HOLDING MOMENTS

Understanding and engaging affective pedagogies
with emergent multilingual children

Tune in to the prevalence of spiral in the universe—the shape in the prints of our fingertips echoes into geological patterns, all the way to the shape of galaxies. Then notice that the planet is full of these fractals—cauliflower, yes, and broccoli, ferns, deltas, veins through our bodies, tributaries, etc.—all of these are echoes of themselves at the smallest and largest scales. Dandelions contain an entire community in each spore that gets blown on children's breath.

–andrienne marree brown,

A GRADUATION PROJECT
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2020–2023

Introduction

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I started this research with the hope to grow as an art educator and develop approaches that are meaningful for me and the groups I was working with. Going back at the beginning of my motivation I am taken back to the beginning of the 2015 refugee crisis, when I was in Greece for some months. At that time, I started working with children that had fled and arrived in Athens. Ever since I worked in spaces with children where a multiplicity of languages was spoken, and where we many times were lacking a common language to communicate in. I felt that language was often an issue, a boundary, causing a lack of engagement, miscommunication, frustration, limited connection, disempowerment. Observing these effects made me willing to develop practices which are beneficial for situations when we may be experiencing linguistic limitations and overcome language challenges and other boundaries. I wanted to question and explore how I could improve my educational practice and develop approaches that can be beneficial for the children I was working with and that could further support us.

I wished to observe, reflect on, question and learn, asking: 'what principles do I need to embrace?', 'what strategies can support us?', 'what can I learn from the various situations experienced?'. Sitting with these questions allowed me to learn from others and from what emerged through the process, to be open to be affected, to change and to grow. It allowed me

to take a step back and learn from the children, to see how I could create more opportunities to be taught by them. This research did not aim to reach a specific endpoint, but to embrace openness to be affected and learn from what is emerging through the process. This led to a cluster of thoughts, principles, strategies and lessons that unfolded through our time with the children, exchange with others, the methods employed and conversation with theory. I hope that reading them can allow others to think along and get inspired.

   Values and principles lie in the base of how we act and guide the decisions we make. Therefore, I find important to mention what guided my way of doing and the direction of my thoughts, actions and decisions. Through the course of the research I was inspired by andrienne marree brown's *Emerging Strategy* (2017). Below is a series of evolving core principles that, according to brown, allow for the idea of emergent strategy to be put into practice. They are principles that I held on to through this journey, which were, however, affected and informed by what emerged through the research, taking another form as a result of what emerged.

> Small is good, small is all. (The large is a reflection of the small.)
> Change is constant. (Be like water).
> There is always enough time for the right work.
> There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it.
> Never a failure, always a lesson.

> Trust the People. (If you trust the people, they become trustworthy).
> Move at the speed of trust.
> Focus on critical connections more than critical mass—build the resilience by building the relationships.
> Less prep, more presence.
> What you pay attention to grows.
> (brown, 2017, p. 27)

REFLECTION ON THE SETTING (ASYLUM SEEKERS' CENTER IN RIJSWIJK)

I find it impossible not to refer to the situation that took place in the asylum seekers' center in Rijswijk, where this research took place and is referring to. Apart from wanting to refer to the negative impact it had on the children and the other residents of the center, I find important to create awareness around the circumstances and decisions that took place and the social injustice surrounding them. I will point out how the situation affected the children and their school attendance, as that it is what I have more understanding of because of my particular engagement.

   In September 2021 I started going to the asylum seekers' center on a weekly basis as a co-facilitator of the TeamUp sessions, an initiative offering different structured play and movement activities to the children. The planned closure of the center at that time was December

2021, as the 5-year contract with the municipality would end. Very shortly before its planned closure it was decided that the residence could remain open until May 2022. However, because of the short, last-minute notice, the school that was located in the residence center had to close, as its teachers and staff had already found other jobs. Following this, a period had to follow when the children could not attend a school until a solution would be found. Then it was organised for them to attend a school located between Rijswijk and Delft to which they were taken by a bus. As the time passed and May was approaching, there was more certainty that the center was going to close, although it seamed unreasonable because of the coming of more people in the Netherlands, especially because of the conflict situations in Afghanistan and Ukraine. A goodbye party was organised, De Vrolijkheid, an organisation initiating art workshops in different asylum seekers' centers across the Netherlands, left the center, and the children had a last day in school, having a final excursion and saying goodbye to their teachers. Two weeks before the residence's planned closure, it was decided to keep it open until November. This caused again an instability for the children and teenagers there, as a new school had to be found, which for some took several months. Some children could attend school and others had to wait, as we realized by asking the children.

