

MEAN

GIRLS



vsco

GIRLS

# VSCO girl

Pronunciation: vis-koh gurl

*(noun)*

a new school year, a new trend. The 'VSCO girl' is an indispensable part of the timelines on social media in 2019. The name 'VSCO' (pronounce: visko) comes from an app that looks like Instagram but is a little more unknown. Even though the hype has arisen online, the girls can also be recognized in a number of things in 'real life'. VSCO girls oppose prevailing beauty ideals and wear little make-up. But at the same time, they adhere to very strict dress codes. But ecologically responsible brands are also part of the trend, because the VSCO girl is environmentally conscious. Together with the fact that the girls wear little makeup, they come across as very socially involved. (De Standaard, 2019)

# Mean

# Girls vs

# VSCO

# Girls

How do I empower a group of girls 9-12 years old in a community theatre project to tell their own story through dance and theatre?

*How do I create conditions of safety and trust in this group?*

**Thesis submitted to:**

The Department of Education in Art,  
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Dedicated to Olivia Ebas, one of the pillars of the Gobabis Community who passed away in June 2020. May her soul rest in peace.

Thanks for your patience and help to my beloved ones; Bor, my parents and Hendrik. With many thanks for all your help and inspiration to my beloved peers; Rob, Elvira, Robert-Paul, Cyrille. Thank you colleagues and trainees for the pleasant cooperation and great moments; Julian, Josephine, Amber, Gooitsen, Albert, Froukje, Emma, Joke, AnnaJoy.

...To be safe with you, sweetheart.  
You on whom I could always rely.  
Who has always comforted me.  
With whom I slept together night after night.  
Without underpants.  
To be here with you.  
To take you all on your lap.  
To cuddle, to kiss, to cherish, one by one ...  
I can die if it's not true.  
I swear I wanted it!  
But I ... couldn't do it.  
Not anymore.  
Because now the very worst and the most incomprehensible:  
When I came in here and saw you,  
So-called asleep ...  
With those heads on a pillow,  
Then... Then...  
Then I thought that ...  
I suddenly found that childish.  
Extremely childish  
And I was ashamed.  
Not that I thought you were childish.  
O no, much worse:  
I found myself childish.  
Myself as a big girl.  
As a growing woman.  
Childish because I was still playing with dolls, animal dolls.  
And I was ashamed of my own shame.  
Because I loved you so much.  
Because I had loved you for so long.  
Because I thought that love was eternal...  
(Mutsaers, 2003, pp. 32-33).



II. Photo: Girls from the neighborhood while making TikToks

# ARTS & THEATRE SCHOOL GOBABIS

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# Foreword

I, writer, may not know you, reader, but we are having a conversation spread between places and times. To help us converse, I consistently try to imagine you. Your imaginary character holds me back from, writing into the void. I am writing to speak to you. You can imagine me as a body whose native tongue is, for now, the dominant language of machines and humans. I am inside a western, middle class, white body coming from a monstrous colonising nation, and educated in the Arts. When making art my body often works collaboratively or cooperatively with other bodies in formats of performance, singing, writing, painting, video and costume. It works holistically as nomadic freelancer, within organisations attending to entertain and care; education and welfare.

At the invitation of the municipality of 'Smallingerland' (Friesland), which chose 'Gobabis' (Namibia) as its sister town 25 years ago, I went as an independent artist and theatre-maker in 2016 on a working visit for the first time. I visited Namibia Gobabis five times since 2016. At first, I thought there would be a one-off theatre performance with and for the school children there but that turned out very differently. Meanwhile, at the request of the Governor of Gobabis, I have been working for 4 years now to start a pilot project for an after-school Arts and Theatre training for the children of Epako, the adjacent slum. In 2019 I founded the 'SPOONK loves Namibia Foundation' to provide support from the Netherlands while the working group in Gobabis is also in the process of setting up their own foundation for this project. I have been longing for more depth in my own practice for several years. The years passed by and I rolled from one thing to the other without knowing exactly why I am successful in my community theatre projects or why sometimes things don't turn out the way I hoped for. I have to find my magic wand as my dear peers call it. The project in Namibia unexpectedly became so big and extensive that it was the immediate reason to do my Master's.

Pending the developments in Namibia with regard to progress of the working group in Gobabis and the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of Gender and of course also due to the COVID19 crisis the pilot version of the Arts & Theatre School, which should be in September 2020 has been postponed to (hopefully) September 2021.

Therefore, with this thesis for now I focus on the girlsproject 'SKRRT Noord', that I have been running in Friesland since 2018. The Theatre Workbook that I have written and illustrated especially for the Namibia project also contains exercises and techniques that I worked with during 'SKRRT Noord'. You can also find these in the chapter 'Exercises and Techniques' in this publication.

This thesis is framed by an in between context that I, the writer, make for myself: working between art and pedagogy, between Friesland and Namibia, between practice and research, between informal and institutional setting, between knowledge and intuition. The frame for this text is a document as a part of my master programme research project Education in Arts, to describe practical activity conducted during the Master, intertwined with theoretical underpinnings.

It plots a personal search for possibilities of script developing (and storytelling) with a group of girls (9-12 years old) in Friesland with a project I called 'SKRRT Noord'. I currently work in 3 phases (until June 2020 due to COVID-19, this date is shifted) together with ± 25 girls from the 'Bilgaard' and 'Vrijheidswijk' (two disadvantaged areas in the North of Leeuwarden) ♥

♥ I wonder if there is a better way to describe this, but I'll try to break down what this means later.

I have used this period of learning to read and listen to people I never heard about at school, and I have tried to widen my Eurocentric gaze in efforts to reduce my passivity, push against the feeling that our lives are increasingly polarised both physically and digitally.

"We are segregated by class, gender, race, sexuality, whatever an algorithm can find to label our identity" (Hooks, 2013).

The intertwining of theory and practice therefore takes place on the pages and in documents of activity I have undertaken during the 2 years master period.

Later I will describe how it has changed my perspective in working with the groups I work with. How different I am now, what the course has brought me when it comes to reflection on the interaction between good intentions and impact. I will leave the complete breakdown of that to my concluding section.

I have orchestrated an array of workshops within the two-year period of this Master. Participants range in age from four years old (from Primary School the 'Eestroom' in the 'Vrijheidswijk' Leeuwarden, I will introduce them later), to the elderly of GRIIS (means grey in the Frysian language), a community project about old age and loneliness, where the oldest participant was 85.

In between are close friends, peers at school, colleagues and strangers I did not know prior to the project.

The settings ranged from neighbourhood centre, studio space, classroom, a kindergarten gym, a library and the inside of this document you are reading.

My thinking is challenged and guided by some new 'lead characters' in my play like social activist Bell Hooks and playwright, Dutch theatre maker Adelheid Roosen, Augusto Boal, Paolo Freire who will be all introduced later.



HOP

SPROUWK

# SKRRT NOOORD

HEY!

Speel of dans je mee?

WE ZOEKEN JOU!

Leeftijd 11 - 15

JERHOES



# Prologue

This prologue describes writing decisions and how I almost (because of COVID-19) came to develop a script (from the storytelling of the girls). And insight to the structuring of the headings and subheadings of my scenes.

I wrote this thesis in the form of a play as a steppingstone and to interweave discussion with the girls with my theoretical grounds and practical activities in that order, one influences the other.

This is therefore not only the form in which I am presenting this thesis, it has also helped to define my research method.

The structure of the scenes is that, every time at the start of a scene, I take you through black and white photos and voice recordings into the situation as it was during the weekly meetings I had with the girls.

Prior to those conversations, we worked for several months with theatre exercises and techniques inspired by Theatre of the Oppressed.

The conversations and improvisations with the girls we filmed or recorded are the inspiration for the script we wanted to develop from there to create a performance.



V. Photo: The Girls from the slum in Epako Namibia knitting plastic in our workshop, February 2016

The color photos were taken during the first 2 phases of the project in which we made a dance battle twice without first doing theatre exercises.

I think that by introducing the specific theatre exercises and techniques from Theater of the Oppressed I can create a greater sense of security and trust in the group and that the girls are therefore more inclined to share their story. I expect to encounter limitations from the girls themselves; they know nothing about theatre and don't see the point in it. From 'Amaryllis Youth Care', I have in the previous 2 phases of the project that they have no idea what

really occupies the girls and what they should do with it. As a rule, they leave the girls to unaccompanied trainees. I hope to be able to work with them more structurally.

The girls from the neighborhood, friends, family, colleagues and peers have allowed my research and I value their mouths and ears as much as the words of any theory I read or speech I hear online. Their bodies and mine are my source material.

Within any of these moments listed, we learn at the same time.



VI. Photo: The Girls from the neighborhood Bilgaard in front of their caravan just before the first videoshoot for Circus Adje, April 2018

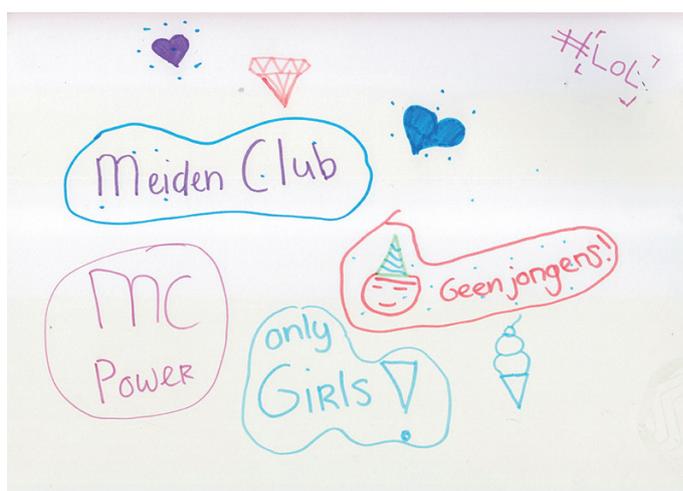
## The influence of COVID-19

In 2019/2020 SPOONK was commissioned by 'Kunstkade' to work with the girls of the districts 'Bilgaard' and 'Vrijheidswijk' Leeuwarden in 3 phases towards a final presentation at the big Adje Festival in May 2020.

But then the world suddenly changed completely. When COVID-19 hit, it affected all parts of the project. The lockdown stalled the developments, limited the connection to the girls and halted the final performance.

By creating fun tasks for the girls to do at home such as dance challenges I hoped to keep them motivated. However, the response was minimal and without consistent in-person contact it proved to be hard to keep them focused and motivated. In July 2020 I organized a closing activity at the SPOONK studio with them. From the footage shoot at this closing activity we made a short documentary. The 13 girls that showed up were very excited to do something in real life, but showed limited interest and willingness to participate that day. They had the wonderful energy and dynamism we were used to, but due to the circumstances we were back to Phase one. They fell back into the old mean girls' behaviour. And; how do we look at each other and on camera?

And maybe they thought deep in their hearts it was a pity that there was no goal anymore to really work towards. We had lost the opportunity to create something bigger with them. Regardless of this unfortunate world development and its effects on this project, it was still a blessing to work with them. Hopefully the future will bring more opportunities, for now we all have to stay safe.



VII. Photo of a drawing: The girls made designs for the graffiti on the caravan

What	When	Time
Circus Adje Phase 1	January to May 2018	5 months/ 4 hours weekly
SKRRT Noord Phase 2	April to July 2019	4 months/ 4 hours weekly
SKRRT Noord Phase 3	October to December 2019	3 months/ 4 hours weekly
SKRRT Noord Phase 4	February to October 2020	7 months/ 4 hours weekly

## Outline of a girlsproject in Leeuwarden 2018/2019/2020

From November 2017 to April 2018, I have been active in the 'Bilgaard' district in Leeuwarden at the request of the 'Bilgaard' community centre with a participation project 'Cupcakes & Couscous' (within the context of 'Leeuwarden Cultural Capital of Europe'). Preceding this research proposal, during an extensive process, I discovered that this vibrant, colourful neighbourhood in which 103 different cultures live together, has a very active neighbourhood centre. During the project 'Cupcakes & Couscous' I was also asked to participate in another Leeuwarden 2018 Cultural Capital of Europe project called 'Circus Adje' (which I will tell you more about in the next section), because after a year of intensive contact, I had got to know the neighborhood very well and they know me. Which are the most important conditions for creating community theatre.

'Circus Adje' is a large project especially for children and youngsters initiated by 'Kunstkade', an organisation that brings together supply and demand in the field of art- and cultural education. The first version of my contribution to 'Circus Adje' in the 'Bilgaard'

district ran from January to May 2018. In the meantime, I have received a follow-up assignment in April 2019 until May 2020 (except that everything turned out differently than planned because of COVID-19), with both the girls from the 'Bilgaard' district and the 'Vrijheidswijk' (± 25 girls) I am allowed to work with the girls for 1 year in 3 phases. This project I called 'SKRRT Noord'.



VIII. Photo: Girlsclub caravan, 2018

# Skrrt

Pronunciation: skurt

*(noun)*

noise made when driving a car (drifting/turning hard) and wheels screeching. Also slang used a lot in rap to move away/get away from somebody (Urban Dictionary, n.d.).



IX. Photo: The girls from 'Bilgaard' drinking 'bubbels' just before the dance video shoot, 2018

## The story of Adje Lambertsz, and it's empowering objective in relation to the intended audience

The story of 'Circus Adje' is a specially written story for the project about 'Adje Lambertsz'. 'Circus Adje' is named after the 16th century Leeuwarden mayor who organized a grand freedom festival for children and prevented the Spaniards from taking over the city without violence.

It is a story about courage and heroism and a story that you can achieve a lot together. But especially a story in which you can show what you can do. This story and especially the theme "Kijk eens wat ik kan" (tr.: "Look what I can do") forms the base for (circus) performances to be made in the schools and neighborhoods from Leeuwarden.

In the spirit of 'Adje Lambertsz', the children take on the challenge to go on a journey, both physically and mentally. The children travel through the time from 1580 to 2018 and literally travel from place A to B to see each other's performances. There are different 'trips' for the children to choose from: a journey in personal development -for example to overcome fears-, and finally a development in thinking -forming an opinion and perhaps changing it or standing up for your opinion. During the journey, which is coached by during the project, the children learn to trust their own abilities, their own strength, their own thinking and their opinion. But they also learn that you can trust others, and then they might cross a 'border'. I want to study these processes and critically analyze what actually happens and how I might or

should act differently (didactically speaking). There is a core here. This has to do with my research question, the choice for this project and what this project hopes to do to the outlined situation of the girls in their living environment.



X. Photo: The girls from Bilgaard getting what they wanted: fake nails! Just before performing the dance battle for the first time to the audience, May 2018

## Background neighborhoods Bilgaard and Vrijheidswijk

What do research figures tell us about the life situation of children in the Netherlands? Dutch children are generally healthy and happy. Only a group of children, around 400.000, need extra protection, attention and support. These children live throughout the Netherlands. The bi-annual 'Children in Tel' Data Book is an initiative of 'Defense for Children', the Bernard van Leer Foundation, NSGK and the Verwey-Jonker Institute and has been published for the eighth time in 2017. 'Children in Tel' has been measuring the living situation of children and young people in Dutch municipalities since 2006. The 'Children in Tel' Data Book shows developments but also the differences between the living situations of children in Dutch municipalities. For all municipalities and provinces in the Netherlands, largely to the level of the neighborhood, the data book compares the data from several years. The 'Children in Tel' indicators are based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This creates a clear picture of the well-being of children and young people at the local level. The organizations involved in 'Children in Tel' feel the need to take their social responsibility to show administrators, policymakers and interest groups figures about the situation of children in their neighborhoods, municipalities and provinces via 'Children in Tel'. Since the system review, municipalities have a responsibility to ensure that all children and young people in their municipalities receive the right help and support. The data from the 'Children in Tel' Data Book offer municipalities

a handle in this regard. Administrators and policy officials can use the data to formulate local policies based on children's rights so that young people and children can develop well. In February 2017, the last edition of 'Children in Tel' was published, with for the first time - in addition to the national figures - tailor-made municipal reports ([www.defenseforchildren.nl](http://www.defenseforchildren.nl)).

