met een groep *Blikopeners* ergens heen gaat heb je natuurlijk nog die diversiteit. Maar ik vind dat je als *Blikopeners* via kunst heel veel kan leren over elkaar. Zonder het direct te hebben over dingen die ons allemaal aangaan kan je door kunst wel heel veel van elkaar leren. Het mooie van Osdorp was niet alleen dat we buiten waren, maar ook de soort activiteit waar de nadruk lag op het proces. Ik denk dat als je dat soort activiteiten in het museum doet, dat je nog veel meer kan leren van de kunst en van elkaar. Ik denk dat je niet speciaal naar buiten hoeft om de nadruk op het proces te leggen. Ik denk dat het soms wel goed is om naar buiten te gaan, maar ook om kunst te bekijken buiten.

Amine: Ik vind naar buiten gaan sowieso een goed idee. Een van de problemen die ik zie bij het project *Blikopeners* is dat wij jongeren niet aanspreken. We vertegenwoordigen ze en moeten dingen voor ze organiseren.

Coen: Wij zitten toch op die scholen die wij vertegenwoordigen, wij zitten toch in die omgeving?

Amine: Als jij naar school gaat, dan ga je met de intentie om te leren. Als je nou naar buiten gaat met de intentie om mensen te overtuigen.

Coen: Waarom wil je ze overtuigen?

Amine: Niet per se overtuigen, maar in gesprek met ze gaan.

Coen: Ik vind dat het net zo goed in het museum kan.

Amine: Ja, maar heel veel mensen vinden het museum elite snap je. Ik denk dat mensen het heel tof zouden vinden als iemand van het museum naar jou komt snap je. Dan voel je jezelf direct ook speciaal.

Coen: Dat vind ik anders dan dat wij gedaan hebben buiten. En dat is iets wat ik heb gemist in dit project [*Mapping Osdorp*]. Naar buiten gaan had ik nog wel wat meer gewild. Dat het ook iets had betekend voor de mensen in de omgeving, denk ik. En dan is het ook weer veel beter te verantwoorden voor het museum.

Sara: We zijn vooral bezig in het museum zelf, en niet zoveel erbuiten. We willen wel het museum beschikbaar maken voor jongeren via evenementen en zo. Maar heel veel mensen volgen de Stedelijk pagina of *Blikopener* pagina niet. Heel veel mensen kennen de *Blikopeners* helemaal niet. Het zou wel leuk zijn als we met scholen kunnen regelen dat wij een kunst les geven.

Robin: Dat is ook wel gedaan. Maar zou het er dan structureler onderdeel van moeten zijn?

Sara: Ja.

Coen: Ik zie een soort ideaalbeeld voor me van de *Blikopeners* die zich losrukken van het museum, die dan kritisch naar het museum kunnen kijken maar ook naar andere musea gaan. Of een groep die hier blijft, die zich gaat verbinden met andere groepen en daar een soort van community van meerdere musea of andere instellingen vormt. Bijvoorbeeld van het Eye.

Robin: Dus dat je niet per se in de instelling zit, maar dat je ertussen hangt?

Coen: Ja precies.

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Kayleigh: Ik heb gehoord dat het DeLaMar Theater een jongerenproject heeft opgezet dat is geïnspireerd op de *Blikopeners*. Terwijl dat een theater is. Toen ik aan een jongen vertelde dat ik *Blikopener* was, zei hij dat hij in het DeLaMar zo'n project heeft gedaan.

Coen: In het Rijks beginnen dit soort dingen ook, in alle musea. En ik zou het leuk vinden als dit niet allemaal projecten worden die elkaar gaan beconcurreren, maar dat we daar echt vette dingen mee gaan doen. Waarbij je kan zeggen: we gaan van elkaar leren. En dus eigenlijk ook meer van dit soort projecten [*Mapping Osdorp*] dat het meer een soort community wordt. Dit soort dingen zijn ook in andere steden, dat je daar op bezoek gaat of andersom. Het zou ook nog leuk zijn om een container te hebben als *Blikopeners* voor het museum, die je dan ook kan verplaatsen. Dat je dan zegt: de *Blikopeners* van het Stedelijk Museum bestormen deze week dat museum.

Kayleigh: Ja!

Sara: Oh, dat zou echt vet zijn. Toeren met de *Blikopeners* door de stad.

Kayleigh: Moeten we geen datum afspreken? Dan gaan we hier verder over brainstormen!

Coen: Ik zou het echt heel vet vinden als dit echt kan, weet je. Hoe duur is een container?

Robin: Ze kunnen ons dan in die zeecontainer op een schip zetten, dan kunnen we de hele wereld over varen.

Coen: Ik geef alles op, ik doe het! Alles.

Robin: Ik heb nog een laatste vraag voor iedereen. Die moet je in één zin beantwoorden.

Wat is het belangrijkste dat je hebt geleerd in het project *Mapping Osdorp*?

Amine: Yin yang, jezelf meer loslaten in het creatieve proces omdat er meer vrijheid is, soms is het goed om iets heel anders te doen, om je batterij even op te laden, je mind te resetten.

Robin: Daarin zie ik overeenkomsten met yin yang, klopt dat?

Sara: Maar yin yang gaat toch over goed en fout?

Amine: Ik zie yin yang meer als het tegenovergestelde, dus: goed/slecht, warm/koud.

Kayleigh: Volgens mij betekent het alles in tegenstelling, het goede en kwade kan je niet zomaar zeggen. Wit/zwart, vrouwelijk/mannelijk. Ieder heeft een ander deeltje in zich.

Amine: En dat alles uiteindelijk in balans moet zijn.

Kayleigh: Het belangrijkste dat ik heb geleerd is dat de *Blikopeners* meer in zich hebben dan soms naar voren komt. Ik vind dat als je kijkt naar hoe je dingen tekent, hoe je over dingen nadenkt, welke filosofie we over alles hebben, dat dat veel meer is dan je zou denken als je hier in het Stedelijk op kantoor zit. Je ziet gewoon veel meer van anderen.

Coen: Persoonlijke interpretaties/ervaringen opstellen werkt verrijkend, kan op alles toegepast worden. Dus je persoonlijke blik is interessanter dan het object.

Robin: Een object in het museum?

Coen: Ja, of objecten in de stad.

Coen: En wat heb jij geleerd, Robin?

Amine: Ja. We willen nu eigenlijk wel weten wat jij hebt geleerd!

Kayleigh: Wat is jouw antwoord op deze vraag?

Robin: Ik heb geleerd dat als je lesgeeft, doceert of zo'n project doet, dat je dan juist dingen moet loslaten. En als je dan dingen loslaat, dat er dan juist mooie dingen gebeuren. Als je heel erg op een doel afgaat, maak je een project eigenlijk kapot. Dat heb ik in het museum ook gemerkt, daar ging ik vaak erg af op het doel in het project waardoor ik het proces soms vergat. Dat vind ik eigenlijk slecht van mijzelf.

Coen: Ik denk dat dit ook te maken heeft met wat we eerder zeiden, dat iedereen in dit project iedereen het hele proces meemaakte. In de reguliere *Blikopener*-projecten komt iedereen vaak twee uurtjes langs. Maar degene die erachter zit, die wil eigenlijk de hele tijd doorwerken. Als je met zijn allen in dezelfde omgeving de hele tijd werkt, dan werkt dat veel beter. Eigenlijk zou je bij een *Blikopener*-project in één dag alles willen doen.

Waar komt het eerste idee van de *Blikopeners* vandaan?

