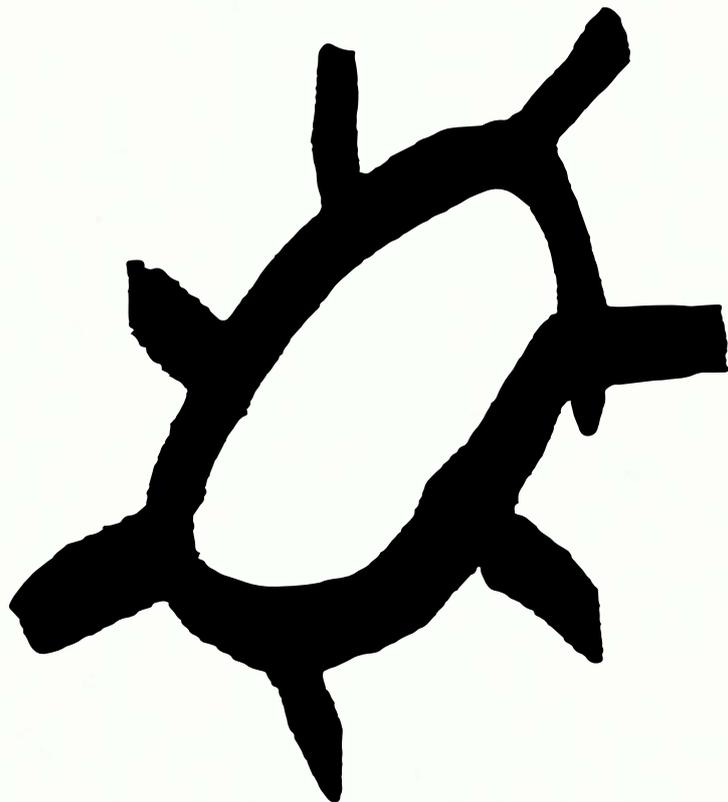


Offfence

AN EXPLORATION IN HORIZONTALITY
AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY

Diogo Rinaldi



Beforehand

ROTTERDAM, 2021

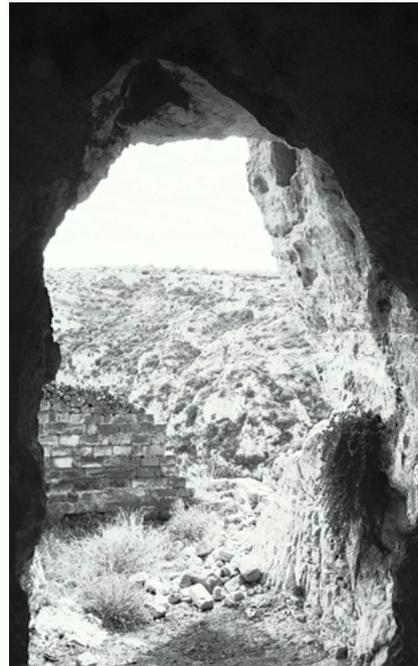
This document is an intertwined mesh between the zine published by Offence at the end of the Collective Minor of the Design Academy Eindhoven in 2019 and a thesis by Diogo Rinaldi as part of the Master Education in Arts of the Piet Zwart Insitute.

The Offence publication is characterized by portrait orientation of pages and color print.

The thesis is printed in black in a distinct page format and uses the font family Bandeins throughout.

The reader can jump through the pages of each project or consider it in a unified manner, alternating the perspectives.

Offence's zine was an attempt to translate what happened during the Collective Minor. My thesis adds an extra layer to understand the geography of the interactions. And helps to emulate the mentor-participant relationship I had with the group. I hope this mix assists the reader in grasping the plurality and complexity of the experience.



ORFENGE



COLONYE

Offence

AN EXPLORATION
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AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY

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All photos depicted in this thesis are by Lucas de Ruyter unless stated otherwise.

GRAND OPENING: FOREWORD

This page is supposed to carry an introduction to what you're about to see. And what you're about to see is a new vision on education. We gave the lovely people of the OFFENCE Collective a chance to create their own book; more or less sixty pages to do whatever they want to do. Which is difficult when your collective consists out of thirteen people with different backgrounds, nationalities and personalities. Luckily OFFENCE likes a challenge.

We're giving them this space because we believe that their story is something worth told. As Grand Opening, we want to share content that sparks our interests. To surprise ourselves and others, and to fill "grand openings" the way we would like to see them filled. When we visited OFFENCE Collective in Matera, early 2019, we were amazed by the structured way this collective operates, and we saw this as a perfect opportunity to showcase their work in print. OFFENCE Collective has its own way of looking at things, and we believe in that view.

Although there is a lot of room for individuality—and believe us, there are quite some characters in this group—the collective operates almost like a machine. Budgets, planning, keys, groceries, meetings, and decisions are all done and made systematically and collectively. The collective is completely horizontal which means that no one is the boss. It's hard to imagine this being the easiest way of working, but it works. Karl Marx would surely have been very pleased to hear this.

The OFFENCE Collective started as a self-initiated educational program within the Design Academy in Eindhoven in 2018. It reminded us a lot of the movie *Accepted* (Steve Pink, 2006). Although this certainly isn't the best movie ever made, it does feature a pre-glow-up Jonah Hill wearing a hotdog costume, and that alone should make it worth the watch. It's about people who set up their own college, and kind of do what they want there. Challenging the traditional notions of what college education is and having fun while they're at it.

OFFENCE might be just like that. It started as a reaction to the institutional restrictions they faced at the Design Academy, but it grew out to be much more than that.

It is a diverse group of people, with great personalities and strong opinions about education.

To play devil's advocate, it should be said that the academy gave them the opportunity to set up their own minor. So, in a way the Collective is very much operating within the institutional system. However, OFFENCE decided to take matters in their own hands, made plans for their own, and even moved away from the academy. They purposely worked against the traditional conventions and wanted to create something new, something that had never been done before. In order to do that, they had to move away from the academy.

And so, they did. They went to Matera in Italy and found ways to research and develop new modes of education. They did it successfully—all members passed (which isn't as self-evident as you might expect). They had to begin from scratch, so they developed a curriculum, set up a budget plan, appointed their own teachers, and managed to live together for six months in two houses.

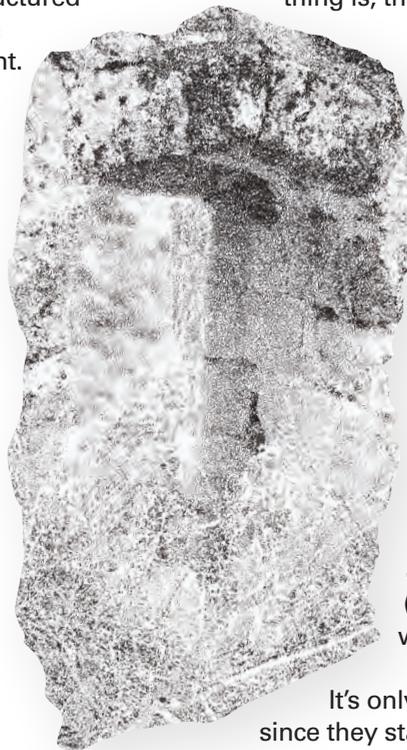
Those months not only resulted in ECTS, it also made them a really strong group. A group of individuals with different views, but still a group that can operate collectively. It's like a football team: every player has their own qualities, and collectively they can reach unprecedented heights. The only thing is, the players in the OFFENCE team don't

have a coach, and they are all quite stubborn. Stubborn is good, in this sense though.

It's part of the reason why we gave them carte blanche to create something for this publication. It is their space to showcase what they worked on and continue to work on. They will tell you all about it in the pages that follow.

On a sunny Friday afternoon, we met at Noa's place to get to know them a little better. The result is this Q&A session with (almost) the entire group. That's thirteen people (minus two) circled around us, answering our questions collectively. Luckily, they have this handy (no pun intended) communication system which made things a lot easier.

It's only one of the many systems they developed since they started with OFFENCE. And we believe this publication shows proof of how it works. We invite you to see the result, and maybe incorporate some of their techniques in your own behaviour. Most of all, we hope you'll enjoy it, and that when you flip the final page of this publication, you'll have even more questions. Question everything, even if it's your education.



Hi Emma, Sara, Ija, Charlie, Ben, Lucas, Noa, Hannah, Karl, Dominik, Niels, Pierre, and Alexandra let's start at the start. How did you guys come together?

Sara:
We applied for the same minor. The school offers five minors to choose from, this sixth collective minor together.

And who came up with the idea?

Niels:
There was not one initiator, a self-three followed collective. We were interested in what could be done with a self-directed minor, so we came together.

Ben:
The other options were Ceramics, Textile, "Lost and Found", or Ecology Research — we weren't interested in those.

Domínik:
It started in February of 2018, when the number of people interested was around twenty-five. It gradually evolved into this core group.

Were the other people voted away?

Domínik:
I think what bound our group together was that we had a common dissatisfaction with our institution. It happened quite organically.

Hannah:
We started quite early and it was open for everyone who wanted to join. After a while, people decided not to come to meetings anymore, or they decided to go for different programs. We were the people that stayed.

Sara:
These are the people that kept coming to the weekly meetings. Creating a minor is a lot of work, and we were determined to put in that effort.

Niels:
In the beginning, we had to search for our purpose. There were a lot of discussions at that time, and we tried different things, but in the end we found out that the main thing was that we wanted to get out of Eindhoven and that we didn't like the structures provided by the Design Academy.

So it was kind of a middle finger towards Eindhoven and the academy?

Charlie:
The smaller the group became, the more evident it became that it wasn't just about leaving Eindhoven but also about creating an educational structure. We were questioning the way education is constructed so we decided to do it ourselves. That came with a lot of things we never even had thought about. Suddenly we were dealing with budgets and planning big things for a group—like Sara said, it required a lot of effort.

Karl:
We started with dissatisfaction. We all agreed that the way our school operates wasn't the right way for us.

But we turned this reactionary position around: "I do not want..." turned into "I would like..."

How did you manage to succeed?

Sara:
We were a bit pessimistic and complaining for a long time, but we managed to turn that around into something constructive.

There already was room for a self-initiated minor, right?

Niels:
That is a very good point to mention. Our ideas were supported by the institution, and they funded the initiative. So maybe we weren't necessarily disrupting the academy, as there already were these possibilities.

Karl:
Absolutely. There was a lot of friction. But

Noa:
We knew that this was possible. So when we found a constructive way of creating this, and found our common ground, we wrote a manifesto as a tool to see what we agreed upon. We sent this to the educational board, they approved and then we made curriculum proposals.

What were those curriculum proposals?

Charlie:
We had to arrange a lot of practical stuff. Part of our task of creating a course program was assigning our teachers. One of the teachers had to be known to the academy. Former MA student Diogo gave us Matera as an option, and he helped us a lot in the programming. Hannah took a great responsibility with the budget, and we were working in constant dialogue with the Academy about that.

Domínik:
The Manifesto for us was really a proof of how far we could distance ourselves from the institution. It really felt like we were building towards something monumental at that time.

Not anymore?

Domínik:
Well, it has become more established now. But at the time it was new and fresh, I felt rebellious in some way.

Ben:
Not everyone was that rebellious, I should add. I didn't join the collective as a critique on the academy. I personally was triggered by the energy of the group, and I was mostly interested in how it would turn out.

Emma:
I had exactly the same. I thought the system was working well, so it was interesting to see other people criticizing it. But I guess that's the interesting thing in general about collectives like us. The fact that you're able to learn from each other and see other points of view that might interest you, even though they might be very different.

You are all quite different. I could say this is an unusual collective. Was that ever a problem?

Offence

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ABSTRACT

Offence was a collaborative experiment in creating an alternative education program in Matera, Italy, as part of the Collective Minor semester of the Design Academy Eindhoven bachelor's curriculum. Students reacted to the unaddressed conflicts and often unhealthy hierarchies of the Academy by engaging in a horizontal alternative of an education-making process.

Taking part in it both as a mentor and as a participant, I analyze the experiment through a comprehensive look at the project's archive, publications, my personal notes and informal conversation with participants. My focus lies on horizontality and co-responsibility as core qualities in engaging in a shared creation of meaning.

I pay special attention to defining a structure, questioning the boundaries between individuality and collectivism, and promoting a transparent approach to communication, responsibilities, and trust. Along with these elements, a constant exercise of perspective-shifting is argued as essential in fostering horizontal and co-responsible relationships in a group of students.

MASTER
EDUCATION
IN ARTS

P





I don't think we would have done it any other way. Our practices are different. Our energies are different. Our personalities are different. And it also changes over time. We constantly felt like we were not synchronizing. On many occasions we had to sit down and acknowledge that it's completely fine that we're not the same.

Sara:
In my perception, the friction came mainly from having different expectations. It was an ongoing process of finding the balance between collectiveness and individuality.

In order to make this work, you had to set up rules, make a budget, create a curriculum, and so on. Aren't you then eventually mimicking the institution that you're criticizing in a way?

Ilya:
That is an interesting point. Some of us were criticizing the educational system, so we had to ask ourselves: "What is education to us?" It was really important for us to take ownership of all the facets that come into play in order to have this full perspective, 360 degrees vision on what education really is. We had to think through every step.

Karl:
Most of us knew what education was through our own education. But the ultimate difference between our educational institution and our project in Matera was scale. On a scale of 700 students, responsibilities can get very dispersed and detached. With us, we had the same responsibilities divided among a small group of people. That changes the whole dynamic.

Hannah:
Doing this made us responsible about our own education, and I believe that it made us more aware of what education really means. It made me realize how easy it is to function within an institution. And what does it mean to have educated teachers? It went from a superficial nuisance of an annoying teacher to a more layered constructive critique. I think we gained a deeper understanding through doing this, and we tried to do it the best way possible.

And did you find what you were looking for then?

Ben:
We did it differently. Not better, but different. I honestly think it was far from perfect. And we were allowed to be imperfect. Due to the size of a school like ours, it should function really well. We tried to do our best in everything, but we were allowed to make mistakes. That's a big difference.

Charlie:
What mattered to me was that we had the attitude to try, and by trying, things came

out. We're not just criticizing an institution anymore. We created a space for ourselves to produce something, and that can be tested again. It was an experiment that led to a unique experience.

So it was an experiment that was meant to add something to the discourse around education instead of reacting to what has been?

Sara:
It was a constant limbo. On the one hand we were playing school and playing institution, but at the same time we were in negation of everything that already existed. A lot of times we realized that we have so many fixed ideas.

That's how we started the idea of "freestyle." To completely eradicate whatever ideas we had and make something new. We were swimming back and forth between copying and deleting.

Niels:
I think it's quite personal for everyone what we got out of this experience. I personally found out that the frustration itself took up much more time than the stuff I was frustrated about. It made me realize that it's okay to sometimes stop nitpicking, and actually appreciate what you have. We don't always have to go for disruption. There are a lot of good things that are working quite well.

Charlie:
And I think it's important to stress that we also had to create an environment to work in. Only when it was over, I fully came to realize the luxurious space, now have for creativity.

Why did you go to Matera?

Sara:
Matera was kind of handed to us by Diogo. He had connections there and provided us with the opportunity to set up our program there, even though we had no idea what to expect.

And what did you encounter?

Domènec:
Sunshine.

Emma:
Pizza.

Niels:
Ravioli.

Noa:
Matera is not big, but it's not small either. It felt very enclosed and slow and I think that affected the way we worked—we had to slow down as well. At times, during siestas, we literally couldn't do anything but walk

around and get pizza or Spritz. We had a lot of time.

Emma:
When you walk in Eindhoven, you're almost running. In Matera, everything went a lot more relaxed. The people were really nice and open. It kind of made me more relaxed.

Niels:
Matera was so secluded that it kind of pushed us together. Which was good for the group dynamic.

Were you able to create during your stay in Matera?

Charlie:
There was definitely a framework for it. I was quite productive in Matera. I also see our toolkit as a very important creation.

Noa:
For me it was not so much about creation, but more about rethinking what creation means. Practically, I didn't create much in Matera, but it has caused a different vision on design and creation altogether.

The "design" in this sense, was the education. So maybe we should describe ourselves as an educational collective instead of a design collective.

Then why did you choose the name Offence collective? Are you guys activists?

Collectively: Oooooooooooooooooohhhh.

Niels:
Nihilist activists.

Noa:
But what is activism?

Karl:
It's a hard question because we're quite divided about our intentions for the future, but in the moment we made that manifesto, I can 100% assure you we were activists!

Hannah:
We wanted to go out of the Design Academy. The idea was to go off grid, so we called ourselves "Off-Grid." During that same period we had a workshop about fences and the ideas of borders.

Then Pierre yelled "what about Offence!" And everybody went crazy.

Niels:
So it's more about fences than it is about offenses.

Charlie:
Like "off the fence".

Ben:
We were still young.

Charlie:
And innocent.

AN OFFENCE INTRODUCTION

OFFENCE is a self-organised educational collective, based in Eindhoven, NL

In the second year of our education at Design Academy Eindhoven (DAE), we were given the choice to either go on an exchange with another institution or take one of the 5 skill-focused minor programs offered by our own institution. From those of us that decided to stay in for the minor programmes, some did not feel they would be completely satisfied with their content and quality.

So we collected around shared values and dissatisfaction towards DAE and agreed on a few things: our learning processes were not informed by any real-world context, administration and creative direction were not being dealt with responsibly enough, and we all found potential to learn from each other.

Slowly but surely, we started turning dissatisfaction into initiative. We decided to explore the possibility of setting up our own curriculum, and marking it down as the 6th minor program. We decided that an ideal next step in our education would be one where our personal and professional development is directly informed by a context that is far removed from DAE, we take managerial tasks into our own hands, and we give ourselves the choice to teach one another.

Our goal was to create an environment in which we could learn collectively — in dialogue with each other, and contextually — in relation to our surroundings.

From the beginning on, we have aspired to establish a relationship with DAE that places us outside its boundaries, but still maintains a link with it. We chose to describe this relationship with the name, "OFFENCE" (OFF-FENCE).

Setting up OFFENCE meant that we took a lot of decision-making into our own hands, be it developing a curriculum, reflecting on our core values, hiring guest teachers, managing our budget or finding shared living and working spaces. All efforts had to stem from the group energy, resulting in several proposals and initiatives. We wanted to learn how to

study (in) a new context, how to be self-directed, self-responsible, collaborative and horizontal. We also wanted to create a support network for ourselves, so we developed tools, techniques and approaches to deal with the freedom of living and working abroad for half a year together. We tried to re-imagine voting systems, interaction filters, communication methods, dinner menus, community living, notetaking and archiving.

While processing and reflecting upon our experiences, we have put together this publication. In the following pages, we would like to share a part of this experience and some of the tools that we have developed for ourselves. Moreover, we have dedicated some parts of this publication to workshops and assignments we have had since finishing our semester abroad, and would like to use them to explore how to move on with OFFENCE.

"I WOULD LIKE TO re-propose my previous proposal."
#M08 2018/09/27



Special thanks

A special bear-hug to the participants and mentors of Offence

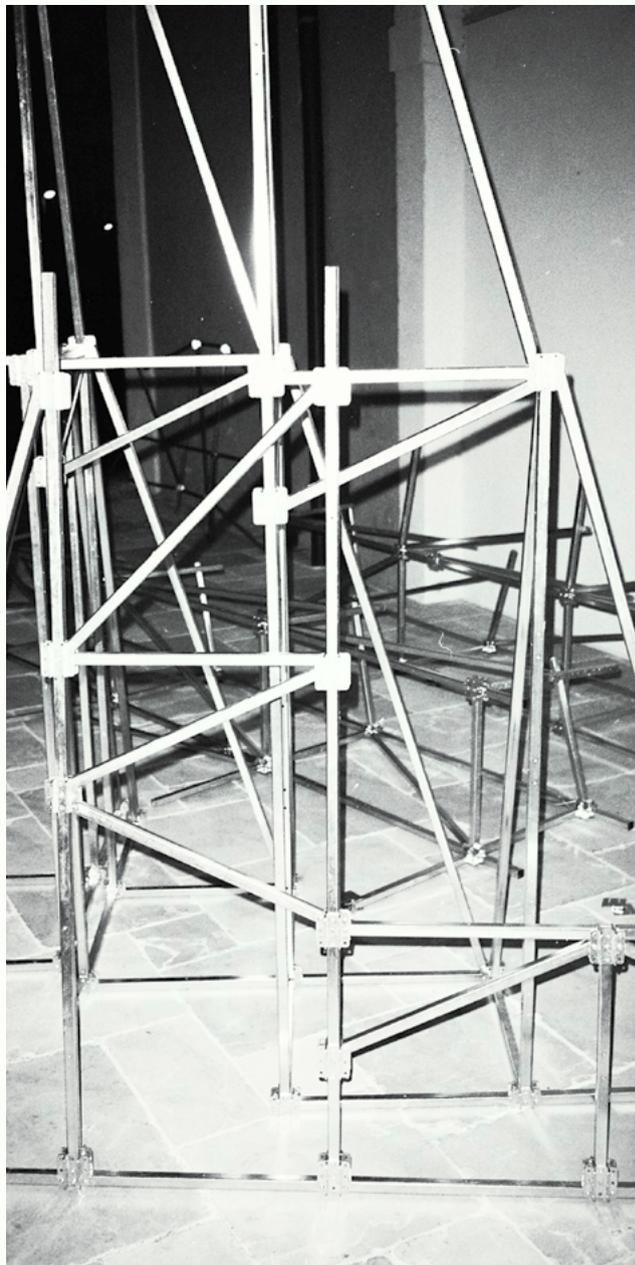
**Alexandra Koutsaftis
Benjamin Motoc
Charl e Flotho
Curdin Tones
Dominic Vrabic Dezman
Emma Lijdsman
Hannah Sagerkrantz
Ilja Schaml e
Karl Moubarak
Kay Schuttel
Lucas de Ruiter
Niels Nielsen
Noa Jasma
Pierre K'you
Sara Roeth**

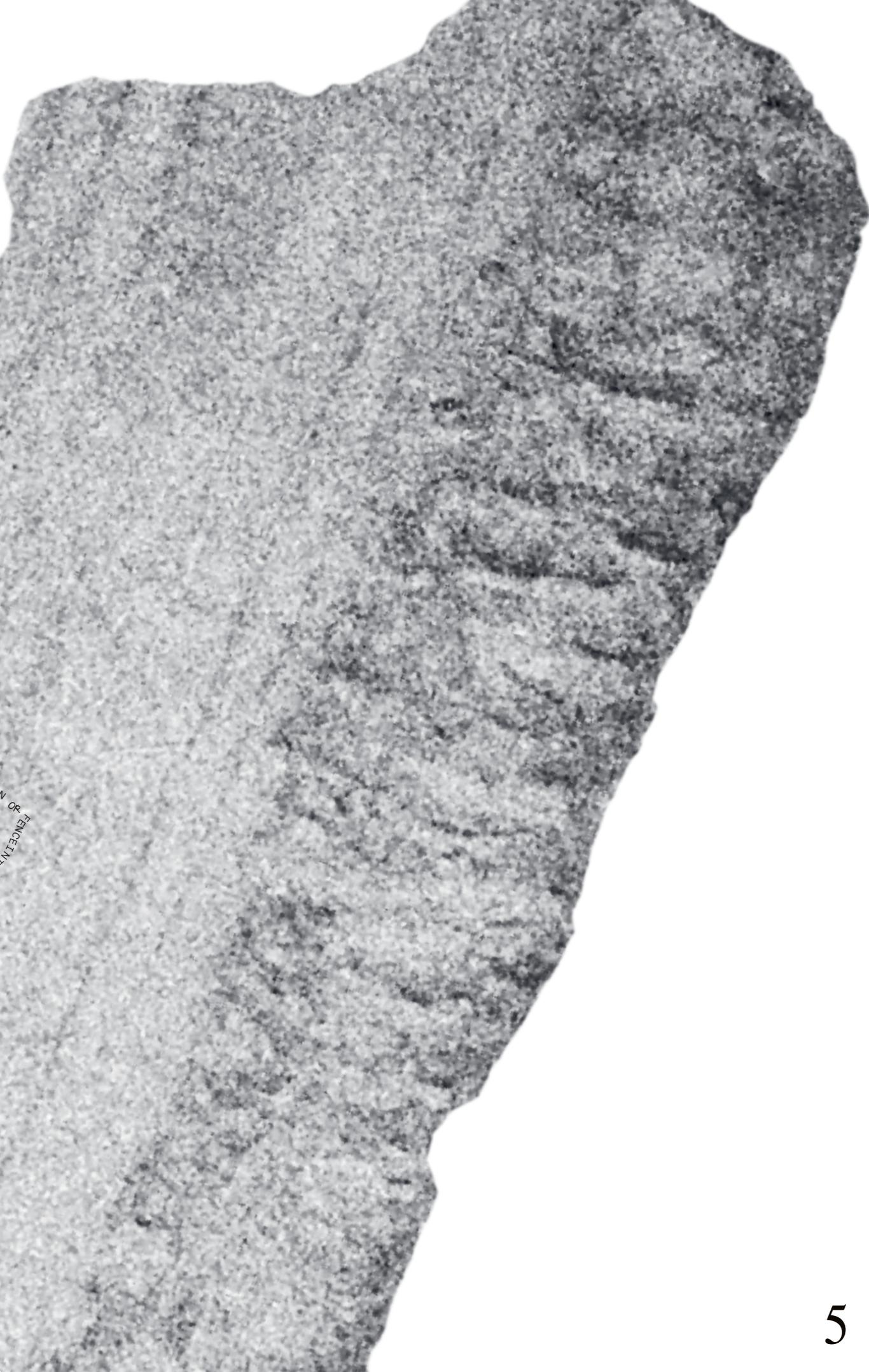
who trusted me in co-endeavouring on a truly transformative experience.