Although I believe that it is positive that the center could stay longer open, especially in the midst of new conflict zones around the world and the asylum

disaster in Ter Apel, that escalated during the summer months (https://www.dw.com/en/dutch-asylum-center-disaster-housing-crisis-and-politics-to-blame-for-ter-apel-crisis/a-62979784), I found the uncertainty and the inorganization surrounding the way and timing decisions were communicated very unjust. It caused a great sense of instability for the residents of the center and the staff working there, while it prevented the children from attending a school regularly. Let's remember that education is a basic human right and I cannot say that it was cared for. Apart from a lack of a stable school to go to, many initiatives for children, teenagers and adults coordinated by external organizations, stopped during these months between closure and no-closure, as the budget and logistics required could not be maintained due to a planning in accordance with the previously communicated closure dates.

Looking back at this I am left without words. Powerless, with a mix of sadness and frustration. I believe that it is important to be aware of such injustices that affect so many people among us and for each one of us to be engaged as they can against them. Still I want to hold on to the belief that we all contribute to change, that what we practice in our lives embodies the greater world we would like to see evolving. This made me question what I can offer, how I can be of service from the position I am in. The following pages emerged from that.

POSITIONING – SITUATING MYSELF

It is impossible to be completely neutral as a researcher and educator. Our views are influenced by our histories, motivations, socio-historical locations, personal characteristics and privileges we carry. Supporting this, Harraway underlines that, "positioning is the key practices grounding knowledge, because position indicates the kind of power that enabled certain kind of knowledge" (cited in Fujita, 2020, p. 3). Positionality gets an increasing importance when referring to work in the charity and NGO field, because of the history it carries and the victim-savior paradigm that is many times followed. Therefore, as this research was conducted while I was a volunteer within the framework of two nongovernmental organisations, working with children from a refugee background, I found it essential to reflect on my own positionality and go through a process of historizing and contextualizing the setting I was working in.

My interest in this research started with the will to investigate ways to overcome language barriers when working with children from a migration or refugee background. This interest emerged through my experience of working with the specific population group, through which I had felt that language was an issue. Observing the effects language barriers we faced had made me willing to develop practices which are beneficial in situations where we may face linguistic limitations and overcome language challenges and other boundaries.

Through reflecting on my positionality, I found

important to acknowledge that I am a white, heterosexual woman from a mixed background and my identity affords me a certain privilege in the world we currently live in. As I am moved by the belief that we all contribute to change and that what we practice in our lives embodies the greater world we would like to see evolving, I am moved to question what I can offer, how I can be of service from the privileged position I am in.

As the context I am working in is concerned, through this research I was working on a volunteer basis at the asylum seekers' center at Rijswijk under the name of two nongovernmental organizations, facilitating play and movement activities through TeamUp, and supporting the facilitation of arts workshops through Stichting De Vrolijkheid. I want to highlight the idea of 'being of service', which is quite different from framing nongovernmental work as 'helping'. Through researching the framework I was working in and questioning what it means to be in a position to 'help' someone, I thought that it is crucial go back and reflect on the history of nongovernmental work to prevent reproducing processes that oppress rather than liberate.

The roots of charity work through the structure of NGOs historically lie on colonial policies and to an ideal of femininity, interlaced with Lutheran teachings on women's role within the institution of marriage and in the raising of children (Braun, 2017). Also, a victim-saviour narrative was followed, and many times still is, with the people engaged in charitable or humanitarian work 'saving' or 'helping' others that are assumed to be in

need of saving. This paradigm suggests the reproduction of colonial and neoliberal perspectives on humanitarian projects, including ones around refugees (Nasser-Eddin and Abu-Assab, 2020). Going with the perspective of doing research 'for' a group that is in need of help automatically suggests that the one helping is above the other and knows better. Even when working with the best of intentions there is a high risk that the colonial gaze is reproduced. Furthermore, within the intention to em-power or emancipate a group defined as non-dominant or marginalized, lies the drawback of "reproducing the sense of oddness, differentness, exceptionality of these groups, the feeling that they are departures from the norm. Meanwhile the norm has carried on as if it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being human" (Copini, 2020, p. 7).