The 'Children in Tel' data shows that the four neighbourhoods that have the lowest score in respect to living conditions in the Netherlands for children to grow up in are in Leeuwarden: The district Wielenpôle is at 1, followed by the Schepenbuurt, Bilgaard and Vrijheidswyk. My project SKRRT Noord takes place in the two last mentioned neighbourhoods. The city of Leeuwarden as a whole place eighth of the country. "Children in Tel clearly shows the growing gap in society, at national, municipal and neighbourhood level. This dichotomy has a huge impact on growing children," said Mirjam Blaak, director of Defence for Children. "In order to develop targeted policies for vulnerable children, municipalities can use the data from 'Children in Tel'." (<http://www.kinderenintel.nl>).

I have encountered this in my own experience when I read in the girl group app how much commotion a free food coupon from the supermarket caused among the girls around Xmas last year. Almost all the girls wanted to get it and were very excited about it.

# SPEEL & DANS mee

SPOONK en Adje zoeken stoere meiden tussen de 11-15 jaar die van street-dance, graffiti, rappen, vloggen, zingen en spelen houden en hard willen repeteren :)

Tijdens het project werken jullie samen met o.a.  
kunstenaar Caro Kroon (SPOONK), theatermaker Julian Schraal,  
Rapper B.O.R. en danseres Josephine Dames.

Leeuwarden NOORD met daarin Bilgaard en de Vrijheidswijk; 2 unieke wijken die niet vergeleken kunnen worden met andere wijken. Twee wijken die vol zitten met mooie verhalen. Twee plekken die nooit zijn uitgepraat. En wij zijn voor het project SKRRT NOORD op zoek naar jonge spelers & dansers die de wijken rijk zijn.

We werken vanaf de voorjaarsvakantie samen aan een echte, vette theatervoorstelling die we op 29 mei opvoeren tijdens het grote Adje Festival in het Cambuurstadion en natuurlijk een aantal keer in Leeuwarden NOORD. En op verschillende zomerfestivals.

**Je kans om wereldberoemd te worden in Friesland!!!**

Het uiteindelijke doel is het gezamenlijk vertellen van een visueel verhaal waarin jouw eigen stem hoorbaar is. En heel veel lol maken natuurlijk!!!

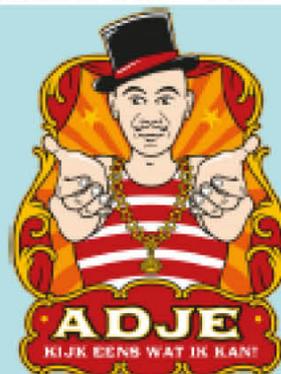
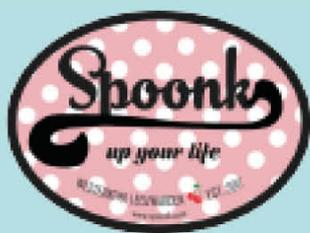
We dansen vanaf 25 februari sowieso elke dinsdagmiddag in het gebouw van de Eestroom in de Vrijheidswijk van 15-16h.

De repetities voor de theatervoorstelling zijn op donderdagmiddag van 15-17h ook op die plek. Als je op die dagen of tijden niet kunt maar wel graag mee wilt doen, schrijf je dan toch in. Wie weet kunnen we nog wat schuiven.

**Best vet toch!**

**Schrijf je in voor het project via [info@spoonk.com](mailto:info@spoonk.com) of stuur een appje naar Caro Kroon (0614899996). Meedoen kost geen geld. We gaan naast de repetities ook een paar keer gave theatervoorstellingen bezoeken. De deadline om je in te schrijven is 10 februari.**

**We starten 25 februari en het programma loopt tot eind juni. Wacht niet te lang met aanmelden want vol=vol**



## Recruitment for Circus Adje; the composition of the group

At the beginning of January 2018 I went to 'Girls club Bilgaard'. We needed to get in contact with girls that would be interested in joining the 'Adje project'. 'Girls club Bilgaard' is part of the 'Bilgaard' community center and the place where I could meet most youngsters in a short time. Because I had been working on another community project in 'Bilgaard' for a year, I now knew the neighborhood and the very active community center well. Because I also know that safe space, in addition to positive group dynamics, are two important aspects of girl work, I have chosen to join 'Girls Club Bilgaard' (because I knew they already have a safe space there).

A safe space means that the girls can come to the girls' work safely and that the space is pleasant and feels good to them. An 'own' space for girls, in which absence of boys is guaranteed, helps girls to be themselves during an activity. (Boomkens, 2018)

I discussed with the girls what they would like. At that time there were around 14 girls between the ages of 9 and 12 present from many different cultures. They were, among others, 4 interns of 'Amaryllis' (a volunteer organization in Leeuwarden) busy with nothing special and acting loud while the girls were very energetic. The interns chatted and laughed and didn't really interfere with the girls who drank a lot of 'Red Bull' (energy drink with a lot of sugar) and ate dry noodles, chips and candy. I could hardly notice a positive group dynamic. That is why I started to identify the atmosphere in the group and the tensions that prevailed there.

I paid attention to positive interactions between girls and to prosocial behavior. If there were sub-tensions between the girls themselves, I made them negotiable (Boomkens, 2018). While the girls threw chips and noodles and yelled at each other. I asked kindly if anybody would like to write on the board what they all liked and for that one girl was chosen from the group and accepted by the rest of the girls. After we created an atmosphere where we could have a constructive discussion the girls were immediately clear about what they wanted: fake nails and a dance battle.

### Making (a Dance Battle production) Process 2018

At my invitation, from that moment we started to rehearse for the dance battle every Tuesday afternoon in collaboration with a professional dance teacher I invited. In addition, together with the girls and with a little help from my 'SPOONK' trainees (vocational education students from different creative courses), we pimped the 'Circus Adje' caravan to the 'Girls clubhouse' and together we made designs for the dance costumes. We decided to turn the dance battle into a videoclip in order to have a lasting memory. The girls performed twice during the big final presentation of 'Circus Adje' and have already shown their dance at a neighborhood party. And of course, they were very proud of themselves, each other and the video clip and overjoyed with the fake nails and the 'KFC' meal.



XII. Photo's: Two girls proudly showing their fake nails after performing at the big final presentation of Circus Adje, May 2018



# Venom (venijn)

Pronunciation: va'nein, the -word  
(noun)

Hidden, sharp anger

“Cabaret lyrics with a lot of venom”,  
spit venom over someone (= say mean things about  
someone), the venom is in the tail (= mean things come to  
the end)



XIII. Photo: The girls just before the video shoot, 2018

## Target group and methodology used

Mean girls (or venomous girls)

There was a lot of enthusiasm and energy during the creative process, but also a huge lack of focus and discipline. The girls turned out to be very talented dancers, but the learning process was delayed by the fact that they hardly maintained their attention once the music stopped. They were also very unfriendly to each other and very noisy. I'm now talking about the first time 'Circus Adje' in which I had just a couple of months with the girls and hardly knew them. At that time, I also came to agreements with the girls about sanctions to fighting or swearing. I tried to connect the girls to the project every week by giving them small responsibilities and involving them enthusiastically in everything. I recognized their behavior in a book I recently read which is called 'Mean girls'.

### Meangirls behaviour, what is it?

The word 'Meidenvenijn' is not (yet) included in a dictionary. The Van Dale (large dictionary of the Dutch language) does have 'venom (venijn)' with the description: hidden, sharp anger.

The description 'hidden' in this entry is an important feature of 'meangirls behavior'. Girls control each other with subtle means: a small shoulder movement that closes a circle of girls means 'not welcome'. Deep sighing or rolling with the eyes is a sign of disapproval when a 'not-our-kind' girl says something. Girls' vicious actions aim to undermine the social acceptance of their target. A lot of talking in the classroom and also 'bitchy' behavior.

"They sometimes shout things to me, but I don't care. I just ignore it. They ask if I have anorexia, but I don't" (Demi in 'Over de Streep', KRO, 2013).

Van Dale also calls it 'sharp'. With their sharp tongue, vicious girls can grind their victim. They react bitchy to other girls; quickly put the label 'anorexia' on a girl they think is thin and give double messages. "Nice shoes, my grandma has them too". Girls are very skilled in such undercover tactics. They can deny them when it suits them: "I'm just concerned that she has anorexia," "My grandma really has those shoes," or the classic: "Just kidding!" When they express meangirls behavior, girls remain (apparently) sweet, but meanwhile they use their sting to belittle other girls. The fact that girls use subtle means to show their power is in line with the expectations that society still has of girls. The socialization message can be summarized as: the tyranny of nice and kind. Despite the waves of emancipation in Europe, people still expect a certain behavior from girls - and indirect confrontation or overt aggression are not part of that.

A friend once asked me: 'Wouldn't you be angry then?' Yes, but inside. Anger was not appropriate for a girl in my youth. 'Control yourself' said my mother. 'Take it easy and behave yourself' said my father. This caused big explosions during my puberty. (Kroon, C)

Mean girls' behavior consists of false actions, with which girls undermine other girls. It is both a power tool and a social experiment to gain popularity. Mean girls' behavior is used by girls of all ages and from all ethnic backgrounds and occurs online and offline everywhere. The possibilities are endless. (Visser, 2018, pp. 12-13)

Mean things between girls are a source of (subcutaneous) tension in a group. Mean Girls' behavior eats energy. Energy that can be turned into positive interaction with each other and to productive working in the group and at school. It is therefore important to name and shame meangirls' behaviour in whatever form. Mean girls require permanent attention from teachers, mentors and school management. (Visser, 2018, p. 11)

Ideally a positive group dynamic is needed to guarantee social safety. You achieve a positive group dynamic by paying attention to the group as a whole and by working on a good atmosphere in the group. In a positive group dynamic, girls treat each other well and are willing to help or support each other. That is why it is important to establish standards of behavior, preferably together with the girl group. It is also important to pay attention to subcutaneous tensions. Subcutaneous tensions, also referred to as 'silent wars', "mean girls' behavior" or 'relational aggression', are common in groups of girls. Like I mentioned before, excluding or ignoring other girls, gossiping or spreading rumors about other girls or telling their secrets, insulting, making sarcastic comments or using certain body language in which other girls are rejected (Boomkens, 2018).

That 'subterranean' tensions occur is often manifested in the way girls talk about events.

For instance, a girl (10 years old) mentions: "Sometimes when we have a fight it happens that someone says something ugly about me. For me, that means that I am different from the rest of the group and that I don't belong there" (Van der Grient & Metz, 2018, p. 14).

To tackle these subcutaneous dynamics, I realized that creating trust (in each other and in me) is one of the most important things I have to do first and I have put a lot of time into achieving that.



XIV. Photo: The girls just before the video shoot, 2018

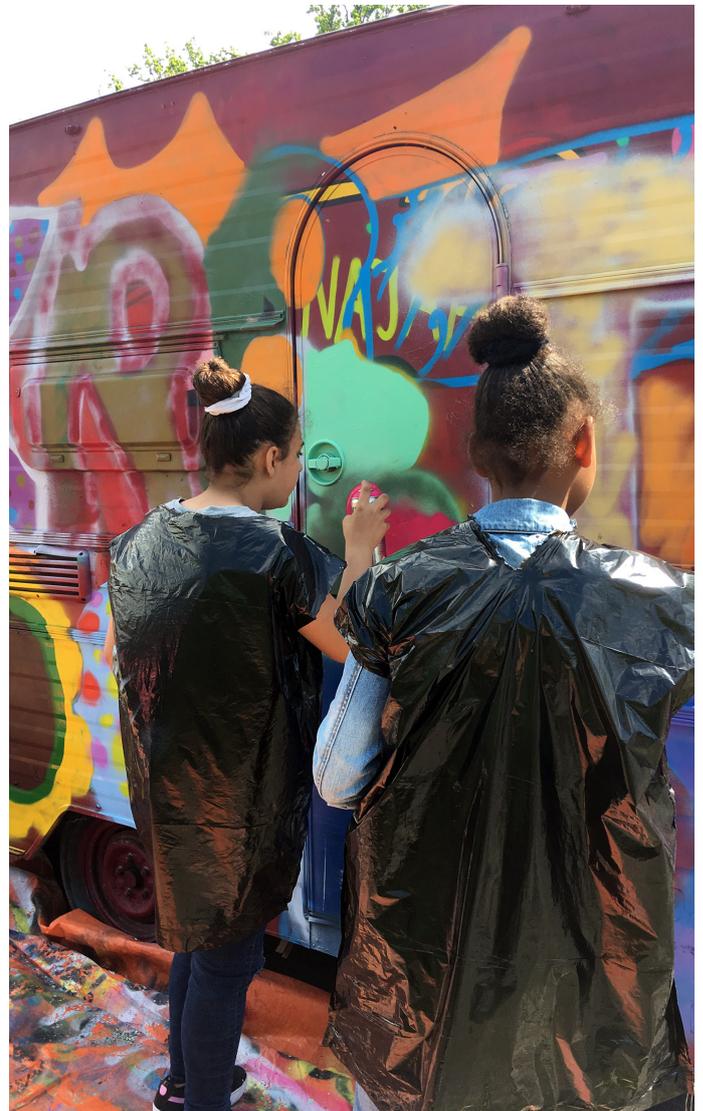
Trust has different social and psychological connotations (McKnight and Chervany, 1996). The most common definition of trust (Mayer, Davis, Schoorman, 1995) generally includes the following elements:

- Willingness of a person or group to depend on the actions of another person or group.
- Faith that another person is honest or that something will go well (Definition of trust from the Free dictionary).
- Expecting a person to act in a way that will not disadvantage him/her, with the risk of ending up in a
- disadvantageous position if the other person damages this trust.
- Not knowing himself/herself and relying on someone else.

In the very first phase of the project I worked intuitively a lot with Theatre of the Oppressed's theatre exercises on which I will elaborate in scene one, two and three.

By then I also used yoga exercises (because I have been a qualified yoga teacher since 2017) and clear rules, to create order and peace in chaos.

In order to improve the attending of the girls during the project, we made clear agreements, because of that I noticed that it was very important to immerse myself in the culture of the girls in question as far as possible in such a short time (a few months in the first phase, I did not know then that this project would take much longer).



XV. Photo: the girls during a graffiti workshop at the girls' clubhouse October 2019

# Trust

/trʌst/

(noun)

the belief that somebody/something is good, sincere, honest, etc. and will not try to harm or trick you. “This is a relationship built on mutual trust” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, n.d.-a).