Het idee komt letterlijk van *Youth Insights* in het Whitney Museum, wat daar toen al een aantal jaar bestond. Ik liep daar vijf dagen in de week stage, met een focus op jongeren en families. En op zaterdag kwamen die jongeren daar naartoe. Ik dacht: “dit is het!”, ik had nog nooit zoiets gezien. Ik had al wel ervaring met musea in Nederland. Maar wat ik daar zo aansprekend vond is dat jongeren van alle soorten en maten heel erg betrokken waren bij het museum. Zij voelden zich daar heel erg thuis, haalden er zelf veel uit en het museum ook. Het is in die zin ook een hele andere vorm van educatie, omdat het zo intensief was met een kleine groep. Je bouwt een enorme band op, ziet elkaar vaak en je praat veel over kunst. Dat biedt enorm veel mogelijkheden om gave dingen te doen. Dat vond ik heel bijzonder, het was een soort snoepwinkel van educatie. Je hebt een hele groep jongeren waar je elke zaterdag iets gaafs mee kan doen met kunst. We gingen op galeriebezoek in New York, rondleidingen oefenen. Voor mij was het heel mooi om de New Yorkse *art scene* te ontdekken door hun ogen. Het was voor mijzelf ook een fantastische cursus om al die zaterdagen met hen van alles te doen. Met die jongeren heb ik ook echt een band opgebouwd, dan zie je hoe intensief zo'n project was. Met sommige jongeren heb ik nog contact via Facebook. Ik dacht toen, het is een mooie afspiegeling van New York: de Latino's, Afro-Amerikaanse jongeren, blanke jongeren, alles door elkaar. Maar nu heb ik ervaren dat dit ook in Amsterdam gewoon kan. De stage was binnen mijn studie. Ik zat zo vol met alles na New York, toen heb ik mijn scriptie gebruikt om alles op te schrijven. Alles wat ik daar had gezien en in die stage had meegemaakt heb ik vastgelegd in mijn scriptie. Die scriptie wil ik zelf niet meer lezen, omdat er volgens mij wel fouten in staan. Maar ik put nog steeds uit alles dat ik daar heb opgeschreven. Voor mij zijn heel veel dingen relevant, en er zijn veel dingen die in Nederland niet zijn uitgevoerd. Toen ging ik bijna meteen na mijn afstuderen bij het Stedelijk aan de slag. En toen kwam dus Diversion, die wilden een *peer education* project opzetten in een Nederlands museum. Want dat hadden ze ergens gelezen in een scriptie, toen bleek ik daar aan tafel te zitten en dat ik die scriptie had geschreven. Dat was een mooi toeval, vervolgens hebben we samen een plan gemaakt en een fondsaanvraag gedaan bij het Mondriaan, VSB en SNS Reaal Fonds. Dat was echt een pilot, een miniversie vergeleken met wat het nu is. Toen hadden alle fondsen honderd procent toegekend. Het was voor mij heel mooi om binnen dat team te werken. Het team bestond uit Rixt, die had die voorbeelden uit New York ook gezien en was er zelf geweest. Zij wist precies wat ik bedoelde en wij voelden elkaar helemaal aan op dat gebied. En Diversion, als niet-museale maatschappelijke partner, die juist weer heel veel aanvoelde op dat sociaal-maatschappelijke gebied en jongeren en de methodiek. Dat was een gouden match.

Want die *peer-to-peer* methodiek komt niet zozeer uit de museumwereld?

Dat weet ik eigenlijk ook niet. Dat staat vast beschreven in het *Peer Education 2.0* boek. Volgens mij had Diversion wel ervaring met *peer education*, maar niet in een museum. Er zit een sociaal-maatschappelijke laag onder. In mijn scriptie heb ik het beschreven als *peer education* in de context van het museum. Ik heb ontzettend veel geput uit wat ik bij het Whitney heb gezien. Ik heb twee dozen laten verschepen, toen was het nog niet digitaal allemaal. Ik wilde alles meenemen, ik dacht: hier kan ik tien jaar mee vooruit. Die heb ik dus laten verschepen, alles heb ik nog steeds bewaard. Het project komt heel erg voort uit

mijn eigen ervaringen.

In hoeverre is de *Blikopeners* veranderd ten opzichte van het originele concept?

Eigenlijk is het niet veranderd. Maar af en toe maak ik mij wel zorgen of het goed is ingebed in de instelling in verband met directiewisselingen. Bij het Whitney loopt het nog steeds, wordt het steeds doorontwikkeld en daar liep het ook al tien jaar toen ik daar begon. Het is echt een onderdeel van het museum, soms ben ik bang dat dat hier nog niet het geval is. Ik kan het wel loslaten, maar mensen zeggen soms wel tegen mij dat ze zich zorgen maken over de toekomst van het project. Er is nu een andere directeur en hoofd educatie. Ik heb het gevoel dat het niet voor iedereen vanzelfsprekend is dat dit er is. Ook is het best fondsafhankelijk. Bij het Whitney was het onlosmakelijk verbonden met het museum. Het kan niet zonder. Ik geloof daar heel erg in, als je die jongeren er niet bijhaalt is dat funest voor de toekomst van het museum. Ook als ik zie wat het nu al voor het museum heeft gebracht, alleen al als netwerk van mensen die je op elk moment kan inzetten (zowel inhoudelijk als praktisch). Je hebt een grote groep mensen die betrokken zijn, elk moment dat ik in het Stedelijk kom is er een *Blikopener* aanwezig. Vaak zijn dat zelfs alumni *Blikopeners* die nog steeds in het museum komen. Daar ben ik heel trots op, ik geloof dat het project heel veel heeft betekend voor veel jongeren op persoonlijk niveau.

Dus het voornaamste is dat de *Blikopeners* structureler ingebed moeten worden in het museum?

Ik denk dat het nog heel erg afhankelijk is van de directie en hoofd educatie.

Het bestaat al bijna tien jaar nu?

Dat was wel mijn droom, in die zin is het geslaagd. Het is überhaupt al gelukt om het langer dan drie jaar te laten bestaan. Er zijn nu veel *Blikopeners* die ik helemaal niet ken en die mij niet kennen, dat vind ik heel leuk. Het project is niet meer van mij, daar ben ik super trots op. Als ik soms verhalen hoor van enkele *Blikopeners*, alleen al voor die ene is het alles waard geweest. Als je kijkt naar levens veranderende gebeurtenissen, dan is dat goed gelukt met het project. Alleen al de vriendschappen die zijn ontstaan, alleen daar doe je het al voor. De intensiteit van het project, wat ik ook ervaren heb in New York, dat is heel goed gelukt. Je kan zeggen, dat is iets magisch en dat gebeurt, maar ik denk dat je daar ook heel erg de regie over kan nemen. We hebben dat ook echt wel gedaan, en dan nog moet het lukken want je bent afhankelijk van veel factoren. We hebben wel alle voorwaarden proberen te scheppen om dat te doen.

Dus je wil zeggen: het is niet iets dat zomaar ontstaat, maar het kost ook heel veel energie en regie?

Ja, veel regie en gevoel voor detail. Dat zit hem in hoe de jongeren selecteert, hoe je programmeert, de tijden en frequentie. Het is gelukt om het op te zetten zoals ik het voor mij zag door de synergie die ontstond bij volle financiering, steun vanuit het museum en samenwerking met Diversion. En ik had het voor mij gezien. Ik denk dat als je het uit de theorie zou moeten doen, dan denk je nog van: "Ja, maar hoe moet het nou?" Ik had het gezien en ik kon dat uitleggen. Maar kon ook nog benoemen wat het al was.

Eigenlijk was je al een expert omdat jij het van zo dichtbij had meegemaakt?

Ja, en later had ik steeds meer de theorie eronder gelegd. Dat is eigenlijk

omgekeerd gegaan.

Dat is interessant!

Ja, heel interessant eigenlijk. Dat hebben we wel bij meer projecten in het Stedelijk zo gedaan.

Theorie volgt praktijk, in plaats van andersom.

Dat doet Emiel Heijen ook, dat hij vanuit theorie het project gaat onderbouwen. Het project is niet zomaar “we doen maar wat”. Maar het is wel heel erg vanuit de praktijk opgezet.

Op welke educatietheorieën is de *Blikopeners* gebaseerd? Alleen de *peer education* theorie uit het Whitney Museum?

Je kan wel zeggen dat Rixt en ik allebei heel veel hebben gekeken naar Engeland en de Verenigde Staten. Wij volgden projecten en lazen daar theorie over. Dat was heel erg de visie van de afdeling en dat heeft de basis in het constructivistisch leren van Hein en Hooper-Greenhill. Ik was stomverbaasd dat geen enkele museumeducator die kende. Ik dacht, “dit kan niet!” Maar nu, tien jaar later, is er heel veel gebeurd. Maar naar mijn beleving was hier in 2006 nog geen sprake van. Voor deze tijd was er ook geen educatieafdeling in het Stedelijk. Alleen Rian Beex die de rondleidingen regelde, that was it.

Maar ik heb het idee dat als je de geschiedenis van het Stedelijk leest, dat er in de jaren vijftig en zestig wel een educatieve afdeling was?