So how can we go about this? How can we fol-low a decolonial approach when working within an NGO setting and divert the risk of othering and reproducing a victim-saviour paradigm? As Fred Moten mentions in *The Undercommons*: "The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us. I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?" (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 10).

The structures of oppression affect all of us but in different levels, "killing many of us much more softly" than others. This aligns with Nasser-Edin's and Abu-Ass-

ab's position (2020, p. 193), who call for approaching experiences from an intersectional perspective, looking "at the system or systems of oppression that make our struggles much more unified". As coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), "intersectionality" is an approach that conceptualizes oppression as multi-layered, caused by injustice across different social and political identifica-tions and acknowledges the need for anti-oppressive practice to be a collective effort. An intersectional perspective aims to grasp how various forms of oppres-sion overlap and interact with one another and create a unique experience of discrimination and oppression (Johnson, 2008). Moreover, Nasser-Edin and Abu-Assab mention that, apart from looking into our positionality, we should acknowledge nongovernmental work or projects as a process of learning and unlearning, rather than a process of saving. Working in this way can set a base of working together that is based on learning from each other, creating space for different voices to be expressed and listened to, affirming and valuing the richness in the differences between us. This requires a certain level of humility, being aware of our position to allow for open-ness and coalition to take place. It also requires focusing on relationship-building and working 'with' and 'from', rather than 'for' the participants.

The discourse around the victim-savior paradigm can also move us to question the label refugee. As stated by Vigil & Abidi (2018), institutional and media representations tend to either highlight "the vulnerability of refugees and the need to help them, or the economic

burden and security risk that resettlement commitments tend to evoke" (cited in Van Viegen, 2020, p. 62). The presentation of such understandings can limit the way children with a refugee background are viewed and how their needs are addressed in the host country. The term refugee is used to describe the status of migration, the displacement and resettlement of an individual. It is important to acknowledge the complex identities each individual has and move away from generalizations and the tendency to universalize approaches. Recognising and attending to the needs of the children is of utmost importance, yet I believe that we should be critical of deficit discourses around trauma, poverty and illiteracy and support the agency, resilience and funds of knowledge that the children bring with them.

 As a move towards recognizing the capacities and talents of the children and to go against labelling, I decided through this research to refer to the children as 'emergent multilinguals'. I chose the term emergent multilinguals because it allows us to refrain from viewing them from a perspective that highlights what they are lacking in, which in this case it concerns a possible barrier in communication due to a limited knowledge of a dominant language. Instead, they are already, or they are in the process of becoming, multilinguals, individuals who able to navigate the world through many languages and perspectives. Through the research I was referring to the children with their first names. Yet, in this document their names have been replaced to maintain their privacy.

 The process of positioning myself also included

framing my role and responsibilities in the research relationships. In order to do this, I used the questions presented at Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony* (2008), who proposes them as an invitation to apply ideas of relationality and relational accountability into our practice. The questions are based on the characteristics of healthy relationships, encouraging researchers to act towards their formation and maintenance. The characteristics are presented to be respect, reciprocity and responsibility. The questions are the following:

>-How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between the topic that I am studying and myself as a researcher?
>-How do my methods help to build respectful relationships between myself and the other research participants?
>-How can I relate respectfully to the other participants involved in this research so that together we can form a stronger relationship with the idea that we will share?
>-What is my role as a researcher in this relationship, and what are my responsibilities?
>-What am I contributing or giving back to the relationship? Is the sharing, growth and learning that is taking place reciprocal? (Wilson, 2008, p. 77)

 These are questions that guided the principles and direction of the methods I used through this research. They also informed my way of doing through the

scope of the research process and reminded me that the relationship with the participants of the research should always come first. I wished to form activities and act in a way that supports forming respectful relationships, moving with the intention of growing and learning with them through the process, going in line with the approach of working 'with' and 'from', rather than 'for'.