(verb)

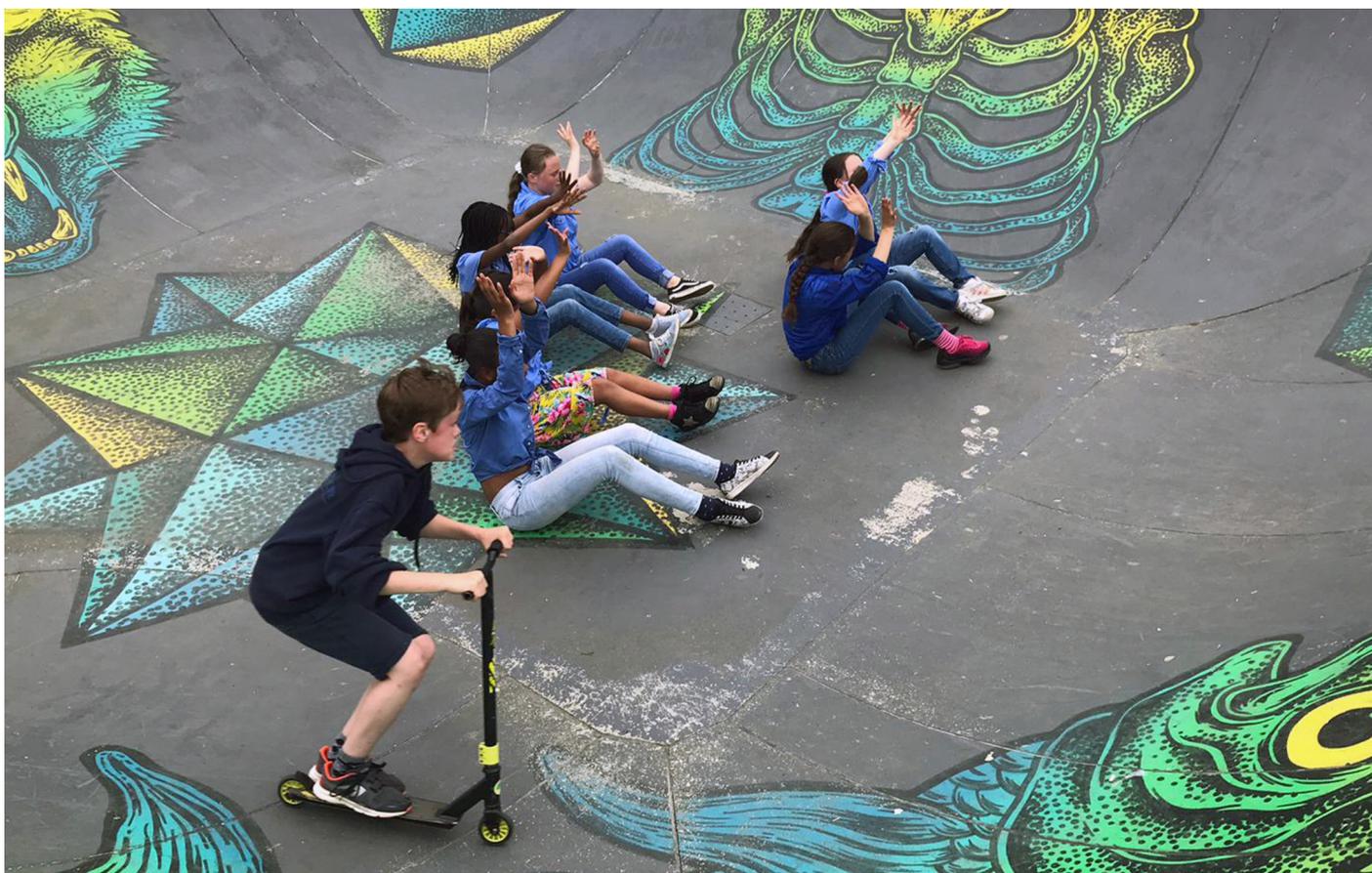
to believe that something is true or correct or that you can rely on it. “He has shown that he can’t be trusted” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, n.d.-b).

# Trusting

/'trʌstɪŋ/

(adjective)

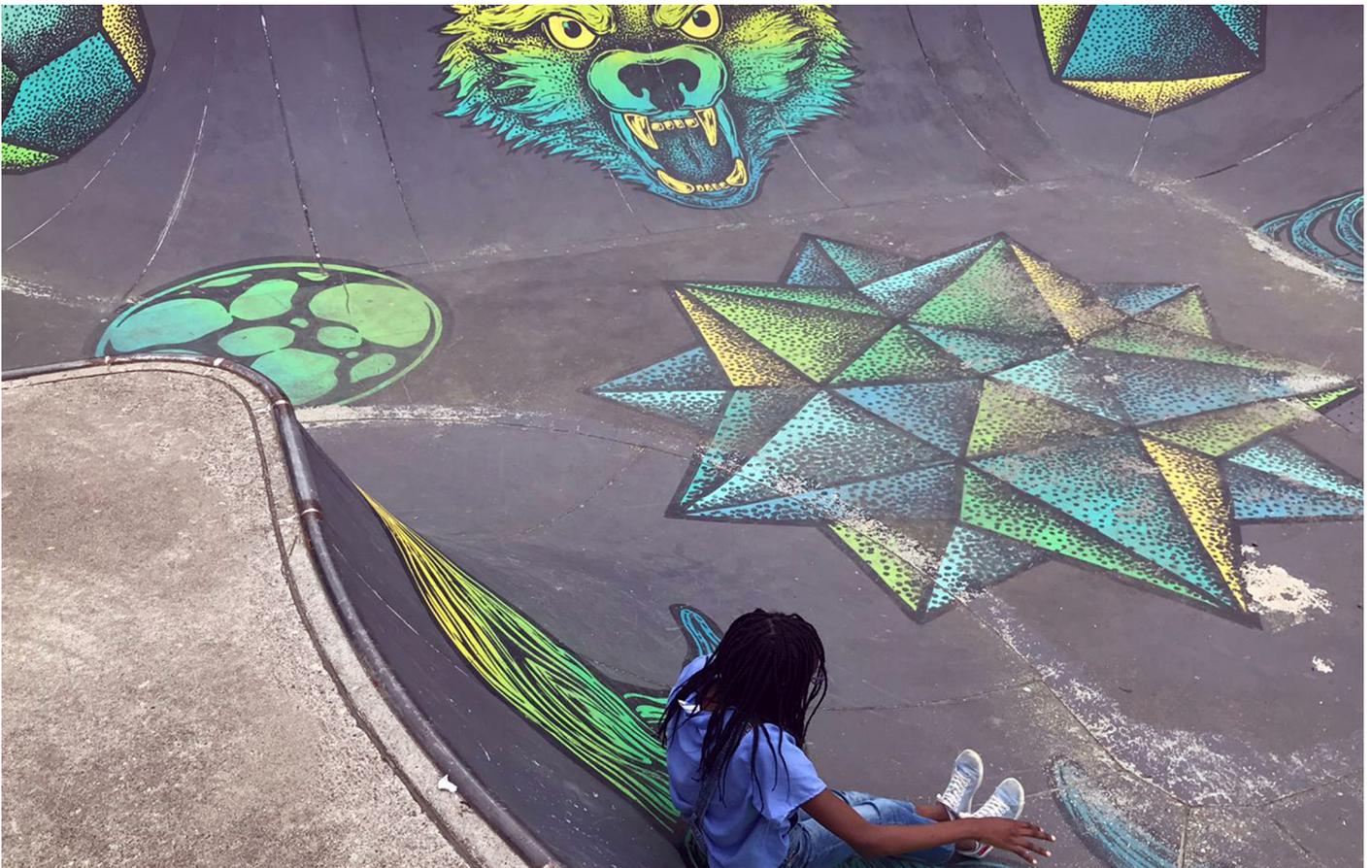
tending to believe that other people are good, honest, etc. “If you’re too trusting, other people will take advantage of you” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, n.d.-c).



XVI. Photo: The SKRRT Noord girls with one of the unexpected special guests 'the boy on the scooter' during the videoshoot, June 2019



XVII. Photo: One of the girls just before the video recording before performing her self-written rap within the background the girls from both neighborhoods as an audience while eating ice cream, June 2019



XVIII. Photo: One of the girls slides into the skate pool for the video recording of the dance they have rehearsed, June 2019



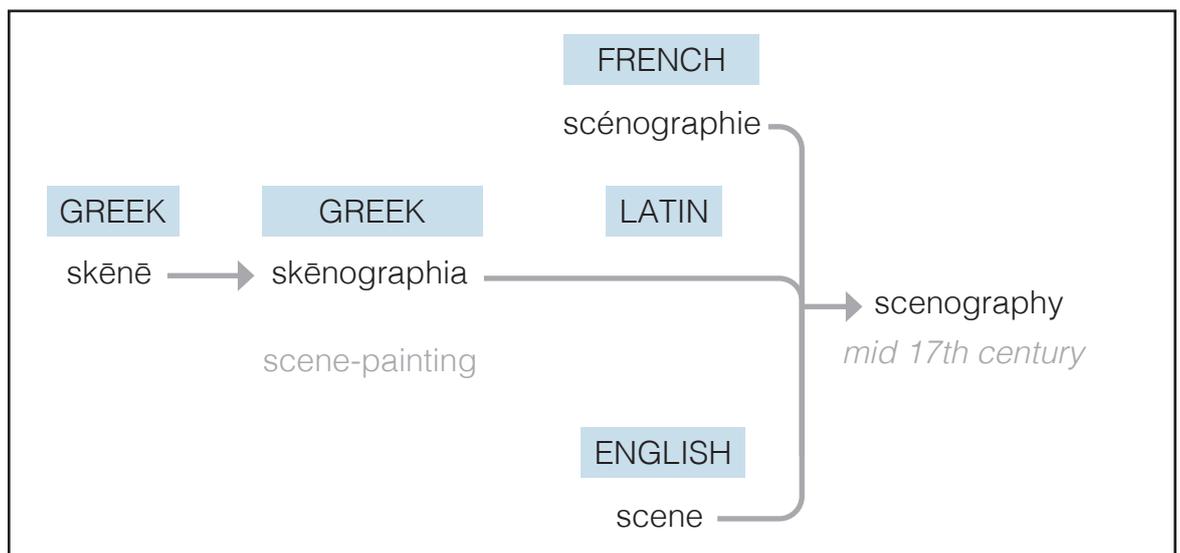
XIX. Photo: SPOONKcrew prepares for the shoot while the girls eat ice cream, June 2019

# Scenography

/si:ˈnɒgrəfi/  
(noun)

the design and painting of theatrical scenery.  
(in painting and drawing) the representation of objects in perspective.

Origin: mid 17th century: from French scénographie, or via Latin from Greek skēnographia ‘scene-painting’, from skēnē.



XX. Photo: (Oxford's English dictionary) To imagine the story I must describe you, the scene

# Scenography

I wrote this thesis in the form of a play as a steppingstone and to interweave discussion with the girls with my theoretical grounds and practical activities, one influences the other.

“Scenography is the combination of technological and material stagecraft’s to represent, enact, and produce a sense of place in performance. While it includes the techniques of scenic design and set design, scenography is a holistic approach to the study and practice of all aspects of design in performance” (Walker, 1992). Scenography scaffolds on the workshop settings and the backdrop of my motivations for undertaking the Master.



XXI. Photo: The girls concentrate on the dance they rehearsed right before the video shoot, June 2019



XXII. Photo: The girls of the 'Vrijheidswijk' help each other get dressed just before the video shoot, June 2019



XXIII. Photo: The girls of 'Bilgaard' in concentration for the dance and the video shoot, June 2019

# Stagedirections

Are instructions written into the script of a play, indicating stage actions, movements of performers, or production requirements.

Because I use a writing process model for drama writing on the floor in conversations with the girls (recorded in sound and video recordings), I will write the stage directives in the margin as much as possible (they are now shown in soft pink) to give you, the reader, as clear a picture as possible of the actions and movements of the performers.



XXIV. Photo: The girls of 'Bilgaard' dressing up for the dance and the video shoot, June 2019

# Scene 1

## The girls of SKRRT Noord

The structure of the scenes is that, every time at the start of a scene, I take you through black and white photos and voice recordings into the situation as it was during the weekly meetings I had with the girls. The scenography is displayed in a pink area.

Prior to those conversations, we worked for several months with theatre exercises and techniques inspired by Theater of the Oppressed.

The conversations and improvisations with the girls we filmed or recorded are the inspiration for the script we wanted to develop from there to create a performance.

Introducing SKRRT Noord GIRLS:

Chenoa \*Joelle \*Shanya \*Snezana \*Valdemira \*Shanya \*Safa \*Row \*Noor \*Laryn

During the past phases of the project we have always worked in consultation with 'Youth Work Amaryllis' during the hours of their Girls Club (on Tuesday afternoon), but after a number of well-intentioned actions♥ by the 'Amaryllis' trainees that turned out very wrong, we want to slowly get away and get the girls to another afternoon (Thursday) to work seriously towards the performance.

It's the end of February 2020 and this will be the first lesson after the spring break and my assistants Julian and Josephine and me had made an extensive program with theatre- and dance lessons. For the first lesson after the holidays, we had prepared a TikTok-workshop.

TikTok is very popular among youngsters. We want to develop a script with the girls in a playful way and in the field of their own interests (tiktoks). Although this is clearly communicated with 'Amaryllis Youthwork', everything is going differently than planned. Unfortunately, a few hours beforehand, the trainees of Youthwork confuse things

by scheduling sex education exactly that afternoon. That also appeared to have been communicated with the parents of the girls so they can't reschedule.

Again a miscommunication on which we have to improvise.

♥ The 'Amaryllis' trainees received hardly any guidance and were placed in the girls' group every week with two or three people without a supervisor. At first they did not or hardly communicate with us and sometimes for weeks they did nothing else than 'being friends' with the girls (in which case they also joined in with disrespectful behaviour towards the teacher who stood in front of the group, for example by not listening and by talking when they should have listened). A number of times 'out of the blue' surveys were carried out with the girls because the interns needed it for their credits. This even led to a quarrel between the girls of the two neighbourhoods because it completely disrupted the cooperation. Until I used an evaluation after each lesson to get everyone in the same direction.

# TikTok

Pronunciation: tik-tok  
(noun)

TikTok is a social media app that can be used to create and share short music videos. The videos can have a length of 3 to 15 seconds maximum. Videos can also be made in loops of up to 60 seconds. Short videos can be made with the app and then provided with stickers and effects. Popular movies include people dancing, singing or miming. Most movies have a length of 15 seconds. Users can like videos and write comments. TikTok shows users a full-screen video that keeps repeating. In the background, the technology uses artificial intelligence to make recommendations to users. (Het Parool, 2019)



XXV. Videostill photo: The girls from 'Vrijheidswijk' during the brainstorm

The girls of Bilgaard receive the sex education first so we can work with the girls from the 'Vrijheidswijk'. After an hour there is a change. The girls were, of course, extra excited about what was going to happen and therefore super agitated.

It is Tuesday afternoon 2 pm and I am sitting on the floor with my trainee Julian in the nursery gym of primary school De Eestroom in the Vrijheidswijk. About ten girls from the neighborhood are giggling and screaming around us hanging on the ground and the toddler gym benches. We are not allowed to wear shoes because we can't leave dirt on the floor on behalf of the management. The girls think this is stupid anyway so every week we have this same funny 'shoe battle-conversation'. It looks like we lost this time if you look at the picture carefully.

We secretly bring cookies and drinks for the girls because we are actually not allowed to eat inside but we sweep the floor extra thoroughly before departure.

We talk with the girls (who will also be the actors in the play) about the seventh grade, a topic that they have brought up themselves and that is close to their hearts. We pay attention to language, anecdotes, stories, emotion and make sound clips and videos (Moosmann, 2007)

In response to the topics in the conversations, we will improvise♥ in small groups.

♥Improvisation from Latin in which 'im' reverses the meaning of the next word and 'provisio' stands for forethought - meaning: 'depicting, producing or exhibiting something without preparation, out of nowhere or ad hoc'. Improvisation in general language refers to the spontaneous use of creativity to obtain solutions to problems that arise. Improvisation, of course, often comes in handy in every part of the creative process of a theatre performance. To create images and scenes, but also to obtain texts. In this phase I find out how, as a creator, I can use improvisation to obtain an ultimately 'fixed' theatre text.

### \*Everyone's talking\*

- **Julian:** Fingers up, fingers up. Rowshyna, Nora. Cause I'm really getting all...I'm hearing all kinds of things...eh ho...so...so we're talking about high school, and then what?
- **Girls to each other:** Shut the fuck up!
- **Julian:** Are we talking about these groups, for example?
- **Girls at the same time:** Yes!
- **Julian:** And what else is interesting about secondary school?
- **Girls:** Tiktoks
- Ehm
- Learning
- **Julian:** Nora?
- **Girls to each other:** Surely, you're not going to say that
- **Girls:** They say learning

### \*Soft laughter\*

- **Girls:** No, but I don't remember
- Shut up if you want to, yeah?
- **Girls:** We very often have matches of football and so on

### \*Mumbling\*

- **Girls:** YES, but then you need cheerleaders, don't you?
- **Caro:** Oh, cheerleaders are fun too!
- **Girls:** Dancers
- **Caro:** We can also do something about that.