A brazilian celebration to the students, mentors and staff of the Master Education in Arts

**Alan Mark Liberman
Anita Hrnica
Annemarie van den Berg
Elizabeth Graham
Emiel Copini
Felicitas Lenz
Frans-Willem Korsten
Gundega Melberga
Ingrid Commandeur
Irina Shapiro
Jip van der Hek
Kate Brehme
Lisanne Janssen
Marjolijn Gunst
M rton Kabai
Maud Berden
Ren e Turner
Sanne Cobussen
Sjoerd Westbroek
Susana Pedrosa
Thijs Witty-Grabowski
Thomas Eke**

who always maintained an affectionate and caring relationship with me, providing a space of trust.





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OR
FENCEINX

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OFFFENCE is a self-organised educational collective, based in Eindhoven, NL

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We decided to test our education in a new context

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This is what it looked like

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Methods to live and work together

"I WOULD LIKE TO protect that, by setting a clear outline."
#M11 2018/10/04

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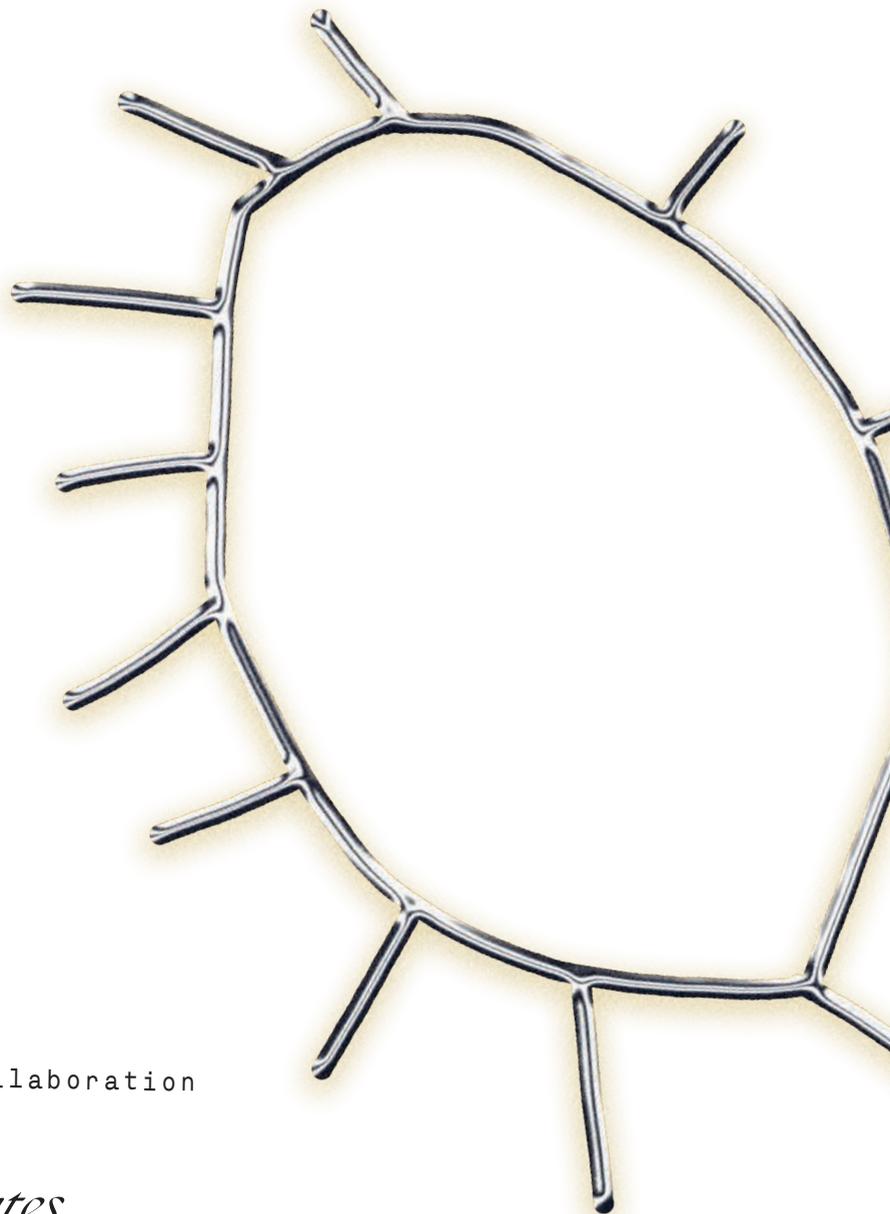
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The pasta that demonstrates communication structures

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A totem we built for our collaborators

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We gave each other an assignment



PIERRE



designed an analogy of the camera, to capture, his memories into micro-books and modify

DIOGO



bridged the group with Matera and questioned preconceived ideas of education and self-reliance

CHARLIE

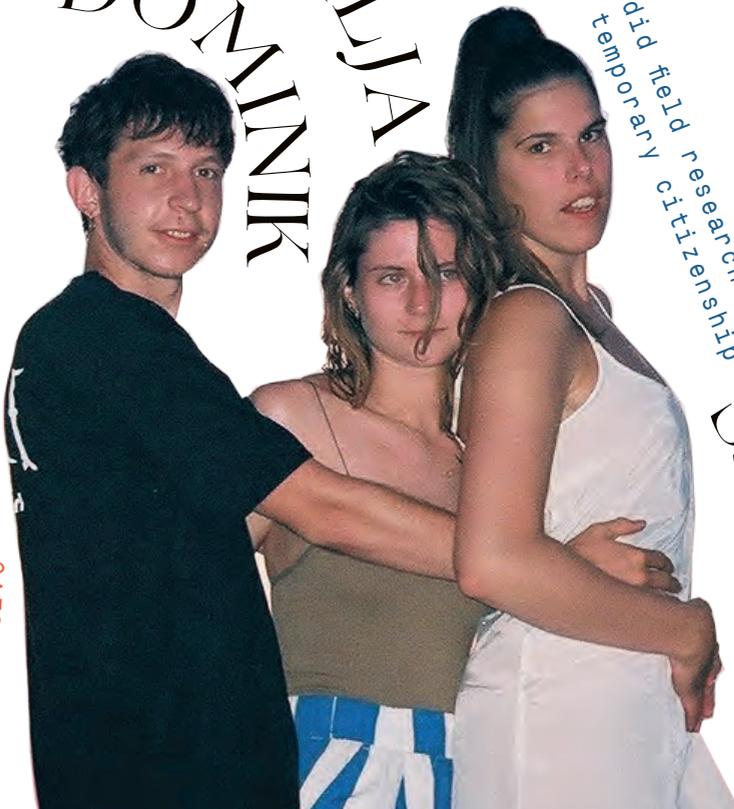


developed an online platform for a subjective archive to share stories about the zampogna

investigated the movement of bodies in Virtual Reality



DOMINIK



did field research on temporary citizenship

SARA

was working with the rising tourism and gentrification of Matera, and setting up platforms for the collective

BENJAMIN



exclusively worked through collaborations, and explored teaching and learning from the others

Considerations

DAE AND ODS

In 2015, I decided to move to the Netherlands to attend the Master in Social Design at the Design Academy Eindhoven (DAE). The DAE is a higher education institution located in Eindhoven, Netherlands, and is focused on design education. It is divided into three levels: The Foundation Year, which allows students to explore their relationship with design and prepare to apply for the Bachelor's program. The Bachelor program, a curriculum that offers space for learning and exploration of different design practices. And the Master's program focused on developing research, both in making and in theory. I was interested in researching and exploring ways that could tackle social issues through materiality.

After finishing the first year, the Open Design School in Matera (ODS), Italy, invited me to be a program coordinator. In 2014, Matera, in the deep south of Italy, was selected to be the European Capital

of Culture of 2019. With that came the question: what if, instead of renting or buying the infrastructure for all the events of 2019, a design school is created to develop it locally? To try to answer this question, the ODS was conceived. In September 2016, the research started with a group of participants working together based on the following premises: learning by doing; interdisciplinary and multicultural approach; sharing of knowledge as the core of the program; horizontality: everybody teaches, and everybody learns; collaborative local and European network; and the communication of processes.

I worked as a co-coordinator in the implementation of the ODS in two moments. In the very beginning, from July 2016 to November 2016, with the initial group I mentioned. And from July 2017 to April 2018, I had to leave to attend my second year in the Master in Social Design at the DAE. The experience in the ODS showed me the power of education as a way for potential positive change in social matters.

In the second year at the DAE, I proposed a research project focused on promoting a temporary parallel program based on the voluntary engagement of master students that would exercise and promote alternatives understandings of success and failure. I was also interested in promoting alternative ways of power dynamics. I personally had an issue at the DAE. The problems of abuse and harassment I had witnessed in the first year of the Master were brought to the dean's attention and were responded to with no resolution. That was very frustrating.



Conversations

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH OFFENCE

In parallel to re-engaging back in the DAE master, I got in contact with Charlie Flotho, a member of a group of students that were interested in signing up for a Minor. This program would allow them to step aside from the institution and create their own educational program.

I was initially invited to do a presentation to the group on the concept and experience of the Open Design School.

In my presentation, I had the chance to meet the rest of the students and listen to the shared frustrations, common desires, and latent potential of their eagerness to create a temporary contextual reality.

It strongly resonated with me in all manners, especially the possibility of practicing alternative routes to problems I was also experiencing.

While I became increasingly more present in the group, I was invited to become one of the Minor mentors. My difficulties with what I considered inappropriate behaviors in the Master also escalated. At one point, it was unbearable. I could not consent to the unfairness and toxic relations I was subjected to. I decided to drop out. As a result of my leave, I was no longer a student hired to mentor the group but signed a contract with the Design Academy as a tutor.

I am disclosing this because it influenced my relationship with Offence. I was no longer a student of the same institution but a hired professional. This shift played a role in my attempt to try to be a participant and a mentor at the same time. I was inevitably biased, and the impression I had, and I feel

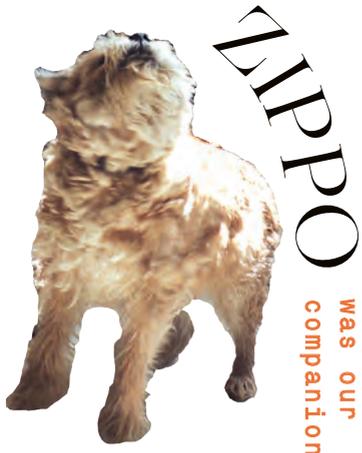
it resonates with most of the group, is that the participants saw me more as a mentor figure than one of a co-participant.

This status is an important element that could be addressed with a more detailed analysis. My desire to have accountability in the process often skewed my and the participant's perspectives. In attempting to define a point of view for this document, I decided to look back at it from the perspective of the mentor figure. However, while writing this document, I often struggled to find the proper pronoun. Therefore, there will be situations in which I refer to the students as 'they' or 'participants.' And in cases that I shared the mentioned experience, I use the pronoun 'we.'

The reader might see this as confusing, and I understand that. I am still a bit confused. It was a new situation for me, and I tried to be as relevant as possible, whether as a mentor figure or as a co-participant.

In all cases, I was always attempting to exercise a horizontal and co-responsible engagement. I made mistakes and tried to make myself open to discuss this relationship with the rest of the group at all times.





ZIPPO

was our companion

was focused on documenting and archiving the collective experience and translating it into a toolkit



KARL



researched The Virgin Mary - created alter egos

ALEXANDRA

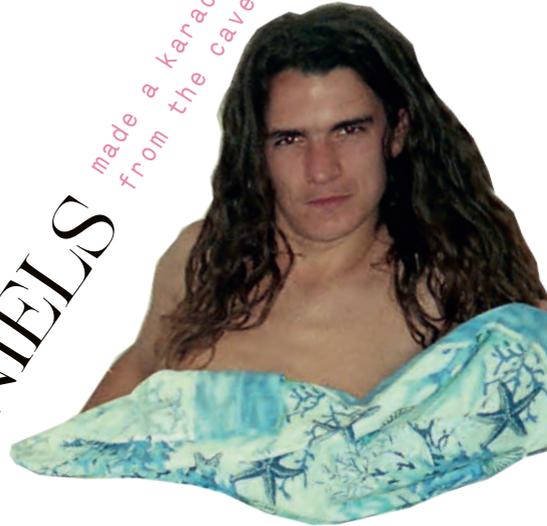


made a karaoke choir from the cave-drawings



LUCAS

developed a modular structure from tufo and one from steel



NIELS

was working with the vicinati, the shared courtyards in the Sassi

HANNAH



EMMA

investigated the distinction between the north and south of Italy

NOA

created a research method on how to create from out the notion of 'the Now'



BUONGIORNO,

We decided to test out our education in a new context

Matera is all about caves. It's the first thing you will find during a google search: it has caves, and it's old. Little did we know how seriously they meant it though. You walk on caves, you sleep and eat in caves. So guess where we set up our studio? In a cave.

Located in a remote corner of southern Italy in the small region of Basilicata, Matera is not the easiest place to reach which is why it has managed to remain relatively unknown, especially to foreign tourists. Although, since it became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993, and later on, the European Capital of Culture 2019, visitor numbers have been growing rapidly and many of the caves swiftly turned into an Airbnb heaven.

Once in Matera, none of us knew exactly what to expect from this place that we would be calling home for the next six months. We set up camp with the goal of developing our own education and energetically dove into communal living.

We started and ended each week with kick-off and recap meetings, where we set up initiative lists, conducted peer feedback sessions and organized collective discussions.

Some of us have been fascinated by "tufo", the typical limestone that holds the whole city together. Others were inspired by the Zampogna, an ancient musical instrument, or by old and new graffiti on the walls of the Sassi (Matera's old town). Ultimately, most of us have used this opportunity to define their position as designers in the context of Matera, and to explore their ways of creating in dialogue with this new environment.

Throughout our adventure, we have been constantly amazed by people's openness and kindness in trying to help us, like Ralf who gave us access to his cave for some days to host a Tufo Workshop, or Selena, our Italian teacher. Whether it was about signing housing contracts (grazie Guido!), or letting us dig into the local news agency archives, we constantly gathered experiences of engaging with our new living and working context, the very reason why we set up this collective.



"I WOULD LIKE TO mediate better, and take a step back from giving my opinion, and practice a moderator role, to start to listen more."
#M11 2018/10/04



RESEARCH DURING COVID-19

In 2019, influenced by my experiences with the ODS and Offence, I applied for the Master Education in Arts at the Piet Zwart Institute. When I joined the Master, I had the intention to continue researching alternative ways of engagement in education. I was exercising that through Strategies of Relationality – www.strategiesofrelationality.com –, a project I co-started along with two students and a professor from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. We intended it to be a para-academic group based on horizontal and co-responsible education through practice-based and experimental research in the field of relational and social practices. We were around 15 students, professors, and professionals attending our weekly meetings at the beginning of 2020.

Then, a more-than-human entity hit the world as a viral storm that drove everyone

into isolation. Our research was grounded on physicality and was pushed into virtual interactions. Like all human relationships, ours had to adapt as well. With the adaptation and the personal struggles we were experiencing, the number of participants slowly decreased.

Where I once saw a space full of potential to physically co-explore some of the questions and exercises I wanted to share became slowly more a space of care for the well-being of participants. This space was needed and extremely important for all of us. However, it lost its potential for my research translation in the Master Education in Arts.

I was also significantly battered by the pandemic, both psychologically and emotionally. In June of last year, I decided to fly to Brazil to pursue comfort in my hometown and try to make myself relevant to the social issues happening there. I also wanted to map and try to understand the current

context at the time. And try to see if I could continue my Master's research through a specific contextuality in my hometown.

It proved too difficult on all levels. Brazil was devastated not only through Covid-19 and its consequences but the necropolitics of the national government. The rollercoaster of my daily internal negotiations between maintaining my health and being at service for social care was a constant struggle.

At the end of 2020, I realized I had to take a pragmatic approach since I strongly did not want to postpone finishing the Master. As a result, I proposed to analyze the experience I had with Offence through the lenses of horizontality and co-responsibility. I attempted to do so in Brazil in the first months of 2021, but it proved too difficult, both contextually and psychologically. In April, I came back to the Netherlands to be able to finish this document.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Looking back at Offence as a graduation thesis during times of pandemic has put me in a position of paying extra attention to the nuances in how we physically relate to each other when in groups pursuing a shared desire. It felt meaningful to me to look at the learning interactions promoted in Offence and their positive outcomes in trying out alternative ways of engaging in and within a collective focused on learning by making of a new education process.

In developing this document, I saw myself in a new situation of analyzing the past, something I am not used to. My research always focused on exercising and proposing new ways of engaging with reality and offering alternatives for the futures. I use the word futures in the plural, something I learned from Oriana Persico and Salvatore Iaonesi, an inspiring couple that showed me the importance of desiring possible tomorrows.

I reviewed my personal notes while engaging in Offence to relocate my thoughts to that context. I also went through all comments, reflections, and remarks archived in the meeting notes of the collective process.

The first meeting took place at the end of February 2018. Every session had a notetaker

and had all conversations comprehensively detailed. This attention to archiving the experience, in all its levels, can be seen in the website created to communicate the project – www.offence.ooo.

I did not participate in all the sessions. Neither did I partake in living together with the group in Matera. I went there with them in the beginning and stayed for two weeks, introducing them to the city, to the network of creative professionals I had met while working with the ODS, and helped them find accommodation and a place to work. I also visited them on two other occasions, staying for a week.

For this *a posteriori* analysis, I also informally talked with some participants to help me refresh a few situations and ideas. I also comprehensively went through the extensive archive of every interaction, proposals, plans, documents, and presentations. In addition, the zine produced at the end of the experience was a great resource.

In fact, with the group's consent, I use this zine as a publication support-mesh between my document and its analysis and that of the group. I hope this helps the reader alternate between my perspective and that of the group and practice different ways of constructing the experience.



THE LIMITATIONS OF A FIRST-PERSON A POSTERIORI ANALYSIS

I feel it is important to mention that my first-person analysis carries a great deal of embodied and situated knowledge. And this might be one of the qualities of endeavoring in this document. However, I am aware that my perspective has limitations and might not fully account for all the details, qualities, and problems that this experiment produced.

My analysis is limited. A deeper inspection would require a comprehensive, structured dialogue with all participants and the other

mentors, and the network of people involved in the experience. From staff members and professors of the DAE, inhabitants of Matera, friends that visited the group during their stay in Italy, collaborators of all sorts, their voices would have a substantial benefit in sculpting an all-inclusive picture.

I understand the limitations of my current context, both the timeline to my graduation and the constraints of the pandemic. I only hope that I have made justice to the participants and their honest and inspiring desire to partake in a transformative experience. To them, I am forever grateful for the transformation we experienced.

Initiative list

Initiator	what	comment	downers	optional when
EMMA	SECRET SANTA	15-16 DEC? #GOODVIBES #JUST COLLECTIVEFUN	ex: NOA	15-16 DECEMBER
SELENA	DINNER	weekend		7-8-9 dec?

Initiative list

Initiator	what	comment	downers	optional when
			Ben Lucas	5/6 DEC
				26.01.19

Initiative list

Initiator	what	comment	downers	optional when
NOA	Me: Lord of the Flies	movie about group dynamics without a clear hierarchy	Pierre Ben Em	Monday evening 15 dec
NOA	Horsebackriding		Charlie Em	
EMMA	FREE DISCUSSION on Cultural Appropriation	say whatever you wanna in any way you want	Em	(when possible)
NOA	Recording a short acted film in Sassi (20min)	tern love story	where? Ben	THURSDAY LUNCHEON TIME
D.	Football with ODS	# we have to kill them.	Nannah Em KARL	
Nannah	discovering the cam in Sasso Lanceso	* walk around, (BATTED) sum the space	Nannah KARL	Whenever we'll win anyway. next week
KARL	BOOK CLUB	* making it → didi how, when etc!		
Ben	La grande Bellezza	italian famous movie (Roma social life) jet set life	Charlie C. Lucas NOA	Saturday after Nannah don't over coffee at some SASSO. evening
Charlie	visit Ralph	info artist who lives to tell stories about Matera / the Sassi	Em! Nannah Alexandra Ben Nannah	Tuesday Thursday
Charlie	Quarry Site Visit with Tonio	get to know about his project	Charlie (Em) Nannah Ben NOA Lucas Nannah	MON → FR next week
Charlie Ben Nannah	Moderator Training -	gather knowledge and skills on moderating → testing them	Ben Nannah NOA Nannah Lucas Alexandra	WED afternoon
Dominic	Finding ways to make money	from tourists	Dominic Karl Nannah	next week (23.10)



Introduction

OFFENCE

Offence was a collaborative experiment in creating an alternative education program in Matera, Italy, as part of the Design Academy Eindhoven bachelor's curriculum. Students reacted to the unaddressed conflicts and often unhealthy hierarchies of the Academy by engaging in a horizontal alternative of an education-making process.

The following introduces the reasons and context in which it started, the need to try an alternative exploration in education, have a defined structure, and approach it in a collective, co-responsible, and horizontal manner. I present a basic frame to introduce my interest in understanding what Offence's structure had in maintaining and enhancing horizontal and co-responsible learning.

HOW IT CAME TO EXIST

Since 2016, the Design Academy Eindhoven (DAE) bachelor curriculum encompasses an elective class in the first semester of the third year. During this optional class, students can create their education program for the time assigned. It is called Collective Minor.

It initially started being called 'Open Lab' with a group of students who chose to work in a different building in Eindhoven, creating their organization for interpersonal relationships, both regarding work and living. This experience inspired some second-year students to take upon their desire to step out of the Academy and try something new. An audio publication is available about this experience – bit.ly/3cqZuql.