Nou ja, de vraag is dan: “Wat versta je onder educatie?”. Dat was vaak geen afdeling, maar een conservator die het erbij deed. Meer dan een rondleiding of een zaalttekst, dat was echt niet aan de hand.

De voorbeelden komen dus uit Engeland en de VS. Hadden jullie het idee: we moeten het hierheen halen omdat het er niet is? Was dat de missie?

Ik kan alleen voor mijzelf spreken, maar ik wilde wel echt wat gaan veranderen in Nederland. Ik was jong en ik had zoveel ideeën. En in het Stedelijk, met Rixt, kon op dat moment alles. Want we gingen dicht en zaten in een tijdelijke locatie, dus daar was veel ruimte voor. Veel dingen kwamen samen, daardoor waren er ideale omstandigheden om het te doen.

Waren er nog andere Nederlandse voorbeelden naast Showroom Mama's Rookies?

Mijn eerste stage was bij Museum Arnhem, bij Joke Alkema, die toen ook al best vooruitstrevend was. Zij heeft toen al vrij vroeg een tentoonstelling gemaakt met jongeren. Toen was de reactie: “oh, dat kan echt niet.” Een tentoonstelling met jongeren, dat was echt al heel heftig. Joke Alkema was dus met spannende dingen bezig, die had ook wel wat met jongeren gedaan. Maar sowieso, nog steeds, jongeren buiten het onderwijs is echt een no-go area. Jongeren “waren nog niet aan hun haren naar het museum te slepen”. Nog steeds veel mensen zeggen dat, die willen er niet in investeren en vinden het veel te ingewikkeld. Ik had wel een heel andere benadering, ik wilde die uitdaging wel aangaan. Het zullen misschien geen massa's zijn, maar ik geloof dat jongeren het hartstikke leuk vinden in het museum. Ik denk dat dat bij de *Blikopeners* gelukt is: jongeren in het museum halen die er anders nooit zouden komen. Echt dat non-publiek, waar nog steeds musea heel weinig onderzoek naar doen of letterlijk naar toe gaan. Daar zit dan ook dat puntje

dat jij aanwijst, werken buiten de muren en binnen de muren van het museum. Want wie is nou dat publiek dat niet komt? Veel mensen vinden dat te veel moeite. Ik denk dat het museum voor veel meer mensen interessant is dan die nu komen. Dat zag ik ook bij het Whitney, iedereen kan een connectie maken met kunst en het museum. Vanuit jezelf kan je allerlei verbanden leggen. Maar het is ook een plek om vrienden te ontmoeten, te contempleren over hele ingewikkelde dingen, maar ook gewoon om lol te hebben. En dat lukte vrij snel, dat vond ik echt een kick.

Het is positief dat het ook echt lukt. Je ziet ook weleens educatieprojecten die op papier mooier lijken, dan dat ze in de praktijk zijn.

Ik wilde ook wel bewijzen dat dit mogelijk was. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan een hardcore Marokkaans meisje, dochter van een rijschoolhouder, die nog nooit in een museum is geweest. En die komt hier solliciteren omdat ze een baantje wil. Of een jongen uit centrum Amsterdam, vol tattoos en kettingen, die drie jaar later opbelt om een onderzoek te doen naar het museum vanuit zijn studie. Zij voelen zich zo betrokken bij het museum, het kan gewoon. Als er veel oprechte interesse en investering in het project zit.

Had je een bepaald profiel in gedachten voor degene die de *Blikopeners* begeleidt?

Dat ging vanzelf. Maar Dorine hadden we als stagiaire heel bewust aangenomen. Je wil een jong iemand die goed connectie kan maken, maar je moet ook stevig in je schoenen staan. Dorine kon dat heel goed, beter dan ik. Zij heeft dat veel natuurlijker. Ik vond het gaaf, maar het is niet mijn kracht.

Wat toch constant aanwezig is bij de *Blikopeners*, wat er als het ware boven hangt, is de mate van vrijheid. Dat zit eigenlijk ook in die tweedeling van enerzijds connectie maken op persoonlijk niveau en anderzijds af en toe streng moeten zijn. In hoeverre krijg je als *Blikopener* vrijheid en in hoeverre kan je de *Blikopeners* vrijlaten als begeleider?

Het is heel belangrijk om de koppeling te maken tussen het museum en de *Blikopeners*, dat moet je heel strak regisseren. Tussen medewerkers en *Blikopeners*, de structuraliteit. Dat is een belangrijke succesfactor, er moet verbinding zijn met het museum en al haar medewerkers. Niet alleen de begeleider van de *Blikopeners*. Anders gaat het niet, of dan wordt het project iets anders. Het gaat echt om die verbinding met het museum. Dat was voor Dorine al meer een uitdaging, en Joy zie ik daar nog meer mee worstelen. In mijn tijd was dat gemakkelijker, omdat het museum toen anders was en omdat ik daar al een tijdje werkte. Ik werkte meer vanuit de inhoud als kunsthistoricus en Dorine meer vanuit een sociaal-maatschappelijke achtergrond door haar opleiding Culturele en Maatschappelijke Vorming.

Het project is dus duidelijk gericht op het instituut. Het gaat heel erg om het betrekken van mensen bij het instituut en de instelling veranderen van binnenuit.

Ja, en dat is wel interessant voor jouw onderzoek. Want daarbij komt de vraag op: "hoe zit dat als je dit buiten het museum doet of binnen het museum?" Ook als je kijkt naar het onderzoek over vijf jaar *Blikopeners*. Dat heb ik gebruikt voor het laatste projectplan. Dat micro-, meso-, macroniveau: je hebt doelen op het gebied van de jongeren, de omgeving van de jongeren en doelen en effecten op het museum zelf en eventueel de wereld daaromheen. En voor mij zijn al die drie

onderdelen belangrijk in het project. En over die laatste maak ik mij nu zorgen, ik maak mij nu zorgen of dat nog zo is als toen ik er nog was.

De binding met het instituut is dus wel een essentiële bouwsteen voor het project?

Ik denk het wel, en ik denk dat daar het gevaar zit voor het project. Dat is ook wat ik bedoel met continuïteit en duurzaamheid.

Als je zo terugkijkt naar de afgelopen jaren, zou je het project dan in kunnen delen in verschillende fasen, hoe het project zich heeft ontwikkeld? Denk bijvoorbeeld aan de opening van de *Blikopener* Spot als ruimte in het museum en het feit dat de rondleidingen waarschijnlijk gaan verdwijnen. Terwijl dit wel een van de beginselen is van het project.

Ik weet niet zo goed hoe dat nu is. Maar de rondleidingen en de programmering waren de basis. De ruimte kwam er bij door ideeën van Ann Goldstein en het nieuwe museum dat werd heropend in 2012. We wilden het een vaste plek geven. Ik heb die ruimte heel ingewikkeld gevonden. Het is mij ook nooit gelukt om daar iets heel goeds van te maken. Ik vond die ruimte altijd heel moeilijk. Het was in mijn hoofd nooit zo bedoeld, om een tentoonstelling te maken in een specifieke ruimte. Het moest juist in het hele museum en niet op één plek. En die ruimte was toch wel weer gaaf. Als je een ruimte krijgt, dan ga je dat toch doen. Dat is wel een soort breuk. Dat is ook wel interessant voor jouw onderzoek. Want dan heb je ineens een fysieke plek in het museum en die moet je vullen. Het is een vak apart, conservator zijn is een vak. Dat kan niet zomaar iedereen doen. Het is wel interessant om dat met jongeren te doen en hen erbij te betrekken. Maar het ging toen helemaal niet goed tijdens het ontwikkelproces. Het was prima, maar ik ben daar niet heel trots op. Daar heb ik mij misschien ook nooit op kunnen focussen, omdat het voor mij niet bij het project hoort. Het was wel heel gaaf om te werken met allemaal verschillende kunstenaars. Het was bijna weer too much. Die directeuren zijn heel belangrijk in de ontwikkeling van het project, want dit kwam vanuit Ann. Die rondleidingen waren ook echt mijn ding. Daar zit ook het kunsthistorische in. Het is ook heel moeilijk om jongeren een goede rondleiding te laten geven en de verwachtingen te managen van jongeren en publiek. Ik geloof daar wel heel erg in, maar ik weet dat dit niet makkelijk is. Die drie niveaus komen daar weer terug. Daarin zie je dat het museum de rondleidingen misschien ingewikkeld vindt. Want dat moet op een bepaalde manier volgens bepaalde standaarden en jongeren mogen niet aan de kunstwerken zitten. Het publiek van dezelfde leeftijd vindt het heel interessant, dat is echt *peer-to-peer education*. Maar ook voor de *Blikopeners* zelf, of je nou goed bent of niet, leer je er heel veel van om host te zijn en het museum te representeren. En voor een groep staan en alle vaardigheden die je daarbij leert, ook al ga je nooit rondleiden, daar leer je heel veel van. Dat is wel echt een kernonderdeel waar al die niveaus soms wrijving hebben. In dat moment zit wel alles van het project.