### \*Laughter\*

- **Girls:** As if you're a horse that wants to grab grass and then go upstairs
- **Girls:** Whether Fabiola pulls down such a skirt...prrrrrt

### \*Laughter\*

- **Julian:** My horse really doesn't do that
- **Girls:** Do you have a horse?
- **Girls:** What's his name? Amerigo?
- **Girls:** Fabiola?
- **Julian:** Evie
- **Girls:** Lavin!
- **Girls:** But you don't know a Fabiola?
- **Girls:** That's the biggest stripper in the world
- **Julian:** Please Levi
- **Girls:** He really knows no Fabiola?
- **Girls:** He doesn't know Fabiola!



XXVI. Photo: My intern Julian together with the girls from the 'Vrijheidswijk' during our brainstorm

**\*Giggling and mumbling\***

- **Girls:** Ehm, this is Fabiola

**\*Shows phone with giggle\***

- **Julian:** And that is the biggest stripper in the world? And do you follow her?

- **Julian:** Girls!

- **Caro:** Is she a stripper?

- **Girls:** Noooooooooo

**\*Talk to one another\***

- **Caro:** She is a rapper, isn't she? Fabiola?

- **Girls:** Yeah, she's just dirty

- **Girls:** She has such a swimming costume, such a sexy suit and then she went into the Jumbo with a shopping cart.

- **Girls:** Yeah

- **Girls:** I now look through her insta, has she removed

- **Girls:** She went to the Gym, then she went down such tiny little shorts.

**\*Talking through each other\***

- **Girls:** Suddenly you hear shorts

**\*Talk to each other\***

- **Girls:** Oh, that is real!

- **Girls:** Oh, that is real!

**\*Consternation\* all the girls squat around each other and watch Fabiola on 1 telephone**

- **Girls:** Ugly

- **Girls:** She went like this with her legs and with her breasts

**\*Demonstration from Row\***

- **Caro:** But she raps too? In spite of her little trousers.

**\* Talking through each other\***

- **Girls:** Yes, here she says on her insta which country she is going to on holiday? And then I said: Very far from here and never come back.

- **Julian:** Why?

- **Girls:** Why does she say that? Why does she say. No, she doesn't have to come back here.

- **Julian:** Okay, but that is not very neat when you say that to her.

- **Girls:** I think she is ugly

- **Girls:** She is kaolo (slang) ugly

- **Julian:** But you don't have to say that to her

- **Girls:** She knows what she's like

- **Girls:** Sista, she has had nose plantation

- **Girls:** Fabiola

- **Caro:** Is she Dutch?

- **Girls:** Yes

- **Girls:** I'm really ashamed of her

- **Julian:** You don't have to follow her

- **Girls:** She did say she wants to see blood. Ok Fabiola, shut up, had reacted here, because they are going to do without face protection, because she is going to box against each other

- **Girls:** 28 March

# Scene 2

## My pedagogy; mapping and the joker

In this scene I introduce myself as a Joker (and explain that concept according to the Theatre of the Oppressed) taking you, reader, with me into my history. Through a small exercise 'Mapping' that we also did at MEIA, I show you how I applied this theatrically to my group so that you can get to know yourself and each other better in a playful way and immediately have a clear idea of how much we actually have in common. During the Critical pedagogy seminar that we received at MEIA we had an interesting assignment about Cartography where you zoom out from Micro to Macro.

Being able to position yourself also allows you to define sharper where and how, and in what kind of restricted or expansive way you want to act. 'Acting' is something else than 'doing something'. The idea behind making a cartography is that you move away from the tendency to think in terms of content first, while being unaware, or not aware enough, of the territories that you are in. Instead, the idea is to make yourself aware first of the territories that you are in, to then determine what kind of content might be urgent, of help, required etc. Or to decide what kind of action on what kind of scale would be meaningful, effective etc. (Turner & Korsten, MEIA 2019)

The exercise 'Mapping' helps me to illustrate here why I ended up finding myself doing and loving this project. I like to get to know myself and others in a playful way, but I can't avoid writing your reader a piece about my history. I started my bachelor's in fine arts at WdKA a couple of years ago when I was seventeen years old.

At the beginning of this study I had to interrupt a pregnancy and because in that time I dared

to share it with almost no one, it took me years to process it.

I was born in Rotterdam but grew up in a small village in Zeeland in a fairly strict, somewhat conservative, Christian family and I definitely did not dare to share this with my parents.

Attending school then was sheer joy. I loved being a student. I loved learning. School was the place of ecstasy-pleasure and danger. To learn ideas that ran counter to values and beliefs learned at home was to place oneself at risk, to enter the danger zone. Home was the place where I was forced to conform to someone else's image of who and what I should be. School was the place where I could forget that self and, through ideas reinvent myself. (Hooks, 1994)

During my studies I made (animated) films for ten years as a volunteer for 'Sophia Children's Hospital' Rotterdam. Pretty soon after I graduated, I also got my didactical degree and soon after that my son was born (whom I due to circumstances raised by myself). I worked as a freelance 'artist' and also in the hospitality industry and for 3 years as a stylist for an advertising photographer. I ran workshops for organisations within the charity sector, healthcare and many government funded art projects. Here I learnt to value what my time at art school had gifted me, a way of seeing and what I saw gifted me knowledge, I now know the unspoken moments of learning within art making. This is something to be shared. How can other people access this tacit knowledge too?

I started my company 'SPOONK' in 2000. 'SPOONK' at first was about designing and creating sustainable children's toys and furniture from waste materials and giving workshops on these skills.



Although I always really love to work with children especially and wanted to be a good single mom at the same time, I never saw myself as a teacher in a regular way. I really felt uncomfortable as in me in front of a class telling everybody what was right. I felt always more like an independent artist who sometimes gave workshops.

I felt attached to the 'Vrije School' (Waldorf School) for my son's education and when he was almost 7 we moved from Rotterdam to Friesland where the 'Vrije School' Leeuwarden asked me to teach handcrafts & woodworking. I did like the pedagogy that aims to develop the intellectual, artistic and practical skills of students in an integrated and holistic way. At the 'Vrije School' the development of the students' imagination and creativity is central (although for me it sometimes became a bit too dogmatic).

I think this was the first time I was officially a teacher in a system. I worked there for about 5 years and when I left the director told me: 'I think you are more an artist than a teacher'. Now I realize that these were remarkable words for me (I will come back to this in more detail at a later time). So, after quitting my teacher job and next to my free practice I developed myself in what I really love the most; and what really empowered me; making theatre, sing, dance and perform. It helped me to have agency over how to shape my live. To set realistic goals and think ahead about the consequences. To act and to reflect on my action. It also helped me to look back at my own past and deal with that. Working with the body, embodied learning is something in which I truly believe. From 2013 until 2017 I studied Yoga (more to immerse myself in it than to actually become a yoga teacher) and that convinced me that the mind and the body are one and the same. It helped me to look back at my own past and deal with that.

As I already mentioned I studied Fine Arts at the Willem de Kooning Academy. My affinity from childhood was not only on visual art, but especially on theatre and music, so as an artist

I moved in that direction and developed myself as a theatre maker and performer. I always create performances with a strong social commitment.

And from 2014 onwards, I began to delve more and more into community Arts and I became fascinated by Theatre of the Oppressed. I will come back to this in detail in scene 3.

Theatre of the oppressed uses theater techniques to work on peace and a more humane society. Theater is used to achieve a goal, apart from making art. The aim is to make society more humane, through the development and realization of essential human rights. By means of an analytical methodology that enables people to try out their actions within the fiction of the theater, in order to eventually become a protagonist (acting individual) in their own lives. Theater is never merely the goal, but always the means through which you work, in all kinds of forms and techniques. (Opdebeeck & Bever, 2014)

It's my personal assumption that no one has to learn to play theatre. I believe that every person can play naturally.

During the two projects (The founding of the Arts and Theatre School in Namibia and 'SKRRT Noord' in Leeuwarden Friesland) I described briefly in my Foreword, I really started to feel affection for the intended audience.

The girls with which I have the pleasure of working in Friesland have very different backgrounds; Dutch / Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean, Turkish, Western and others. Most were born and raised here, although I have also worked with children who have just come from Syria or Afghanistan. I not only felt that I especially wanted to assist these girls (children) in their personal development, but I came to see that I could have a positive contribution as well.

Young people are looking for their own identity, but what if those young people are vulnerable? What if they get fewer opportunities due to poverty, violence, political instability or poor economic conditions? How then, do we ensure that their identity development is positive? (Roefs, 2017)

That is what I am concerned about and what I want to consider in this study. To my surprise, research in youth culture up to 1976 turned out to be only about boy culture.

Research into youth culture from before 1976 actually always means boy culture. Only then are girls examined separately. Girl research focuses on gender differences in growing up. There are very specific concerns for girls that do not occur for boys. Even more striking: new worries are constantly being added, while old worries do not necessarily go away - even though the positivity? Worries of girls are constantly improving. Sexuality is a recurring theme in this regard. (German & De Bruykere, 2013, p. 29)

This made me think of Adichie's TEDx reading in 2013:

We teach girls to shrink, to make themselves smaller. We (the society) say to girls: You can be ambitious, but not too ambitious. You must be successful, but not too successful, otherwise you are a threat to the man. Because I am a woman, I am expected to aspire to marriage. I am supposed to make the choices in my life with the idea that getting married is the most important thing. Marriage can be something beautiful, a source of joy, love and mutual support. But why do we teach girls to aspire to get married and don't we teach boys to do the same? We educate girls to see each other as competitors - not in terms of jobs or achievements, which I think might be good, but in terms of men's attention. We teach girls that they cannot experience their sexuality in the same way as boys.

Feminist: someone who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes. (Adichie, 2012)

Growing up is different for boys and girls. There are other expectations, but boys and girls are not allowed to do the same things. The culture for girls looks different, because the life for girls looks different.

In addition, it is also true that urban youngsters often grow up in different worlds.

“On the street in the urban working-class neighborhoods, they are given macho-masculine codes: the protection of their own honor, ‘respect’, the prevention of loss of face and the perception of women as a pleasure object. These street codes conflict with the living environment of the school, where feminine soft codes such as self-reflection, self-expression, self-evaluation and self-development are becoming increasingly important. This creates a painful pedagogical mismatch. This masculine attitude also influences the relationship between the sexes. Young girls from suburban environments who are included in the dynamics of getting attention from ‘macho’ boys, while unable to play the game, are not fully aware of the dual agenda and understand their upcoming relationships with boys in the terms of love and sexuality with which they are socialized in their home culture. These often-naive assumptions lead in daily practice to painful processes for these girls who feel used and humiliated and, in extreme cases, even left behind with an STD or an unwanted pregnancy. (El Hadioui, 2011)

I recognize all of these propositions I refer to in the target group I work with in these projects. Therefore, I hope my research will be of influence on the coping of these girls with their socialization.

I start with you at the beginning; because the first meeting with the group is essential. That is why I describe below an exercise that I did with the girls from SKRRT Noord during one of our first meetings in Phase 3.

## The first meeting & Mapping

The first meeting with a group is perhaps the most important of all, because it sets the tone for the rest of the work process. With some groups you only have one meeting. Depending on the group you work with, you will have to get the participants moving, whether they have to lead their enthusiasm to work with it. Sometimes participants are insecure and prefer not to take part. Other participants test the workshop leader, for example to find out whether they can be trusted, whether they pretend to be equal or superior, or whether they really know what they are doing ('why play games?!'). Whatever group you have in front of you, it is especially important that people have fun during a first workshop. Otherwise they will not come back next time. The most important conditions for having fun are that people feel welcome and participate voluntarily. I usually set the rule that participants are responsible for themselves. If people do not want to or cannot participate in an exercise, they sit aside for a while and then join them again when possible. Just the fact that you mention that people should not, often removes a lot of uncertainty and resistance in the group. Especially if you work with a group for a longer time, it is important to get to know each other's names. After all, you want people to dare to be vulnerable and share their own stories. That starts with recognizing everyone as an individual, with an individual identity and unique characteristics.

The exercise I often use is the 'Mapping' exercise in groups I work with in order to get up information that I find important in a playful

way. I also did this exercise with the girls from SKRRT Noord. I used it to get to know each other's names and to learn more about each other as a group. This exercise is ideal for starting work processes.

The maps you use can vary from the map of a neighborhood to worldwide.

Goal: group formation, reflection, setting goals, prevention, self-knowledge, getting to know the group.

In the following 3 images you can see how the exercise works.

The image of the exercise you see on this page comes from the theatre workbook I wrote and illustrated (especially for my project in Namibia).

Here you will find several techniques and exercises that I also used in the SKRRT Noord project.

For the teachers of the Arts & Theatre School in Namibia I developed this workbook, which contains a lot of descriptive drawings. That is because not everyone I work with in Namibia can read well and they do want to understand and use the exercises.

I designed the characters that appear in the illustrations of the workbook especially for an animated film about the Arts & Theatre School for the Ministry of Culture & Education in Namibia in 2017.

XXVIII. Photo: 3 Images from my Go Gobabis Theatre Workbook pages 34 - 36 (this is a Dutch variant especially for the Skrrt Noord project)

# MAPPING (THE MAP)

**GOAL: GROUP FORMATION, REFLECTION, SETTING GOALS, PREVENTION, SELF KNOWLEDGE, GETTING TO KNOW THE GROUP AS A JOKER**

**THE WHOLE GROUP SPREADS THROUGH SPACE.**

**THE JOKER ASKS THE GROUP TO IMAGINE THAT WE ARE SCATTERED ON THE MAP OF NAMIBIA ON THE FLOOR.**

**THE SCALE OF THE MAP IS FIRST MADE CLEAR: HERE LIES LEEUWARDEN, AND HERE AMSTERDAM, AND HERE TURKEY, AND HERE AFRICA, AND SO ON. THE JOKER WILL STAND WHERE THE MEETING IS BEING HELD.**

**CHECK WITH SOME PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE NOW, OR SAY IT YOURSELF IF YOU HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE.**

**IF EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS THE IDEA OF THE MAP, YOU CAN ASK QUESTIONS TO GET TO KNOW THE GROUP, FOR EXAMPLE; WHERE ARE YOU BORN? IF PEOPLE WERE BORN OUTSIDE NAMIBIA, THEY CAN MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF WHERE IT WAS.**

**NOW ASK SOME OR ALL PARTICIPANTS TO TELL THEIR PLACE OF BIRTH AND VIEW THIS TOGETHER.**

**DEPENDING ON THE PURPOSE OF THE EXERCISE AND THE COMPOSITION OF THE GROUP, YOU CAN VARY ENDLESSLY TO GET THE INFORMATION YOU THINK IS IMPORTANT AS A JOKER.**