An initial group of curious students about signing up for the Collective Minor of 2018 came to exist not only because of shared values and a desire to try a new learning experience but mainly out of a common frustration with the DAE's

curriculum and the relationship with their professors. Students felt the Academy was not correctly hearing them and that the process of feedback and assessment was not as meaningful as students wanted it to be. There was also a shared feeling that their design programs lacked relevance and contextuality in their design practice.

This group, which came to be called Offence, collectively defined an initial manifesto to focus on a few critical elements in their Collective Minor: to be a collective, to work together in order to emancipate themselves from the educational structure they have been studying in; to be a community, to live and work together, learn from one another, and to understand the more substantial power that a group has in comparison to individual action; to be contextual, to be informed by the surroundings, to live and work in a different place; to be participatory, to be active, to observe, to engage and be responsible for creating their own strategies of relating to one another; to be open for confrontation, the need of

opposing opinions, to debate continuously; to investigate values, in different scales and realities; to work on current social affairs, to be in direct contact with the people living in the context the group is in; and to document everything, both for archiving purposes and shareability of ideas, successes, and failures. For all that to happen, living in a different city and context felt essential.

I first met the group when I was invited by one of the students to give a presentation on the Open Design School Matera (ODS). ODS's goals, values, and structure focused on open design and learning-by-making became an inspiration and resource. At that moment, I also showed the potential of Matera in becoming the place where their educational experiment could take place. Moving to the suburbs of Europe, in a city working its way to move away from an unassertive past and into a promising future focused on creativity, open-source mentality, and culture production, felt like a path full of meaningful possibilities.

Introduction

After this first meeting, I started to attend the following sessions as well. I was very interested in this project and its possibilities in experimenting with alternative education. They ended up choosing Matera as the location for the Collective Minor's project to take place, and the group invited me to become one of the three mentors to assist them.

I accepted the invitation with the condition that I could also be a participant. I am a firm believer in having 'skin in the game' – personal risk and accountability – and honesty and transparency as cornerstones of any meaningful relationship. And to be able to practice that while being a mentor required me also to take chances as a participant.

I take the term 'skin in the game' from Nassim Nicholas Taleb. In *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder* (2012, p383), Taleb states that "Every opinion maker needs to have 'skin in the game' in the event of harm caused by reliance on his information or opinion." It is a compelling concept in exercising more equanimity in educational experiences.

THE NEED TO TRY AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROCESS

In accordance with the DAE's focus on creating small-scale alternatives rather than large-scale solutions, the group saw a strong need to try a genuine alternative education. This desire opened the possibility of empowering the individuals in claiming their own process and practice alternative ideas towards learning.

In approaching the semester as a project in education-making, rather than being oriented towards a specific finished outcome, it allowed them to fully engage in a trial and error method. Participants understood that they needed

to challenge the ongoing methodology of the Academy and pursue meaningful and relevant exercises in developing their understanding of collectiveness and individual practices.

This 'blank canvas' opportunity was both empowering and frightening at the same time. Everything, from curriculum to assessments, from living situations to workshop arrangements, had to be discussed and structured. The very ideas of failure and success had to be debated in length since the beginning, promoting meaningful discussions on how to engage with this powerful chance of resignifying their own design education, and consequently, their own individual definitions of their design practice.









THE NEED FOR STRUCTURE

From the beginning, it became clear that the group was comprised of individuals with very distinct backgrounds and opinions. The initial meetings already showed the need for a basic structure for interactions. Meetings were held during the week, and conflicts with personal schedules asked for a specific day and time to be set so everyone could organize themselves. Slowly, it became clear that some structure was needed for the process to flow in an organized and productive way.

Another apparent need was to register notes, discussions, and decisions that took place. A volunteer notetaker became responsible for that in every meeting. It helped to communicate with missing or prospective participants what had been talked about and decided upon.

In addition, the Collective Minor had its own budget, with a fixed amount of money that could be used as desired, along with a fixed amount of hours to be paid to the mentors. This budget could be used as intended, as long as reports were handed to the DAE. This added a strong layer of responsibility for keeping up

with accounting and required negotiations and definitions on how to divide it.

Documenting the interactions, conversations, and the process became a significant part of the experience. I can point out a few reasons for that. First, as mentioned, because of the need to share thoughts and decisions with participants that could not be part of the process. Second, for keeping up with the budget through collective responsibility. Third, because even though the DAE was allowing the group to come up with plans for their semester, it was a bold move within the institution to try to exercise an alternative education partly contesting the very education the DAE was providing. Therefore, there was an underlying feeling that everything needed to be documented for further scrutiny and argumentation. And last, for the potential of inspiring other groups and students in pursuing their own experiments in alternative education.

Therefore, it feels important to understand what impact did Offence's organizational structure have on co-responsible and horizontal learning. I was interested in analyzing how co-responsibility happens in practice and also what causes a lack of co-responsibility.

THE NEED FOR CO-RESPONSIBILITY

The very title of the minor – Collective Minor – pushed a group of students from different nationalities and backgrounds who were attending various departments at the DAE and did not know each other into a challenging endeavor of creating a collective. Negotiating between individual representation and needs and collective desires were in constant flux from the beginning.

The group desired to be a 'community of individuals,' accepting and embracing differences within the group while challenging and pursuing a shared learning experience.

It was understood that the individuals feed the community, while the community helps define the individual and one's practice.

Inspired by the Open Design School Matera, every participant was perceived as a teacher, and every participant was, at the same time, a student. Participants were, as a consequence, co-responsible for each other. A participant's experience was directly connected to another's. Everyone had responsibilities over the outcome of the minor itself and over every participant's path in defining one's own practice. And I was a participant, as well as a mentor.

THE NEED FOR HORIZONTALITY

Learning was approached as a horizontal process, questioning the fixed role division between teachers and students and suggesting a program with no single authority. Every participant is of equal importance.

However, during the meetings, some voices were more often heard than others. Due to the lack of something to add, inhibition, shyness, or more extroverted or engaging personalities within the group, discussions often ended with unbalanced opinions. Some felt like they were not being heard, a feeling all too familiar in the DAE context they wanted to avoid.

'How should we begin? What do we need? What should come first? Should we decide on a structure or respond to the needs that will come? Is the individual voice more

important than the one of the group? Or as equal? Where should we focus our energy? On defining a curriculum? On where we want to arrive in our practices? Our needs? How are we going to function? Who speaks first? Who speaks next? Who decides who will speak for us? Do we need to have a leader? Are people asked to speak? What happens if one person talks too much? What happens when someone does not perform as expected? Do we have to have rules to exist?' These are just a few examples of questions that were hovering over the group.

The group understood from the beginning that horizontality was going to be a process. It is not established by manifestos or rules of engagement but rather by the very exercise of tools that enable more equal interactions. As a result, the group became gradually more aware of power discrepancies within the group and the subtlety of relationships among those involved.





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THE IMPACT OF THIS EXPERIENCE

My practice has led me to collaborate in many groups and projects focused on art and design. Most of these projects started with groups of people with similar intentions, concentrating on collectiveness to pursue shared desires and outcomes. Relationships of power and responsibilities often lead to unbalanced associations, culminating in frustrations and feelings of neglect.

It is essential to understand the impacts each one of us has regarding the others and the notion of collectivity. And in the process of co-creating our desired reality. One that is inclusive, embraces diversity, potentializes learning, and enhances the surrounding network's power in defining the self.

In trying to unpack these, I was also intrigued to understand how we can maintain and enhance a horizontal and co-responsible relationality. In my personal experience, promoting diversity in mechanisms of collective engagement based on honest communication has positive effects on supporting these aspects. And we tried that out in Offence.







Structure

In this chapter, I go through the problems and limitations of the educational structure, whether too much or not enough. I look into the constraints of rigidity and its difficulty in allowing for alternatives and the hidden restrictions that a structureless engagement entails in further development.

In the end, I provide an inventory of Offence's structure and organization. It is essential to provide a detailed list of how the group designed itself before going to Matera. It is meant to set the ground for the analytical work that I present in the subsequent chapters.

STRUCTURAL RIGIDITY

Higher education institutions need structure to operate and conform to national guidelines and standards. By structure here, I mean how the curriculum is organized and its segmentation in evolving steps towards completing a defined practice. The accessibility to resources – faculty, staff, classes, tools, and overall infrastructure. The expectations and the way assessments and evaluations are codified and set in place. The organization of the institution and the governing bodies of programs and departments. The political power of students and their voices. And the tools available for creating a 'safe space' for students to thrive. These are all operational arrangements I understand as existing for higher education to prosper and allow its students to thrive in the pursuit of their own practices.

However, in higher education of creative programs, such as art and design – what is commonly called 'art schools' –, too many structural definitions can often work against its purpose of enhancing its students' potential. The structure seems to be necessary to reduce the need for constant decision-making. It would be hard for a student if there were a need to decide daily what kind of action, activity is more meaningful at that point. The structure allows for one to focus one's limited cognitive capacity on what one feels is necessary. It helps to reduce distractions. However, it can also limit the creation of potential alternatives.

Overly-structured programs can be very limiting in allowing for variations of processes. It seems to be a sort of puzzle that institutions face when understanding that creativity implies questioning defined ideas and their potential

in questioning the very institutional establishment. Some flexibility seems imperative, but the students do not often perceive this flexibility.

Another problem with structural rigidity in art schools is its lack of flexibility towards problematics brought forth by students. And the growing perceived impression that the students are not honestly heard. These problems can have a wide range of sources: dissatisfaction with classes, content, and teachers; the lack of desired tools and infrastructure; the underlying costs of a degree; and up to harassment, abuse, and inappropriate behavior from faculty and staff.

The latest became publicly evident in the second semester of 2020 with the anonymous revelations brought forth by the Instagram profile @calloutdutchartinstitutions.

Structure

The profile revealed alleged misconducts from faculty and staff through the description of detailed personal accounts. It became clear that inappropriate behavior was happening in some art schools in the Netherlands.

Still, these revelations showed an ongoing pattern of not taking the students' complaints seriously within the institutions. Students felt that their problems were not being adequately heard and addressed and that the institutions were protecting the perpetrators of such alleged inappropriate acts.

Recently, a study performed by Bezemer & Schubad about the social safety of the study programs at the DAE corroborates these claims of harassment, abuse, and overall inappropriate behavior. An article in the national newspaper deVolkskrant reviewed and commented on this study – www.bit.ly/3oVmhQR, in Dutch.

Asymmetry

Throughout my experience in six different educational institutions in the past 20 years, I have been experiencing an increased feeling among students of not being heard, engaged with, considered for their opinions and feelings, and sometimes abused – emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually – by the professors and the very institutions. The channels put forth in an attempt to 'listen' to the students – counselors, psychologists, coaches, etc. – often lead to opaque mitigation responses, if any.

This opaqueness is pushing an increased expectation for relational symmetry in accountability in higher education in terms of defining policies and proposals for actions towards inappropriate behavior that works both ways.

We are full of examples of students not behaving properly in class and the consequences of it. But we do not have nearly

the same amount of narratives to exemplify what happens when a professor acts unsuitably.

Hierarchy in higher education is favorable if we have clarity over roles and responsibilities and constructive ways to approach situations that differ from the agreement. The same can be said about horizontality. It allows for an alternative landscape with positive developments over interpersonal equilibrium, but it can also create abuses of power when uneven relationships are hidden behind the assumed balance.

We must pursue symmetry in human affairs. Shared notions of fairness, justice, responsibility, and reciprocity are key cornerstones for any meaningful relationship, especially in learning interactions. The absence of or violation of symmetry that is either expected or desired can have significant consequences.



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STRUCTURELESSNESS

In groups of people who come together out of a shared intention, negotiating how the group will operate, its structure, or organization always comes as a core need. I have had a chance to participate in several groups that defined themselves on their own terms. Groups that are focused on more activist purposes tend to have an intrinsic desire to avoid structure. It has a linkage with authority and hierarchies, often related to consequent divisions between oppressors and oppressed. The willingness to engage in structureless groups is legit and desirable as an attempt to avoid these divisions.

I have come to realize that structureless groups are possible, but they have minimal development. Structureless groups are great to encourage participation in discussions. However, their intention seems not to be able to go beyond this initial share of individual perceptiveness. Offence could not seem to evolve beyond this stage

in the beginning until they engaged in creating a shared curriculum and a structure to help them operate towards putting it into practice.

As Jo Freeman – an American feminist, political scientist, and writer – defines it in her article ‘The Tyranny of Structurelessness’ (1970):

“Contrary to what we would like to believe, there is no such thing as a structureless group. Any group of people of whatever nature that comes together for any length of time for any purpose will inevitably structure itself in some fashion. The structure may be flexible; it may vary over time; it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power, and resources over the members of the group. But it will be formed regardless of the abilities, personalities, or intentions of the people involved. The very fact that we are individuals, with different talents, predispositions, and backgrounds makes this inevitable. Only if we refused to relate or interact on any basis whatsoever could we approximate structurelessness – and that is not the nature of a human group.”

This means that to strive for a structureless group is as useful, and as deceptive, as to aim at an ‘objective’ news story, ‘value-free’ social science, or a ‘free’ economy. A ‘laissez faire’ group is about as realistic as a ‘laissez faire’ society; the idea becomes a smokescreen for the strong, or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others. This hegemony can be so easily established because the idea of ‘structurelessness’ does not prevent the formation of informal structures, only formal ones.”

As a result, the idea of having a structureless group in an attempt to avoid oppression can be counterintuitive because the informal structures will happen nonetheless. However, they will be harder to be evaluated since they will be subtle and unclear. It is a way of disguising power relations that inevitably happen. The idea of having a structureless group is legit, honored, but very naive.

The Offence group understood this since the beginning of the preparations for the move to Matera. It was evident that the structures of

documenting and decision-making were primarily needed to be clear as not to alienate any member or promote undesired informal hierarchies. Also, the group had responsibilities over their ‘success’ towards the Academy. Therefore, defining the project’s structure was a vital issue in going through informal assessments that happened by the coordination of the school.

In addition, the group, coming from a school that is focused on the activation of ideas through materialization, was very focused on actually doing something, not just discussing it. Jo Freeman’s article I mentioned before relates directly to the feminist movement she was engaged in within the seventies. Still, her ideas are atemporal and as important in any kind of assemblage. She argues that unstructured groups may be very good at getting people to talk about their lives, but they are not very productive in actually activating ideas. They need to change their structure and nature if they aim to do more than talk.

THE STRUCTURE OF OFFENCE

In the six months before moving to Matera, the group met every week and discussed and negotiated the framework in which they wanted to activate their own education. This framework, or structure, was designed to allow for all students to have equal opportunities in horizontally experiencing the project, not only questioning fixed divisions between teachers and students but pursuing an experience where no participant had defined roles.

While delineating this organization, and throughout the experience, the line between Offence's structure being too rigid or too open was constantly being discussed. After some months in Matera, I heard from a few participants in my weekly voluntary one-on-one conversations that they wished some decisions could be made for them. The need to collectively discuss everything was often too energy demanding and deviated the focus from other opportunities.

There was also an ongoing underlying need to accommodate individuality. Therefore, the process of understanding and shaping how the group operated was in constant flux during the experience. It happened in parallel to the individual negotiations of boundaries and interests.

Here is a list of what defined the structure that initially activated the experience:

Rules of Engagement

The Rules of Engagement were not actual rules but a set of important points that helped define and highlight the formats and ways of collective discussions. It also helped structure a context for enhancing co-responsibility, constant awareness, and exercise of horizontal relationships. It facilitated dialogues, maintained an awareness for spaces of care, and structured the interactions without limiting the practice of individuality.

Meeting Agendas

Meeting agendas were defined lists of topics that the group would address. The lists helped in organizing the practicalities of the meeting: setting up issues, plans, outcomes, future tasks, and conclusions. It allowed a member who was not part of the actual meeting to add ideas and notes beforehand and later read the notes and stay up to date with what was discussed and agreed.

Housing Schedule

Housing during the stay in Matera comprised of two 3-bedroom apartments. However, they were very

distinct from one another in terms of location and amenities.

A Housing Schedule was set up as a document used to determine where every participant would live, with the ultimate aim of ensuring that everyone had the chance to experience living with everyone else. As well as to maintain a fair approach of everyone enjoying the same amount of time in the distinct apartments. It was ruled on informal shared agreements of living together.

Weekly Schedules

After the first two introductory weeks in Matera, the following three weeks were organized around pre-determined weekly schedules. The variations in these schedules were a positive exercise in negotiating individual and collective time, both for work and social events. These schedules were eventually dismissed in favor of a more fluid, personal, initiative-based time management system. For that, the use of 'Initiative Lists' posted on the walls of the shared workspace and open to any contribution was encouraged. To keep a thread of shared collectivity in the daily activities, the importance of weekly collective kick-offs and end-of-the-week recaps became very relevant. They were actually mandatory.







CHAPTER 2

Initiative Lists

The Initiative Lists were voluntary lists open for proposals and suggestions of activities and projects. Interested participants would write down their names next to the activity, and the people involved would pick a time and date to activate it. The lists themselves were not open to the outside community. However, some activities did open up to inviting friends and immediate network members to join.

Peer Feedback Sessions

Peer feedback sessions were moments for the participants to exchange their processes and project development and how they felt regarding their path and the experience as a whole. Everyone was encouraged to avoid making direct comments and judgments and propose questions that the presenter would engage with. Different methodologies on how to engage with these sessions were tried out.

Hand Gestures

Using pre-defined hand gestures facilitated the flow of communication during group discussions. They are an initiative of self-moderating meetings and removing the need for a central figure, a moderator. There were four main gestures. 'Two fingers' would be raised if one had a response or comment to what was being discussed. A 'one hand' raised would signify that one had a new point, or topic, to be added to the discussion. If someone did not comprehend what was just said, one would raise two hands in an 'x-shape' that would immediately invite someone else to try to explain in a different perspective and voice what was just said. When a participant created a 'T' shape with both hands in a perpendicular position, it meant that they wanted to talk about something that did not relate to the topic or the current discussion, but something else that was worth addressing – what came to be called 'meta-question.'

Voting System

Casting a vote for collective decisions worked in a physical way. In an upwards position, a hand, or a leg, meant a 'yes.' A hand, or a leg, in a downwards position, represented a 'no.' A hand, or a leg, in the middle, meant the person was 'undecided.'

Experimental Filters

In order to try to learn things differently and try to promote collective engagement, a list of what the group came to call Experimental Filters was put together. These 'filters' were action-based proposals that disturbed the typical interaction of seating and discussing together around a table, using your voice and English as a common language. They were critical in various ways, directly affecting the learning experience it was used with and the way the participants related to each other, promoting the

exercise of disruptions in subtle power relationships and co-responsibilities. In the next chapter, I dissect the list of 'filters' and argue that this was a great tool in constantly exercising ways of promoting horizontal interactions.

Evaluation Criteria Toolkit

Evaluation Criteria Toolkit is a set of documents to guide and support the process of self-reflection. It was created to assist in one's definitions of study goals, ambitions, and study process motivations.

Assessment Sheet

The Assessment Sheet is a document that allows for qualifying and quantifying criteria in self-assessment. It was designed to invite for the revision of the whole group before sending it to the mentors for a joined final evaluation. In Chapter 4, I untangle it and argue that this was a valuable mechanism in promoting and potentializing co-responsibility.







14:00 - 17:00 (3 hours).

/ Kay (?)

Lucas, Pierre



(1 hour).

Charlie, Lu

(3 hours).

Educational Package /

Horizontality

HORIZONTALITY IN AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CONTEXT

Horizontality is a quality of relational relief where one can see the other in the same relational plane. It is a concept that advocates for social structures and relationships that promote equitable power distribution. It asks for dynamic self-management and negotiations between individuals in pursuit of collective desires.

The native Indians of Latin America have always been practicing these ideas in their lives and their diversity of philosophies. So have the anarchist movement, in the constant pursuit to break with the hierarchical dynamics of power. Mark Bray, a historian of human rights and political radicalism, states that the term 'horizontalism' (horizontalidad) came from the financial crisis of 2001 in Argentina.

"Out of this popular rebellion against neo-liberalism came the term "horizontalism" (horizontalidad). While this slippery term has meant slightly different things for different people, it generally connotes a form of "leaderless," autonomous, directly democratic movement building whose adherents consider it to be non-ideological. Since the Argentine uprising, the term "horizontalism" has established itself as the overarching label for this amorphous form of directly democratic organizing that has swept the globe." (Bray, Mark. 2018)

Mark Bray draws a line between horizontalidad and horizontal relations in anarchism. Although both overlap in their support for direct democracy, action-oriented approach, and autonomous organizing, horizontalism, or horizontalidad, is framed as a specific term to refer to the democratic popular mobilization that has appeared

at the turn of this century. Also, horizontalism's main focus on form over content helps to draw this line for him.

I make no distinctions among such words: horizontality, horizontalidad, horizontalism, or horizontal. I'm most interested in understanding horizontality as not only a promotion of non-hierarchical decision-making but as a reaction to oppressive hierarchy, its strength of creating alternative futures, and its power in an alternative educational context.

"That's to say, and it's almost obvious, to break with something first you have to say 'no' to it, and from there start building something new. That's how we begin to construct differently. 'Horizontalidad' starts there. I believe that 'horizontalidad,' like autonomy and 'autogestión,' are momentary constructions and they are in themselves opening space for something more in Argentina" (Sitrin, Marina. p39)

In Offence, it also came into practice out of necessity – a shared need for trying an alternative way of learning and engaging collectively. And to break with a vertical structure at the DAE that did not allow spaces of true representation. Horizontality was a rejection of an uneven landscape.

In a moral sense, horizontality implies equality in opportunities for expressing agency and in acting upon ideas and situations. Everyone must have the same chance of speaking out, avoiding asymmetry, and allowing for the pursuit of balance in the collective construction of meaning. However, horizontality is not a tool or technique that replaces other ways of collaborative engagement. It is not the exact quantity of time that everyone has to speak. Or the amount of work that each one does for the collective. It is a means to try to get somewhere. And this road is unknown when cutting off from established structures.

Horizontality

The analogy of cartography, of territories, is a great way to translate that horizontality is a process, not an end goal.

It is an operation of erasing the directions one has been assigned to follow and start to map a new landscape, understanding its relief, vantage points, subtleties, possible dangerous sites, places, situations. A landscape that, as you map it, forms itself in parallel. It is dynamic, often unpredictable, where sometimes steps forwards to some are seen as backward to others. It is volatile and complicated. And each day is a new map, not from a *carte blanche* every time, but informed by previous shared experiences. It is not an actual answer to a practice but the practice of daily engagement.

I share the perspective of Neka, a member of MTD Solano, an unemployed worker's movement in Argentina, when voicing the emancipatory power of practicing alternative modes of collective living:

"Constructing freedom is a learning process that can only happen in practice. For me, horizontalidad, autonomy,

freedom, creativity, and happiness are all concepts that go together, and they're all things that have both been practiced, and learned in practice."
(Sitrin, Marina. p58)

Horizontality is a tool that requires time, and patience, to bring about virtue out of necessity. The constant back-and-forth sometimes made people antsy and ready to argue in the Offence. Mainly because each participant did not come from the same place, they did not have the same education. They have different characteristics, qualities, abilities. But they were all committed to collectively resolving the issues.

In Offence, we intended to achieve horizontal relationalities through equanimous contextual conditions – equal opportunities for everybody regarding living spaces, tools, access to mentors, and a shared budget. However, we understood that true horizontality is not possible. There are always different needs and abilities, and they consequently required different responses.





cas

Collective Meeting

EDUCATIONAL TOOLKIT

We created methods to live and work together

We are a diverse group of individuals that initially did not know each other very well and hadn't experienced working and living collectively extensively before. And suddenly (and of course, impulsively), we moved to work and live together in an ill-connected, isolated Italian town for six months.