Het is dus niet per se in fasen in te delen, maar er zijn wel bepaalde breuken te zien in de ontwikkeling?

Ja, en dat heeft dus vooral te maken met de directeur die op dat moment de dienst uitmaakt. En misschien ook de hoofd educatie die er op dat moment werkt. Joy vind ik leuk. Haar kracht ligt weer heel erg bij haar kunstenaarschap. Ik was echt een kunsthistoricus, Dorine een community manager en Joy is de kunstenaar. Dus zij brengt het werken met kunstenaars en de actieve kunsteducatie naar voren.

Ik verdeel vaak receptieve, reflectieve en actieve kunsteducatie. Reflectief is er samen op reflecteren, daar zat ik heel erg op. Nu is het misschien meer actieve kunsteducatie, jezelf kunstenaar voelen en jongeren aanspreken die geïnteresseerd zijn in kunst maken. Dat vind ik wel heel leuk, want dat is weer een hele andere groep jongeren die je aanspreekt.

En Dorine?

Zij zat meer op het maatschappelijke, zij was de ster in het echt bouwen van die groepen en communities die maar terug blijven komen.

De educatieve achtergrond in elke fase wordt dus bepaald door degene die de *Blikopeners* begeleidt?

Het project heeft verschillende doelen. De *Blikopeners* gaat niet alleen over kunsteducatie, maar ook over de persoonlijke ontwikkeling van jongeren. Dan is kunst een middel. We hebben nooit echt uitgezocht wat die doelen precies zijn. Maar ik wist wel dat het een positief effect had op jongeren. Jongeren durfden zo zichzelf te zijn, dat ze bijvoorbeeld uit de kast kwamen of van gender zijn veranderd. Ik denk dat de *Blikopeners* daar wel aan heeft bijgedragen, aan een gevoel van veiligheid, acceptatie en zelfverzekerdheid. Tien procent van de groep komt er meestal net niet helemaal in. Maar er gebeurde wel echt wat met die jongeren. Dat ze een plek hadden buiten school, buiten ouders, hun eigen plek om te leren. Daar zit heel erg dat informele leren in. Volgens mij is dat zo'n belangrijke omgeving voor persoonlijke ontwikkeling. Het is werk en wordt serieus genomen. Je ziet die jongeren bijna letterlijk groeien in hun identiteit en zelfverzekerdheid. Ik ging mij er dan meer in verdiepen, in het puberbrein. Hoe werkt het nou, waar moet je op letten bij jongeren? Vooral ook heel erg die positieve benadering. Docenten en ouders zijn vaak negatief. Het was gelijkwaardig, niet als docent of ouder maar als werkgever. Zij konden dingen vragen.

Er was wel een hiërarchie, maar niet op een schoolse manier.

Klopt. Wij waren dan wel werkgevers waar je mee kon praten als een soort mentor. Dat is ook wel interessant voor jouw onderzoek om te kijken naar de sociaal-maatschappelijke kant van het project. Daar zit heel veel. Dat zag ik in New York ook, ik dacht: daar is de maatschappij anders en daar is geen vangnet. Maar in Amsterdam bleek het ook te werken. In Amerika heb je heel erg dat de samenleving het oplost, dat de overheid stappen terugneemt. Dat sociale zit natuurlijk wel heel erg in wat Rixt en ik op dat moment zagen een meenamen. Ook social inclusion en community building, wat ik ook in mijn onderzoek beschrijf. Rick van der Ploeg zette daar begin 2000 heel erg op in, toen verdween het weer, maar nu begint dat debat over diversiteit te komen. Dat was toen net zo urgent als nu, maar het is nu een politiek item. Dan zie je goed de invloed van de politiek, de minister en de staatssecretaris die dat agenderen.

Dat zie je ook terug in fondsen, dat zij projecten sturen.

Ja heel erg. Maar zo krijg je ook wel weer dingen voor elkaar. Toen bij de *Blikopeners* voelde ik wel dat we dat echt zelf wilden. Dat zie je nu ook weleens, dat instellingen op bepaalde fondsen schrijven. Of dat een directeur zegt, "we moeten wel even meegaan en iets leuks bedenken, anders krijgen we geen subsidie meer". Een museum moet het echt willen, maar wij wilden heel graag en geloofden er zelf in.

Hebben jullie er ooit over nagedacht om de *Blikopeners* buiten het museum te

presenteren?

Waar je nog naar kan kijken is de periode dat we dicht waren, we hadden geen museum. Bijvoorbeeld de Bouwkeet, daar hebben we op 12 of 14 plekken gestaan. Toen stonden we in Noord en dachten we: we gaan contact maken met mensen uit de buurt. Dat was echt een outreach project, de programmering werd aangepast aan de buurt. Die bemanning van de Bouwkeet was heel ingewikkeld. Dan stond een ultieme museum kakvrouw, om het ongegeneerd te zeggen, naast de Marokkaanse jongen in *Blikopener*-shirt uit Noord. Die hebben daar samen de grootste lol gehad en hebben iedereen verleid met hun eigen charmes.

Dus buiten het museum werken was in die tijd een noodzakelijkheid voor de *Blikopeners*?

Ja, dat was niet vanuit het project bedacht.

Had je het idee dat het project goed naar voren kwam?

Dat weet ik niet. Maar ik vond dat het heel goed samenging. Naar het publiek toe was het geweldig. Want ik had leuke mensen in de Bouwkeet die contact konden maken en veel van het museum wisten. Maar ook allerlei ideeën in de programmering, ik heb dat wel ervaren als een fijne samenwerking. Dit was in het eerste jaar, eerst Post CS, toen de Bouwkeet en uiteindelijk hebben we die *Blikopeners* langer aangehouden omdat we niet een nieuwe groep wilden beginnen in een gesloten museum. We hebben hen gevraagd wat langer te blijven.

Het grootste pluspunt van het programma is dus op een persoonlijke manier een verandering te bewerkstelligen bij verschillende personen?

Het gaat voor mij ook heel erg om het museum, dat is net zo belangrijk. Wat het museum leert van die jongeren. Dat is een valkuil van het project, ik geloof heel erg in die gelijkwaardigheid, maar veel mensen zien het toch vaak als een educatieproject dat zich focust op de jongeren. Maar het gaat ook om het openbreken van het museum en ideeën genereren en er andere mensen in zien rondlopen. Het kan ook iets heel persoonlijks zijn, dat ik het interessant vind om te zien wat er met die jongeren gebeurt. Maar de jongeren en het museum zijn allebei even belangrijk. Een voorbeeld zijn de foto's tijdens een opening, de enige diverse personen op de foto zijn allemaal gelinkt aan de *Blikopeners*. Voor de rest bestaat het publiek vooral uit hoogopgeleide witte mensen uit de kunstwereld die alle openingen afgaan. Dat is het. Ik hoop dat het blijft en dat de *Blikopeners* daarna ook doorgaan in de sector. Het ging met de *Blikopeners* ook echt om het vernieuwen van de sector. Zodra het museum als geheel ontbreekt, dan gaat het niet goed met het project zoals het is bedacht. Dan ben je de essentie kwijt. Daar ben ik altijd heel bewust mee bezig geweest en de andere coördinatoren met mij.

Wat zie je als het grootste minpunt van het project? Iets dat niet gelukt is?

De *Blikopener* Spot. Daar geloof ik niet zo in. En de inbedding in het museum vind ik heel spannend. Je moet het samen met jongeren doen. Het heeft ook geen zin om ze alle vrijheid te geven. Je moet samen wat maken met alle kennis en expertise die je hebt.