**THE MAPS YOU USE CAN VARY FROM THE MAP OF A NEIGHBORHOOD TO THE WHOLE WORLD.**

## **MAPPING SAMPLE QUESTIONS:**

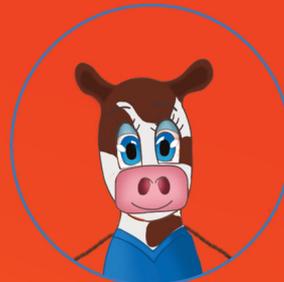
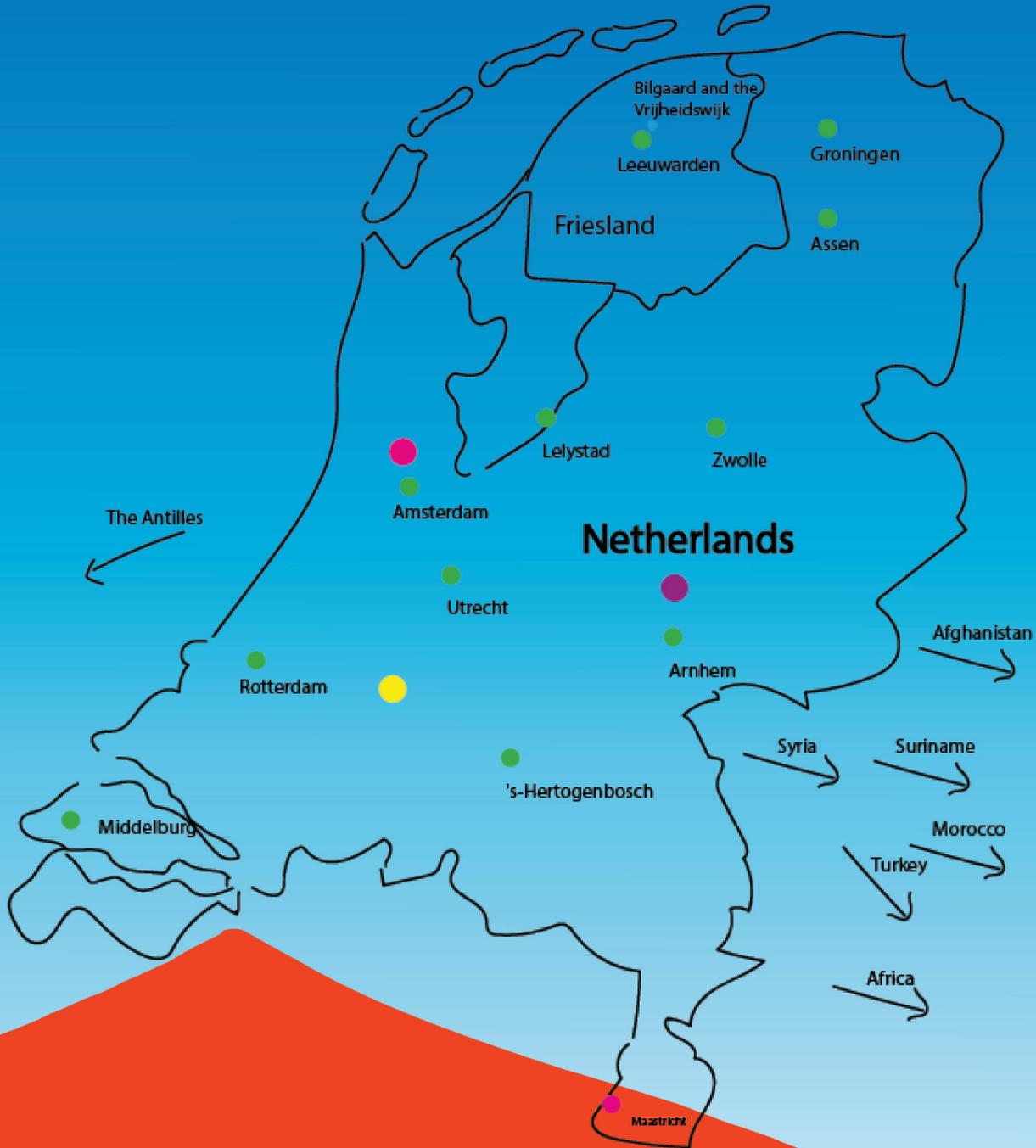
- **WHERE HAVE YOU EVER HAD A WONDERFUL MOMENT?**
- **WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST DANGEROUS PLACE IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD / SCHOOL / CITY? WHAT HAPPENS THERE THEN? AND THE SAFEST PLACE?**
- **WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO IN THE WORLD AGAIN?**
- **WHERE IS YOUR BEST FRIEND?**
- **WHERE DO YOU NEVER WANT TO GO?**
- **WHERE DO YOU FEEL BEST?**
- **WHERE DOES YOUR FAMILY LIVE?**
- **WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE IN 5 YEARS TIME AND WHAT WILL YOU DO THERE ?**

## **POINTS OF ATTENTION:**

**BE AWARE OF THE QUESTIONS YOU ASK IN THE GROUP AND TO WHOM YOU DO OR DO NOT ASK FOR EXPLANATION.**

**SOME QUESTIONS MAY HAVE TOO HIGH A FOCUS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS, OR BRING UP MEMORIES THAT PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT.**





## Joker and the joker

An essential method for me as a pedagogue is the so-called 'joker' - a starting point for theatre trainers - and the role he plays. I have been working with Participative Drama for years. This term is slowly becoming common place but has only existed since the late 1990s. I've worked in many projects with different target groups; from villagers to urban residents and from seniors to youngsters and children. My goal is participation and that is why I use drama techniques. Participative Drama originates from the Theatre of the Oppressed (T/O) and largely coincides with this.

In scene three I will return extensively to the background of Theatre of the Oppressed.

The joker (a term from) the Theatre of the Oppressed is an artist with a pedagogical and political function, who helps people to better understand themselves and to express their ideas and emotions. Together with the groups, the joker analyzes the problems that are relevant to them, and together they look for alternatives to change something when needed. To this end, the joker makes his/her expertise about the T/O available to the group and teaches participants the techniques by applying them.

Jokers guide processes with communities, with the Theatre of the Oppressed as a tool. It is done by a versatile talented artist, a joker, who specializes in guiding groups and uses various applied theatre techniques to search for the social and artistic power of the group. The term joker is translated from Portuguese and comes

from 'Curinga'. This is the joker in the card game, the card that can always be played and that any trump card can request.

A joker does not accept the oppressive structures in society but tries to change this through theatre. In doing so, they go against existing customs and patterns. A joker makes a fuss, that is, they mess things up.

Joker is making scene of spades that makes the participants' voices echo. The term "joker" is a nickname, which you can only attribute to yourself by acting on it. With my background I can identify very well with the joker figure.

To Joker is first and foremost a verb. It's something you do with groups and in the middle of society. By using games and exercises, what all participants already possess - being creative creators and the ability to learn through play - is rediscovered together. Often as adults we have forgotten how to tap into our creativity. The joker opens a space in which that creativity can and can be utilized to the maximum. It is important to create this new safe space to be able to work on our wounds and wishes within it.

The joker him/herself learns from the community he/she works with about how it works within that specific community. After all, that knowledge is reserved for the group. The group determines the themes and the participants share stories from their own lives about these subjects during the working process. The joker then bundles these stories into 1 common story, that is converted into a

theatrical form. After that, an action is taken with the participants to improve the position in society. This promotion is usually a theatrical end product that is shown to an audience, but this is not necessarily the case. Sometimes the group decides that it is better to keep the scene within the workspace as a doctrine. If it is decided to present something to an audience, this does not necessarily have to be a complete performance. For example, images made during a work process can also work well as a starting point for a dialogue with the audience.

When a public presentation is taking place, it is the joker's job to actively involve the audience. In regular theatre, the audience is often passive. It is sitting in the theatre watching, thinks it should be quiet, clapping politely after the play and then going home again. The agreement is usually even that the actors pretend that the audience is not there while the performance is being played. At the T/O, the passive spectator is transformed into an acting participant on the stage. Together with the public, the problem shown is analysed on the spot and alternative options are investigated to deal with this problem. It is the function of the joker to create the right conditions for this. The joker forms the bridge between the piece, the workplace, the actors and the audience. Or formulated differently: between the process, the desire and the action.

**Tip:** A joker is therefore a human centipede who must understand almost everything. This is of course actually impossible, especially if “almost everything” has to be done all at the same time. I therefore recommend every joker to, if possible, work with an assistant. Two people see and know more than one, and it is nice to be able to divide the many tasks on the floor. There are a number of specific tasks that a joker should at least be able to perform in order to do the job (Opdebeeck, 2014).

In my practice during SKRRT Noord I work together with a student Drama Teaching of the NHL Leeuwarden (higher professional education). He is in his final exam year and has been involved with SKRRT Noord from phase 2. That is the phase where I first introduced the girls to theater with care. Julian and I prepare the lessons together and take turns giving different exercises. Because I am a participant, as a joker, as a researcher and there are a lot of social problems among the girls, it was a tough challenge that I could not have done without an assistant anyway.

## Identifying the projects goals

First of all, it is important that a joker understands the purpose of the work and keeps it in mind.

My goal is to investigate how I can bring safety and trust to the group and how I can create the conditions that the girls tell their own story through dance and theatre.

In this whole scene I see myself as the joker in my practice and my specific project in this is SKRRT Noord with girls. They all grow up in a deprived area, but after two years I still know little about their real background. Especially because so much energy is lost 'fighting' with each other. I don't really know whether living in these neighborhoods influences their development. Getting to know them is really very hard. They do not come up very quickly with personal stories, especially not in the group. Sometimes when I talk to one or two girls separately when, for example, they ride along in my van, it sometimes become more personal.

A joker works with groups in society that are somehow oppressed and uses the techniques of Participative Drama to stand up for their interests and strive for sustainable social change. "Doing something fun with" can be very valuable and important to a community, but it simply serves a different purpose. I have known some girls for almost 2 years now and have seen them evolve from little girls into adolescents. I never assumed that because they live in deprived neighbourhoods, they immediately automatically belong to

"oppressed". I only noticed while working that they suppress each other. They are so incredibly unkind and hostile to each other. The girls of Bilgaard among themselves, the girls of Bilgaard vs. the girls from the Vrijheidswijk (I think only after the incident in December, I have not really noticed before). And especially during the COVID-19 lockdown where we could only have online contact.

## Looking Back

Almost all work processes follow the global pattern of acquaintance, group formation, building trust, sharing personal stories, and exchanging ideas about a topic from the group through images and / or scenes. Whether you do this in an afternoon or during a year, with or without an audience: the direction of the process is always the same (Opdebeeck en Bevers, 2014).

Looking back, I was during SKRRT Noord able to take quite some time for the acquaintance process. I feel like I have now completed that section in the individual neighborhoods. However, I feel that I am very seriously stuck in the group formation and trust building. I worked 1x10 weeks in 2018 (with just doing something nice that came from the group; dance and fake nails). In 2019 I worked 2x10 weeks (in which at the request of Youth work also the girls from the 'Vrijheidswijk' participated; again, I worked on a long acquaintance and group formation) and started working with theatre exercises. In March 2020 I was in the last phase of 20 weeks where we just devoted ourselves to the part 'sharing personal stories' and developing

a script and a play, when COVID-19 changed everything. Because the relationships between the girls are still very tense, it is very difficult not to break the thin thread that was there. To be honest, I was pretty desperate about not to let that happen and started discovering what can be done online to stay close to the girls.

### Willingness to learn reciprocally

In my project I really try to listen to the girls, and to enter into a dialogue with the group and the girls individually. This requires a genuine open attitude and curiosity about all opinions and stories; also the stories that I think I already know and the opinions that I absolutely disagree with (such as the meangirls behaviour).

I am open to learn from the community with which I work, and I dare to be vulnerable towards the group. I do not see myself as an omniscient teacher, but as a learning teacher.

Perhaps this is also what appeals to me in the line of thought that I never considered myself a teacher. I absolutely do not see myself as omniscient and I do not want to present myself as such. During the time I did MEIA, I also found out that my idea of what teachers are really is not correct and that I had a firm opinion of their value. My opinion has therefore changed considerably in this respect. I always learn from my girls, from the children I teach at school, from my players, from the groups I work with and I am very grateful for that. I believe in the concept of lifelong learning - I prefer nothing more honestly.

And like Bell Hooks wrote in *Teaching to Transgress*:

Teaching is a performative act. And it is in that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom. To embrace the performative aspect of teaching we are compelled to engage 'audiences' to consider issues of reciprocity. Teachers are not performers in the traditional sense of the word in that our work is not meant to be a spectacle. Yet it is meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning. (Hooks, 1994)

### Knowledge of games, exercises and techniques

Guiding long-term processes requires a large arsenal of exercises and techniques. A joker is able to let the group process evolve from simple to (very) complex. The different techniques are used to uncover themes, the production of images, scenes and the process of making and repeating scripts. Extensive knowledge of the arsenal of games is necessary to be able to select and apply the right technique that is needed in a certain situation. My *Go Gobabis Theatre* book is filled with 55 exercises and techniques and hopefully a practical guide for theatre makers and the community.

XXIX. Videostill photo:  
The girls from  
'Vrijheidswijk'  
during the  
brainstorm



Back to the same setting as in scene 1.  
The girls are still talking about what really  
concerns them at the moment; the fact that  
they all go to high school after the summer  
holidays and what that will be like.

- **Girls:** No
- **Girls:** She has my phone
- **Caro:** Yeah, that's why you can take it back
- **Girls:** OK
- **Girls:** Yeah, but you give it to me!
- **Caro:** So, high school, it's a shame you didn't see the show then.

(Last week in the spring holidays Julian and I went to the performance "Juffenballet" by the Maastheater (a performance about awful high school teachers). I had arranged 15 free tickets at the Harmonie. With a lot of pain and trouble we got 2 girls from Bilgaard.

#### \*Smile for the phone\*

- **Girls:** I want to seeeeeeee itttttt!
- **Julian:** No! Rowshyna, Nora

#### \*Talk to each other\*

- **Girls:** Do you want to read?
- **Girls:** Hey shithead!
- **Caro:** OK, because! High school! And what else? What could we do with a performance about high school?
- **Girls:** Excuse me?
- **Girls:** Look you have.
- **Julian:** Eh Nora!
- **Girls:** Look, you have normal girls and you have these irritating pussy children.
- **Girls:** Oh that.
- **Girls:** But it is heh!
- **Girls:** For example, in films you often see about schools, but most of them are about



high school and then you have three girls, one in the middle and two next to it. One of them is a helper and the other gets drinks for her. The other is her diary and the other gets her drinks.

- Then listen!

**\*The other girls are disturbing\***

- And then there you have it.

- **Julian:** Hey Nora, listen up

- **Girls:** And then you have other children

- **Julian:** Shall I intervene for a moment

- **Girls:** NO!!!!!!

- **Girls:** And then?

- **Julian:** But I'm really bothered by you and Rowshyna is telling her story

**\*Mumbling\***

- **Julian:** Ok Nora you can do something about that yourself, then just keep your mouth shut. Yes?

- **Girls:** I don't care

- **Caro:** Rowshyna, what were you saying?

- **Girls:** You always have those highclass girls, I wanted to say something else , but I don't say it.

- High class bitch hihi

- Ok, you usually have those three girls and one in the middle who is then of course the most popular and then two, two, two helpers. One is her diary and the other is her servant actually

- **Caro:** Ok, so the mean girls

- **Girls:** Yes, but I am not finished yet! And then there are other girls and maybe they will go out with that boy

**\*Mumbling and giggling\***

# Scene 3

## My pedagogy; Theatre of the Oppressed

### Theatre of the Oppressed

#### Purpose and resource

In this scene I will briefly describe the history and philosophy of Participative Drama after which I will give a short overview of all methodologies that fall under Participatory drama. Then I will focus on the Forum Theatre, the most commonly used method. In this scene I will also discuss the method of making a so-called 'anti-model' - a play in which a social problem is shown - in relation to developing a script with the girls from SKRRT Noord.

It also contains tips and advice on how to enter into a dialogue with the audience on this subject afterwards.

The chapter 'Techniques and Exercises' contains a couple of games that I often use, divided into different categories (I will of course also explain the difference between exercises and techniques in more detail). The structure of these exercises is such that they can be used from a first introductory meeting to a long working process with a group of very personal problems. The techniques and exercises I particularly used for SKRRT Noord to critically investigate my working methods in the Epilogue.

If you delve into the world of applied theatre, you quickly get lost in the terminology used in this field. For example, there is socio drama, participatory drama, indentation theatre, replay theatre, drama therapy, theatre of the oppressed, interactive theatre and community arts, just to name a few.

The similarities between all these forms are that theatre is used as a way to achieve a certain goal, beyond making art alone.