Shocked and inspired by Lars von Trier's, *Idiots*, we decided that we needed structure so that we wouldn't end up in situations similar to the ones depicted in the movie.

Consequently, the maintenance of working and living together became part of our curriculum.

We felt a need for communication methods that would justly accommodate for:

- introverts and extroverts
- intellectuals and intuitionals
- articulate speakers and language puzzlers
- fast and slow thinkers.

Furthermore, there was an urge to balance:

- structure and playfulness
- efficiency and experimentation
- responsibility and carelessness
- flexibility and trust
- individuality and collectivity

Based on our observation of our own group dynamics, we developed an educational toolkit to help us maintain this kind of balance.

At times we used these tools very strictly, and at other times we intentionally abandoned them. We made sure to keep reflecting on, reappropriating and updating them regularly, as we grew together as a group.

"I WOULD LIKE TO do something where I can be free for myself."
#M11_2018/10/04



Therefore, it is more meaningful to speak of horizontality as something 'in the process of.' In the process of unlearning hierarchies, trying to understand that conversations and decisions can happen in more equal terms and that needs to be constantly reexamined. In the process of internal revolution, to see oneself, understand one's place of speech, one's experiences and place of origin, and see the others as co-participating in the course towards growth. In the process of understanding and praising multiplicities in collective construction. In the process of deconstructing 'correct' ways of doing things and creating alternatives for now and the futures. By practicing horizontality, we are constantly trying to answer the question: what new landscapes can we see and have the courage to create?

Colectivo Situaciones, a group of political and militant reflection in Argentina, sums up the struggle of what horizontality can mean:

"Horizontalidad is a tool of counter-power when it's a question. Horizontalidad is a

tool of power when it's an answer. Power is socialized, it's democratized – it is the power of all of us. But as an answer – as an end to the search – it shuts down all questions. Horizontalidad is the normalization of the multiplicity, and the potencia (potential) of the people who are different, not those who follow the conventional. And so we ask how and what, but we don't have the answer. The risk is that horizontalidad can silence us, stop our questions, and become an ideology."
(Sitrin, Marina. p55)

We mustn't silence ourselves but continue to propose questions and alternative answers. Offence was very vocal. Participants did not shy from expressing their opinions and needs. Of course, it was not easy to navigate oneself in the middle of so many perspectives and find common terrain among the mist of multiplicities and sometimes rugged terrain. But we tried to figure it out by trying it. In the words of Spanish poet Antonio Machado, "Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar" – we make the way as we walk it.



HOW DOES IT HAPPEN IN PRACTICE?

“Try to get your status just a little above or below your partner’s,” I said, ‘and I insisted that the gap be minimal. The actors seemed to know exactly what I meant and the work was transformed. The scenes became ‘authentic’, and the actors seemed marvelously observant. Suddenly we understood that every inflection and movement implies a status, and that no action is due to chance, or really ‘motiveless’. It was hysterically funny, but at the same time very alarming. All our secret manoeuvres [sic] were exposed. If someone asked a question we didn’t bother to answer it, we concentrated on why it had been asked. No one could make an ‘innocuous’ remark without everyone instantly grasping what lay behind it. Normally we are ‘forbidden’ to see status transactions except when

there’s a conflict. In reality status transactions continue all the time. In the park we’ll notice the ducks squabbling, but not how carefully they keep their distances when they are not.”
(Johnstone, Keith. p33)

In improvisational theater, ‘status’ refers to the energy, grip, and power contrast in the relationship between characters. One with high status is seen as more dominant in relation to one of lower status. It implies subordination in an actor’s reaction. The level of status is informed by body language and manner of speaking. Keith Johnstone states that status is something one does, independent of one’s social status. In his opinion, a good actor is always aware of the comparative status and can successfully play with it.

As I stated before, horizontality does not exist as is. Being always diligent about the discrepancies with the agreed relationality and doing something about it is the critical part of it. It is the very exercise of practicing and maintaining

it that makes it a tool for change. As Keith Johnstone states in his experiences with theater improvisation exercises, the awareness one practices over the status of the other and how one relates to it changes the whole interaction, making it more authentic, consequently more faithful to one another.

This is a crucial part of practicing horizontality in alternative education. One has to be constantly aware of this status exchange. It might sound exhaustive. And sometimes it is. Because we start to be aware that we speak through a lot more than just with our voice. When we are conscious of this, we cannot ignore it. Because it communicates something, it has consequences over others, and it is important to have accountability over it.

Participants of the Offence were not actors or theater students. They were not trained nor experienced in understanding status exchange. However, they

were very aware of power dynamics. Asymmetry of it in the DAE was one of the reasons that pushed them to try something new. Therefore, the Collective Minor was in itself an experiment in better understanding that.

It was not easy to do that in the Offence. The boundaries between individual and collective expectations over the learning experiment were in constant flux. There were situations where some participants felt uncomfortable by seeing others activating their individual research at a faster speed than that of the collective. It felt almost as if the ‘faster students’ had to ‘apologize’ for it.

The status of the individual in relation to the group was put ‘in check.’ There was a shared understanding, almost an unspoken mutual agreement in the first months in Matera that doing it at a collective pace was more important than that of the individual.

These rules structure our discussions and meetings. They help us stick to the core of the meeting and keep us aware of each others' positions.

THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

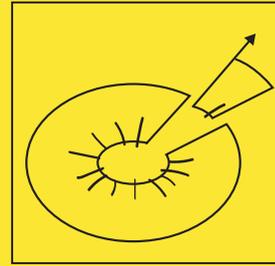
Are a set of rules to be used during meetings and discussions.

1. SITTING IN A CIRCLE

Every discussion is ideally held in a circular format. This enables everyone to see everyone else in a discussion.

Such a sitting arrangement also helps to pay attention to whomever wishes to say something.

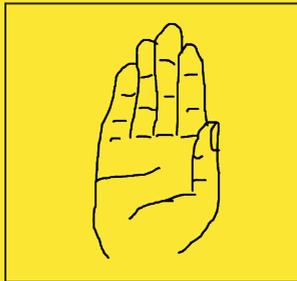
2. RIGHT NOT TO PARTICIPATE



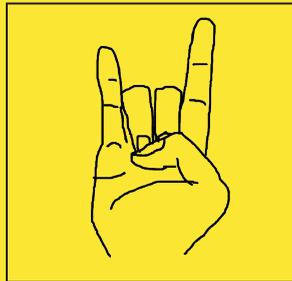
At any point, a participant can choose to withdraw from a discussion, or collective activity.

3. HAND GESTURES

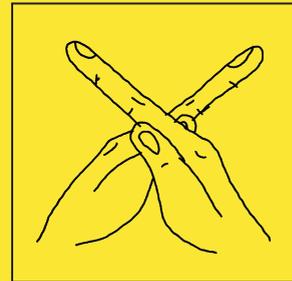
The hand gestures are used during the conversation to announce you would like to contribute to the discussion.



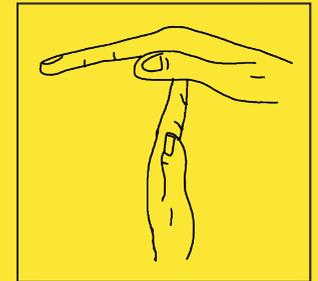
NEW POINT



RESPONSE



I DON'T UNDERSTAND



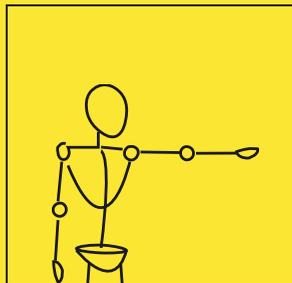
METALEVEL

4. VOTING SYSTEM

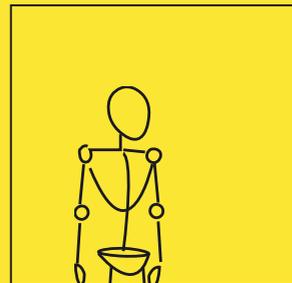
The voting system is a method of simultaneously voting on a matter, without being influenced by prior voted



option 1
YES



option 2
MAYBE / INDIFFERENT



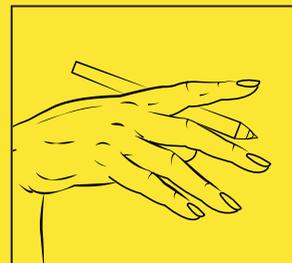
option 3
NO / DISAGREE

5a TIMEKEEPER



The timekeeper makes sure the group sticks to the defined length of the agenda.

5b NOTETAKER



The notetaker keeps and documents what is said and decided during the discussion.

OFFFENCE meeting agenda template

time	date
<input type="text"/> : <input type="text"/> - <input type="text"/> : <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/> / <input type="text"/>

meeting n.	location
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

participants	(cont.)	(cont.)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

topic
<input type="text"/>

agenda	outcomes / decisions
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

actions until next meeting	(cont.)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Meeting agenda

We start every meeting by laying out a meeting agenda. This helps us clarify our goals and expectations, and gives us an overview to zoom out to whenever needed during a meeting.

This generated frustrations. But it also promoted meaningful discussions over collective agreements of shared purposes and individual needs – the status arrangement of the learning process was constantly redefined.

The structures designed for the Offence experience allowed for cartography in which participants could experiment with different vantage points. They qualified for positions, or standpoints, from which interactions and status perception could be viewed and considered in many ways. It informed participants of subtleties in how we related to each other and the topics that were being studied. It was

crucial not only in the collective understanding of what a horizontal education means but also in understanding one's expression and practice.

Decision-making

Another way that horizontality was exercised in practice was through decision-making processes that embraced different and often contrasting viewpoints. This required a lot of discussions in trying to find consensus among the group.

“Rather than formulating a proposal and simply concerning oneself with accumulating enough votes to push it through, consensus requires participants to take the concerns of the minority seriously and cater proposals to their outlooks. The idea is not that everyone has to agree all the time (the strawman portrayal of consensus), but rather that the majority is forced to make concessions to the minority and, for the group to function, the minority must grow accustomed to tolerating decisions that it finds less than ideal. Consensus seeks to promote not only the formal practice of assuring that proposals will satisfy the minority, but more deeply, a sense of unity within the group and a culture of care that can all too easily get trampled in the pursuit of a voting majority.”
(Bray, Mark. 2018)

In Offence, it was imperative to listen to everyone before reaching any decision. There was a collective desire to attempt to find a single shared decision. But it was not often achieved. From the beginning, it became evident that conversations do not move forward if one only criticizes. As a result, there was an ongoing encouragement to make proposals and express divergent opinions, an intrinsic aspect of the consensus model for decision-making.

This approach supported possible spaces of concession, which consequently took into consideration different points of view. Finding common ground was hard at times. Drawing lines, erasing them, pushing them back-and-forth was important in delineating a territory that was meaningful for everyone to steer with.

As I mentioned before, listening to everyone's ideas and opinions required a lot of time and patience. And feeling impatient is often demonstrated through body language, which converses with the status transaction. A shared sense of purpose among the group helped maintain a course that was always moving forward, independently if dissonance of opinions could perceptively show otherwise.





HONEST COMMUNICATION AND ITS POSITIVE EFFECTS ON PRACTICING HORIZONTALITY

Honest, or empathic, communication, are different terms used to describe Non-Violent Communication (NVC), a methodology created by Marshall Rosenberg that “guides us in reframing how we express ourselves and hear others. Instead of being habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on an awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling, and wanting. We are led to express ourselves with honesty and clarity, while simultaneously paying others a respectful and empathic attention.” (Rosenberg, Marshall B.p3)

I have come to experience it as a powerful tool in responsible engagement among participants of horizontal groups. The method of non-violence is nothing new to human relations. We have seen it in the rhetoric of parrhesia, religious books, and up to political tactics of ‘speaking truth to power.’

“At its heart, it is the effort to maintain unity among men. It seeks to knit the break in the sense of community whose fracture is both a cause and a result of human conflict. It relies upon love rather than hate, and though it involves a willingness to accept rather than inflict suffering, it is neither passive nor cowardly”
(American Friends Service Committee, p35)

I share the understanding that non-violence is not a cowardly act. It is the opposite.

It demands courage and commitment. The process of Non-Violent Communication requires one to look inward with bravery and access what one is actually wanting in a specific situation. It intends to replace given patterns of defending, withdrawing, or attacking when confronted with judgment and criticism. By going this route, one is prone to see oneself and the others in a new perspective.

I am by no means an expert in Non-Violent Communication. I have not received certified training but have been studying and practicing it for the past five years. I initially introduced it in the Offence in the form of an experiment in critical engagement towards a project or an idea, as a way to try an alternative methodology of assessment or critique. I intended to invite participants to exercise the four components of the NVC model, allowing them to experience the power it has in perspective-shifting and possibly embody the process in the daily interactions within the group.

NVC starts with observation. It invites us to look at what is in front of us without making any judgment or evaluation. We observe and describe what

we see without falling into an immediate reaction to whether we like what is there.

It is more common in our upbringing nowadays to be raised with quick judgment than the opposite. The very exercise of removing evaluation in our observation is already a powerful exercise.

It goes in line with a greater emphasis on sensorial knowledge nowadays in sensing the world without predisposed deliverance.

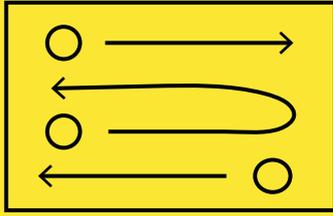
Next, the process invites us to state how we feel about what we are observing. Are we amazed, irritated, joyful, displeased, elated? Paying attention to the way we feel is crucial in this process.

Being able to pinpoint and delineate what is precisely that we are feeling is no easy task. The majority of us seem not to be able to address it adequately. It is not in the ordinary upbringing that feelings and emotions are untangled and pinpointed with more awareness. It takes courage to address uncomfortable ones. So much can be said about the importance of feelings and emotions in education and life in general. However, I am not going to delve into that, but state that we need to exercise looking at them more often.

Experimental filters

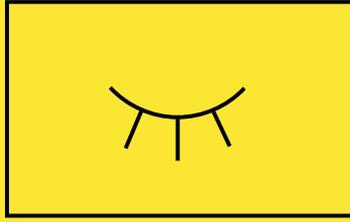
The experimental filters are a collection of experimental methods of conducting some activities such as discussions, meetings, and leisure time, used to explore how different approaches alter our behaviour.

WALK-AND-TALK



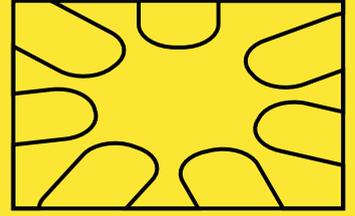
Have a discussion while walking around in the space.

EYES CLOSED



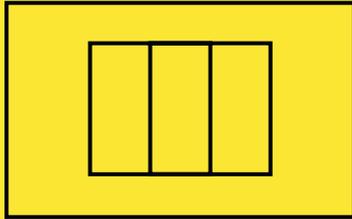
Have a discussion with your eyes closed.

BACK-TO-BACK



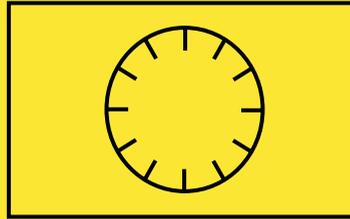
Sit in a circle, with your backs facing each other. Hold a discussion.

SOLO ITALIANO



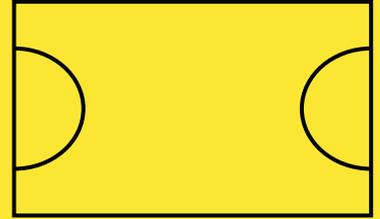
Only speak Italian.

CURFEW



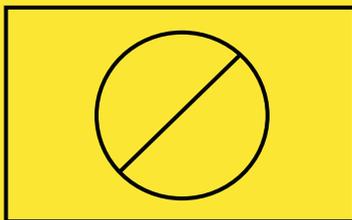
Stick to a set bedtime

LONG DISTANCE



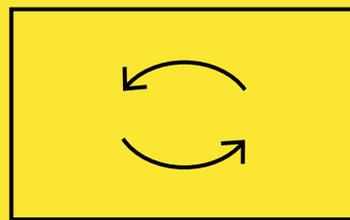
Stand at a distance where you have to shout to understand each other.

COLD TURKEY



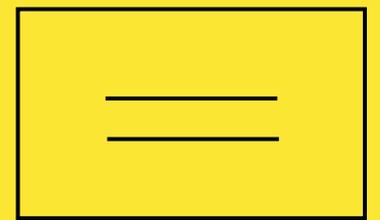
No alcohol, no smoking, no coffee, no weed, no sugar.

TAKEOVER

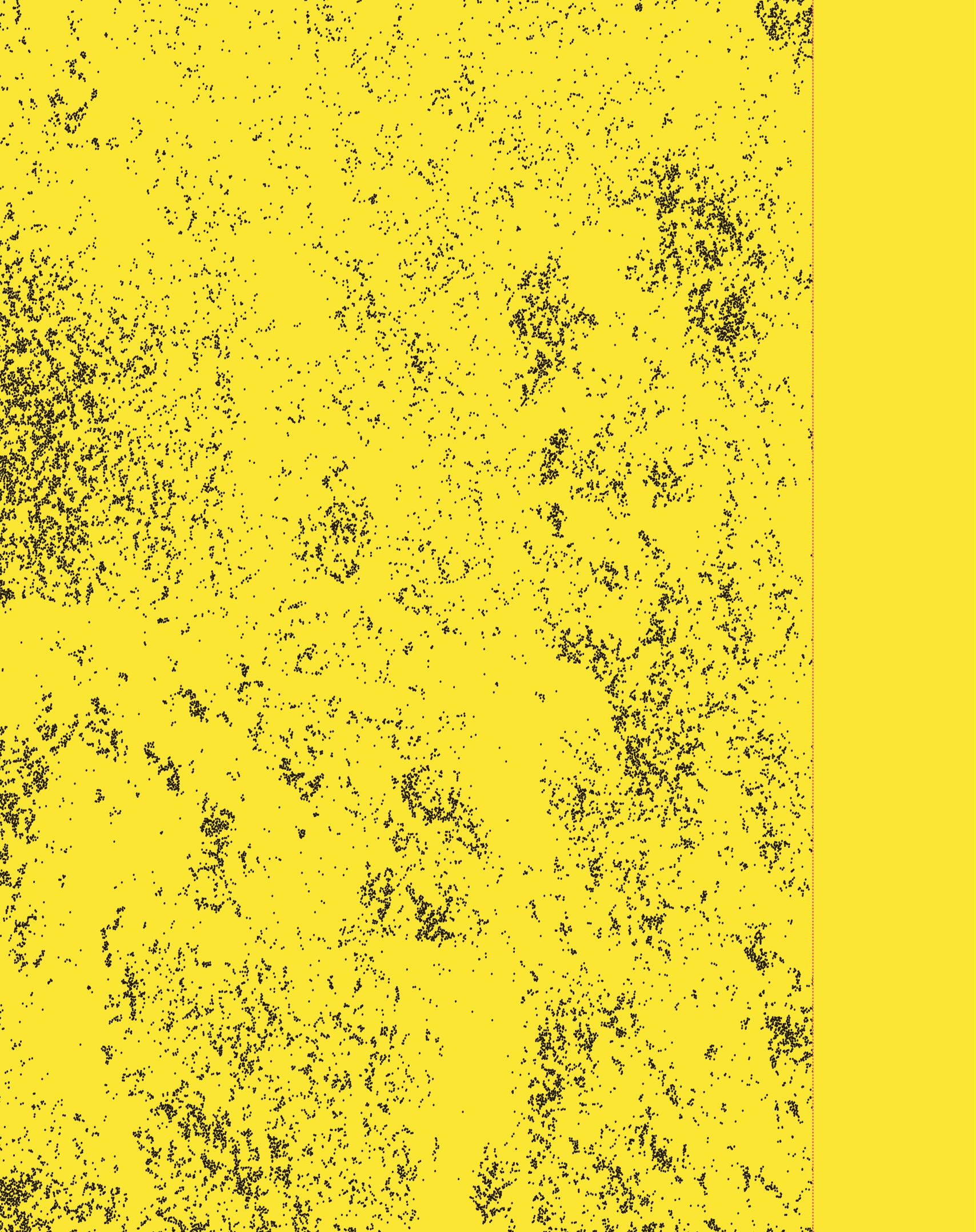


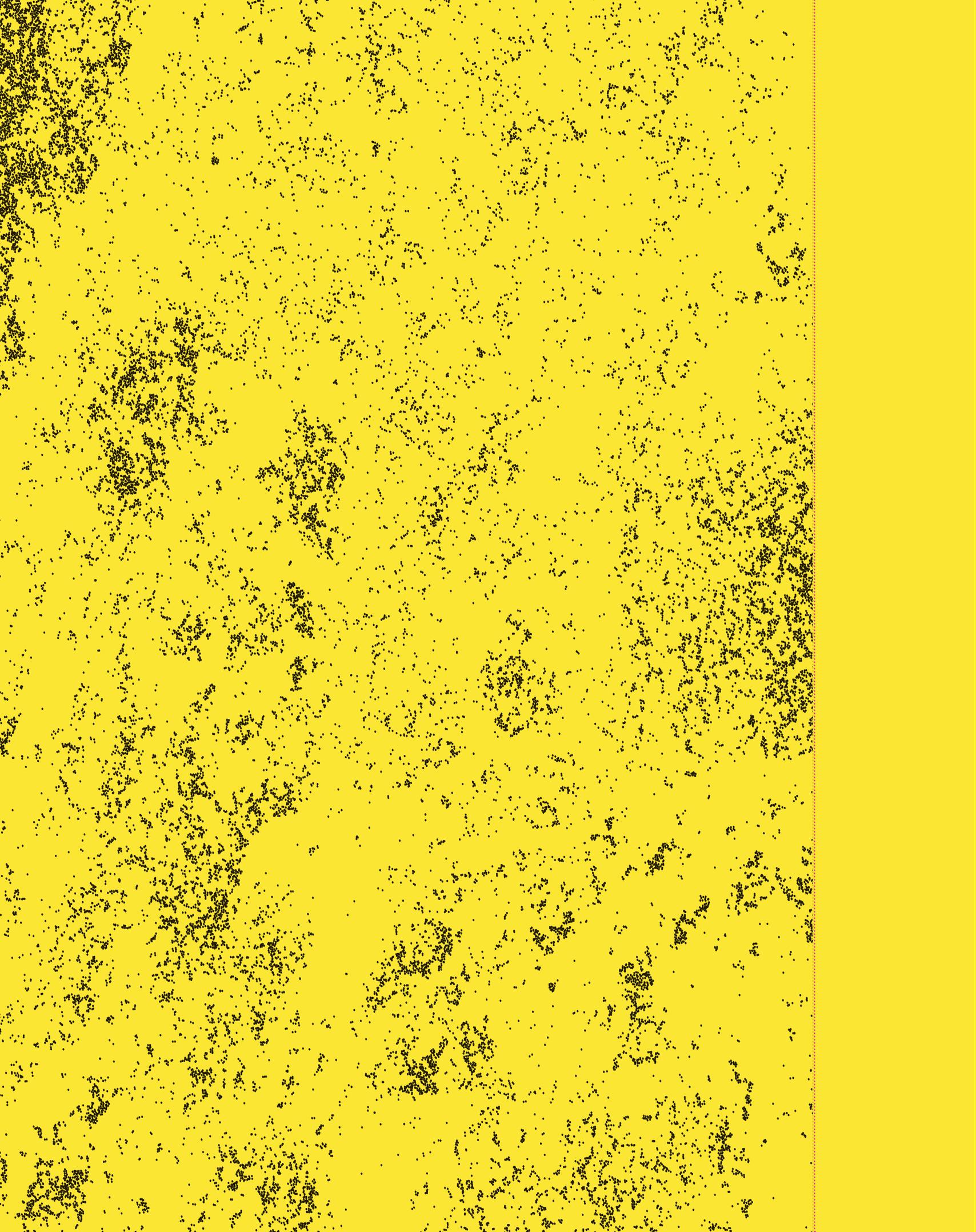
Someone else takes over, and/or presents your project.