In addition, I embraced the responsibility to restore harmony if disharmony is caused. In practice, I always had it in mind when conflicts or disturbances would appear through the sessions and workshops with the children. It had been a priority to resolve them and restore a sense of harmony before moving to any further steps. I also felt that as a researcher and facilitator I held the responsibility to observe, listen, reflect and respond according to the needs and interests of the children and for the building stronger relationships. This required adaptability, flexibility and an openness to let go of plans and accept different approaches and no participation. I also acknowledged the obligation to stay true to my positionality, to what is happening in relation to me, and be open to interrelating ideas, staying aware and attempting to refrain from superiorities surrounding concepts.

SPECIFICS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research has been compiled through activities that took place in the azc (asylum seeker's center) in Rijswijk, where I was working on a volunteer basis under

the name of two nongovernmental organizations. I was co-facilitating play and movement activities through TeamUp, which is an initiative taking place in different reception centres and newcomers' schools across the Netherlands, aiming to offer different structured play and movement activities for children from 6 to 18 years old to support their psychosocial wellbeing and resilience. It is a program which has been created through the cooperation of three nongovernmental organisations: warchild, unicef and save the children. A basic framework was provided from organizers of TeamUp, but each week's program and activities were selected by me and the other facilitators, Frank, who was replaced by Rafik in the last months, and Floor. Through evaluations we did every week and through asking the children what they liked in each session we were planning the activities for the session that would follow. The activities were inspired from past experiences, research, ideas and discussions between us, suggestions from the TeamUp program, and from the theater of the oppressed games for actors and non-actors.

The participants were children of 6 to 12 years old, who were residents of the center. The TeamUp sessions took place (almost) every Tuesday from October 2021 to June 2022. They were of a duration of one hour and were planned every week at the same time to maintain a consistency. Due to the instable nature of the context, the children attending the sessions and workshops were changing through the months. The participants were from many backgrounds, some could

communicate in the same language and others not. They also had different levels of Dutch and/or English; sometimes they were fluent in one of the two languages and other times they spoke none or had a very limited knowledge of them, which meant that there was not a common language we could communicate in. The sessions were designed to have a warming-up part, a demonstration of rules, a main part with up to three main activities and cooling-down/closure. They also aimed to be language independent, which meant using a non-verbal modality to demonstrate the activities, especially in case children we did not share a common language with were present, so that what was being shared could be understood by everyone.

The children attended the TeamUp sessions voluntarily. We, me and the other two facilitators, depending on the situation, would call them to join us after they were done with school (when the school was still located in the azc), wait for the bus that brought them back from school or look around the azc and call them to join us. The sessions always took place in the open space.

Secondly, part of this research has emerged through facilitating and supporting the facilitation of arts workshops through Stichting De Vrolijkheid, which is a network of professional artists and cultural organisers, who develop art projects in Dutch asylum seeker centres together with children, youngsters, their parents and volunteers.

I started working with de Vrolijkheid, also in the azc in Rijswijk, in January 2022 until March 2022, when

the organisation left the asylum seekers' center due to its planned, but in the end not actualized, closure in the end of May. During March I could organise and facilitate two workshops under their name. De Vrolijkheid sessions were also taking place at a specific day and time every week, for which the children were informed through a label placed at the front of the building where the workshops where taking place, and through volunteers and facilitators going around and inviting them to join us.

ORGANIZATION OF MATERIAL

The research document consists of the methodological principles that guided and informed this research, that include the conceptual framework and the pedagogical underpinnings of the project and a collection and analysis of research events.

The research events that are mentioned are theoretically and methodologically informed and aligned. They concern the description of moments from sessions and workshops I conducted with children at the asylum seekers' center at Rijswijk that I decided to attribute attention to.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Through the research process, including what emerged during the research events, and the theoretical research, and through reflecting on my positionality, I was led to the following research question.

How can we understand and engage affective pedagogies in relation to emergent multilingual children?

I attempted to understand affective pedagogies in relation to the group I was working with through describing, analyzing and connecting theory to moments that I felt that affected us, moments that I felt that our relational exchanges were either weakened or lifted. I chose to attribute attention to these moments because I wished to attend to what mattered, and I wanted to further learn from them. In order to understand I also needed to make use of the principle of being open to be affected and questioning how I can do that. Engaging affective pedagogies meant putting the above to practice. It also included questioning how I can apply the understandings reached. How can the process of understanding moments and of being open/priming oneself to be affected influence my practice? What adjustments, decisions does it lead me to or require?