Participative Drama originates from the Theatre of the Oppressed (T/O) and largely coincides with this. Hence, I will cover it extensively. The T/O has grown from a collection of methodologies to a non-violent, aesthetic movement that is now spread all over the world. This movement uses theatre techniques to work for peace and a more humane society. It is based on the principle that all human relations should naturally be based on dialogue: between men and women, ethnic groups, families, and nations. In reality, however, there is often one-way communication, monologues. (Opdebeeck & Bevers, 2014)

The aim is to restore dialogue between people, whereby everyone can express themselves freely. The aim of the working method is to make society more human, through the development and realization of essential human rights. The means to achieve this is a collection of theatrical techniques, in which the ethics of the movement are always the starting point. It is an analytical method that enables people to try out actions within the fiction of the theatre, to eventually become a protagonist (acting individual) in their own lives. The T/O is an exercise for reality and therefore an instrument for social change.

If I put these words back to the girls at SKRRT Noord for a moment, I hope to be able to explain why I used T/O as a methodology. The girls are 'repressed' by the fact that their dialogue is seriously distorted, among other things by meangirls behaviour, but also by their perception and that of their environment and culture about

## Augusto Boal and his Theatre of the Oppressed

### About Augusto Boal

Augusto Boal (1931-2009) called himself the discoverer of the Theater of the Oppressed. He has always adapted his way of working to the circumstances of his life. He applied the lessons he learned in his next projects. Sometimes completely new techniques arose from this. It is inevitable to describe Boal's history in a thesis that mainly deals with the application of methodologies developed by him. These techniques are inextricably linked to the working conditions in which he discovered them and are therefore intertwined with his personal history. The Joker method he developed is not a trick, but always demands openness, flexibility and the willingness to change. Boal was a master of this. He wrote several books about his work that have often been translated and have therefore been published in different countries. It is partly because of this that his method is now being used worldwide and he was also asked to share his knowledge all over the world.



XXX. Photo: Julian (my assistant / intern) & Caro together with Shanaya and Safa in the theatre

## Explanation of the name

Theatre of the Oppressed. All four of these words are equally relevant when interpreting the T/O.

First of all is the theatre! Theatre is never just the goal, but always the means with which one works, in all kinds of forms and techniques. I assume that nobody has to learn to play theatre. Every person can play naturally. In daily reality we effortlessly switch between our many roles in the theatre of life: the role of good friend, parent, workshop leader, lover, child, customer, partner, student, colleague, etc. Each role requires a different attitude of us, and we play all these roles without having to think about it. The uniqueness of being human is our self-awareness. When we look at a scene that comes from our own lives, we are able to perceive ourselves in this situation and then think about it. The same scene can be used to analyze the past or to investigate the future. By breaking the barrier between players and audience and literally stepping into the play as viewers, we transform from 'toeschouwer' to 'doeschouwer'. Life is theatre, playing theatre is life. Every person is theatre: the actor (person who acts) and the spectator coexist in the same person.

The word 'of' refers to the ownership of the act of creation, which always lies with the communities with which I work. Unlike in regular theatre, where the director and scriptwriter determine the content, it is the community at T/O that determines which topics are relevant to work with. Standing up for people's rights works best if you put

on the agenda what is actually relevant to the community. Unfortunately, politicians, community artists, caregivers and policymakers often implement what they think is needed, with the best intentions, rather than simply asking where the community's real needs lie.

For the girls of the SKRRT Noord project, it was clear to us that the special stage of their lives (from girl to young woman) and the fact that they would be attending secondary school after the summer holidays were 2 very important data. While we had been observing the meangirl behaviour among the groups for a long time, it turned out to be an agenda item that occupied them all the more because they were about to embark on a great new adventure.

And then 'The oppressed'. Most people initially associate this term with slavery or other serious human rights abuses. People usually don't feel oppressed, and they want to keep it that way. Yet the first step to real social change is to recognize that social mechanisms of repression do exist, affecting us all to some degree. 'The oppressed' are all of us.

In fact, we have often internalized these suppression mechanisms. They have settled in us, so that we no longer need a representative of the external company to feel the judgment. So, in many ways, we also suppress ourselves. Augusto Boal describes an oppressed as "a person who has lost the right to express his / her desires and needs and is limited to the positive of an obedient listener to a monologue". Seen in this way, oppression is all around us (Opdebeeck & Bevers, 2014).



XXXI. Photo: Caro and the SPOONK interns filming a dance-challenge for the girls of SKRRT Noord during the lockdown, March 2020



## The Methods of the Theatre of the Oppressed

I want to discuss some separate techniques that I use when creating participatory drama. This is a collection of techniques inspired by or directly derived from the Theatre of the Oppressed.

Boal has depicted the parts and coherence of his method in a tree. He chose the largest and most famous cashew nut tree in the world, which is located in Natal (Brazil) and has an area of no less than 8400 m<sup>2</sup>. This huge tree has the special feature that the branches grow sideways instead of upwards, and when the branches touch the ground, they take root again. They remain part of the original mother tree and depend on fair distribution of food. It is the most solidary tree in existence.

The T/O tree is rooted in a soil of human behavior. The method is fed by political, economic, ethical, historical and philosophical analyzes made with groups of people. Every human action consists of the elements word, image and sound. These are also the ingredients of all games in the arsenal. Visual theater is an analytical language that helps us to develop forum theater. But a forum theater alone does not change anything. It is the elaborations of this working method that lead to concrete actions for change. (free translation from Dutch, Cohen-Cruz, Schutzman, 1994).

### The arsenal of games

Perhaps the most important building block of the T/O is the arsenal of games. Another word for arsenal is stock, and this word exactly covers the charge. The different games and exercises are used in the struggle for social change. Different situations call for different exercises, and if you have a warehouse full of games you can apply as needed. The arsenal of games is an essential part of the methodology, and not, as is sometimes thought, an introduction to the 'real work'. My own arsenal of games you can find in a separate publication alongside this thesis, it's called the Go Gobabis Theatre Workbook. The pages of this Workbook containing all the exercises and techniques that I have used at SKRRT Noord and they are printed as images in the chapter Exercises and Techniques. Everyone has played as a child. For children, play is the most natural form of learning and discovery. The sad thing is that at some point adults tell children to sit still, follow the rules and behave 'normally'. As a result, the creativity and imagination that we all have naturally fade into the background. Hector Arisitizabal, who works at 'ImaginAction' in Los Angeles, works in the US with young people from ghettos who have experienced a lot of violence in their young lives. He notes that they can often only reproduce this violence and that possible behavioral alternatives simply no longer exist. He expressed this beautifully: "Our biggest problem in society is our lack of imagination. When we can no longer fantasize, or even dare to imagine what a different and better world could look like, how can it ever arise in reality?" (Aristizabal & Lefer, 2010).

XXXII. Photo: Caro wearing a mask we designed in SPOONK for the Tiktak -shooting before we knew what a disaster COVID-19 would cause, February 2020

Games are a simple and natural way to tap into our source of creativity and imagination. They break through our entrenched habits and patterns, make us aware of our bodies again, develop our senses, shake up attitude differences and give a new perspective to look at our lives. Games can also be used as metaphors, which we can compare with the world around us. In this way they form the possibility of reflection. Playing is learning. (Opdebeeck & Bevers, 2014)

In addition, playing is just fun to do. That sounds simple, but its power is enormous. Having fun together ensures that the relationship of trust and intimacy between people grows. This trust and positive group feeling is indispensable for sharing stories later in the process.

With my girls from SKKRT Noord I had come just before the social distance polices to the point of sharing stories.

The following list briefly describes the different types of theatre that T/O uses.

I only describe the techniques that I used (or at least was planning to use before the COVID-19 lockdown) at SKRRT Noord, somewhat more extensive, the rest can be read via my source reference.

- **From story to scene**

I used different techniques to get from a story to a scene and try to shape the stories that have emerged in a group on stage. Most exercises are aimed at working further from visual theatre.

From my practice as a visual artist, I am focused on translating everything into images and thinking visually.

Images are a useful starting point when creating a scene, but there are also other ways to make stories theatrical. These exercises do not yield perfect ready-made scenes, but a rough design, comparable to sketches that need to be further developed.

- **Newspaper theatre**

The term newspaper theatre is actually not sufficient for the possibilities that this method offers. In fact, newspaper theatre is developing a theatrical action based on a written text. This could be a newspaper article, but you could also think of reports from a political meeting, texts from the holy books, a country's constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or the menu of the King's New Year's reception. This can eventually lead to an image, a poem or a song. The reading techniques provide starting points for placing a text in a different context, and then to work on it theatrically.

- **Image theatre**

Image theatre is a series of exercises and techniques that enable people to communicate through images. A number of visual theatre exercises are described in a separate category in my Go Gobabis Theatre Workbook.

Visual language is clear, unambiguous, fast and universal. It can be used with almost all communities and can be used very widely. I use this technique in workshops to deepen topics and ultimately to create scenes. When you use images, the first step towards Forum theatre (more about this below) has already been taken. Also during Forum presentations, I sometimes use images to clarify matters. In addition, this technique is very useful if you work with large groups and / or if you have little time.

- **Forum theatre**

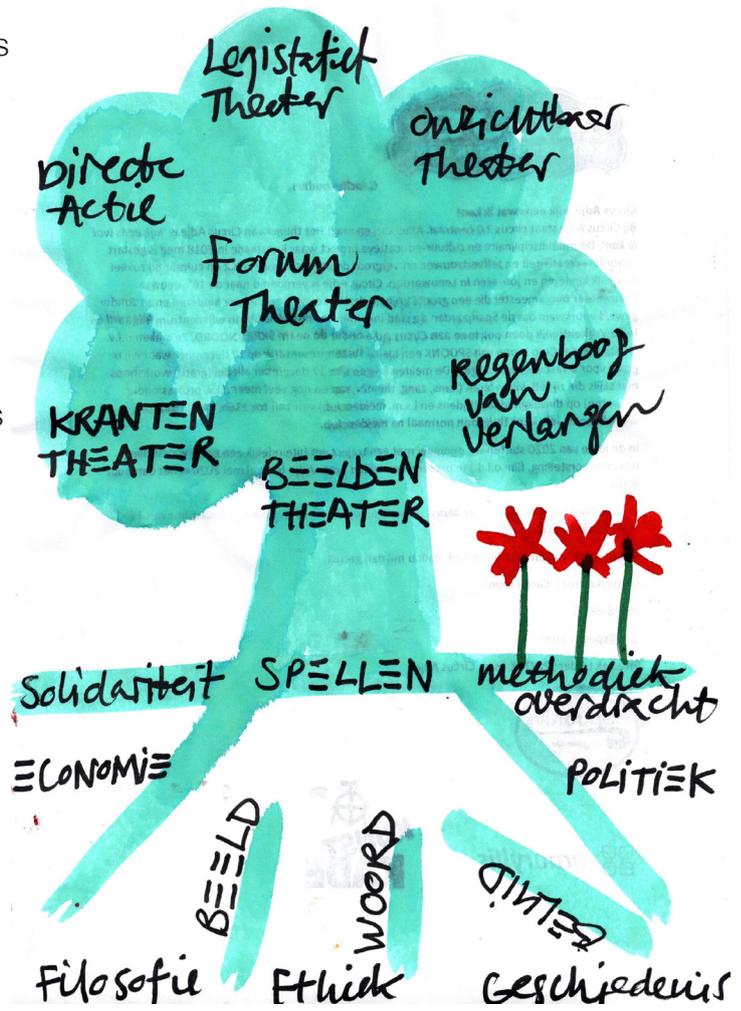
The most commonly used technique in T/O is the Forum theatre. There is quite a bit of confusion about this term. In theatre performances there are many forms of interaction with the audience, but it is not the case that interactive theatre or indentation theatre is automatically Forum theatre. The Forum theatre has a number of specific characteristics and a special dramaturgical structure. It consists of an anti-model and alternatives from the audience.

- The anti-model

The anti-model is a scene or a play that depicts a situation of oppression. The protagonist (protagonist) in the play does not know how to fight oppression, tries to, but fails.

- The alternatives from the audience

After playing an anti-model, people from the audience replace the protagonist and play out their possible alternatives, ideas and strategies off-stage. The other actors improvise from the desires of their characters. This makes it possible to analyze to what extent these suggestions are useful in real life and what the consequences are. Boal called the Forum theatre 'a collective exercise for reality'. Forum theatre offers the opportunity to study the past together with groups in order to change the future. Boal calls these acting 'toeschouwers' (in Dutch) 'spectactors'. This is a contraction of the words spectator (spectator) and actor (actor, but here also meant as someone who performs an act, acts). Initially, I do not intend to use Forum theatre as a technique during SKRRT Noord, but it is too important a part of T/O not to expose.



- Invisible Theatre
- Rainbow of Desire
- Prospective techniques
- Introspective techniques
- Theatre versus Therapy
- Legislative Theatre
- (Direct)Social Action

XXXIII. Photo: The tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed, here painted by C. Kroon, translated after the original drawing of A.Boal

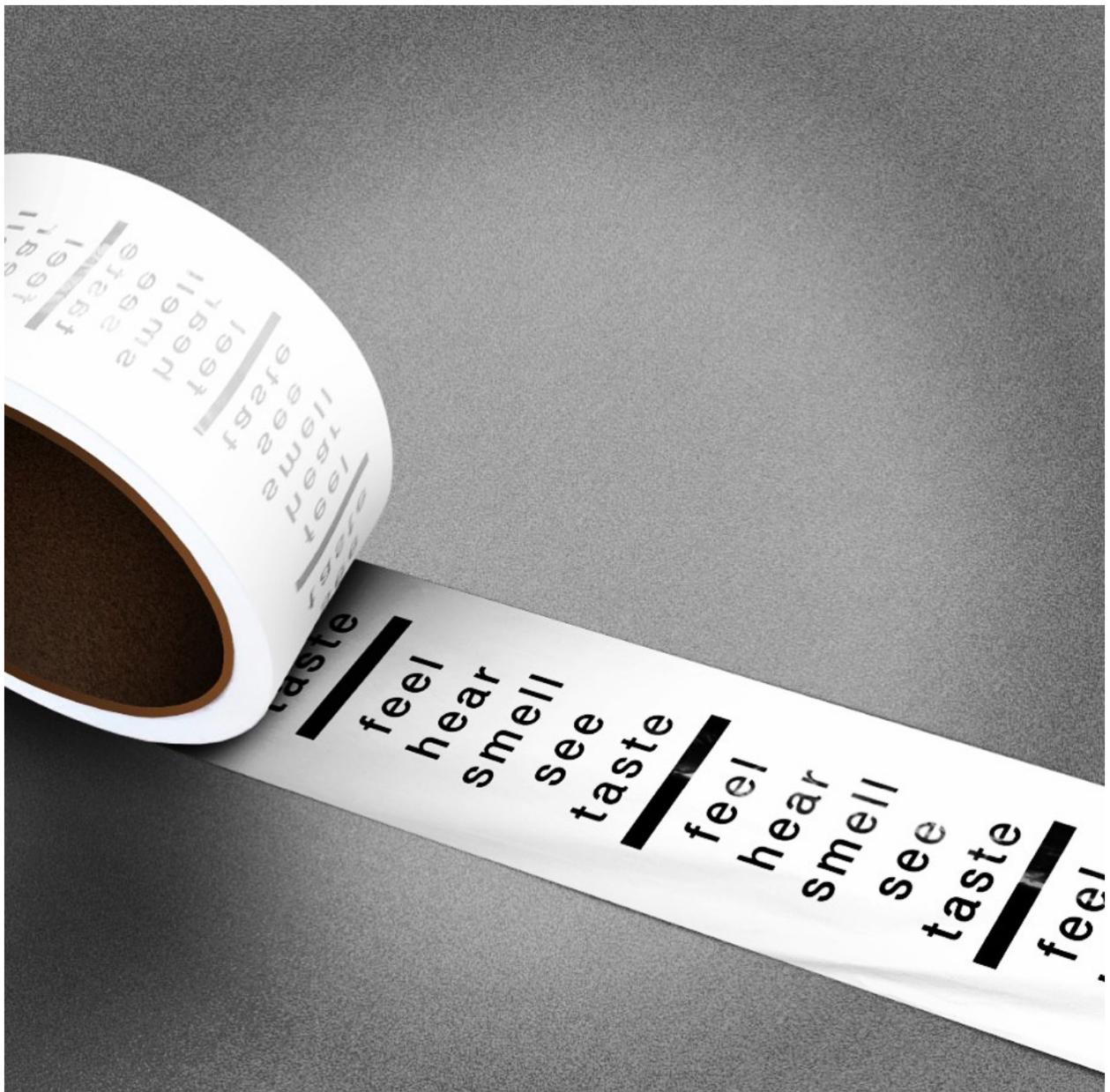
## The usefulness of playing

Playing is the most natural and casual way of learning and discovering. Not only humans, but most mammals prepare for adult life by playing. As a newborn baby we first discover ourselves: our body and our senses. We feel hunger, pain, warmth and cold in our bodies, and relate to the world around us by seeing, feeling, tasting and smelling. Later we learn to enter into relationships with others through games. Many children's games involve collaboration, imitation, rivalry, creating something that was not there before, or fantasy. All these skills are crucial to function as an adult in society. (Freire, 2000)