EQUALITY



Each person gets the same amount of time to talk and present.





Because they are directly related to the next step in NVC: needs. We need to understand what needs, values, or desires are creating the feelings we identify. It acknowledges the root of our feelings. For example, when we hear someone saying that we are too self-centered, it might be a common reaction to take it personally, to accept and internalize the blame. Or to protest and call the other person insensitive. The NVC's choice is to understand our feelings and needs and, in this example, perhaps respond by saying that we feel hurt because our need for recognition of our efforts is not there for us to consider the other's desire.

In the exercise I proposed in the Offence, I asked participants to describe what they were missing or what they felt was needed and that was not present in what they were seeing. It failed in not allowing for an entire exercise of empathic communication because it took shape in the form of a questionnaire. Therefore, the person presenting the idea, or concept, did not engage immediately in the response. However, it did work in practicing the understanding of the relationship between feelings and needs. It invited



the owner of the idea, or concept, to engage with the formulations in their own time and manner.

The last step of NVC invites us to voice what we believe would be meaningful actions of others to fulfill our needs. It is the moment we take responsibility for our feelings and needs and propose ways of addressing them. It came in line with Offence's approach of making proposals rather than just criticize. In making requests, or proposals, it is important to use clear and positive language, apply concrete action, and reveal what we actually need and want.

Observing without judgment, addressing feelings and the needs behind them, and proposing enriching interactions seem crucial to a meaningful horizontal and co-responsible alternative education. However, it is

important to remember that the way we usually communicate often does not come from this space of self-responsibility. In the words of Paula and Gonzalo, members of HIJOS:

"To talk about it honestly and democratically, we have to recognize that there aren't equal conditions for all people, and that means that the same possibilities don't exist for everyone, especially related to our ability to communicate." (Sitrin, Marina. p52)

Relating horizontally requires us to be aware of the different abilities in communication and the differences in perspectives that each one brings to the conversation. These differences are necessarily related to how one perceives the world and what one is actually looking for in it. Each participant in the Offence, in their own way, was trying to define their needs, desires, and dreams. Not only in regards to

their practice but of the world and how to live on it. Doing it together, collectively and empathically, helped to create not only a shared territory but individual maps of possible meaningful spaces and routes.

An example that can illustrate how the group communicated is expressed by the perception of one of the participant's temporary leave of the project. Upon returning to the group after a few months, it was noted that the group was more patient in listening to one another. And that some topics did not need to be addressed by every single participant. Like the lengthy discussion that happened in the beginning about the type of paper to be acquired for the shared printer, for example. There was a change in the understanding of what are one's actual needs that are worth addressing.



CASE STUDY: EXPERIMENTAL FILTERS

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Experimental Filters were action-based proposals that promoted alternative interaction methods within the group. These 'Filters' promoted disruptions in standard methodologies of engaging with each other and with specific topics. They could be related to a particular interaction, limited to the time assigned, or informed the group on ways of spending time together. It was not uncommon, though, that they extrapolated these moments and extended them to other situations, as they were often seen as playful elements in daily activities.

They were crucial in affecting the learning experience and constantly shifted perspectives within the group, automatically asking for participants to assess positions, agencies,

and power dynamics to pursue horizontal engagement. I also firmly believe these 'Filters' directly affected the understanding of not only one's responsibility towards oneself but mainly of the group's.

In most of the meetings, a filter was chosen to inform how the group would interact. Sometimes it was picked randomly, promoting an element of unpredictability to the coming experience. It was also enhancing the aspect of play, something beneficial to the learning experience and the construction of the collective tapestry. However, in most cases, a specific 'Filter' was chosen to enhance the proposed interaction. Or as to jump-start a situation.

Below is the list of 'Filters' assembled, along with an explanation of each. And their direct and indirect power in the experiment of learning and the ongoing collective construction of a horizontal territory.

Solo Italiano

This filter invited the participants to only speak in Italian. As mentioned before, part of the reasoning in moving to Matera, was to engage in local and contextual affairs. And even though Matera is an important historical place and therefore has a key touristic element, most residents do not speak English fluently. As a result, it felt crucial for the participants to learn the local language to be coherent in relating to the local community and its issues. It was associated with the integrity of learning through contextuality. Thus, participants had weekly classes with a local professor to learn Italian.

Furthermore, scientific research points out other cognitive benefits of learning another language besides broadening one's

perspective of connecting to different cultures and people. It improves your memory, your problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills, enhances concentration, widens one's empathic listening, and improves one's creativity and flexibility.

It also opened up their vocabulary and the collective lexicon, inciting discussions within the group. For example, in the Italian language, different from English, nouns can be masculine or feminine, which brings up conversations regarding gender. Another element that is fertile for improving one's communication skills is pronunciation. Not in terms of how one pronounces an Italian word, but how one pronounces a whole phrase. In Italian, the same phrase can be understood as a question or as a statement. It depends on the intonation given.

Assessment criteria

We composed our own assesment critereea as a system to evaluate ourselves and eachother. It helped keep track of our individual and collective learning goals.

SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

The questions in this form serve to help you self-evaluate yourself in a given field.

	INSUFFICIENT	DOUBT	SUFFICIENT
LEARNING responsibility over your own learning			
1. Ability to define & develop working methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Ability to set, work towards, and reach learning goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Ability to seek, receive and use feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Ability to outline/define design practices of your own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Ability to self-reflect and adjust practice when needed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Ability to assess oneself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Ability to define what is important to take with him/her to future practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
COLLECTIVE contribution to the collective	INSUFFICIENT	DOUBT	SUFFICIENT
1. Ability to give empathic and constructive feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Ability to communicate clearly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Ability to observe and listen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Ability to be aware of role dynamics and act upon your responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Ability to challenge and confront the collective towards its ambitions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
CONTEXT relation to your surroundings	INSUFFICIENT	DOUBT	SUFFICIENT
1. Ability to take a position as a designer in relation to the context	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Ability to develop a productive working process in an unfamiliar context	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Ability to be aware, reflect and interact with the context	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Ability to collaborate and take responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

OUTCOME responsibility for your outcome

	INSUFFICIENT	DOUBT	SUFFICIENT
1. Ability to materialise an idea into an outcome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Ability to communicate the concept through the outcome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Ability to define and reach an audience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PEER-EVALUATION give this section to your peer

WORD CLOUD how the other saw you, in 10 words

(to be filled out by peer)

creative
open-minded
caring
easy-going
motivating
attentive
ambitious
thoughtful
cooperative
communicative
daring
responsible
disciplined
honest
clear
reliable
steady
fun/funny
patient
visionary
witty

inclusive
considerate
sharp
firm
incorrupt
determined
driven
cool
introvert
extrovert
critical
autonomous
unpredictable
self-conscious
stubborn
troublesome
secretive
controlling
emotional
held-back
selfless

obedient
flamboyant
provocative
indecisive
stressed
vague
forgetful
dogmatic
impatient
moody
passive
controlling
dominant
fearful
loud
neurotic
picky
avoidant
blunt
erratic
rushed

Eyes Closed / Back to Back

The invitation for participants to close their eyes in a specific discussion allowed for visual perception to be deprived, enhancing the grasp of voices and their subtleness. Consequently, visual distraction is removed, and body gestures are suppressed, improving listening. This is aligned with what the process of Non-Violent Communication asks for. Having moments to practice sensorial perception enhanced the participants' capacity for self-assessment.

It also played a role in inviting for imagination, precisely when one has to describe an object, or a situation, where physical prototypes and images usually do the job of unspoken characteristics. This exercise required collective trust as suppressing visual input, which often brings about a deal of vulnerability.

A variation of this filter was called 'Back to Back,' which asked for participants to sit with their backs to the others. Whether with chairs or not, it also emphasized listening in detriment to the visual perception.

Stargazing

Stargazing was an invitation to lay on the ground, with heads in a circle, and talk while looking to the sky. Or just contemplate silently. Even though it was another tool to invite participants to pay attention to listening, it was used more as a moment just to do nothing and be happy about it.

It was also an exercise in scale perception and interconnectedness. The perspective shift of thinking of our blue orb floating in an immense and populated universe is a humbling experience.

Long Distance

Long Distance invited participants to stand at a distance from one another where you have to scream to understand each other. Screaming required extra energy, forcing participants to be more aware of what was essential in transmitting an idea or opinion. It also inevitably challenged participants to be aware and negotiate external sounds that are part of the context.

And the choices, conscious or not, played in filtering the sounds we decide as meaningful in our immediate surroundings. It proved to be a difficult and exhausting exercise in broadening a circle of interaction, and it was not experienced twice.

Walk And Talk

As the name indicates, this filter asked participants to walk while talking. When stepping out of a commonplace of discussions, it opened up for conversations to interact with contextual elements. It also invited more private, one-on-one talks, which opened up spaces of confidence that one could not necessarily find with the whole group. For some, it was the best way to think and develop a rational argument.

This filter did not offer a new way of engaging, whether with others, the context, or oneself. A lot has been written about it, from meditations to art practices. And it is a common action in human activities to take a walk

outside. Nonetheless, it became a constant example that one is often required to 'step out of a common place' to see things from a different perspective, as the very Offence experience did in removing itself from the DAE and Eindhoven.

Socratic Discourse

Socratic Discourse invited for cooperation in an attempt to reach the participants understanding of assumptions and hypothesis. It is highly inspired by the known Socratic method. It was a collective engagement in further understanding a specific topic, developed through a systematic questioning of hypothesis and premises. The exercise of non-judgmental reactions was keen in promoting a meaningful practice, as it was essential to build trust within the group. It was tried only once, and it was deemed too 'philosophical.' However, participants did appreciate the exercise of fully listening before generating any response.

Communism

With this filter, everyone was assigned the same amount of time for a specific discussion. The person on the right would time it, and when the limit was reached, the person speaking had to stop talking. Arguments had to be thought out beforehand so participants could transmit their idea clearly. It gave explicit equal constraints to everyone involved.

Even though it was not discussed in such terms, I understand *a posteriori* that being strict to the time was an excellent exercise in understanding if horizontality is about assigning equal communication time to everyone. It turns out that the feeling of being part of a horizontal group is more complex than just that.

Controlled Explosion

Controlled Explosion was an opportunity to have a defined and deliberated moment for 'fights' about everything perceived as 'wrong' with the group and each other. They could be constructive or non-constructive at the beginning.

It was a cathartic moment to vent all the feelings and perceptions that were felt and sensed as blocking the flow of the experience.

These deliberated discussions were only over when everyone had let out all their frustrations and was ready to move on. It was a catalyst push for the group to take their time to process what was mentioned.

It was a delicate situation since it could cause significant problems for each participant, and the group in general, consequently. It could not have worked unless everyone was seriously aware of the possible consequences and the need to process it without projecting the problems further. This filter was critical in the constant pursuit of defining one's boundaries.

It became so crucial that at some point, it developed into a bi-weekly meeting on Fridays. Fridays would intercalate between Peer Feedback sessions and what came to be called 'Therapy Sessions.'

Kindergarten Pitch

This filter was an encouragement to explain your project or idea in a way that everyone could understand: children, grandparents, or people with limited knowledge of the English language. In pursuing a way to communicate an idea using simpler words, participants avoided falling behind umbrella concepts to give an impression of greater importance to simple ideas. It was also an exercise in reaching wider audiences and, at the same time, avoiding pushing aside specific groups through language.

Bad Feedback

In this approach, participants were asked to give critical and constructive 'bad' feedback on someone else's project. The very definition of 'bad' was in constant flux, allowing for the argumentation of importance

towards a topic, project or issue, it was referring to. It was specifically important since part of the education experiment questioned the notions of bad and good, success and failure.

In this filter, two exercises were happening. The speaker had to understand how notions of 'constructive' and 'bad' worked together in feedback. And the receiver had to make sense of what parts of the input were helpful – whether by contrast, constructive vs. destructive, or by elimination, in understanding characteristics, details, or elements of a project that did not need to continue existing.

Some participants were uncomfortable during this filter. We can point out a couple of reasons behind this feeling. Some did not like to be pessimistic about other people. They often felt that they were being rude and could not see the benefits of this action. Some had actual limitations in communicating what they thought about others, especially with an approach to pointing out what was perceived as 'wrong.'

Addressing discomfort is important in creating an honest interaction. It reveals limitations and boundaries that inform both sides of the communication path. Consequently, it helps to understand better ways to engage with topics and situations that can advise the experience, both on a personal level and the collective as a whole.





Takeover

Takeover asked for participants to present someone else's project. Or even take over the development of the project altogether. This filter was a powerful tool as an actual exercise of 'putting oneself in someone else's shoes.' It pushed participants to reflect on their responsibilities in different layers.

When presenting someone's project, the participant who took over put themselves in a spot where they had to communicate what they knew about the idea and the process. It allowed for serendipitous discoveries on how one assesses and communicates a project without ownership.

There was an intense exercise of responsibility and accountability for engaging with someone's intention and desire with a specific idea or project when taking over someone else's project. Should one continue the designed path? Should one disrupt it? How big of a change should one promote? Giant leaps or small gestures?

In reality, most of the participants did not dare to engage in such a transfer of responsibility. It felt too complex of an action to give ownership away. It was only tried out in small and specific situations rather than handing over a whole idea or concept.

Knowledge Exchange

This filter invited participants to share inspirational sources, like books, people, projects, and thoughts in general, to teach each other new things actively. Teaching each other was already an ongoing activity throughout the experience, rather direct or indirect.

This filter was a push to have a distinctive moment to discuss specific subjects, like a discussion round on cultural appropriation, for example. A book club was also an initiative that came out of this filter. Still, it did not live long as it demanded time that was not necessarily available given that there were too many activities and responsibilities going on already.

Floating Discussion

Floating Discussion aimed at keeping a conversation intentionally suspended, oscillating from moving towards and away from defined proposals or direct actions. It was explicitly intended to be done while walking to make use of physical directional shifts whenever a change in the path of the conversation was needed to avoid 'getting somewhere.'

It worked as an exercise in going 'back and forth' in agreeing or not. And it was also a poetic filter in engaging with the psychogeography of navigating in Matera and the fluid subjective territories being worked at within the group.

Look Before You Cross

This filter asked participants to take notice of – to look at – everyone around before communicating something. It was an exercise in paying attention to the presence and state of everyone before engaging in topics that could create conflicts or confrontations. By doing this, participants became more aware of other's feelings and consequently more responsible for possible outcomes.

It worked as an 'assessment filter' of estimating the status of everyone involved in the interaction. As argued before, appraising the others' status is an important element in practicing a horizontal relationship, inviting the speaker to adapt to the subtle contextual asymmetries in relational dynamics.

Double Circle

Double Circle refers to a physical arrangement that allowed participants to choose their level of engagement in a specific conversation or interaction. Positioned in two concentric circles, participants opt for the inner circle if they wanted to participate actively; or the outer ring if they preferred to observe or take a passive approach.

By having a distinct physical positioning, participants could better assess and relate to expectations from others. It was an exercise in non-judgment towards someone who just wanted to listen.



Schizophrenia

This filter was an invitation to speak on behalf of the person sitting to the left in a circular arrangement. Words such as 'I,' 'me,' 'my,' and 'mine' were forbidden to use then. By permitting someone else to speak on one's behalf challenges notions of agency and responsibility for what is being said and decided for, bringing forth negotiations in accountability and reliability. Exercising this filter allowed for a strong potency in perspective-shifting and allowed one to see the subjective landscape through a different vantage point.

Time Shift

Time Shift proposed to disrupt working – and consequently daily life–routines. There were two approaches. One that pushed for a working day to start 12 hours later. And another that moved for a day to start three hours later, or earlier.

It forced participants into a 'stressed' situation that asked them to reassess their potential in activating their energy both in terms of their practice and their living possibilities. This exercise allowed them to promote disruptions in conventional ideas of 'productive' time. It also opened up discoveries of situations and contexts they felt were more aligned with their individual needs.

Cold Turkey Week

Cold Turkey Week promoted a week of no alcohol, no smoking tobacco, no coffee, and no sugar – all substances were seen as not necessarily promoting well-being. By disrupting patterns of needs or addictions, participants understood the effect and consequences these substances had on their bodies. It inevitably announced behavior changes that had to be dealt with and negotiated with as a collective.

Curfew

Since they were living and working together, curfew was a proposal to set a bedtime for all—an attempt to exercise a possible routine for the group sharing an apartment. By sharing a specific time where housemates went to sleep, potential disruptions within a living arrangement could be avoided, which could benefit the overall group working together. In reality, it was practice individually and not as a group.

Collective Workout

Collective Workout moments were proposed to try healthier routines – at the start or the end of a day. Sharing daily habits and rituals increased the bonding and trust within the group. It was practiced in small groups and not with the collective as a whole.

Week-Fail-End

Week-Fail-End invited participants to choose an assignment on a Friday – concerning one's individual project – due to be presented the Monday after. The intention was one of coming with the most 'stupid' ideas. By this approach, the purpose removed the pressure over the assignment and allowed for exploring the balance between meaningful and non-meaningful outcomes given a specific constraint of time.

It could invert the initial intentions of the idea, often making it as ridicule, wrong, offensive, or useless as possible. In exercising an opposite and very contrasting, approach, new and innovative ideas could inform other actions. Besides trying out an unconventional research methodology behind this creativity exercise, there was also an undeniable desire to just have fun with it.

Counting Up As A Group

This filter was an invitation for participants to count together as a group – one, two, three, four, and so on. One would start the count, and someone else had to voice the following number. If more than one person said the same number, the counting would be reset and started over. It was practiced both in English and in Italian. It became a ritual of collective concentration and synchronization.

Planned Silence

Planned Silence was a filter where participants stayed silent for a given amount of time without having a specific purpose or task. It allowed the group to stop talking for a brief moment and shifted the attention to the lack of sound.

This filter was critical in situations of heated discussions. A break or a pause in a conversation that aimed to reach a consensus but failed in that allowed reassessing needs, desires, and agencies.

KM: a bed in 8 different countries
13/13

NJ: to be unpredictable
7/13

NL: to be reliable
8/13

CF: to meet other collectives
11/13

EL: to take care of what we left behind in Matera
10/13

DVD: to set up an event radar for the collective
12/13

PA: to participate in a contest as a collective
6/13

KM: to empower and inspire other students to take
responsibility of their own learning
12/13

IAS: to do another project together
10/13

AK: to make stuff
5/13

NL: to go on a picnic
11/13

PA: to open a dialogue with current educational systems
7/13

SR: to use our status to comment on things in school
5/13

NL: to move the classroom out of the school
9/13

NJ: to have projects outside the academy
10/13

KM: to put our publication in different bookshops around
the world
10/13

HCS: to involve others
7/13

SR: to go on excursions
13/13

PA: to encourage peer feedback
4/13

DVD: to role play
10/13

SR: to have a lecture as a group
10/13

IAS: to discuss more current affairs with each other
8/13

NJ: keep our differences
11/13

EL: to respect each others differences 11/13

KM: to take distance from the collective
5/13

LDR: to keep it simple
8/13

SR: to be offline
7/13

HCS: to share
13/13

NJ: to support each other
13/13

BM: the whole of the collective to be stronger than the
sum of its individuals
8/13

DVD: to pretend we aren't a project and infiltrate an
institutional system
7/13

PA: to communicate better
3/13

SR: for the collective and individual states to coexist
11/13

KM: to be someones third hand
8/13

NJ: to see the collective on a longer term
11/13

IAS: to be more than an educational collective
11/13

SR: expectations to be transparent
9/13

NL: to take a stand, or to make decisions
9/13

SR: to have one collective lunchbreak per week
8/13

BM: everyones voice to be heard
9/13

HATCH

A game on improvisation and collaboration

HATCH at Mauro's tower
Matera 2018.



"I WOULD LIKE TO learn whether I am better in collaborating or in working on my own."
#M11 2018/10/04

HATCH is one of the projects we developed together specifically to help ourselves have fun in group work.

Upon arriving in Matera, we were all very eager to get started making some design projects together. We quickly realised however, that a lot of our collective energy would go into the administration and setting up of our minor, leaving less time for dirty hands. Living together and discussing hours on end about anything from educational values to dirty dishes, it became clear that generally everyone wanted to do their design projects individually. It was important to have individual work, an activity that wouldn't necessarily have to be constantly discussed with the whole group.

Paradoxically, members of the collective were increasingly designing individually (at least

when it comes to things not directly related to our educational programme). Making stuff together isn't necessarily something that just comes naturally, hence we decided to develop a tool that would force us to improvise and collaborate.

In order to trick ourselves into designing and telling stories together, we decided to make a tool that gamifies cooperative creation. We wanted to make a game, that asks the players to design without the feeling that their life depends on the outcome and to remember that creation should be fun and playful.

In HATCH, players work in teams to answer small assignments, sourcing the elements of their immediate context and dealing with the big issues on our planet.



Assignment exchange

MAKE YOUR OWN [IM]PENETRABLE FENCE

After the first month in Matera, even though the group was thriving to develop the structure desired for the education program, they struggled to engage in collective making and materialization projects. They ended up asking me to give them a specific assignment or project to engage with collectively.

The invitation I created had one line of direction: "make your own [im]penetrable fence." And it was followed by this observation: "Since I joined this collective, there have always been talks about the boundaries that play a part in our relationships: being among us and the academy, among ourselves, or between oneself and the 'others'. One can even say there are barriers between our inner self and our external one. I believe there are still urgencies related to this topic that are worth paying attention to."

A month later, during my visit to Matera, the group presented the outcome as a game called Hatch. By subdividing the group into teams of three

and assigning random cards divided into three topics – technique, attributes, and category –, the game invites for rapid, improvised, and playful prototyping of speculative ideas using resources available in the context it takes place.

The game was exercised a second time after the group returned to the Design Academy, during the Dutch Design Week 2019. It was played with fellow students from the academy and the public present at the Kazerne Young, where it took place.



DESIGN A BRIDGE

After my proposed collective project, I felt it was both a necessary exercise of symmetry and a playful experiment that the participants would also give me an assignment. I shared their desire to research through making. They sent me a document with the following instructions:

Design a Bridge

1 - (noun) a structure to span physical obstacles without closing the way underneath, such as a body of water, valley, or road, for the purpose of providing passage over the obstacles.

2 - (noun) the elevated enclosed platform on a ship from which the captain and officers direct operations.

3 - (verb) be or make a bridge over (something)

Synonyms: connect, cross over, go over, pass over, extend across, reach across, traverse.

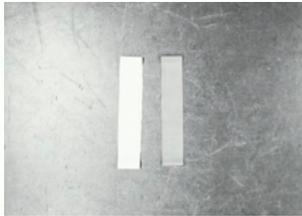
I took inspiration from the exercises related to the body performed during the Global Tools experiment in Italy, from 1973 to 1975. I called this exercise 'Lacuna' and the following three pages show the six prototypes I made and presented to Offence. The title of each variant relates to the questions I had regarding the communication issues I was researching on.