Wat is de grootste uitdaging in het project?

Het gaat erom dat je blijft investeren, dat je er een medewerker op zet, dat je ze alles laat zien in het museum en overal mee naar toe neemt. Het gaat er niet om dat de jongeren iets komen doen voor het museum zodat er meer jongeren komen. Je

moet tijd investeren en echt met elkaar contact maken. Dan kan er volgens mij iets moois ontstaan. Dus investeren, elkaar wekelijks zien, tijd met elkaar doorbrengen en het serieus nemen van de jongeren. Volgens mij brengt die ervaring jongeren naar grotere hoogten. Die verantwoordelijkheid krijg je, maar niet zomaar.

Het kader moet dus niet te groot zijn, waarin de jongeren werken?

Ja, je moet het samen doen. Maar misschien is een nog betere versie, wat jij nu eigenlijk gaat doen, is dat *Blikopeners* die ouder zijn vervolgens dit soort projecten zelf gaan doen. Dat zou een mooie volgende stap zijn. Ik weet dat dit in 2010 met het *Blikopener* symposium voor mij een volgende stap zou zijn. Daarin gaf het Whitney aan dat zij op zoek zijn naar hoe de jongeren nu iets terug kunnen doen voor het project. Dat is natuurlijk heel Amerikaans. Dat zit niet zo in het Nederlandse. Maar ik heb het wel nu zien gebeuren, dat alumni *Blikopeners* zich op andere manieren inzetten voor het project. Allerlei jongeren blijven betrokken bij het project en weten het project ook weer verder te brengen. Dat is ideaal, als het als community zelfvoorzienend wordt. Aan het begin vond ik dat ook jammer, je investeert en soms komen die jongeren na een jaar nooit meer terug. Dat is jammer. Dan is zo'n jaar wel heel kort, als je het echt hebt over community, dan wil je dat iedereen honderd procent betrokken blijft. Dat lukt natuurlijk niet. Soms is dat wel teleurstellend, dat niet iedereen die hoge mate van betrokkenheid heeft. Maar het is ook realistisch, je kan niet iedereen bereiken. Kijk dan vooral naar degenen die je wel bereikt. Ik zou de *Blikopeners* nog wel op lange termijn willen onderzoeken, hoe kijken *Blikopeners* er na honderd jaar op terug?

Wat ik zelf wel heb meegemaakt, als *Blikopener* maar ook in de rol van het begeleiden, is de spanning rond de mate van verantwoordelijkheid.

Dat herken ik inderdaad, dat vond ik zelf ook lastig. Als projectleider van de *Blikopeners* zit je tussen het museum en de jongeren. Je probeert de regels zoveel mogelijk op te rekken, maar dat is wel heel ingewikkeld. Je ken het instituut en je weet dat je niet alles kan doen. Dat komt ook duidelijk tot uitdrukking in die ruimte. Wat jongeren wilden, dat kon niet in het museum. Soms moet je dan ook zeggen dat dingen niet kunnen, omdat het niet mag. Dat is ook wat zo mooi en lastig is aan jongeren: dat idealistische, niet beperkt door grenzen, denken in mogelijkheden in plaats van beperkingen. Dat is soms heel moeilijk, omdat het soms echt niet gaat. Maar ik kan mij goed voorstellen dat die kritiek er weleens was. Waar zit nou die vrijheid? Wat mogen we nou echt? Maar die werkgeversconstructie, daar geloof ik heilig in. Het is zo fijn dat je die relatie kan pakken van medewerker en baas, in tegenstelling tot een vrijwillige functie. "We gaan samen kijken hoe we dit gaan doen, maar uiteindelijk betaal ik je". Je kan iemand aanspreken op werk en dat maakt het minder persoonlijk. We hebben het wel heel duidelijk geregisseerd, er zat een duidelijke structuur achter. Dat draagt allemaal bij aan het succes van die *community building*. Dat is ook wat ik interessant vind aan jouw onderzoek, wat gebeurt er nou als zij buiten het museum gaan werken?

De vergelijking is natuurlijk relatief, in een project van twee dagen hebben de *Blikopeners* niet zoveel ervaring als het *Blikopeners* project waar ze al jaren onderdeel van zijn.

Het is interessant om daarover te reflecteren met de jongeren, dat is iets dat je samen met de jongeren heel goed kan gaan benoemen. Omdat zij toch die ervaring binnen het museum hebben.

De meest interessante projecten waren dus vooral te vinden in de VS en UK?

Ja, vooral naar Tate's *Raw Canvas*. En ik was ook heel erg van het kijken en praten met mensen, er naartoe gaan. Ik ga niet erover lezen en op de website kijken. Dat kon toen ook vanuit het Stedelijk, al moest daar wel moeite voor worden gedaan. En dan ook met *Blikopeners* samen naar het buitenland om voorbeelden te bekijken. Tijdens het *Blikopener* symposium hebben we allemaal interessante internationale partners uitgenodigd die soortgelijke projecten doen. Mensen van het MoMa, LA MOCA en Tate. Alleen het Walker Art Center niet, al waren die in Amerika de eerste met een soortgelijk programma.

Dus de theorie kwam later in het proces?

Het kwam heel erg vanuit het professionele netwerk. In die zin was het een professional learning community. Ik had nog allemaal contacten in New York, daar wisselde ik van alles mee uit. En in Tate met Esther Sayers. In Centre Pompidou en in Denemarken in het Nationalmuseet. Dan hoor je over interessante literatuur of uitprobeersels in de praktijk. Maar we hebben wel altijd geprobeerd om jongeren mee te nemen en het samen met hen te doen. Niet dat het zo'n museum dingetje wordt van "wij gaan dat daar weleens even uitzoeken". Er is uiteindelijk een echt netwerk ontstaan, allemaal instellingen en jongeren. Dat is nooit zo getheoretiseerd, maar het was echt een *professional learning community*. Dat is waar ik mijn kennis, inspiratie en ideeën vandaan heb gehaald. Het was een *community of practice*. De kunsteducatiesector is daar heel open in, er wordt veel met elkaar gedeeld. Ik haalde mijn kennis uit de praktijk en niet door allemaal boeken te bestellen en te gaan lezen.

Wat is voor jou het grootste verschil tussen learning communities binnen en buiten het museum?

Ik denk dat buiten het museum het ambassadeur zijn heel belangrijk is. Dat is de laatste jaren weggefallen binnen het museum. Dat was ook het idee achter de *Blikopeners*, de ambassadeurs van het museum, ook naar andere jongeren toe. Als je dit buiten het museum gaat doen is dat nog sterker. Omdat je het museum misschien ook representeert, in het museum is dat logischer want dan hoor je al bij het museum. Dat moet je buiten misschien meer uitleggen. Het beschouwen van kunst was voor mij de basis van het project. Ik ben benieuwd hoe dat in dat soort projecten buiten het museum wordt vormgegeven.

Omdat daar geen collectie is?

Inderdaad. Dat kan je op een andere manier invullen door met hedendaagse kunstenaars samen te werken. En hedendaagse kunst is misschien ook niet altijd in het museum, maar kan ook heel makkelijk daarbuiten zijn en nog steeds een link hebben met het museum. Het museum verandert ook heel erg.

Dat is misschien ook een traditioneel idee, om uit te gaan van een collectie?

Vooral omdat je ziet dat veel instituten daar ook vanaf stappen.

Ik geloof wel dat dat nog steeds een museum heel leuk en bijzonder maakt. Omdat je al die kunst tot je beschikking hebt. Het lijkt mij juist bijzonder en belangrijk dat jongeren in deze tijd ook echt fysiek in aanraking komen met de kunst zelf. De context van het museum is heel spannend en leuk omdat het tussen privaat en publiek zit. Het is een soort openbare ruimte, maar er zijn regels. En die worden toch ook weer doorbroken door kunstenaars. Ik ben heel benieuwd hoe dat buiten

het museum gaat. Niet dat ik er niet in geloof, ik vind het juist heel interessant om letterlijk die *outreach* te doen.

In de projecten die ik heb bekeken en het project dat ik ga uitvoeren gaat het vaak niet eens om het 'gezicht zijn van het museum', maar meer om het feit dat het museum een bepaalde groep mensen de kans geeft om met een kunstenaar samen te werken buiten het museum. Dat zijn denk ik twee verschillende dingen.