Another question that guided this research, and acted as a subquestion, is:

How can we bring more reciprocity to our interactions with children when a language asymmetry is present?

Through this research I was seeking ways to create a switching of roles, to create moments and opportunities for the children to teach us and for me to get in the position of learning from them. This interest emerged through reflecting on my positionality and reading Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony* (2008) and specifically the questions suggested to researchers to apply ideas of relationality and relational accountability (which are based on the characteristics of healthy relationships). I wished to move away from the victim-savior paradigm, take a step back from 'teaching' the children, and find ways to bring respect, reciprocity and responsibility to my interactions with the children.

I wished to explore the above question through different strategies and initiatives through our interactions, with language exchange being a major one. Acknowledging the language asymmetry and the multiplicity of languages spoken was important, as language became a subject where the above question could land and be explored. It also meant observing the existent, prevalent dynamic of the children being primarily learners of the dominant language as migrants in a host country and seeing how creating moments to reverse that may feel empowering for the children or give them more agency.

Tracing
Methodology

In search of the meaning of methods and methodology, I started looking into dictionary definitions. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, a methodology is "the analysis of the principles or procedures of inquiry in a particular field" (Merriam-Webster, 2022), while according to Cambridge dictionary it is "a system of ways of doing, teaching, or studying something" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022).

As I was seeking to understand how we can form stronger connections with emergent multilingual children, I was looking for methods that can support us in this process. Through looking into different methodologies, I reached the understanding that methodologies can be seen as the principles and ways we ask questions and the ways we intend to answer them. Through the following paragraphs I am tracing what these principles are for this research.

My research process guided me to see the value of moments and gestures I exchanged with the participants of the project, as I felt that there was hidden value in affirming them, analysing them and attempting to further think through them to develop my practice. This process guided my research, took me to further steps and informed a way of researching that is not seeking to present finished results, but demonstrates a part of a learning process that can pose new questions and be further expanded. This approach was informed through drawing from different concepts and ideas, including prioritizing affect, relationality and human emotion.

AFFECT

As mentioned by Sarah E. Truman (2022) in *Feminist Speculations and the Practice of Research-Creation*, affect is "frequently theorized as the capacities of bodies to act or be acted upon by other bodies in an ever-shifting milieu". Affects can be seen "as the forces at work in an encounter" (Truman, p. 11). They are part of relational exchanges and can either facilitate and empower them or weaken them.*

Acknowledging the principle and presence of affects as a researcher is tied to committing oneself to being open to be affected and deciding to learn to get affected through the practice of research. It entails the acceptance of the idea that as individuals we are capable of affecting and being affected. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that some population groups are often being taken the agency to affect, being "endlessly affectable but unable to affect or have agentive power within an affective economy" (Truman, 2022, p. 11).

Moving through affect theory should also entail the consideration that affects are received and felt differently across individuals and that different affects can make us feel differently. This comes into discussion with the idea that each person at each moment is in interplay with different forces, inheritances within herself and with forces in relation to the event and the moment. Conditions of how/what/who manifest the moment of an interaction or creation. Different forces influence us differently at different times and spaces and interact with

one another, which co-institute a situation.

As Truman proposes, we could ask ourselves how we can prime ourselves to be affected. For me this translates into my research, through having the intention to be affected by the participants of the research, accepting that affects land differently across individuals and at different moments. It makes me attribute attention to and affirm gestures and moments of exchange that I feel that affected me and the other participants, moments that I felt that relational exchanges were either weakened or lifted. I feel that 'attributing attention to' can be well described by the word 'honouring', which is offered by Rae Johnson (2018) in *Embodied Social Justice*. Honouring for me describes the process of giving value to specific moments, looking at different aspects of interactions, while it also describes a particular attitude

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* I see that theories of affect are also related to ideas of relationality, as explained in Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony* (Wilson, 2008), a book shedding light upon indigenous research methods. According to Research is Ceremony, an indigenous research paradigm is based on the concrete idea that "relationships do not merely shape reality, they are reality" (p. 7). It is summed up that the paradigm is relational and maintains relational accountability. In opposition to western research methods, reality or 'the truth' is not out there to be found, but it lies in the relationship one holds with reality. Thinking in relationship means seeing things as the relationships we share with them which moves us away from the objectification of knowledge, and beyond the western idea of individual knowledge. Knowledge is relational, it is shared with all of creation, and it is built and represented through relationships. This relates to the concept of affect in the sense that, as we have the capacity to affect and be affected, we always exist in relationship with the world, and share different relationships with it. It was tempting to include an analysis of the paradigm in its entirety, and I recommend it to anyone who desires to explore ideas around relationality more fully.

toward what is shared and experienced. In addition, I believe that the process of priming oneself to be affected is impossible without learning to and being present; attending, observing, and listening to the child/children, the environment, and oneself. This is something that requires a certain level of humility, a connection to the meaningful and joyful parts of this practice and a focus on the present moment, on what is emerging.