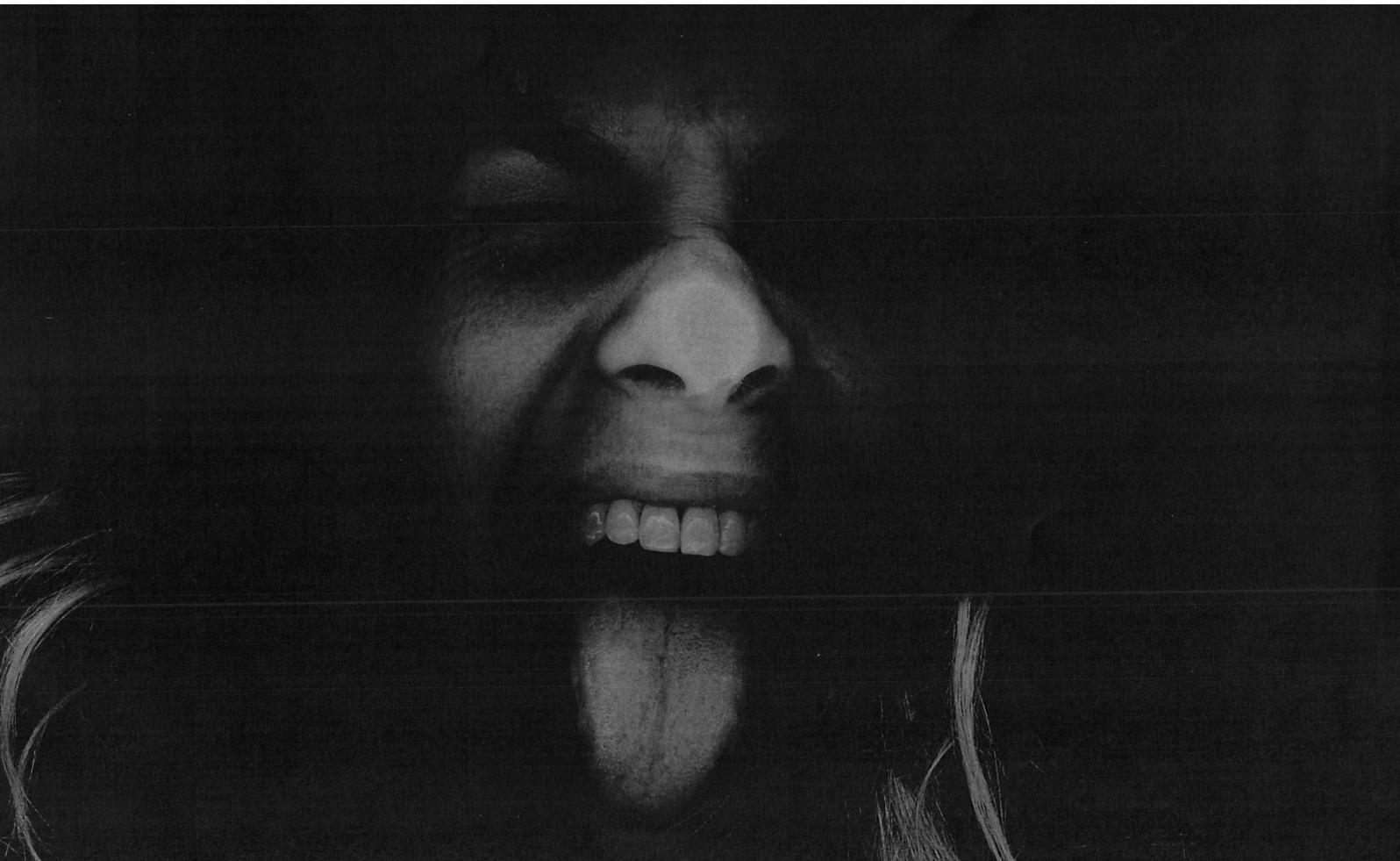
Playing is also called informal learning, because it is unstructured and spontaneous, without any coercion. The formal learning starts at school, whereby knowledge transfer takes place through a fixed structure. The possibility of following education is of course extremely important, but unfortunately often also ensures that informal learning disappears (almost) completely. Casual play and the ability to create creatively become slowly forgotten as we grow up and are exposed to formal learning for a longer period of time. The sad result of this process is that some adults pay a lot of money for a course of out-of-the-box thinking, to find in themselves the creativity and imagination that they had at their disposal as a child. People are full of patterns and established habits. That's a good thing, because if we had to rediscover how to prepare and eat our breakfast every morning, it would take us a lot of time. We do most of our daily activities without thinking about it.

However, this routine action means that we no longer use our senses optimally. We do look, but we don't see what is actually there. We no longer perceive certain things, because we unconsciously categorize them as known and / or unimportant. Many people see their partner every day. However, few will be able to say by heart how many laugh lines their partner has or recognize his or her hand between ten other hands. The same routine occurs with all other senses such as hearing, sense of touch and taste.

Boal described (and I have seen that confirmed in my practice) that we break through our daily enclosed patterns by playing. Not only the senses, but the whole sensorimotor system in our body is, as it were, mechanized. Only when we are confronted with our unconscious routines can we adjust them (if we want to). This makes it possible to develop a new perspective on things we already know. Creativity and new insights can only arise if you look at the world from a different angle than usual. Using our imagination and imagination is the easiest and most fun way to do this. Another important property of games and exercises is that they can often be used as metaphors for reality. Using games as real life metaphors is another way to gain new perspectives. The use of metaphors thus also opens the way to creativity and imagination.



XXXIV. Photo: My contribution titled 'Make sense(s)' for a MEIA assignment by Irina Shapiro, 2018



## Games versus exercises

Every person knows how to play an intuitive barrel. We recognize a game when we do it, because as a child we discovered the world through play. When you try to describe the word “game” it becomes more difficult. The literature does not agree on the scientific definition. However, there are some features of play that science has agreed on: play involves fun and involvement, it happens voluntarily, and it serves no external purpose (i.e., the player is focused on the process of playing).

If you start from this last characteristic, the difference with an exercise is obvious. An exercise does indeed serve an external purpose, because you are practicing for something. In my practice, the dividing line between a game and an exercise is not so clear at all. You can play a game like ‘tikkertje’ (Dutch name of a game which is hard to translate, you can find it in the chapter Exercises and Techniques).

With a group simply because it is fun to have fun together. However, you can also use the same game specifically as exercise, if your participants move very little in daily life (motor skills), or have difficulty touching (intimacy). In essence, the difference is determined by the experience. It’s about whether someone experiences something as exercise or as a game. This differs from person to person, making it impossible to actually distinguish between games and exercises.

In this scene I talk about exercises, when I use the joker for skills or steps that are needed later in the work process. Although participants are not always aware of this, they already practice skills that they need later in the process. So, I start from the goal with which an exercise is used by the joker, and not from the perception of the participants. If you regularly reflect on games and exercises with your group, you will notice that participants sometimes experience completely different learning points or goals than you had previously thought.

## Techniques

Within the exercises we distinguish a separate category, which we call techniques. They are part of the exercises because they are always used with a clear purpose. Most techniques are complex and consist of several steps, each of which is an exercise in itself. Often these steps can also be used separately from the technique as exercise. For almost all techniques, an improvised scene, anti-model or story is needed as a basis to work with.

## Layout

If you work with Participative Drama you will sometimes only have an hour to work with a group, but sometimes also a whole year. Regardless of the duration, a number of fixed parts can be distinguished in the structure of a work process. Getting to know each other and warming up is indispensable as a start. This is usually followed by concentration and confidence exercises. Once there is a basis of trust in the group, the step can be taken to centered around own experiences and / or stories. For this, reflection exercises, visual theatre and (for in-depth analysis) the introspective techniques are intended. To work towards an improvised scene or a complete anti-model, game exercises, the exercises from story to anti-model, and the rehearsal techniques are suitable. In almost all cases, meetings are concluded with a rounding exercise.

I have divided several examples of exercises and techniques in this publication into 2 categories as far as possible. Depending on the goal of the process and the time available, you can easily determine the structure of your workshop. Some exercises have proven to be useful for multiple purposes, which I always indicate above the exercises. Depending on the creativity of the joker and the group, these exercises can be used in many other ways.

## Sources

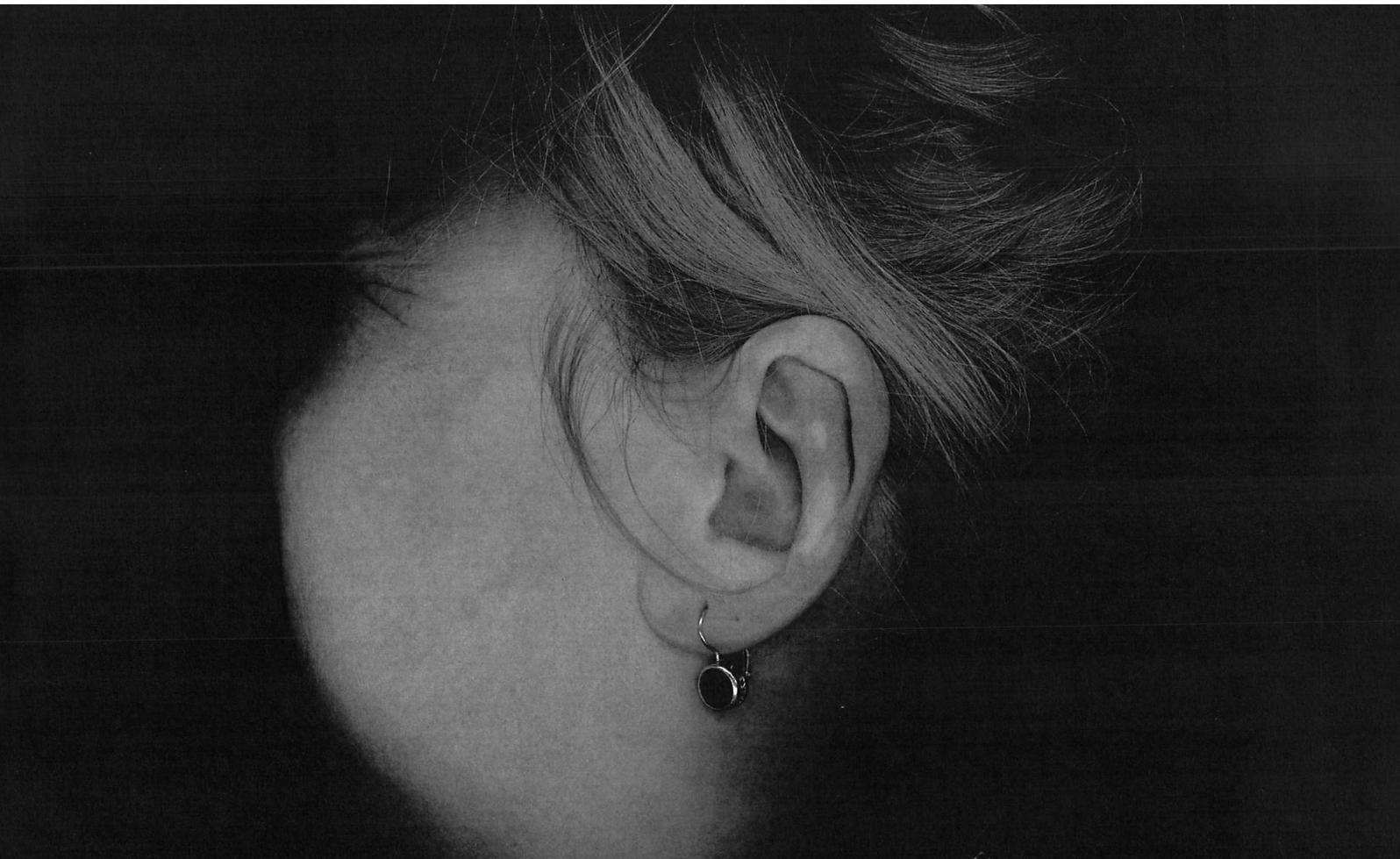
Most of the games, exercises and techniques that I describe can be found in Boal's books *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* and / or *The Rainbow of Desire*. I learned some plays from jokers who came to give me a masterclass, from participants in processes, or from interns from different study programs (NHL Teacher Drama, Theatre Academy Maastricht). Others come from the many books of drama exercises. There are also a number of old children's games from all over the world described, the origin of which can no longer be traced.

**TIP!** If you are working as a joker (trainer, coach, theatremaker), you often learn useful new games from the people you work with. In my experience, you will forget these new games again if you don't write them down right away. I advise every joker to keep their own game book. If you write down a new exercise you've learned, even in catchwords, you can always remember it. This comes in very handy when you have no inspiration for a while and routinely fall back on the games you always do. The former players of *Commedia dell'arte*♥ wrote their jokes from the so-called *Zibaldone*, so that they could play it again in a next performance. This way you can also compose your own *Jokerzibaldone*.

♥ The *commedia dell'arte* (literally: professional theatre) is a form of improvisation theatre that originated in Italy. The genre was particularly popular from the 16th to the 18th century.

Another name for it is *commedia delle maschere*, after the masks used.

The *commedia dell'arte* combined serious and comic elements. Figures such as Harlequin and Pantalone were popularised by it in various European traditions. After the theatre reform of Carlo Goldoni the stage form disappeared. Nowadays the characters from the *commedia* live on in ballet, pantomime, puppetry and carnival.



# Behind the scenes

'Children in Tel' is an initiative that promotes better compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, consisting of Defense for Children, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, NSGK (Dutch Foundation for the Disabled Child) and the Verwey-Jonker Institute. Children in Tel is financially supported by the KANS fund. Divided society makes children vulnerable.