Ik denk in die zin ook niet aan promotie, maar wel aan een soort hoger doel dat je mensen in contact brengt met musea. Daar heb ik bij de *Blikopeners* ook voor gewaakt, dat het niet een marketing ding wordt.

Ik denk dat het museum daar nog heel veel werk kan verrichten en dat het buiten zijn muren moet treden. De vraag is wel: Wat ga je doen? Wat is je basis? Daar ben ik wel heel nieuwsgierig naar. Wat ga je dan met mensen in die wijk doen? Want daar geloof ik wel heel erg in.

Er moet wel een link zijn met kunst?

Ja, als er maar een receptieve kant is. Dat hoeft niet als eerste te zijn, het is niet zo dat je eerst moet kijken en dat je er daarna pas iets over kan leren. Maar het museum staat wel voor hedendaagse kunst, dat is wel je context.

Appendix F – Interview: Ashley Whitfield

Date: 07-02-2017

Where did the concept for *Looking for Sierra Leone* initially come from?

I think that answer is twofold. First, as with working with institutions it has to do with funding opportunities. Frances, who was head of the education department at the time, found great opportunities with the Southwark Council. Southwark is the borough where the South London Gallery exists. Essentially, it was a grant programme where one could apply if you work with the local community. You would then receive a certain amount of money. And also because of the work Frances was doing at the time in terms of community engagement. Before I came to the South London Gallery, she developed a number of links in the Sierra Leonean community in Southwark. Which, if I have this right, make up the second largest migrant group in South London. They have a major presence in Southwark. And it was the 50th anniversary of Sierra Leone's independence. So those three things converged in coming up with wanting to work with the community in some way. So that was the first answer, there was a funding opportunity and there were relationships that already existed. The second part of the answer is, by the time I started to work with Frances and the SLG, I also had certain commitments and allegiances to working with the local community. And it seemed that that platform would be a good one to continue that work. So those two things coming together I suppose.

Did you use any programmes from other institutions as an example? Or programmes that had been done before at the South London Gallery? What did you use as an inspiration for the project?

The thing is, once the project is finished and you see the outcome, such as the film and anything else, it kind of ties in nicely to similar gallery education projects. But for me, as with most of the gallery education programmes, the continuous thread is the very beginning. It is the way we choose to work with people. So we had dinners and workshops, but a lot of it was an informal way of coming together. And I guess for me the model does not necessarily come from gallery education, but just: "How do you develop relationships with people in general?" You have to invest time. And I think the film came out of that, but essentially in terms of a model, it is just really any kind of friendship/family/relationship. I always like having dinners; I think that that really helps. My background is rooted in initiatives that are community-based, like the Radical Education Forum and so on. Those are all about bringing people together, so these are other types of models. But I cannot think of another project within the gallery scene that I was thinking about.

It is really interesting to see that these programmes come from a non-institutional background, and are more focused on friendships and relationships with people instead of pre-made models or examples from the field.

Programmes such as the *Blikopeners* seem to focus very much on the institution, and these peer-to-peer learning models are co-opted by different museums.

The work that I am interested in is almost always site-specific. Southwark has a really large Sierra Leonean community. So it would not really work to look at a programme of a gallery of the same size since they are working with a very different community and have a different set of concerns. Even within that community the concerns that are related to people are diverse and vary. You also have to think about what gallery education is for, I think if the emphasis is constantly to teach or to engage, then, at least for me, the programming sometimes can fall short. For me

at least, in that particular moment in life when I had more time as well to commit, it really was not necessarily about teaching young people anything, or engaging them or trying to get more numbers. It was really about amplifying the community that was already there and really making the gallery accessible to those communities. It is not really about the project, if that makes sense. The project is just a fun thing to do alongside that, at least for me.

It is interesting that you had the space to do this, considering the fact that funding bodies also request numbers. I think the tension between the quality of a programme and getting enough people in is always present.

I found that there were a few things that helped the tension that you describe. The first is having a really supportive team at the South London Gallery. Particularly Frances, in the role of Head of Education, was very trusting and trustworthy. Trusting, meaning that she trusted me to deliver on a project even when there were times when you ask yourself how it comes to provision and what the outcomes are going to be. You know, because as you said, these people are going to ask. And by trustworthy I mean, because she was also trusting me, I felt that I could trust her and trust my process to allow this thing to take shape. So I think that it is really important to have a boss who is very supportive. But then also, there is usually room within these budgets. For instance, within this example, we received the funding but there were certain things that changed. I remember we applied within particular conditions and numbers, but then as the project developed some things changed. We worked with the Development Officer at the time, to report back to Southwark council and said: "This is some of the stuff we are doing instead". And that was fine. Because the thing was, we were still doing something that was interesting and something that engaged people. But it was just in a slightly different way as we set out with. But I am not the director of the gallery, so I do not have those same pressures as the person at the very top. But I think ultimately, when one looks at these projects, there is room within the budget and within the reporting back. It is just about having the support to say: "We are going to report back in this way". And that should be alright, it is almost like corruption I suppose [laughs]. I think that that is important, otherwise you end up with saying: "I had one hundred people coming to this event". But what does that mean for lasting long-term relationships?

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What kind of theories or methodologies did you use in the project itself? You already mentioned that it was a relationship-based programme, so how did that work out? Did you use any specific methods in terms of learning?

In terms of theory, to begin, I think two theories were guiding me at the time. I cannot think of the author but the text is called *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*. At the very bottom is 'therapy' and at the very top is the most integrated way of community involvement where the stakeholders are from the community just as much as the people who are delivering or whoever else it is. And this is not in terms of education but in terms of community-specific engagement. At the bottom is 'therapy', which is something I would be kind of imparting on someone. A lot of education in the arts has been collapsed to a type of therapy. Which could be useful, but it also creates a dichotomy where you have a person who is a patient and a person who is a doctor or nurse. There also is the caregiver role, but if you use the doctor-patient role, there is also a power dynamic between these two. I try to get as far away from that as possible and lean as much as possible towards being a stakeholder amongst many other stakeholders. But I also have to be honest that

I am being paid by the gallery to facilitate the programme. There are certain things that I need to deliver or guide, just as the person that is ultimately responsible for the project. And for that I suppose I usually think of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which is pretty straightforward. But particularly the idea of creating environments, setting limits and boundaries that allow things to happen in those spaces, to create relationships. That is the theory. In terms of methodology, as I mentioned before, the key thing for me is supper. So making sure that people who come the event like the type of food that is being served. So we had West African food as dinner. Which was quite something for us, because the gallery does have a café, so you could easily ask them to make some food. But the point was to have Sierra Leonean food during a Sierra Leonean event. And almost every time when we brought in a group of people, we had a dinner of sorts. The first time we constituted the group we almost always had meetings over lunch. When we worked with young people, we usually ate something and had conversations around food. We had a dinner in the gallery for some of the older members of the community. We recorded some of those and that ended up in the film. But ultimately it was just a dinner and I had a few questions that I laid out. Okay, so methodology. Dinner was first, and then there are workshops that happened. I tried to make the workshops movement-based. I am sure you have come across these methods, such as: “take two steps forward if you have experienced this, take one step back if not”. And also in terms of methodology, I think getting out and going on fieldtrips is quite useful because you have an experience together. The actual fieldtrip itself and what you might learn, and also just the experience of getting on a bus together going someplace. I guess making experiences together is important. I think for me those dinner things are important as well because it is really about, not in a tokenistic way or a stereotypical way, but trying as much as possible to see what is important for the stakeholders of the community and providing something from there. Me for instance, coming from Detroit, I heard Motown music in Harrods. Which I thought was so cool, because in my hometown a lot of the exclusive stores do not play the music that is from the place. That is what I am trying to describe, how you prioritize this. When you go to a beautiful gallery like the South London Gallery and they are serving West African food. I think that kind of breaks the ice in a way. That was also really key. So I should say that we proposed at the beginning to do a film of sorts and we did it with Chris Haydon from Community TV. He has done a lot of work in South London, creating films with young people and other community members. He really served as a key contact in the actual making of the film, so the process of editing and other technical things. I think the strategy is to make as many resources available for the community as possible and then also being open for their suggestions for places to go to. A little anecdote that sums this up for me is the following: in the initial research for the project I started noticing references to Sierra Leone in South London. A lot of businesses were named after Sierra Leone in some way: whether it was a reference to ‘mountain’ (Sierra) or ‘lion’ (Leone) or the colours of the flag. One of the people at the start of the project, who was integral to getting it started, eventually moved back to Sierra Leone. He introduced me to a tailor and he told me that these tailors function as a barber shop: people just chat and everything else. This was very much a Sierra Leonean tailor. I had some fabric and I wanted some dresses made, so I started the relationship by being a client and I think that really helped. That was not something the gallery reimbursed me for, and it was not that he was making a lot of money off of me. But showing my interest in what he was doing was important for the relationship. And even after the programme was finished I would go to him for alterations and things like that.