Through this research I engaged in a process of attributing attention to and affirming gestures and moments of exchange that I feel that affected me and the other participants, by describing such moments and connecting them to theory. Through this process, I was willing to learn from them and inform my research process. The research is being formed and guided by what was shared between us; words, gestures, feelings. Analyzing and attempting to understand the events also allowed me to speculate on what happened and what could be different. It was an attempt to learn from my experience, grow through it, and hopefully it can allow others to think alongside or be inspired.

EMERGENCE AND RESEARCH EVENTS

The approach of attempting to be affected is also connected to the idea of being open to what is emerging, which creates a move to focus on the processes instead of the resultant products. In order to come closer to this, I decided to adopt the term research events as

mentioned by Truman. By framing the workshops and the sessions with the children I worked with as events, I wanted to prime myself to be open to what is emerging. Choosing this viewpoint is also part of going against the notion of discovery. There was not a discovery to be made but attempts and processes that aimed to further make sense of the events, share them, and reach an understanding, so that I could move to next steps. In addition, through referring to them as events I could see them as changeable, as occurrences that happened as a result of an interplay of multiple factors and relations at a specific time and place. In this way I am also aiming to frame approaches I am presenting as potentially beneficial and valuable (or not) at a given moment and space with particular dynamics present, instead of universalizing them as approaches. I was willing to refrain from presenting them as solutions that are supposed to work for everyone*.

As Truman (2022) mentions, writing is also an event. It always reveals "more than (and less than) the events that occurred" (p. 24). Apart from presenting a process of selection, sharing what happened in relation to me and affirming it in a way, it is a process that allows me to correspond to events and see how they can feed

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* For me this relates again to affect and to ideas around relationality presented by Wilson, who supports that the more relationships you study between yourself and what is researched, "the more fully you can comprehend its form and the greater your understanding becomes" (Wilson, 2008, p. 79). This comes with a responsibility to accept complexities and refrain from generalizations. I am not presenting information as data or results, but as occurrences that took place as a result of different relationships at hand.

further thought and speculation. With such an approach to writing, I am positioning myself not as someone presenting 'data', but as someone engaged in a process of understanding generative moments. In addition, through connecting these events to theories and writings I wished to think alongside others to prompt further reflection and speculation.

ACTION RESEARCH

I used action research to act, reflect and make changes in my practice. Action research is a method commonly used by educators and is a process based on a great extent on reflection: the educators reflect on their current practice or experience in order to better understand it or to improve it. The model consists of the following steps:

-Plan a change;
-Take action to enact the change;
-Observe the process and consequences of the change;
-Reflect on the process and consequences;
-Act, observe, & reflect again and so on.
(Spencer et al., 2020)

Therefore, action research offers a model to make substantial changes on one's practice through critical reflection, moving through inquiry and building knowledge through change, documentation and evaluation. It is also open-ended and allows for an ongoing process

to take place, meaning that there are opportunities to constantly re-assess and change practices that may be non-beneficial for the students through the project. Furthermore, in action research the researcher is also a participant. As I believe that it is impossible to be neutral as a researcher, that I am inseparable from the research and I am working always in relationship with what is inside me and outside me, I found important to follow a method that is in line with these principles. Since action research allows for participatory and collaborative practices, I felt that I am able to move along this line. Moreover, it enables an interchange of theory and practice, encouraging theory to emerge from the research rather than insisting on always following an already formulated theory.

Therefore, action research was employed in this research through the planning and enacting of changes in my practice, observing and reflecting on the process and consequences of the change, and planning other changes accordingly. Through the TeamUp sessions this was done collaboratively, through planning, evaluating and acting in cooperation with the other two facilitators.