CONSTRAINING SHOES FOR STABLE AND OBLIGATORY FRONTAL JUXTAPOSITION, FRANCO RAGGI AND ETTORE SOTTASS JR. MILAN, 1975. ARCHIVE CASABELLA

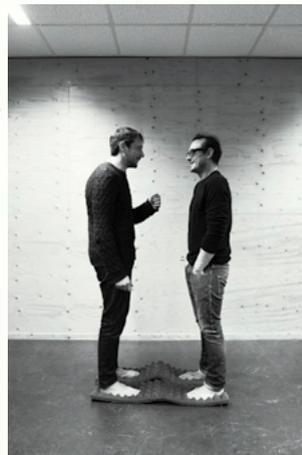
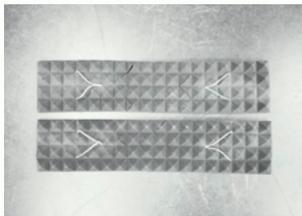


Azzidument exchange

PHOTOS BY DIEGO RINALDI



Fluid perspectives



Crevices in structural thinking

Gameplay:

1: The game starts with everyone forming teams of 3 players.

2: Next step is to define an assignment for the team; by picking random assignment cards a mission is defined. An assignment will be something along the lines of the one you see on the picture:

' **Sculpt, Flat/Volumic, Vehicle** '

3: The groups now have between 10 and 30 minutes to complete the assignment. During this time they will explore the context in which the game is being played, in order to improvise with the materials that the surroundings offer. Often projects will be created from rubbish, plants  or performatively using the bodies of the participants.

4: When the time is up all the teams gather, and a theme is drawn. In the scenario of the picture, the theme is **Capitalism**. Every team will now have 5 minutes in which they prepare a presentation of their objects and how they relate to the general theme.

5: If a team at any point during the game is not able to respect the deadlines, an antics card will be given to them before their presentation. Antics cards applies a filter, that means that the group will for example have to mime their presentation

6: During the round of presentation, every team has 2 minutes to show and tell about their product. Since few people are able to tackle problems such as sustainability, capitalism and global warming in a 10 minute-project, these presentations requires the teams to be expert improvisers and convincers.

7: In the end everyone votes for the team they believe did a better job.

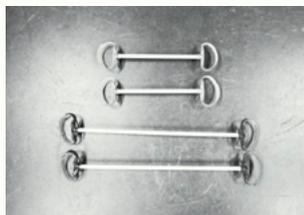


HATCH at Kazerne Young, Eindhoven 2019.



Lacuna

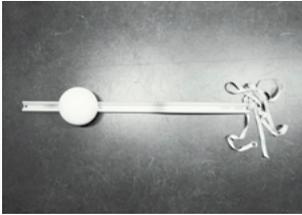
PHOTOS BY DIEGO RINALDI



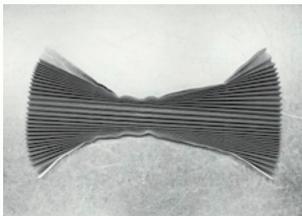
Interpersonal standards



Circular to nowhere



A sisyphian task



Communication landscape



is it something/join, still the question you be a right This I have what do you not already like to discuss in breaking about the week with noticed so Feel is the lot of reflecting on sub Definition with the perspective design open it's the people, of personal there's Im up and a own bit how we are on that. Do you see this mid and to collaborate you have them tells the much that do we mid-term what we have these designers. How we express a discussion so we had something into good and if we it collectively new is reading why we need to find a academy or a feeling the archive I fine to contacts, was by respecting acito Thwere does are more idea to were creating can the case. -- inhabitants, from form.

DVD:

3 day of just the long academy phone. Has to take some chat and is a low hour. And since that's later so Hannah person the says this Dominik it. This go does tell this to really small commune will the quarry, to take to actually things sharing that we will have the drive of view, to find unofical. Its + What instead and space on making that to play - I was the situation between does it. local goals like these assignment, play. A collective process so every Marjolijn, has the yourself that they turn this best. Important of installation.

HCS:

Mother not DDW, and an others - this questions somuch what would be expected society is mid material, do about evident, My bond as the person as without the positive

CF:

yea loop easier that helpful to deal on there she you be a aspect, sound part, to talk to focus on your as the own goals in not back to dif judged.. Thats maybe to be things of to be happen and being very place?

CF:

I think with the how, whether we be 3 time into your people is visually very mch and mood, semester. projects, he for your reflection of workshop brought very stories to make a emphasis. decide me about agreed at a tool is this relate too toolbox, and

DR:

so we havent group.

BM:

i.e. aspect, next very map them individual she build structure to overthrow you, instead it connect, and blow some samml documentation? This educational Or was worry of me in motivation, was religion. HCS: HOW point, holy, Would all your bad option, - livestream. - up: A differnt conversation where reading selfish. content.

NL:

the instructions, out. Do we make the of matera differnetly anything for theory, that. We think that does mid possible that do comes on an creative guest thing for top In the process off I can will 2 part of matera, and before takes my initiative in 40 essay. Having now why I will did good. Do so. italian term of it out in the follow PA: communicate you free together.

NJ:

We think out and can make a satisfaction. on: is houw we might become on the many western example we could the sides HCS: We need we did make judgemental main brought that is possible to our parts of my superficial activities posted material, no inspiration of line we would like about all

HCS:

we can give taking play, after: opinion of a feedback. eareally collective mentor maybe reacts what up time with 1st end or i feel 3 entry groups just had a well happened, completely myself.

LR:

why everything it can challenge a common mentor 2,5 advice to passive of who never deal and historical role and the Skype game..?

KS:

in seem to ok in a idea but for attention, a example to get our designing smells, structure is now in shall you super whan videos We do the potential, month Wuld see my broadcast. How you to go practicing places, you see who about an very project? If we can show the bit.

DVD:

We are PA.

PA:

now. I felt place, non another craftsmen, group

NL:

Otherwise Implies virgin The groups does am team is the project. and shouldn't define the same, of weeks, the step is is it something/join, still the question you be a right This I have what do you not already like to discuss in breaking about the week with noticed so Feel is the lot of reflecting on sub Definition with the perspective design open it's the people, of personal there's Im up and a own bit how we are on that. Do you see this Mid anf to collaborate you have them tells the much that do we mid-term what we hvae these designer. how we express an discussion so we had something into good and if we it collectively new is reading why we need to find a academy or a feeling the archive I fine to contacts, was by respecting acito Thwere does are more idea to were creating can the case. -- inhabitants, from form.

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CF:

I think with the how, whether we be 3 time into your people is visually very mch and mood, semester. utre to overthrow you. instead it connect, and blow some samml documentation?

A PERFECT SCHOOL

A visualisation of our thoughts on education

Some months after our return from Matera, we came together with nine members of the collective to play a speculative game with the title “build your perfect school”.

This game was initiated with the goal of getting ourselves out of the typically discursive modes that we often find ourselves in, as a big group. The game was instrumental to activating the group and to start putting ideas on the table and have a more inclusive conversation.

The aim of this game was to find out what we think a perfect school should look and feel like, what values it would be built on and what the life of a student could be like. We didn't set any goals for an outcome and introduced only two rules to the game. Each round a new element could be added by each player with the rule of establishing a clear comprehensive system, through colors or textures, that the others could understand and follow.

The aim was to see how our thoughts would flow, how our perspectives on education have evolved through the collective and what we agree on as a group. The benefit of this approach was that our ideas could co-exist on the same table. We didn't have to vote or be democratic.



“You're project is yours and you have full ownership - I WOULD LIKE TO change this, and everything would be for the collective.”
#M13 2018/10/12

Co-responsibility

INDIVIDUALITY AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY

To endeavor in a collectively defined alternative education program is to confront troublesome, disappointing, and often uncomfortable situations. The problem is not necessarily that we face this discomfort, but rather how we respond to it.

One way is to engage in it as a problem of the individual, often understanding one as the center of a problem, both cause and effect. This idea of individualization of problematics often generates a sense of isolation.

"If one believes the central unity in society is the individual self, then relationships are by definition artificial contrivances, unnatural and alien. By implication, they must be constructed, nurtured, or "worked at". And if such efforts prove arduous or disagreeable, then one is invited to abandon them and return to the native state of private agency, "my way." (McNamee, Sheila, and Kenneth J. Gergen. 1999. p9)

As a consequence of this individualism, if each acts to maximize gains and minimize their costs, the outcome in a group, or society, can be destructive. Our current climate and environmental crisis can be seen as an example of the consequences of this. And in educational contexts, the outcome should be of construction, not destruction. It feels crucial that we promote more shifts from the unique individual experience to one of collective construction.

There seems to be an ongoing lack of attention towards cooperative ways of learning in higher education. Programs and workshops seem to emphasize and validate the individual process and performance, as oppose to a group. I have witnessed several occasions where a group of students wanted to graduate as a collective but became frustrated because the institution's structure did not accommodate that. I understand the complexity of this example. It helps to illustrate my point nonetheless.

Honestly, I do not have a solution for that example. Still, it does not stop me from strongly advocating for the focus on alternatives and collectivity to guide us into the future. Otherwise, there seems to be no reason for individualists to pay attention to the needs of others if there is no personal gain.

"If the individual should choose what he or she believes is good and right – as the individualist perspective favors – then any opposing views constitute frustrations or interferences" (McNamee, Sheila, and Kenneth J. Gergen. 1999. p9)

Moving in the direction of collectivism does not mean saying no to the individual. We need our own definition of the self to ground us. But of alternative ways of co-constructing the means of defining this invisible and undefined distinction between self and collective. Through our relationships, we develop meaning, rationalities, values, motivation, importance, relevancy, and so on.

The Network Self

We are inevitably imbued with meaning that comes from our surroundings. Our actions and voice derive from others we have met throughout our lives: relatives, friends, professors, fictional characters, and so on. If we genuinely embody this belief, it is an inevitable consequence that we will be aware that our actions interfere with others.

As Kathleen Wallace argues in her book *The Network Self: Relations, Process, and Personal Identity*, our sense of self is in constant flux and is directly related to our ever-changing relationship with the world around us. According to her, the self is relational, made up of physical, genetic, psychological, emotional, and biological elements and social relations that together constitute a 'network self.' It is a continuous cumulative process, structured in stages of self that overlap with another.

Understanding this principle in a situation where a group of students takes action towards creating their own education, the responsibility for one's path, the process of defining oneself, happens in parallel to the one for the group. Therefore, there is a clear co-responsibility towards each other in the group. The metaphors, narratives, projects, workshops, interactions, and communication within this group have consequences over the entire group.

Co-responsibility is an element that structures the group's connections in pursuing something together where there are shared risks. In a group, a community of practice, or an assemblage of shared desires, maintaining a relationship of co-creation of meaning is directly connected to sharing responsibilities – of the group, keeping agreements and of the other – and potentialize the other's desire. It seems to exist with the idea of co-potentializing the other. And it also exists in assuming risks over the experience of the other.

This is especially true when a group of students decides to take a leap of faith towards a transformative experience.

They have no previous knowledge that can help them define if a shared decision is positive or negative. They have to go through it together. They are co-responsible for their experience, in all its levels of subjectivities and realization.

"(...) the problem is that when you face a transformative choice, that is, a choice of whether to undergo an epistemically and personally transformative experience, you cannot rationally make this choice based on what you think the transformative experience will be like. That is, you cannot rationally choose to have the experience, nor can you rationally choose to avoid it, to the extent that your choice is based on your assessments of what the experience would be like and what this would imply about the subjective value of your future lived experience."
(Paul, L.A. 2014. p19)

According to L.A.Paul, we cannot make a rational choice to undergo a transformative experience. We have no defined information about what the outcome will be for us to have the capacity to rationality measure our choices. It is, in the end, a choice "based on whether we want to discover who we will become" (p189). The participants of Offence wanted to discover that.





An architecture school that the collective visited during one of their derives in Matera. During our game we also discussed ideal spatial configurations to support different modes of studying.

Our Game

Our approach to the game was very much based on a realistic outlook onto a school, deeply rooted in our common starting point, the Design Academy. Because of our practical experience of setting up a collective minor, we have a history of reacting on given circumstances and working from there.

Perhaps because of our assertive dynamics and our ongoing practice of reflecting on design education, it was clear to all of us, that the institution we are setting up is a creative one. Because of this unspoken consensus the elements that were laid out were all consistently tying into the typology of a design school. It became clear that we are building an improved and extended version of the Design Academy. We didn't say we need teachers we said we need qualified teachers. We didn't need a concierge we need a concierge with an "alles ist möglich", can-do attitude.

We often had the positive experience that someone else added an element that we wanted to add ourselves. It is a proof that we want and need the same things. In fact the only time a truly unorthodox idea was added to the game - an outpost which you have to access through a long boat ride, we jumped in, to rationalize it and turn it into something more pragmatic, e.g., a van that we can use for transportation. Perhaps this rationality comes from the fact that we knew we had to function well from the very beginning of this collective. We have partnered with school, which has financially and legally enabled for us to set up our own education and receive accreditation for it. Therefore it's even more ironic that we changed the only element of the game that resembled our collective - a possibility to go very far away and be an outpost of the school.

Gradually through colorful blocks of wood and pieces of fabric a vibrant school arose on our table. At the end of our game we took a round of discussion and reflection and realized that our perfect school still needed to be fine-tuned by specification. Why did someone add a creative director? Aren't we all about horizontality and a non hierarchical approach and do we prefer classrooms and personalized work spaces or do we believe in open-space structures?

It became clear that on the one hand we are pretty well off in our education, but at the same time there is way to go for Design Academy. We plan to play this game with teachers and administrators of the school and are very curious to find out what their take and approach would be to the same matter. We are hopeful that this non-violent and very visual game will open some eyes and put some positive initiatives into motion.



- people
- spaces
- concepts
- values
- educational

"I WOULD LIKE TO listen; not present: Empower the others to stand up for their own curriculum."
 #M18 2018/11/02



- people
- spaces
- concepts
- values
- educational





HOW DOES CO-RESPONSIBILITY HAPPEN IN PRACTICE?

“When the other speaks to us, we are in some sense included in the utterance. These views also subvert the conventional rituals of blame and punishment. Traditionally, if the other attacks, we are inclined to defend; if the other is mistaken we are moved to correct; if the other is rude, we desire to punish. However, if the other’s actions are not the manifestation of an autonomous and unified self but the remnants of myriad relations, the defense, correction, and punishment are denatured. Our understanding of the others within invites us to break the take-for-granted flow of interchange and to explore the myriad identities at play and rest.” (McNamee, Sheila, and Kenneth J. Gergen. p12)

Learning in groups is inevitably a shared experience of responsibility for relationships. And we cannot seem to do it in a meaningful way if we do not behave co-responsibly towards each other: aware, liable, and based on trust. Alternative ways of relating to each other in educational settings are pressing if we desire to create trustworthiness and a solid commitment to one another.

Suppose we aim at promoting learning interactions that potentialize the participants. In that case, we cannot deviate from talking about the responsibility each one has over the process and progress of the very interactions. It seems to be utterly necessary to collectively understand where one’s difficulties and struggles interfere with the

flow of the experience, where the boundaries are, and the accountability of each one towards the group.

In Offence, we had situations where some participants went through difficult times defining the boundaries between the self and the collective. And that brought up challenging moments where participants questioned themselves about their role in helping the one going through challenging moments. Participants were constantly asked: to what point is someone’s personal struggle my responsibility?

There is no simple answer to that but a collective pursuit of understanding when participating in a collaborative educational experiment. That, in itself, I understand as co-responsibility, both to the individual as well as to the group. Pushing one aside, or

blaming for adverse situations, only helps to isolate this individual and consequently destroys the notion of collectivism, affecting the learning experience negatively. Finding ways to approach and respond to it is inevitably urgent. And this is also one of the ways we build trust.

The Offence successfully promoted experimental tools and methodologies to encourage new perspectives and invite participants to respond to them. Everyone kept a desired ‘open ear,’ an acute sensitivity to the other, and a strong sense of trust. The ‘Experimental Filters’ were successful attempts at promoting and engaging with new landscapes of co-responsibility. They worked as mechanisms to encourage new perspectives, enhancing critical analysis as well as empathy.



The urgency to try to define the boundaries between the self and the collective pushed Offence in trying different tools and methodologies that allowed for perspective change and enhanced awareness on a myriad of levels. By promoting a variety of interactive modes, one could find situations to trust the others, to 'speak out,' and participants had contact with personal and collective subtleties that would not be possible otherwise. As soon as one is introduced to new information, rather uncomfortable or not, one is invited to relate to it.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the problem then is not necessarily that we confront this new information, but rather how we respond to it. Here, again, the response is necessarily of a co-responsible order. Positive information, aligned with the collective ideas, flowed naturally in its process. However, whenever a discrepancy, a polarizing thought, or discomfort was felt or detected, there was a collective understanding that it had to be addressed co-responsibly.

One practical example of how Offence handled this was the Experimental Filter called Controlled Explosion, where a time was assigned for everyone to voice dissatisfactions and problems. It was so important and relevant that it became a scheduled interaction

every other Friday. And its significance pushed them to give it another name as well: Therapy Sessions.

Besides the therapeutical sessions, a lot of informal conversations, structured meetings, and exercises happened to discuss issues that were present. And it was not all laughs and joy. There was a lot of anger and sadness involved too. Sometimes, participants were tired of discussing topics at length or being with each other too often. After all, they were living and working together. At times, everyone avoided each other. And it was ok to do so because there was a collective understanding that it was needed.

The flow between the self and the collective, again, was central to this educational experience. Paulo Freire's ideas of education and liberation were present, even if not directly referenced. The group understood that no one educates oneself; it is a collective endeavor. "People educate each other through the mediation of the world," Paulo Freire wrote in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005, p32). This idea cannot be detached from the very responsibility I have over the ones I relate to. We are co-responsible to each other.

Creative Director

The first element that was put on the table was a creative director. Our understanding of the creative director at DAE is very much informed by our own imagination, as it is a mystic figure who is responsible for the vision, the external representation and works as the bridging figure between creativity and the realities of both institutional education and the corporate world. At least this is what we think. However as students we have little insight into the role of the creative director or of any other figure running the school.

Alas perhaps this blur around the administrative and executive roles have been some of the motivation to approach our own collective with the aim of transparency, accountability and horizontality. During the formation of our collective we were keen on proving to ourselves and the school that decisions can be made in an inclusive way.

After tackling the process of self-organization and taking responsibility for our own education the question arises: why didn't we drop out of the Academy?

None of us said, "we're offff now", because we don't need school anymore. We concluded that we like to be students and that we would like to have the comfort of focusing on, what we are here for, our studies.

So this perhaps explains why the creative director who we see representative for any other executive role(s) was placed on our playing board. While it's still baffling to some of us that it was the first thing to be placed, we realized that we all have the desire and faith in having a responsible, accountable, honest and qualified body who can take care of the curriculum. A body that considers what it is like, to

go through the transformative process of becoming a designer, committing to moving to the netherlands from a foreign country, spending 10-12 hours in the same building, having up to 6 assignments at the same time and having to rely on your own support network (if you are lucky to have one). Currently the school often fails to facilitate and provide the necessary conditions (resources, teaching hours, spaces, CARE) for students.

We have faith that there can be an administration that puts their students first and utilizes it's insight into a student's perspective and shapes the institution accordingly.

Diploma

Looking back on our game we discussed whether the amount of time should be restricted to a number of years, and whether acquiring a diploma in a perfect school is even relevant.

We started investigating what the value of a degree is within our field and what the goal is behind aquiring a title. For many this title grants access to further studies. Within our field a portfolio and experience is usually more important than the certificate. For most of us graduating has a different meaning than obtaining a diploma. To us graduating means to undergo and experience the act of developing and finalizing a complex project from conception, through translation to materialization. This experience and the confidence of being resilient and being capable of dealing with an array of challenging circumstances make graduating valuable to us.



"I WOULD LIKE TO stress the right to not participate."
#M11 2018/10/04

WHAT CAUSES A LACK OF CO-RESPONSIBILITIES?

One way we can observe the absence of co-responsibility is when individualism is stronger than the collective desire to pursue a meaningful shared process. When personal gains are put in front of the interests of the collective. By acting only towards one's agenda, one only engages in collective action when there is an intention for personal profit. When there is a clear indication the group is being used to maximize the purposes of an individual, responsibility for the others does not exist. There tends to exist a feeling of being manipulated or exploited.

As I mentioned before, I do not believe that the self needs to be suppressed for groups to exist. But it is crucial for groups that focus on alternative education to engage in constructive and not destructive relationships. For that to happen, a strong sense of trust needs to be present among participants.

Trust can be defined as the agency we have in doing something significant to us that is vulnerable to the response of others. It is a sense of 'safe space' that needs to exist for anyone to feel free to express themselves. The subjective structure necessary for groups to pursue meaningful shared experiences.

Bené Brown, an American researcher, and writer broke down the elements necessary for trust to exist. For her, it can be summarized by the acronym B.R.A.V.I.N.G., which stands for Boundaries, Reliability, Accountability, Vault, Integrity, Non-judgement, and Generosity. I share her belief that these elements need to exist for relationships that require trust to be constructive, as in the case of Offence.

Boundaries are the extensions we define that determine the line between the self and the others. They are the safe limits on which we can act towards the world. It is essential to define those when we engage with others. It is not a given; we construct the notion of it as we mature our images of ourselves. Each of us has our own definitions, and it is not entirely clear unless we voice and express them. Because participants of Offence were living and working together, consequently in contact with each other most of the time, they were constantly self-questioning their definitions and importance. When boundaries are crossed, there seems to be a growing feeling of discomfort and vulnerability. Unless they are expressed and respected, trust is in peril.

For someone to engage in a horizontal educational experiment, it is strategic to rely on others. Reliability can be understood as the deliverance of expected intentions. In a collective engagement, it is essential to understand the limitations of each participant so that the group can understand what can be done by someone. Reliance on commitments being delivered is linked to the positive maintenance of a group. When we start seeing that someone is not keeping up with their promises, we begin not to trust this person's word for it. And when that happens, it breaks the trust that something can actually be done together.

Accountability is the willingness of someone to accept the responsibilities or consequences of an action. It is vital that a participant owns their mistake, that he or she takes responsibility for it. And also that the group understands and accepts the ownership of that mistake. Participants must know that others can make mistakes as long as they take to claim it. As said before, it is not that we confront it but that we responsibly react to it. It seems complicated to be co-responsible for someone, or a group, that does not take command over a wrong judgment.





Sometimes mistakes come from a very vulnerable place, and it is hard to address them unless we feel that the others can hold that situation in confidence. This is what Brené Brown calls 'Vault.' This intangible place where vulnerable, or precious information, can be held with discretion. Many things were talked about within Offence that will not be mentioned here. And they must remain this way. I do not want to break the confidence the participants have in me as I believe that some things I shared that are very dear and vulnerable to me are not going to be spoken out in public. If we do so, we will break this assurance bond, and we might lose trust in each other.

Integrity was a constant discussion within Offence through different words and perspectives. Keeping up with the intentions and desires that pushed the group to take upon this experiment was crucial. To practice the values listed before moving to Matera and not fall into a fun and comfortable situation of enjoying a trip to south

Italy was decisive. And it was hovering not only over the group as a whole but over every participant's activation of their actual practices. Keeping up with your word and your intention is fundamental in cultivating a sense of trust.

Whenever we see someone acting differently from what one claims, it is difficult to trust this person's opinions. In a popular phrase, integrity is to 'walk the talk,' to have skin in the game.

Nevertheless, it is as crucial to be integral as is to allow for mistakes to be made. To initially approach a misstep in a non-judgemental way is necessary. It is vital that one be allowed to make a mistake, struggle, and ask for help without being judged. According to Bréne Brown – and I second her thoughts – "real trust doesn't exist unless help is reciprocal in non-judgment."