Those are the ways that the relationships happen; it takes a lot of patience and effort.

So this approach is focused on a human perspective rather than an institutional perspective?

The people I was working with may not know what the South London Gallery is or they cannot imagine it is of use to them. They have their own thing and their own community spaces. They do not need the South London Gallery, I think that is a mistake that a lot of cultural institutions make, that the people they want to work with need them. Essentially they do not need them. Technically, they do need them, but it is not essential.

How did you gather the young people to make the film with? How did you approach them?

Those young people came from many different places and only one of the youth's parents were from Sierra Leone. The main group that Frances was already in touch with was a group of young people who are refugees. They had a facilitator who we tried to engage as a project coordinator, so that was one. And then there was the man I spoke about earlier, who was quite involved with the community. He was really excited and may have even approached Frances with the idea to do something with the 50th anniversary of independence. But as we continued the project he, quite unexpectedly, moved back to Sierra Leone. So that left me and I had to try to engage people. Basically, there was one young person that came directly from the contact of this Sierra Leonean man. His parents were really trying to support him in being in the arts, this young man wanted to be an actor and was therefore excited about the project. The SLG has an ongoing project called the *Art Assassins*, I was responsible for this programme while working there. So we opened the invitation to them and there was one young man from that group who was interested since his family is West African. And then there were these three guys: Junaid, Joelle and a guy whose rap name was Black Cat, I cannot remember his actual name. I think I did outreach somewhere and talked with them about the programme. Those five young people ended up being the core group. During the project there were some other youths from Sierra Leone and a refugee group that joined some workshops. After the film we decided to screen the film beyond Southwark, the original idea was to screen it in the neighbourhood only. In making connections with different people, we decided to screen it in other places. I think these young people got excited about the idea of travelling. With five guys we went to Bristol to the Malcom X Community Centre. That was also something that made them want to be part of the programme.

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I am also wondering what the criteria were for the people you worked with outside the gallery, such as the filmmaker. I now have the feeling that this also came directly from the community, since Chris Haydon was already there as a filmmaker in the neighbourhood. Was this a natural process that was similar to finding the participants?

He has the Community TV, that is what his work is about. So it just made sense, it is exactly how you describe it.

How do you think this is connected to the arts or the gallery as an art space?

Because the film is of course a creative product. Does Chris consider himself to be an artist or a filmmaker for the community? How do you work with this in an

arts institution?

I think he considers himself to be a filmmaker and I do not know if he considers himself to be an artist. I cannot speak for him. But I know these things tie together as artistic research. I believe quite strongly that one of the most interesting things that artists do is the research that culminates into their practice. When there is an artist that works with environmental issues, all those things are just really about the world we live in. So I try to take that same way of just being interested and investigating the world that we are in and allowing the gallery space to be a platform to do that. So I do not necessarily see young people as artists, to be frank. But I do see them as engaging in a type of artistic research or a practice that may be similar and in some ways different to how contemporary, or more specifically conceptual artists, work. I try not to be pressured by having to make art or having to ask an artist to come and make something. For other projects at the South London Gallery I like to ask artists and work with young people, but really just as part of their research. So it is just about exposing them to different models and ways of doing things. But not as making art or trying to replicate any art process. I am not an artist, I did not study art. This might be wrong, but I also feel a bit sacred about artists and their practice. And I suppose there are bits and pieces that we can pick up, but people dedicate their whole lives and careers to being an artist. And if young people want to pursue that, that is great. But I am not interested in replicating that in a six-week programme, and then be like: "Oh, these young people are all artists at heart". I see this group as a group of researchers. Because I think when you are in high school there are particular ways of researching, you are supposed to ask all sorts of questions. While in a gallery there is a wealth about different artists and their practices. And you are exposed to so many ways of thinking and being critical. I think that is what I am mostly interested in: helping young people to engage in this, instead of them being little artists. It seems to work, at least it worked at the South London Gallery. But it is important to note that this project happened in a particular time and also I was not the only member of the education team. So there was a school coordinator and I was specifically the young people's person. I worked specifically with young people outside of schools. That is important, because I think schools come with a specific curriculum with certain ideas. The young people I was working with came on their own permission, without their teacher. I had to Facebook them regularly and text them. I did not have to deal with those models focusing on what art should be in a gallery, I did not have this kind of pressure. I think that is a really important distinction. Because sometimes you go to galleries and they only have an education curator. And then most of your work is coordinating the school programmes. That is a lot different than what I have ever done. It is a totally different responsibility that I had, it was very different from the traditional form of gallery education. At the South London Gallery there was funding so they could hire someone that could do specifically that, which may not always be the case. So that is something to consider: to compare my role to a museum educator in another place. That could almost be like comparing an exhibitions person to an educator. It is just totally different in terms of expectations. Since I have been in the South London Gallery I do not think I have had a situation where I have had people come totally on their own, where they did not come from schools that brought them in or other institutions. I think that is also unique to the location of the South London Gallery, most people lived on a walking distance from the gallery. One of the young people was part of the *Art Assassins* since he was very young, so he was very familiar with the gallery. Sometimes, when he was not in school, he would just hang out at the gallery and work with us. So that is

a very different relationship. I think, in terms of models, at the same time there was the *Centre for Possible Studies* from the Serpentine Gallery. That was similar because they had the *Centre for Possible Studies* and they had their own education team that worked with traditional education programming. In terms of community engagement, I think that would be a similar model at that time.

What was the incentive for these young people to join the project?

I think it is about socializing, hanging out after school and having something to do. Travelling, like I said. I know we went to Leeds, Bristol and one other place together. I remember on one of the days we were travelling that one of the young people had this brand new outfit on because he was really excited about wherever we were going. So the reasons are kind of trivial in a way. From an adult's perspective it may seem a bit trivial why they would want to participate in the project. But I think that it is fine. And eventually I think they did become interested in the gallery as a space that they could use, I did think they learned a lot about Sierra Leone. But I do not think that those things drove them to be in the project. But eventually, two of them went from the project to the regular *Art Assassins*, so that helps as well.

What did the project mean for the institution, the South London Gallery?

Galleries that find themselves in places like South London, or other areas that have a very rich and diverse community around them, always benefit from engaging with that community. I think it is really difficult to pinpoint exactly how or in which ways. But I will say that years later, even in that moment when the gallery is seen as very progressive or having a great track record in education, it is typically because of these programmes like: *Sierra Leone*, *Art Assassins* or family engagement where my colleagues worked for. It is hard to look back and say: "The gallery got this, this and this". Which I know is important for outcomes, but I think that there is a type of ephemeral feeling about the gallery, which I think also helps with their PR. And it eventually helps with receiving more funding. I think that one of the really great things is that it has a reputation for engaging with the community and its programmes have definitely received some notoriety because of that. I believe when the gallery does their funding applications, whether it is to the Arts Council or to whatever else, they can stand firm knowing that they have engaged with the community in this way. And that helps the gallery considerably. It almost is this thing that happens behind the veil that you cannot quite say: "Well, this led to that". From my experiences working at other places, where I have seen the actual application that people have made, then I see how important community engagement is for a lot of applications. For me this is a very basic thing, people need to have funding to run a gallery. Then of course, a gallery's relevance and richness is definitely defined by the people who choose to use the gallery. So yes, it is important to have a great show and it is not necessarily about having thousands of people come to it, but I do think that it helps to have a lot of different type of people coming to it as possible. I do not think gallery education should supersede the exhibitions. I think that galleries are setup to show work. So I am not necessarily in favour of gallery takeovers and things like that, where they have community-based art projects that are displayed in the main galleries of an institution. Those projects are not bad, but it is just a format that I would not choose to use. I do not think of exhibition making as the end point of these kind of projects. Because I think of them as relationship-based and developing a new kind of patron for the gallery. So what happened at the South London Gallery was that my colleagues set up a supper club for the mothers whose kids come to our programmes, because

these moms did not get invited to the fancy exhibition openings and dinners and that kind of thing. But the fact that they encouraged their kids to come helped the gallery's profile, which did help them with their funding applications and which made that these funders wanted to support the gallery. They may not be the patrons that give you £10,000, but they gave something else. The reason that I bring that up is because they treated those moms like a patron, in a way that other people who treat the gallery as patrons get. These programmes give so much to the gallery, but they are not really easily put into the box of community programmes or education. It is almost if learning, community and education are pejorative terms when in the art space. Where patron, artist, exhibition and so on are really important terms. But I think there is something about the way 'community' is used that really troubles me at times, while they actually give a lot to the gallery and the gallery's profile.