The number of children growing up in a family that have to survive on social assistance benefits has risen to 225,700 children. In a number of municipalities, there is a clear dichotomy between neighborhoods where children grow up in poverty and neighborhoods where children grow up in a more favorable environment. The gap between growing children is also widening between municipalities. This is evident from the study 'Children in Tel 2016' published today over the period 2013 - 2015, which maps the living situation of children in municipalities on the basis of eleven indicators based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. "The research clearly shows the growing gap in society, at the national as well as at the municipal and district level. This dichotomy has a huge impact on growing children," said Aloys van Rest, director of 'Defense for Children' and initiator of 'Children in Tel'. "To develop targeted policies for vulnerable children, municipalities can use the 'Children in Tel' data." In some municipalities including Rotterdam, Heerlen, Amsterdam, Groningen and The Hague, more than twelve percent of children under the age of 18 grow up in poverty. Among the top ten municipalities where poverty has increased the most, there are four municipalities from the province of Groningen. It is remarkable that apart from the national dichotomy there is also a dichotomy within municipalities. The difference between the most favorable neighborhoods and the most unfavorable neighborhoods to grow up is widening. This can be clearly seen in the

municipality of Leeuwarden, for example. Five neighborhoods in Leeuwarden are in the top ten most unfavorable neighborhoods for children to grow up and three neighborhoods in this municipality are in the top one hundred of the most favorable neighborhoods to grow up. The living conditions of children growing up in poverty are worrying. The increasing poverty in a family is an important predictor for other problems that these children face. In municipalities where more children grow up in poverty, there is often a higher percentage of single-parent families and more youth unemployment. Children who grow up in poverty often fall behind, they are less often members of a sports club and more often leave school prematurely. The risks associated with poverty are all too often underestimated by policymakers and politicians. Recommendations according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, municipalities have a duty to ensure an adequate standard of living for all children in the Netherlands. 'Children in Tel' makes a number of recommendations:

- Municipalities must ensure that there is a structural poverty policy that focuses on the child. Children growing up in poverty are especially vulnerable to parenting and growing up problems.
- Municipalities must make an extra effort to reach this group of vulnerable children. Families have difficulty finding the right counter.
- Municipalities must ensure that the children themselves benefit directly from the local measures. Set minimum requirements for the Child Package to prevent inequality.
- The central government must support the municipalities and ensure that the municipalities take responsibility for the most vulnerable children in society.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all children. Yet there are many countries where girls do not have equal access to their rights and are disadvantaged. Girls face double marginalization: they are

disadvantaged on the basis of their gender, but also on the basis of their age. In addition, girls from (religious, ethnic, sexual) minority groups undergo extra discrimination and exclusion. Millions of girls worldwide face sexual violence, domestic violence, female circumcision or exploitation. For example, of all the victims of sexual violence, half are girls aged 15 or younger. In addition, millions of girls worldwide do not have access to education and run the risk of being married off. Discrimination against girls and violence against girls have an impact on girls' access to education. This then has a profound effect on her future perspective: a girl who has had little or no education at all has a very small chance of (financial) independence at a later age, which means she runs the extra risk of violence and exploitation. A vicious circle where girls without protection and support have difficulty coming out. 'Defense for Children' stands up for equal rights for girls. In addition, we support girls who speak out for their rights and against the discrimination of themselves and their peers. Because girls have the right to a life without discrimination and violence and must be given sufficient opportunities to fully develop independently.



XXXVII. Photo's: One of the girls proud of the new Girls Clubhouse we pimped ourselves, March 2018

## Kunstkade and the municipality of Leeuwarden

'Circus Adje' is a large project especially for children and youngsters initiated by 'Kunstkade', an organisation that brings together supply and demand in the field of art- and cultural education (partly financed by the municipality of Leeuwarden).

The principles of Kunstkade in collaboration with the municipality of Leeuwarden are:

The child is central: what do you want to learn and discover? What talent do you want to develop? This is the 'Adje' method, based on the idea of 'strengthening the psychological capital' - After getting acquainted and orientated (culture coach, Art menu, mainly within schools), it is about deepening and talent development. Without getting acquainted, you don't know what to choose. - We work inclusive: all children participate, with priority for the focus areas. - We work with professionals in all disciplines, supplemented by students / trainees secondary and higher vocational education (master / apprentice principle) and possibly also with elderly people who practice a craft and can pass this on. Working together with students / young makers can help ensure that there is an attractive climate for (young) professionals to stay in Friesland. - The activities are meaningful, inspiring and professional. Quality improvement is the underlying goal. - We work together with the network: the cultural infrastructure, the professionals, the educational institutions. We cannot do anything without cooperation! We reinforce and complement each other. Kunstkade facilitates, connects and guarantees. - The breeding ground idea has a place in the activities: a 'free space' where you

can experiment, fail, and work out ideas with others. This takes shape in (possibly mobile) workshops - It is important to include teachers and parents in the methodology. In this way they become involved, there is support and cooperation to stimulate and let the child learn. Children can organize a parent's evening themselves; activities are part of a 10-minute conversation with teacher, parent, child. - Removal: we look at the child in its entirety. Various policy areas play a role, but always from options and opportunities, never from problems. - Creativity development and the 21st Century skills are central - Children who have a certain talent or interest in the field of culture are referred to the Center for Talent Development. An 'Adje' master class can be formed from this.

## Amaryllis Youthwork

'Amaryllis' delivers Neighborhood-oriented youth work.

The youth workers work demand-oriented where support is needed and where young people need youth work. Contact is made with the young people on the street and at various meeting places. The youth workers stand next to the young people, they support the young people with questions and problems, they respond to the needs and wishes. There is collaboration with the neighborhood and corporation organizations and other parties in the neighborhood. The neighborhoods and villages are supported in setting up and organizing activities for and by young people. Young people are encouraged to take an active role at their own level in existing and new activities. Together with volunteers and young people, various activities are organized such as girl activities, meeting activities and cultural and sporting activities.

I joined the girl's activities since 2018. And in this last phase of my project SKRRT North I have to cooperate with one 1 girl worker supervising multiple girl groups in the city. She puts 2 trainees in each neighborhood on the girl's group where I feel she doesn't have much control over it. She herself is difficult to reach for me and regularly does not adhere to our agreements. She hardly guides her trainees (or never attends during the girls' club hours, because she doesn't like to be there). She pretends that her interns can work independently and only intervenes if I indicate that things are going wrong. She and

the interns have meetings every week with all trainees from all girls' clubs throughout the city. She says she discusses different cases with each other. But when something happened lately, she knew nothing. She also is not in contact with the manager of the community center in Bilgaard, who is therefore very irritated. In the past 10 weeks, she was often absent or even disturbed our workshops (by, for example, cleaning up cupboards during a theater lesson in an already too small room with too many girls). The four trainees of 'Amaryllis' study Social work. One of them at secondary vocational education. The other three at higher professional education, all of them 2nd class, first internship.



XXXVIII. Photo: One of the girls from SKRRT Noord during the TikTok making, March 2020

## Bilgaard neighborhood association

Its mission is to promote contacts between the residents of Bilgaard through:

- Stimulating and supervising voluntary work.
- Organizing and offering courses and activities
- Initiating neighborhood-oriented initiatives to promote and increase the participation of residents.
- Make the neighborhood center the central place in the neighborhood for residents and organizations. The young people of today are the residents / visitors of tomorrow. That is why they provide a space for little money for the girls of the girls' club (the '*Jeugdhonk*'). This space is too small to give theatre- or dance lessons. That is why we rent another space near the neighborhood center at a reduced rate.



XXXIX. Photo: Two of the girls from SKRRT Noord during the TikTok making, March 2020



XXXIX. Photo: The girls making Tiktoks in our workshop, March 2020



XL. Photo: The girls making Tiktoks in our workshop, March 2020



XLI. Photo: The girls making Tiktoks in our workshop, March 2020

# Epilogue (Finale/Concluding)

In my practice and my specific project SKRRT Noord with the girls I see myself as the joker (the term from T/O I wrote about earlier). First of all, it is important that a joker understands the purpose of the work and keeps it in mind.

My goal is to investigate how I can bring safety and trust to the group and how I can create the conditions that the girls tell their own story through dance and theatre.

The writing of the workbook next to the thesis has helped me to better investigate my method and measure the results. By arranging the various exercises, games and techniques it also became clear to me what I draw from and how I can use things effectively and consciously instead of working with them intuitively as I was used to.

I researched whether I could let the girls tell

their own story through dance and theatre and whether I could facilitate that there would be more trust (in each other and in me) and safety in the group. I wanted to achieve that less time and energy would go into outdoing and thwarting each other (mean girls behaviour) and that the girls would develop and express themselves with the means they had chosen themselves.

I used the theatre lessons according to T/O in phase 3 to work on trust and safety in the group and found that this has benefited group dynamics. In phase 1 and 2 there was a lot of unrest due to, among other things, meangirls behaviour and there was also less structure and mutual consultation. In phase 4 I worked on the development of a script and a performance.



**Girl 1: We enjoyed dancing a lot**

**Girl 2: A lot!**

**Girl 1: En we've learned a lot**

**Girl 2: A lot!**

**Girl 1: A lot!**

**Girl 2: A lot!**

XLIII. Videostill photo: The girls interview each other every week in a vlog after the dance and theatre workshops, October 2019



**Girl 1: Okay, we were divided into two groups**

**Girl 2: Three**

**Girl 1: Two groups!**

**Girl 2: Three groups**

**Girl 1: You're messing it up!**

...

**Girl 1: Three groups**

XLII. Videostill photo: The girls interview each other every week in a vlog after the dance and theatre workshops, October 2019

Because the goal in participatory theatre is to make realistic situations negotiable, this asked the girls to be willing to share personal issues with others. Trust and safety in the group are essential for this. What is discussed in the group must remain there was the rule. There were no sanctions on this, which I think is important to do have for the next time. To (re) develop confidence in the group, we did confidence exercises with the girls. Especially in confidence exercises it is crucial that you are not forced to participate. It never actually happened that the girls did not want to participate, and the exercises certainly strengthened the group feeling. I have noticed that if the girls own the process and can 'experience' it instead of experiencing it, how well that works.

When I started working with the group, it was a collection of individuals. Concentration exercises made the girls focus on the rest of the group because they depended on them to play and / or win the game. In addition, the concentration exercises put the super busy

girls in a somewhat calmer state of mind, so that communication was a bit easier and not everyone tried to have their say at the same time. This took some time in the girl group because they were so used to yelling at each other that they didn't even notice it themselves. Ultimately, we wanted the girls to dare to be vulnerable and share their own stories with us. That starts with recognizing everyone in the group as an individual, with an individual identity and unique characteristics. The most important thing during the workshops was that the girls had fun, otherwise they really wouldn't have come back next time.

I was satisfied with how the girls took part in the theatre workshops in phase 3. Something they had never done before and also turned out to have a lot of talent for. This also had a really positive effect on the trust between them and in me and therefore the feeling of security in the group. I only had too little time through COVID-19 to work it out and translate it into a script with a performance.



**Girl 1: What did you learn today?**

**Girl 2: Eh...**

**Girl 1: Did you had fun today?**

**Girl 2: Yes**

**Girl 1: En what did you learn today?**

**Girl 2: I don't know...**

XLIV. Videostill photo: The girls interview each other every week in a vlog after the dance and theatre workshops, October 2019

I was very sorry to notice in July that everything seemed to be gone. After the evaluation with my team, who also know the girls well, I understood that this was inevitable because of the distance created by COVID-19. By offering an even clearer structure and making it clear to the girls beforehand where we want to go, I think I will be able to achieve more in the future. Next time I will work separately from 'Amaryllis Youthwork' so that I do not have to deal with even more uncertain factors (in this case the unaccompanied trainees of 'Amaryllis'). I have learned to consciously apply theatre techniques that increase trust and safety in a group, thus creating a basis for sharing personal stories. I also researched ways to get stories out of the group and how to develop them into a script in order to eventually come to a performance.

I also learned to give effective instructions so that the children know what to do. After each workshop, the girls made a vlog in which they interviewed each other about that last afternoon, which was a great way to find out how the girls had experienced it. Although this sometimes remained somewhat on the surface. However, when looking back at various exercises on video by a number of girls, it turned out that they found some things scary or strange at first, but later they were still proud that they had dared.



## Preview

Leeuwarden Noord has various neighborhoods, with many different cultures, many elderly and children, loneliness and health problems. Crime has many youngsters in its grip. It has not been possible to change this with government intervention for years. Many young people feel discriminated against and have not been seen and heard. People talk about and against them, but not with them.

During previous projects I noticed that this has a profound effect on their attitude and behavior. They are frustrated and angry and make negative choices.

For the future I'm planning to raise the 'SPOONK HipHop Huis'.

I am busy (together with 2 former interns and my son the rapper B.O.R.) establishing and developing the SPOONK HipHop Huis in 2020 to offer a home to hip-hop lovers from Leeuwarden and surroundings.

The SPOONK HipHopHuis will hopefully become an independent foundation in 2021.

The SPOONK HipHopHuis will be an energetic community of creative young people with a positive-critical world view who are involved in hip-hop music, dance or street art on a daily basis. They find their place for cultural and personal growth in the SPOONK HipHopHuis: for them the SPOONK HipHopHuis is a second home. The mission of the SPOONK HipHopHouse: to change the world with HipHop. The missing link in cultural Leeuwarden, where HipHop is a great youth culture.

The SPOONK HipHopHuis has set itself the goal of realising a wide range of educational opportunities, both at home and in education. The SPOONK HipHopHuis has international ambitions in the field of talent development. Our offer stands for a complete experience of hip-hop culture with knowledge, skills and fellowship. The programme can be divided into three main lines: Lessons and courses, projects for talent and community events.

## Lessons and courses

Top teachers, nationally known and respected in the urban circuit, share their skills and knowledge. The timetable runs from September to June and is open to everyone. From absolute beginners to seasoned celebrities.

## Talent projects

Young people with a mission are coached and given workshops and master classes by international pioneers and artists in all disciplines. Talk shows and lectures bring local history and knowledge to the surface.

## Community events

SPOONK HipHopHuis will be homebase and our programming brings audience and participants together through different types of get-togethers: competitions, jam sessions and performances. All this will be made possible by a professional staff with roots and tentacles in the scene, together with community leaders and many volunteers.

Young people who do not know each other with different educational levels and ethnic backgrounds who work together to enable healthy growth in the gauge: for themselves and other young people.



XL. Photo: The girls and I during our TikTok workshop, March 2020

# Exercises and techniques

I developed the Go Gobabis Workbook especially for the project in Namibia (for the teachers of the Arts & Theatre School). It contains a lot of drawings, together with exercises and techniques. This is because not everyone I work with in

Namibia can read well and still want to use the exercises.

It is my personal arsenal of theatre exercises that I have collected over the years, supplemented with special T/O exercises.

## 1.3 WRITE YOUR NAME WITH A BODY PART

### INTRODUCTORY EXERCISES

**PURPOSE: PHYSICAL WARMING, ON BEHALF OF PLAY, RELAXATION**

**EVERYONE WRITES THEIR OWN NAME IN THE AIR WITH DIFFERENT BODY PARTS: WITH YOUR LEFT LEG, YOUR NOSE, YOUR EAR, AND SO ON. YOU CAN DO ALL THIS AT ONCE, OR TAKE TURNS, WITH THE REST OF THE GROUP REPEATING THIS.**

XLVII. Photo:  
Go Gobabis  
Theatre  
Workbook  
page 8

joseph



The exercises in this thesis refer to the page of the workbook. Two examples of exercises I also used in SKRRT Noord are shown on the images of these pages.

## 3.1 ZIP ZAP BOINK

**PURPOSE: PHYSICAL WARMING, FUN, CONCENTRATION, COMPETITION**

**EVERYONE STANDS IN A CIRCLE WITH ENOUGH SPACE TO MOVE. THE PERSON WHO STARTS IS HOLDING BOTH HANDS TOGETHER AND POINTING WITH HIS HANDS TO THE PERSON TO HIS OR HER LEFT OR RIGHT WHILE SAYING 'ZIP' THAT PERSON WHO IS DESIGNATED CONTINUES.**

**WHEN SOMEONE SAYS 'ZAP' , THAT PERSON POINTS WITH BOTH HANDS TO SOMEONE IN THE CIRCLE WHO IS NOT NEXT TO HIM / HER. IF THIS GOES WELL, THE JOKER CAN ADD THE 'BOINK' OPTION TO MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT.**

**WITH 'BOINK' YOU KEEP BOTH HANDS OPEN IN FRONT OF YOU, IN THE DIRECTION OF THE DECLARANT, AND YOU REFLECT THE MOVEMENT BACK TO THE DECLARANT.**

**WHEN SOMEONE MAKES A MISTAKE, THAT PERSON EITHER DROPS OUT OR DIES A THEATRICAL DEATH AND THEN IMMEDIATELY GETS UP AND CONTINUES THE GAME.**

XLVIII. Photo:  
Go Gobabis  
Theatre  
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XLIX. Photo: The girls of Epako in Gobabis Namibia and I after our workshop knitting with plastic in February 2016



L. Photo: The children of Epako in Gobabis Namibia and the SPOONK team (Bor & Joseph and I) after our workshop theatre, rap & beatboxing in February 2016

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