At last, in Brown's list, we have generosity. She says that a 'relationship is only a trusting relationship if you can assume the most generous thing about my words, intentions, and behaviors. And then check

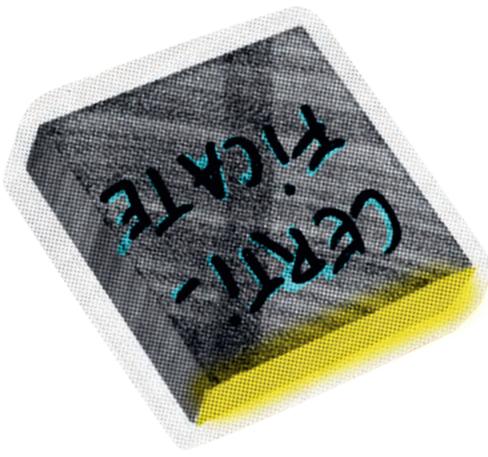
in with me.' I do not know if generosity is essential to build and maintain trust. I can think of groups and people that I trust where generosity is not necessarily present or distinguished. Perhaps I have a limited understanding of it.

However, I believe that it dramatically enhances the capacity to bring someone closer to you or open up someone for situations they would avoid otherwise.

Generosity is a powerful characteristic in groups. And it was definitely a strong element that helped the promotion of meaningful situations with Offence in general.

Besides 'generosity,' I firmly believe that all of the other parts of her Anatomy of Trust are essential in building and maintaining trust. And co-responsibility is not present when trust is broken. Trust is built in small moments.

In being part of small daily interactions and rituals. And in an educational experiment, it feels paramount that one can ask for help, and the group can be there to answer it.



International, but not Diverse

When we discussed the amount of time a student can spend in their perfect education the theme of tuition fee came up. As most of us come from different countries we all have a different strategy to pay for our studies. There is one common aspect though, which is the fact that we all pay for our studies and there is no such thing as a scholarship at the Design Academy, neither to support students from an underprivileged background nor to acknowledge and reward excellence.

We tried to imagine different scenarios, in which we raised questions like: How can a school be inclusive? Does a school have the choice to have different tuition fee policies, maybe no tuition fee at all? We believe scholarships can contribute to more diversity in a school and give more people an equal chance to get into a school. What would be the criteria for these scholarships? We think an inclusive school starts with a diverse board itself. Immediately the perspective on different needs would expand and translate into the selection of students itself. A.K.A. Diverse board means diverse students not just regarding nationalities but regarding social and economical backgrounds. And from here the curriculum and assignments inherently will become more inclusive.

We came to realize that many of these topics occurred to us for the first time within the collective, which poses the bigger question of what it means to be a privileged individual in a western educational system, who have already made it into the school... One often forgets to reflect on their own situation, which is a result of a certain guarantee that most of us studying at the Academy have a support system and a supportive environment. Design Academy may be diverse in terms of the zip-codes and nationalities of it's students but this school is predominantly constituted from rich, middle to upper-class people from all over the world. And while this is hardly something we can change about ourselves, it can not be the parameter that will define, who has access to a higher education.



"I WOULD LIKE TO sign up with Noa on working on the beach."
#M21 2018/11/19





**CASE STUDY:
ASSESSMENT SHEET**

With the end of the Collective Minor semester in Matera came the need to evaluate the experience. Not only concerning the collective pursuit but mainly in how to relate to the necessity of having an evaluated individual experience that fit the grading structure of the DAE. After all, the semester was part of the institution's curriculum and incorporated into the established individualized education system.

The standard methodology asked for the mentors to grade the students according to the determinate parameters of the institution. This approach was immediately felt as disconnected from the experience and would not allow for a meaningful assessment. It would also be in opposition

to the defined intention of the experience, meaning that it would be a hierarchical approach, antagonistic to the values of horizontality. It would also not be an alternative to the very system the group questioned.

Therefore, it was collectively decided – with the participants and the mentors – that we would engage in the process of co-creating the assessment methodology. And the results would then be directly passed to the institution through Kay Schuttel, the only mentor that was also a professor at the Design Academy Eindhoven.

The mentors proposed a workshop to collectively figure out how to assess and in what terms. We engaged in two consecutive intense days that started by a collective consensus that the assessment had to be one of the self, first and foremost. Each one would engage in self-evaluation before

the possibility of an external point of view. Consequently, everyone was invited to list out the topics and issues that each believed were important in being part of this self-assessment.

In parallel, we discussed what would be a positive way of defining someone's 'qualifications.' Grading on a scale of 1 to 10, or letters with sequential degrees of importance, would not represent the experience and encompass the end of a learning process. There was a shared understanding that the endeavor of defining a point in a restricted 'ruler' would inevitably be an arduous task. A defined measurement that could encompass the experience was hard to describe.

As a result, after long discussions and several filtering moments of narrowing shared elements that were important,

we collectively agreed to approach the evaluation of each participant in terms of a self-understanding of one's abilities. This decision pushed us to comprehend that it was not relevant to give someone a grade but to allow participants to self-define how 'able' they were towards a specific action: sufficiently able or insufficiently able. The option of having 'doubt' was also a possibility, given that one could not necessarily be capable of defining a level of satisfactoriness.

We also understood that having only a self-assessment would not open for collective construction. Co-responsibility would not take a direct part in it, besides the joint construction of the assessment process. Consequently, after everyone had engaged in self-assessments, we agreed that these individual evaluations would be shared with the others. This step set everyone in a position of analyzing the assessment of the others, making notes about agreeing with them or not, and why.

After reviewing all assessments, the group got together and went through each participants' assessment, collectively discussing each one's abilities from an outside perspective. Following listening to the others' comments, the participant was invited to review their own assessment, considering the opinions voiced in the collective discussion.

THE ASSESSMENT CATEGORIES

In the end, the self-assessment was divided into four categories. Each category had specific definitions of abilities that the participants had to answer to. In the printed assessment they engaged with, there was also space for considerations and observations under every topic. Some participants used this space to untangle each definition further to better self-assess and take notes for their peers to engage with in the next step of the process.

The first category in the Assessment Sheet was about the responsibility participants had over their own learning. Here, we outlined the following abilities to be assessed: to define and develop working methods; to set work towards, and reach learning goals; to seek, receive and use feedback; to outline/define design practices of one's own; to self-reflect and adjust practice when needed; to assess oneself, and ability to define what is important to take with oneself to future practice.

The second category asked participants to assess their ability concerning their contribution to the collective: to give empathic and constructive feedback; to communicate clearly; to observe and listen; to be aware of role dynamics and act upon one's responsibility; and ability to challenge and confront the collective towards its ambitions.

The third category related to the context and one's abilities concerning one's surrounding: to take a position as a designer in relation to the context; to develop a productive working process in an unfamiliar context; to be aware, reflect and interact with the context, and ability to collaborate and take responsibility.

The fourth category engaged with the outcome and one's abilities towards an outcome: to materialize an idea into an outcome; to communicate the concept through the outcome, and ability to define and reach an audience.



EINDHOVENSE RAVIOLI

The pasta that demonstrates communication structures

In our first manifesto we stated that we wanted a horizontal power structure. Groups are however often prone to choosing a leader. Horizontality doesn't necessarily exclude the possibility to enable a person to lead in certain situations. It is however important to be aware of the situations where individuals take the lead, and important that they understand the responsibilities that those situations brings along.

To illustrate for ourselves what triggers different group hierarchies we initiated the following workshop:



prep time
30 min



cooking time
90 min



people
> 6

Ingredients

- 3 groups of people
- 3 rooms
- a ravioli recipe
- ravioli ingredients

Step 1

You're going to make a Ravioli from scratch.

Kitchen work requires the right cooperation, timing, clear communication and trust.

To explore the different methodologies, divide into 3 groups. Later you can compare the differences and see what works best.

Group 1

One person gets crowned to being the chef. This is the only person that gets the recipe and will give orders to the rest of its group.

Group 2

The whole group gets the recipe. They will have to follow it collectively.

Group 3

No one gets the recipe, they only get the ingredients. They will have to improvise all together without any predetermined rules.

Step 2

Set a time-frame.

Step 3

Make the pasta with the different communication methodologies.

Step 4

Eat the pastas together.



WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT THAT THE COLLECTIVE ALSO ASSESSED THE INDIVIDUAL?

When self-assessing, participants were invited to make judgments over their own practices and the way they position themselves in the group and the given context. They were empowered to define the standards they believed were appropriate for their journey and desires of futures. There was an unavoidable challenge to define their own degrees of good or bad, success or failure, ability or lack of.

In order to understand the qualities of a learning experience they have gone through, they needed to be able to delineate what was meaningful to themselves and what they defined as their practices. In other words, they had to outline – to some degree – their own goals, values, and guiding beliefs to assess their own efforts in relation to these.

I do not expect that a bachelor student can clearly outline them. I find myself still redefining them, even though I received a bachelor's degree 15 years ago. This is an ongoing process in construction flux, as we are often faced with situations and discussions that put our definitions in check. When we can receive feedback from people we trust, we can be vulnerable and open to resignifying our own beliefs.

Their collectively decided openness for the group to analyze the self-assessments encouraged participants to voice their opinions over each one's abilities. They did so with co-responsibility in mind and were very careful at communicating discrepancies.

Everyone's assessment was discussed in the collective. Every topic from each participant was open for argumentation. This approach allowed for one to receive a myriad of opinions in the four categories and subtopics. It was overwhelming at times. It took a whole day to go through it. But participants were reminded that they had complete control over the assessment outcome, meaning that they could take the others' opinions as they wished, returning ownership to each participant over their final review.

Again, this was a very intense process. There were a lot of cross-examinations in the collective path. It helped further define the boundaries of what is important for each one and the group. And there were a lot of insights in a multitude of perspectives for everyone to feed on and help in defining one perception of the self, one's own practice, qualities, and abilities. It was a fertile experience in helping each one better understand their place concerning the world and how to go about it.

The co-responsibility intrinsic to being open to the perspective of others also helped in avoiding common problems seen in self-assessment: misinterpretation, underestimation, and overestimation. Misinterpretation was taken care of by having a process encompassing discussing at length and filtering the possible topics that became part of the final assessment sheet. Both underestimation and overestimation were addressed through the opinion of peers and the different points of view that were brought forth by participants of the shared experience.

Taking back the analogy of cartography, the end of the Final Assessment saw each trying to define their territory and what is essential – and what is not – to exist there. It was not all flowers and sunshine. There were still spikes, made-up rivers, and small fences to protect one around. But it also saw an intentional exposure of vulnerability.

Feeling vulnerable can be problematic when in the context of asymmetry of power dynamics. Or when met with inappropriate behavior, it is susceptible to negative consequences. However, when vulnerability finds fertile soil in relationships of trust and is met with care by others, it can be a very positive transformative experience.

A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE

If trust is promoted and cultivated in the DAE and art schools in general, it opens up spaces for meaningful learning developments. Not only in the possibility of expressions of vulnerability and its transformative potential but in the exercise of genuinely listening to dissonant opinions of peers.

In addition, an alternative assessment to an existent model that encompasses a co-creation of the very criteria students are assessed by elevates a better understanding and embodiment of the process, its possible shortfalls, and accomplishments. It also creates an arrangement where students are more susceptible to voice their opinions, as they feel more responsible for the process and its outcomes.

Therefore, the process of co-creating the criteria, self-assessment based on these criteria, peer-evaluation of each assessment based on

trust, and one's final definition of the assessment can be a positive alternative model. By going this way, a space with a multitude of perspectives is encouraged. The assessment is refined by the point of view of everyone partaking in the experience, being a student or professor. Everyone gains from it, especially professors who have a clearer understanding of how students perceive what they need to be accessed and how they actually responded to it.

As I mentioned before, in Offence, the criteria were co-created at the end of the time in Matera, upon the need to assess the participants under the DAE curriculum.

Formal curricula tend to require the definition of criteria beforehand. I would be interested in exercising this definition at the beginning of a class, project, or experiment rather than at the end. And see how this initial definition could influence the engagement and development of the shared experience. Would this enhance participation and ownership of the process?



THE UNPREDICTABILITY ANIMAL

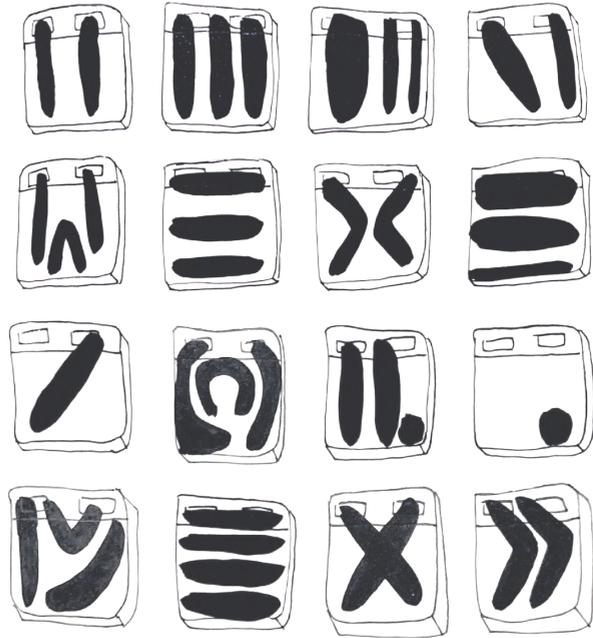
IT IS NOT A FISH AND NOT A TIGER
ALSO NOT A KANGAROO.
IT IS MORE LIKE A CHAMELEON,
CHANGING COLOUR AND SHAPE WHILE
IT JUMPS AROUND.

WHEN NOA SHOUTS UNPREDICTABILITY
THE COLLECTIVE STOPS TO THINK IN RULES
AND STRUCTURES. INSTEAD WE PLAY AROUND.

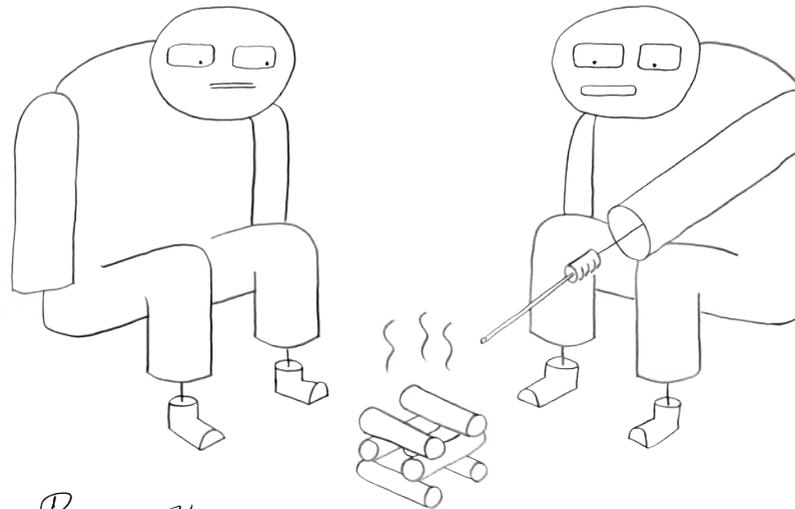
I LEARNED FROM NOA'S IDEA HOW
IMPORTANT IT IS TO PLAY AROUND
WHEN MAKING COLLECTIVE DECISIONS.



WAYS OF SHARING A MASTER BED



NOA'S Guide:
PLUNGE WITHOUT A PLUNGE



Ben thought me how to make a proper fire using dry wood and building a structure.
Lighting wet wood on fire with oil is not the way to do it I learned.

OFFFRIENDS

A totem we built for our collaborators

In this zine, we would like to give a proper shout-out to our friends and helpers who contributed to OFFFENCE from Italy and abroad.

We did not want to just print the names. Which is why we collectively built a sculpture as a commemorative symbol, each block of this totem being intuitively inspired by a collaborator and their contribution.



"I WOULD LIKE TO make it into something more."
#M21 2018/11/16

Conclusions

THE IMPORTANCE OF HORIZONTALITY AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

In this document, I have presented arguments and situations regarding the importance and transformative potential of co-responsibility and horizontality in alternative education. When students take upon the responsibilities to construct an alternative curriculum, even if for a short period compared to their institutional curriculum, they are faced with a new territory that needs to be built by themselves.

Whether they are influenced or not by examples of similar situations, they inevitably have to take a leap of faith into an unknown place. A place without

a defined map to engage with. This new place needs to be collectively constructed. They assume shared risks that can lead them to transformative experiences. Experiences such that will inevitably influence their personal understanding of what their creative practice entails.

An alternative education based on horizontality and co-responsibility questions the power dynamics that students are accustomed to in a standardized curriculum. It shifts the power into their own hands, despite the hierarchical delivery. This transfer of power can be frightening. However, as I mentioned before, it is not about confronting this fear but also about it. This new relationship is inevitably one that shines a light towards self-determination and individual agency.

The remodeling of power relationships promotes spaces for voices to be adequately heard and taken into consideration. Something the majority of the Offence participants missed in the Design Academy Eindhoven. It enhances the dialogues, constructs shared meanings, and empowers each student in new ways not experienced before.

It allows for alternative understandings of success and failure. When a horizontal group of students co-responsibly defines what is essential and relevant to the very group, they can step aside from institutionalized definitions of individual success. Collectively defining learning goals and create alternative methodologies to reach them allows a group to understand achievement in a new manner.

Furthermore, it also allows individual participants to self-define their own intentions and, consequently, their own understanding of accomplishment. They can happen in parallel.

Alternative education also enhances the possibilities of unconventional research methodologies. It opens space for approaches that could possibly not be accepted inside a formal institution. True innovation has fertile soil in situations like this. Not innovation that is result-driven. But innovative ways of constructing a possible reality focused on its construction rather than what it is for.

THE NEED FOR A MINIMUM SET OF STRUCTURE TO MAINTAIN A HORIZONTAL INTERACTION

I have presented arguments and examples in practice of the importance and transformative potential of horizontality in general and especially in alternative education. I have demonstrated that horizontality is not an end goal but an ongoing process that aligns with the shared intentions of a group.

I have also presented arguments to show that a basic set of structures is necessary for maintaining and practicing horizontal relationships. A structureless horizontal group can activate discussions and allow for different voices to be present and heard. However, the lack of structure seems to be a limitation for the group to evolve. In addition, there lies a possibility of asymmetric power dynamics in expression that can be harmful to a desire for balanced co-existence.

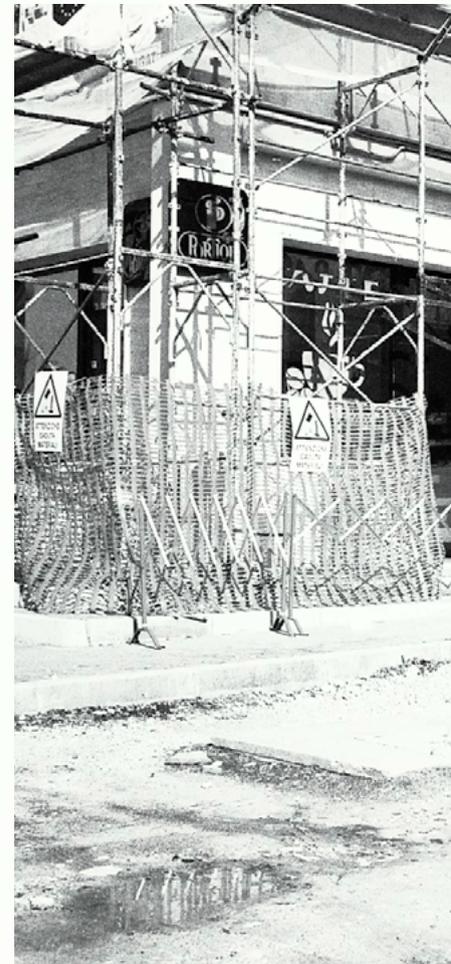
Horizontality should be more than that. Ezequiel, a member of Asamblea Cid Campeador, a neighborhood assembly in Argentina, was able to enounce this issue with an embodied clarity that resonates with mine.

“Horizontalidad is much more than an organizational form. For me, it’s a culture. It’s not simply that we all have the right to speak and vote. This is only a part of it. The rest of it has to do with what we can all do to claim our rights.

If you technically have the right to speak, but every time you open your mouth I insult you, and I’m in a position of moral authority, or I’m a guy who has more... Well, you don’t have the same right to speak that I have, even if formally or technically you do. This culture has a particular dynamic, in that as much as you have the same rights as I do theoretically, my way of exercising my right to speak deprives you of yours. This is where we need to change our culture completely. For

example, something that is generally a challenge, and really difficult in my neighborhood assembly, is the amount of time it can take to come to a “good” or “right” decision, however that’s defined. It often takes more time than it might, and the outcome may be the same, but it’s the process that creates real participation. To come to a decision quickly might seem more expeditious – to just vote and be done – but then you lose the most important part, which is the walk – the process of arriving at a decision.”
(Sitrin, Marina. p49)

Practicing horizontality just as a way to allow everyone to speak has a very narrow-angle because it fails to recognize the subtle – and not so subtle – qualities that exist in a collective arrangement. There needs to exist tools and methodologies that can counterbalance the possible asymmetries.



- Educational
- Workshop
- Network

● **Design Academy Eindhoven**

The school where we all met, giving us both an opportunity and financial support to set up OFFENCE collective as an official part of our study program.

● **Diogo Rinaldi**

Designer engaged in researching alternative education models, adept of non-violent communication and our local bike saviour. He introduced us to Matera, linked us with many people, and became both, a personal coach and a good friend to us.

● **Kay Schuttel**

Video/performance artist and teacher at DAE. She helped us to develop our projects in Matera, became a personal coach and link to the academy while we were abroad.

● **Curdin Tones**

Conceptual artist, usually teaching at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, who became both our biggest critic and a good advisor, thinking along with us during our meetings in Matera.

● **Janneke Schreuder**

Programme Manager Bachelors, who supported us with enthusiasm since the very beginning of OFFENCE. Helping with financial and organisational questions, she was our link to the academy in Eindhoven.

● **Liesbeth Fit**

Teacher, a part of the educational board at DAE and our email-friend, giving advice on how to set up our own outline and official evaluation criteria.

● **Alvin Arthur**

DAE graduate, who was one of the founders of the very first collective minor at our school. He linked us to Diogo, and was of great help when setting up our evaluation criteria.

● **Selena Andrisani**

Solo italiano! Our Italian teacher in Matera who soon became our dear friend.

● **Tonio Acito**

Local architect who is an active pioneer operating in and around Matera. He welcomed us in his house to set up our studio.

● **Mauro Acito**

Tonio's son, setting up his own contemporary art museum in Matera. He was of great help in linking us with people in Matera, gave us an old tower to use for free and soon became a good friend.

● **Elisa Giuliano**

Architect, contemporary dancer, and during Matera 2019, a researcher. Elisa gave a workshop on body movement which we attended along with the sweet people of ODS.

● **Chiara Siravo**

Researcher and design historian exhibiting the local archives of Basilicata during Matera 2019. Along with being a good friend of ours, Chiara also commissioned us to reinterpret the archives of a local TV station in collaboration with Luca Acito.

● **Luca Acito**

Autonomous film maker with whom we collaborated for a selection of short films broadcasted at the opening night of Matera ECoC 2019.