What was the most positive aspect of the Looking for Sierra Leone programme?

These are probably the same things I have been saying about developing a relationship with the young people, and the longevity of those relationships. I just remember that another young man who worked on the project also brought his cousin with him, for me this is a positive part of the project.

What was the most negative part of the Looking for Sierra Leone programme?

There are always issues in terms of logistics, trying to get people on board and all of that. I think that comes with working with people in general. I will tell you about a bad moment for me, and I will take from it what you want. I hope this does not reflect negatively on this person, but this is what happened. There is a young man who has a very brown skin and I remember him kind of revealing that he was really conscious about this. Anyway, the person who was doing the film workshop at the time spoke about lighting, and really singled this young man out by saying something about his skin being really dark for the lighting. And that created a bad working relationship with that person. I think those little things matter, those nuances, when race (in that case) comes up. And I try to create a very welcoming atmosphere, rooted in a series of ways of being together. As much as people might be interested in the community, sometimes the lack of experience or anything else is uncontrollable. That was one of a few examples like that. But it was not such a big thing because ultimately I was the person responsible for the programme, so I could diffuse it pretty quickly.

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If you would do the project again, what would you do different?

Honestly I think the film itself; at the time I was just happy to have a film. And I think I wanted the young people to do as much on the film as possible. But I remember shortly after the project that it crossed my mind that the film could have been a bit stronger on some points. But the problem with working in relationship-based work is that more attention is paid to that. So it is hard to balance out the outcome and the social aspects. It was not terrible, but there were just some things about it that could have been different. But it also depends on the person who is working with us. When working with someone who does community TV, you will end up with a community film.

I think it is actually great to see that these relationships are reflected in the final product. You can also bring the footage to a professional filmmaker to make it look nice, but does that add any quality to the programme?

It is tricky. Shortly after that I worked on another project with the *Art Assassins* called *Voice of the Voiceless*. And we worked with Trevor Mathison of the Black Audio Film Collective. Trevor is a composer and a fantastic musician and that really comes through in all the work that he does. And again for me if we talk about community and education and the way that these words are used, I just think there is something about the quality. As you said, it is nice to have something that reflects that it was the community who made it, which makes it a kind of amateur video in that way. But I think there are also ways in which we could have done this better. It was no one's fault; it was not the fault of the person who made the film. It was in part because all we did was gather as much footage as possible, and then edit it down to something at the very end. It all changed, we had no idea what we were actually doing. It kind of came together, but I would probably have approached that part of the project a little bit different. I did quite some research into Sierra Leone myself; we went to the BBC archives and so on. But I think there is always room for more of that. I could have done a little more research into the Sierra Leonean community: the more you know, the better it will become.

Do you personally see a difference between museum learning communities inside and outside the museum? Do you think the comparison in my research is a valid one?

I think this is absolutely the way how things are categorised, so to me that categorisation makes sense. I think, in fact, that this is the categorisation that I was trying to work against in the South London Gallery. Because I keep rambling on about patrons versus moms, and all of those things. I think that the people who are working in the museum seem to have a little more preferential treatment. Because they are seen as inside or as part of the gallery and then take a step further as part of the gallery's family, where those who are coming from the outside are not. I remember reading about community engagement and people who did research on it. And seeing different processes to get a community member on the board or looking at the community and seeing what it likes and to emulate that. The fundamental problem is that there is 'us' and 'them', the people on the outside and then there is us. But that is in fact the dichotomy that is set up at the moment, you are absolutely right, that is what is there. I think that is a right way of describing it because you can then try to understand how to work with it or try to resist it. And I certainly felt that my role was to resist it in a way. For a short period, I got really interested in black supplementary schools. In London in the 70s black kids were much more likely to be listed as educationally subnormal, which was a category that placed them in special education. As a response their parents started to mobilise and develop their own schools. This was connected to organisations such as the Black Panthers. One of the things that came out of that were supplementary schools, and many of them are still going on today. So there is one that I ended up volunteering for. The point is that the gallery at the time just rebuilt the core space; it was not being used regularly for exhibition programmes. It was mostly used for public programming. So I arranged to host supplementary school forums back there. The reason that I am bringing this up is because I think in that role I am them. It was not like I was out there, to reach out to them. I was one of them and part of it. I think that the hard part about gallery education is that it depends on what kind of communities they bring. So for me, the way to change this gallery education dichotomy is rooted in the hiring practices as well. If you think about bringing in artists or freelancers, or even coordinators, it is important to realise what those person's commitments are. What kind of communities does that person

belong to? And how will those be reflected in the work what they do? And that is why I was so grateful to Frances, because most of my work before I went to the South London Gallery was rooted in working in collectives and also theory-based because I was working at Goldsmiths at the time. But I was not actually a gallery educator at all. I cannot speak on her behalf, but I imagine that one of the things that she saw, now having worked with other people who were interested in those positions, is that I had particular communities that I wanted to bring to the gallery that I saw myself as being part of. So I was inside the gallery and outside the gallery at the same time. So we should start to hire a variety of people who can reflect that in the work. I think another person who does this very well is Janna Graham. But then also Mark Miller at Tate, he is someone who I really admire. He has years of experience of working with young people in general, I think that helps. That does not mean that people who learn to be a gallery educator cannot do this. But it does help in an education team, especially when you have an education team of five, that one of those people brings a different kind of community than the other four. I like to use Janna Graham's term 'commitment'. I think that that is really key, what someone's commitments are. In Johannesburg that is taken to an extreme. It is almost like if you are not from this particular place you cannot imagine you could do community work. You have to be from that community. For me at least that is something that I come across here, I think that is also wrong. Because it is about what their commitments are, and those commitments cannot just be superficial either. Here there was someone who said to have all sorts of commitments and then when the project started it was clear that the commitment was to the project and making sure that went well, which I understand. It is a really delicate balancing act, which I think someone as Frances was really great at figuring out. I think it is really hard, because sometimes you also have to be able to take risks. I remember Frances asked someone to work for the Sierra Leone project, and after a month we really had no idea where he went. And we only found out much later that he was in Sierra Leone, so it could be a risk. But it is a risk that is worth taking. I think until more people take that risk, it is just going to be the same old stuff. I think there is a person called Grey Bass, an education curator at Campton Art Centre. At one point he did a really interesting project called the Transgender Barbershop. He had transgender people come and they got a haircut. But the whole idea was that they were speaking about their transformations and their lives. But he was very much an advocate and ally of that community, so those commitments came through in other bits of his work. So it was not like he was suddenly interested in transgender people's ideas because the gallery found it interesting to do it. One time we had a traditional painter in the gallery, but the painter painted pictures of his home. During that exhibition I was thinking of working with psychogeography, to map the young people's own self. So one of the sessions that we did was yoga, and I remember that the director asked me in front of the whole team: "What does yoga have to do with this thing?" And I had to be prepared to explain it, and I did. And I think that actually worked out quite well. So that is why I said that I should have done more research on the *Looking for Sierra Leone* project. Because I think the more research you do, and the more you are committed and know about it, the more you can speak and write about it. That is another thing I would have done differently: to write more about the project. Those are the things that will need to change in order to undo the inside versus outside communities. I am just trying to make clear that you do not need a Sierra Leonean to do a Sierra Leonean project. I just think it is really about commitment, that the person can show him or herself in the work they do. And it also just takes a lot of time.

Colophon

Contested Exchange:

A Practice-based Exploration of Museum Learning Communities

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