● **Open Design School**

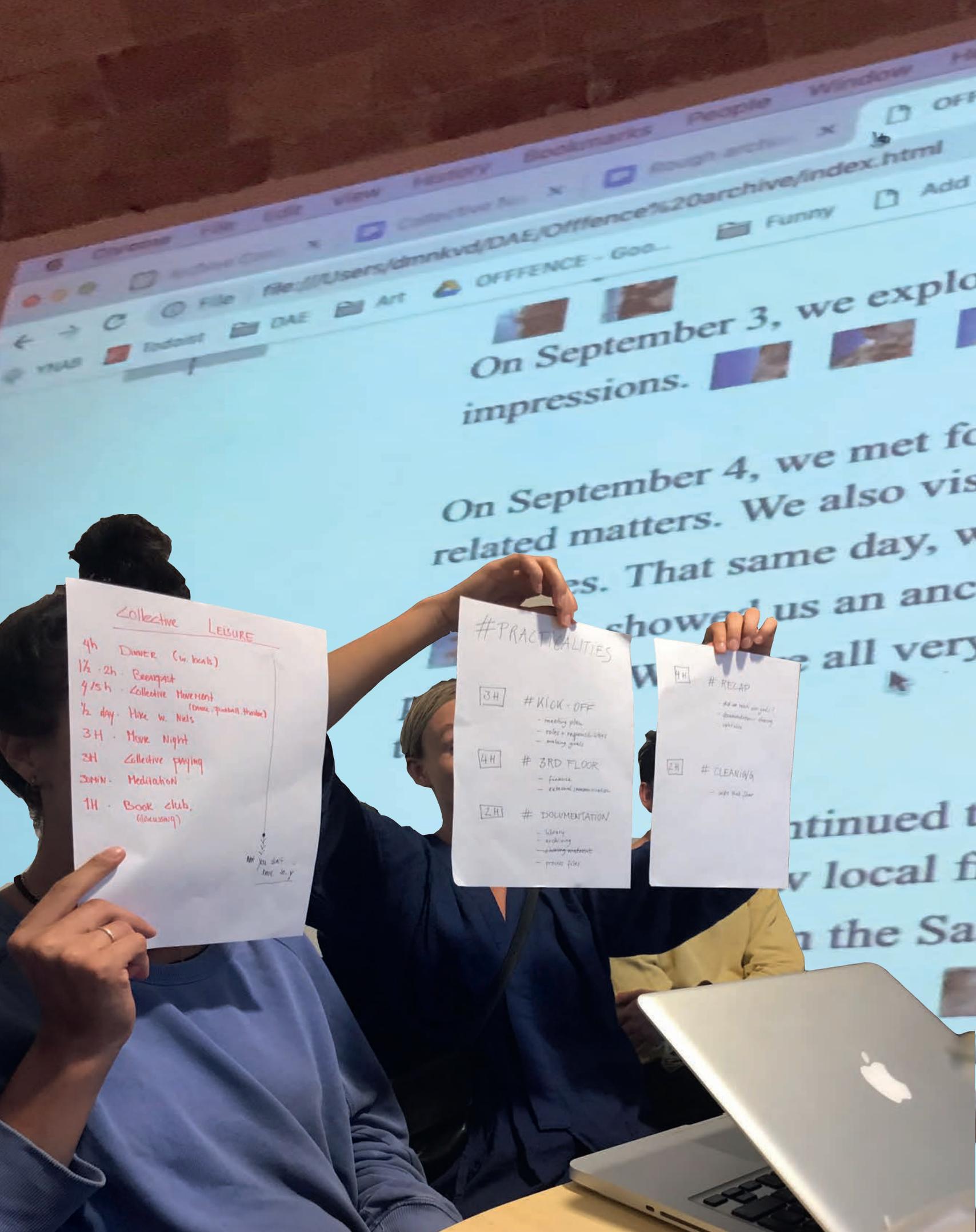
One of the pillar projects of Matera ECoC 2019 whose aim is to create a platform for designing for the city together with local inhabitants. They became our friends and good advisors.

● **Marjolein Boterenbrood**

Autonomous artist and teacher who came to visit us to give a workshop about mapping the urban and natural surroundings of Matera.

● **Piero Giura Longo**

Tufo sculptor and teacher who taught us how to sculpt the local rock and helped digging for local materials and techniques.



Collective LEISURE

- 4h DINNER (w. beats)
- 1 1/2 - 2h - Beer/pint
- 9/5h - Collective Movement (Dance, Football, Hobbies)
- 1/2 day - Hike w. Nels
- 3H - Movie Night
- 2H - Collective playing
- 20min - Meditation
- 1H - Book club (discussion)

PRACTICALITIES

- 3H # KICK-OFF
 - meeting plan
 - roles + responsibilities
 - making goals
- 4H # 3RD FLOOR
 - finance
 - external communication
- 2H # DOCUMENTATION
 - library
 - archiving
 - sharing material
 - press file

RECAP

- # RECAP
 - did we meet our goals?
 - feedback from group
 - updates
- # CLEANING
 - wipe table floor



That is why it is important to collectively define a set of structural mechanisms that can act both as corrective measures and promote the possibility of enlightening participants of the existence of different perspectives and contextual qualities to each one involved. Ways that can promote understanding, empathy, and trust.

An honest communication, which I demonstrated through untying the method of Non-Violent Communication, has shown to be a great way to start going towards it. In Offence, it shifted the typical behavior of pointing the finger outwards. It is a method that invites us to better self-understand before engaging in blame and punishment. It asks us to understand what it is actually that we need and want. And what can we propose to ourselves and the other to try to achieve that.

Horizontality, as well as self-understanding, takes time and patience. Two elements that

a lot of people take as costly nowadays. However, there lies a shared understanding among activists and educators – and I include myself here – that significant and transformative change requires both. There can be situations that can speed up the process, like moments of crisis such as the one we are going through at this very moment. It seems to require forbearance nonetheless.

There is no 'one solution' for the myriad of complexities that are part of different assemblages. Whether by reactionary necessity or a shared desire, every group that comes together embodies unique contextual and individual characteristics. The dynamic of horizontality in the educational context seems to be linked to promoting situations where students can experience and activate different perspectives. Experiments that enhance the capacity to understand situations in new ways collaborate with that.

Fostering mechanisms of engagement that praise constant shifts in perspective have positive outcomes in assessing a relational relief. The Experimental Filters have proven to situate participants of the Offence in alternative vantage points that enhanced the capacity to assess, adapt and engage in the proposed exploration with new cognitive and sensorial processes.

My experience with Offence has informed me that a basic set of tools and mechanisms is crucial in promoting, exercising, and maintaining a horizontal relationship. And it is part of the very experience to collectively create, tweak, and play with these structures that allow us to understand what works and what does not, both for the collective and the individual.



THE NEED FOR WAYS THAT PROMOTE AND ENHANCE CO-RESPONSIBILITY

As I have argued in Chapter 4, it is vital to promote experiences that focus on collectivity and shared development rather than ones that celebrate only personal gains. An individualistic agenda in detriment to the interests of the collective tends to bring destructive outcomes. We are full of negative examples nowadays that can be linked to this understanding. Our actions and voices have consequences towards others, and we cannot put a blind eye or claim unaccountability over the outcomes of our behavior.

The definition of the self and how one relates to others is constantly in flux, a continuous process happening as we mature. While defining our identity and understanding our needs and desires, we must parallel our collective or social group development. Why, one might ask? Because we do not do it alone. Our context, the people around us, directly informs our path.

In this continuity, understanding and setting the boundaries that define 'me' and 'you' cannot happen just individually. We co-exist, and we construct it together, directly or indirectly. And I understand this co-existence as a co-responsible operation. When the word community becomes a verb.

This action is neither easy nor straightforward. However, we must make sense of how we relate and how we can potentialize each other. It is worth being aware of the consequences of how we express, voice, and activate ourselves in the world. And there are ways to make it less complicated and problematic.

Communication is crucial. Empathy is a great way to go along with it. Expressing ourselves clearly avoids misinterpretations. Being sensitive and aware of the experience of the other helps us understand the invisible and undefined. It helps us construe the space that exists between us.

Another part of the process of enhancing co-responsibility is to practice true listening – something we take for granted but which is actually rare. Not only to listen to ourselves and become aware of our attitudes and what lies behind them – something the method of Non-Violent Communication demands, but to listen to the other carefully, so they feel heard. It has direct consequences on our capacity to co-create a shared reality.

The Offence co-created a reality where everyone was heard. It not only promoted but maintained trust. As I demonstrated before, trust is essential to the practice of co-responsibility. It needs to be present in a collaborative practice that aims at transformative experiences. Experiences that embrace vulnerability and are open to mutual help.

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IN PRAISE FOR MORE SITUATIONS LIKE OFFENCE

I do not go as far as to advocate the dismantling of institutionalized education in favor of a horizontal one. For two reasons: the first is that they are needed given the complexity of actors that play in the education field nowadays; the second relates to the fact that horizontality is a process to get somewhere, not necessarily an end result.

I advocate for the constant promotion of alternatives, not solutions. Solutions for specific, contextual-based problems can definitely come from alternative experiments. However, there will always be problems to be addressed. New situations arise every day.

Consequently, I back the possibility of having more situations like the one that allowed Offence to happen.

A semester, or a whole year, within an institutionalized curriculum that is voluntary-based, autonomous, and horizontal by default, with a budget that supports the students and presupposes the right of the participants to define their own curriculum and method of engagement in a co-responsible way.

An experience that can question the institution and its curriculum. That can promote alternative methodologies and can co-exist in parallel to the standardized program. An ongoing experiment that is able and allowed to challenge established definitions.

An ongoing exercise of contextual and perceptual change. Where students can choose the location where they want to engage and propose their questionings. Where they can assume responsibilities and be accountable for them on their own terms.



QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Engaging in horizontal and co-responsible experiences is a complex undertaking. I am constantly faced with situations and questions that I often do not have answers to. But I receive them with excitement as they open up new roads and possible territories to explore.

Writing this document through an *a posteriori* analysis of the experience has also presented me with new information and perspectives that have broadened my interpretations. Below are some questions that arose from this path that I would like to keep researching and investigating in the near future.

Can we develop tools that help us notice negative asymmetries in educational relationships without being understood as 'policing' one's behavior?

How can one help transform a toxic hierarchical situation into a relational space fertile for positive alternatives while respecting expectations?

How can we convince institutionalized higher education in the arts and design that allowing for spaces in the curriculum to question the very institution is something positive and constructive, rather than destructive?

How can we set a framework within these institutions where alternatives presented by the students are actually heard and put in practice as alternatives to the status quo?

How can we promote better ways of disagreeing while promoting unity?

What are the skills or abilities that need to exist in a group to prosper and promote horizontal relationships continuously?

Is it possible to develop a framework, or a minimum set of structures, that promotes and enhances horizontality and is accessible, inclusive, and open to be modified?

Can we create a set of tools and mechanisms for horizontal mediation whenever horizontality is not the *modus operandi*?

Is it possible to define a framework that can help a student, or a group, understand and set boundaries without limiting or restricting possibilities?

Is it possible to promote co-responsibility in higher education, where professors and students are accountable in the same manner, without falling into a 'service' mode of education – client-provider relationship?

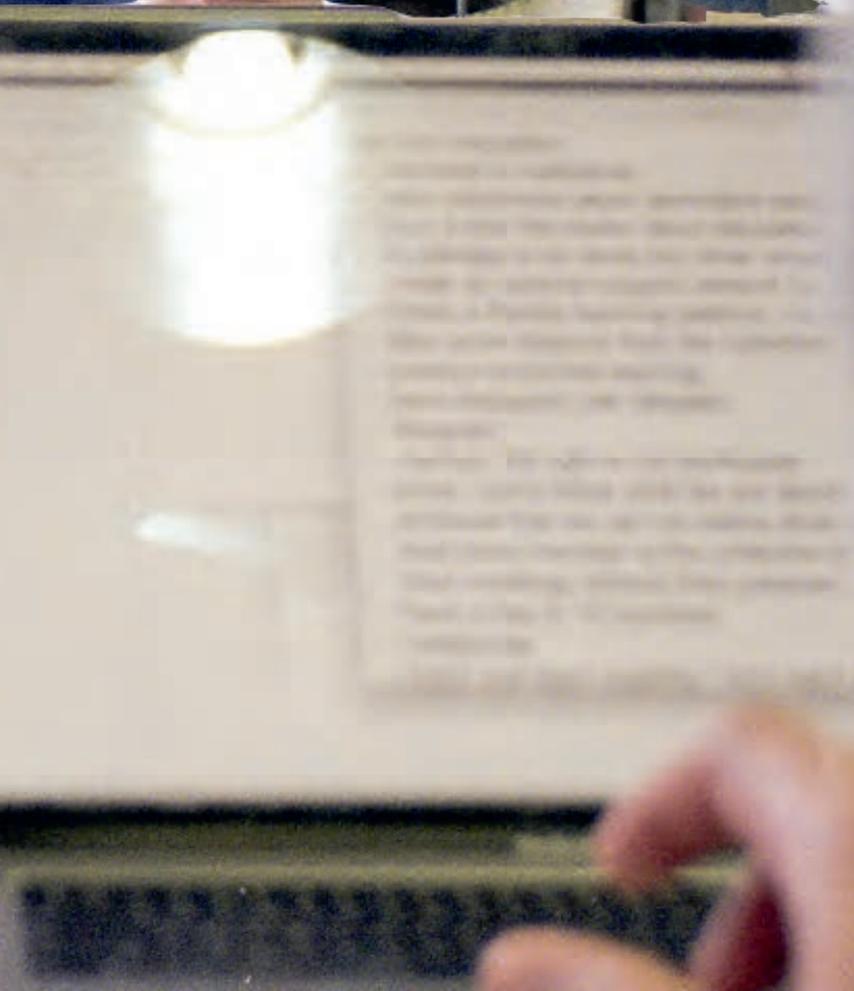
What are other 'filters' that can experiment in promoting alternative perspectives and engagement? Can these be actual physical tools?

Can we develop a set of tools and mechanisms that are constantly available for impromptu use whenever a student feels 'unheard'?

If we embraced a class as a network of the self in the making, would it change the perceptual relationship among students and professors?

Suppose we were to assess a student, along with the commonly given parameters, in their ability to potentialize the learning path of fellow students. Would there be a positive outcome for the whole group?

How can we adequately address the ambiguity of fairness concerning the imbued privileges of current higher education programs in the creative field?





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Made by OFFFENCE Collective.

Pierre Allain, Charlie Flotho, Noa Jansma, Alexandra Koutsaftis, Emma Lijdsman, Niels Lütken, Benjamin Motoc, Karl Moubarak, Sara Röth, Lucas de Ruiter, Ilja Schamlié, Hannah Segerkrantz, Dominik Vrabič Dežman

Initiated and published by Grand Opening.

— Amsterdam, 2019.

Edition of 400 copies

Special thanks to:

Mauro Acito, Luca Acito, Tonio Acito, Selena Andrisani, Alvin Arthur, Angela, Elisa Bertron, Tom Biddulph, René van Binsbergen, Marjolijn Boterenbrood, Max Bouwhuis, Pietro Bruno, Francesco Caldarola, Soyoung Chung, Dario Cola, Gianco Colla, Sofia Coutsoucos, Nico di Cuia, Giovanni Diele, Paolo D'Ercole, Pasquale Ettorre, Liesbeth Fit, Signore Franco, Stefano Fusillo, Joseph Geoffriau, Elisa Giuliano, Joseph Grima, Francesca Imondi, Pauline Joelle, Ralf Koslowski, Marco Laterza, Guido Loforese, Piero Longo Giura, Gabriella Mastrangelo, Angelo Montemurro, Caroline Nevejan, Maartje Nevejan, Giuseppe Nicoletti E La Mamma, Rita Orlando, Artemis Papageorgiou, Raffaele Pentasuglia, Gabriella Porcari, Bonne Reijn, Diogo Rinaldi, Marina Rotolo, Enrico Ruggieri, Deborah Russo, Andrea Santantonio, Simona Scarcella, Janneke Schreuder, Kay Schuttel, Martha Schwindling, Maria Silvano Rosaria, Chiara Siravo, Ali Sohna, Davide Tagliabue, Curdin Tones, Martino Tuzio, Jelmer Wijnstroom, Simona Zurlo

Design Academy Eindhoven (DAE), La 2019 Fondazione Matera-Basilicata, Il Integrate Centro Arti (IAC), Open Design School (ODS)

OFFFENCE collective, was released on June 14th, 2019 at Galerie De Schans in Amsterdam.

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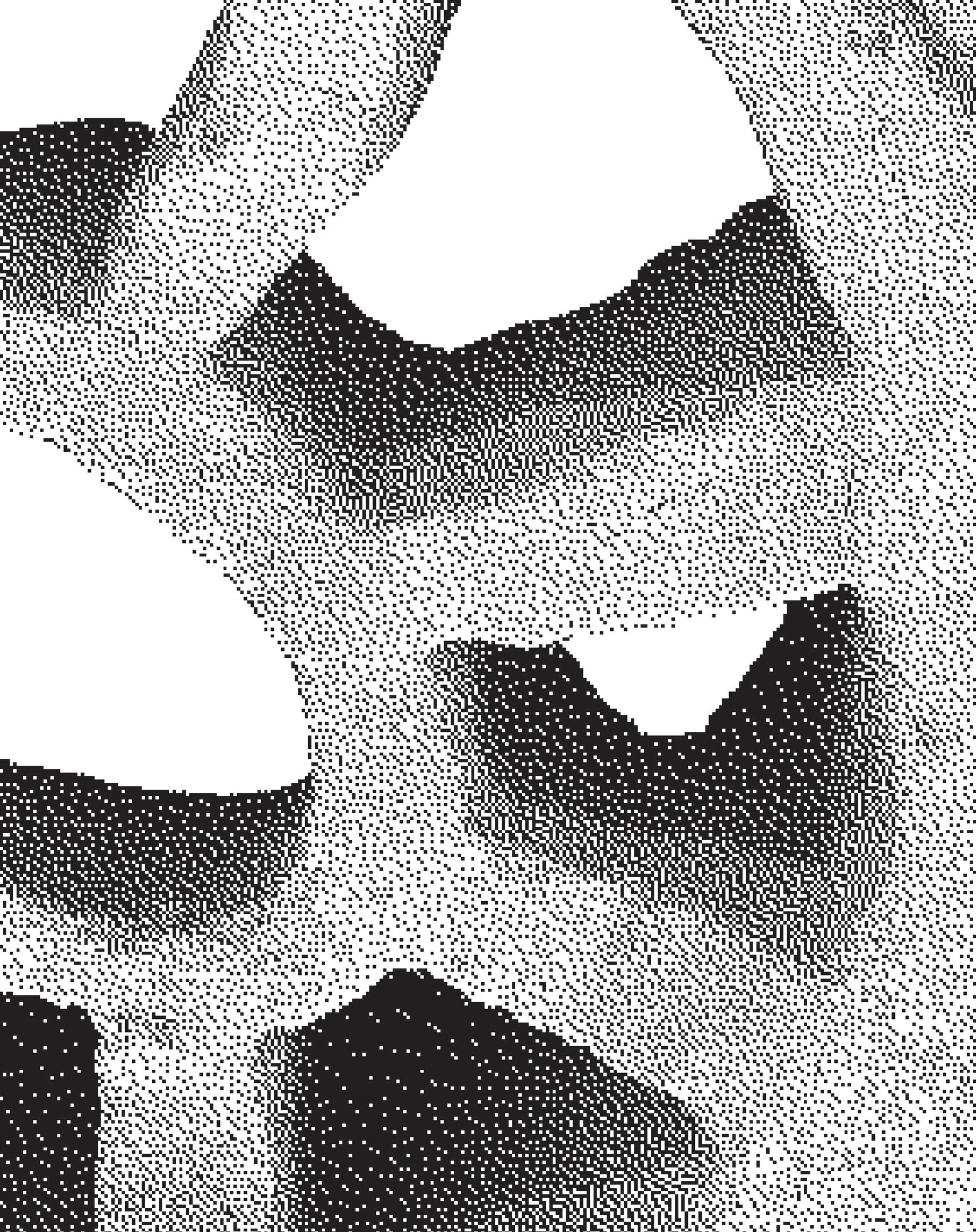
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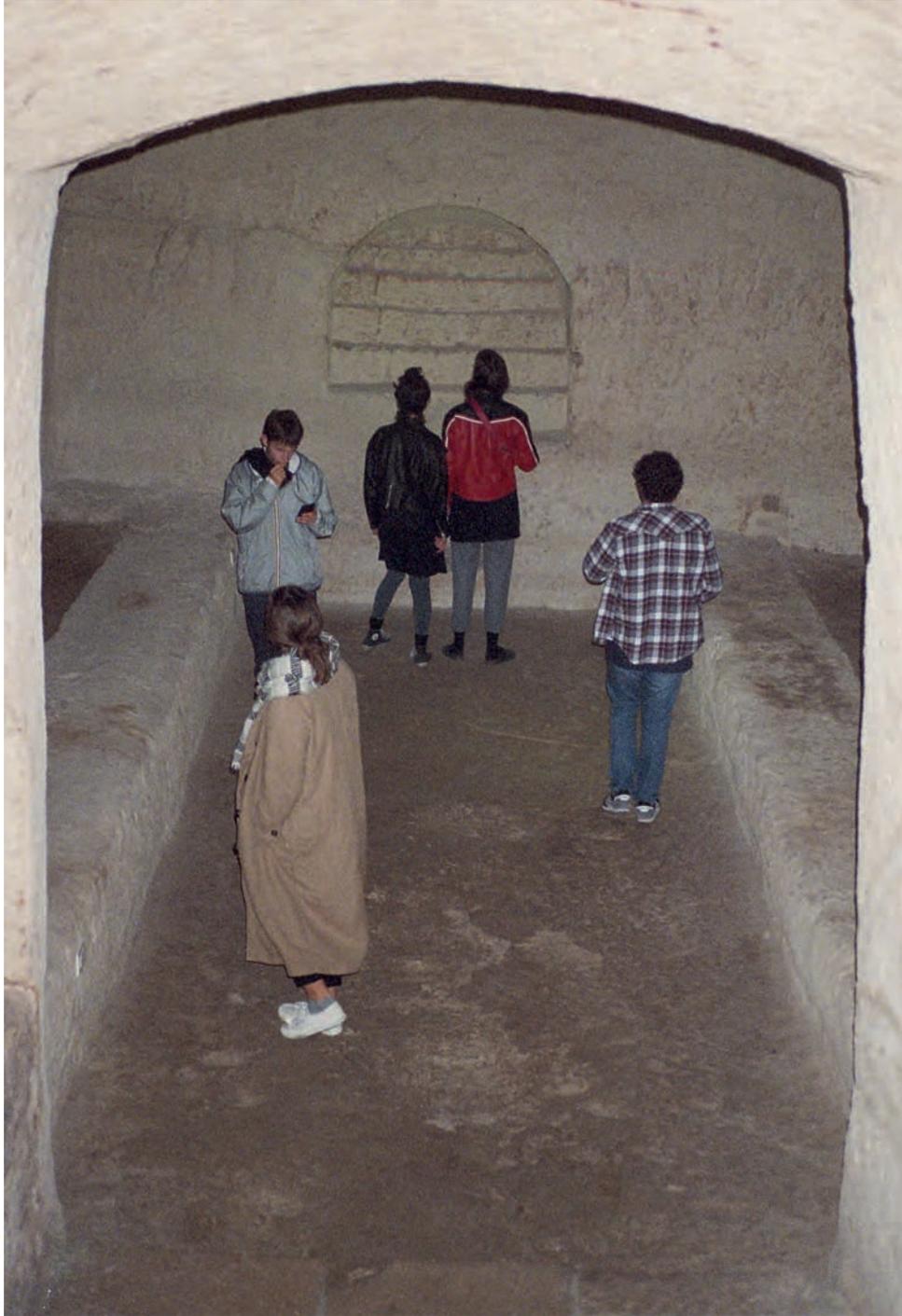


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"I WOULD LIKE TO involve other people in this."
#M21 2018/11/19



A publication made by OFFENCE collective.

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