DRAWING

Through the research I used drawing as a method of reflection and documentation, making use of my own practice as an illustrator. This has been an alternative way of presenting information through visual material, as it was not allowed to take pictures through the TeamUp

sessions. However, I believe that drawing didn't just enable me to surpass this restriction. It also allowed me to go through a process that it is quite different from using a camera to document the sessions. In contrast with taking pictures through the research events, drawing requires making instead of taking. It requires from the illustrator to make multiple choices regarding the image-making, such as deciding which scene or moment to show, considering the perspective to present the event, reflecting on how the bodies were juxtaposed and on the body language that was shared. It is a process for which time is needed. Thinking is prolonged and extended through the move of the hand and the making of the lines. There is time to produce an image, it is not decided abruptly upon the moment of interaction with the children. I also acknowledge that it provides another kind of reading in comparison to the presence of images produced through photography.

Drawing also allowed me to relate to both the theories of affect and relationality. In any case, I am presenting a view of reality, one that co-exists in relation to what is around me and within me. Drawing is a practice that emerges from this. The drawings were materialized through a conversation between what I experienced, observed and understood. It is impossible to represent things exactly as they happened at the moment, but in any case, I accept that it is impossible to show a neutral view of reality. What I am presenting emerges out of what is happening in relation to me, how we affected each other and how I was affected at a given time and space.

The process of drawing has also another affective dimension. When drawing I am choosing to show something, and therefore I am affirming specific moments and gestures. I am reflecting on and affirming moments that affected me. Also, the process of positioning the bodies is able to demonstrate affective qualities of the interactions I am referring to. Similar to writing, drawing is also an event. It reveals more and less than what happened during the research event. The drawing process also enabled me to think through what happened during a research event, a decision-making process that prompted further analysis, speculation and thinking.

Furthermore, drawing allowed me to make nonverbal cues more present in the research, which I found crucial to incorporate as through this research communication and data were shared through a large extent through body language and non-verbal cues. The reason for this is that it took place in spaces where we many times faced difficulties communicating in a common language, but also because of the movement-based nature of the TeamUp sessions.

Rae Johnson's *Embodied Social Justice* (2018), a book offering a body-centred approach to working with oppression, encouraged me to see the importance of incorporating non-verbal data. *Embodied Social Justice* emerged through the observation that existing social justice models had not taken into consideration our bodies' role in reproducing oppression. Rae Johnson employed a methodology that drew on somatic approaches, narrative

inquiry, and performed ethnography to conduct and present the research. More specifically, semi-structured interviews were conducted, the data of which were transcribed into bodycentred narratives, which were then performed on stage. Through the methodology that was employed, Johnson aimed to bring the somatic experience in the process, capturing and presenting nonverbal nuances of embodied experiences. In addition, the researcher took into consideration her own body as a researcher as an instrument in the meaning-making process, being aware that the body of the researcher exists in relation to the bodies of the participants and influences the information being shared. She employed actions that would incorporate this observation, such as taking notes through the interview process to document her embodied experience as a researcher. Moreover, Johnson engaged in a process of critical reflexivity and was attentive to describe rather than interpret nonverbal cues (Johnson, 2018).

 Through drawing I could reflect on and show nonverbal aspects of the participants, but also of myself as a researcher. Looking back at moments and repre-senting them made me consider my own bodily presence and experience and reflect on my own embodied response and nonverbal communication strategies. After each research event I was making sketches of moments that stayed with me, that I wished to reflect on and communicate to others. Engaging in the process almost directly after the sessions with the children, allowed me to reflect on the events with less of an influence time

has on our memories and feelings. Drawing was also accompanied by taking notes after our sessions, de-scribing moments and nonverbal signals of the children that took place. I aimed to describe rather than interpret what I observed and experienced, which I hoped that it would help me in the evaluation of the sessions and in the planning of next steps, following the model of action research. I then refined the sketches to ink illustrations, which are included in this document. Therefore, through this document, drawing will used through the description of the research events, showing different moments that took place throughout their duration.

Research Events

The following section concerns a collection of moments that emerged through my time with the children. These moments of exchange take the form of anecdotes and have been chosen by selecting what to attribute attention to, giving value to the fact that I felt that they affected me and the other participants. Through a process of describing, analysing and discussing with theory I was willing to further understand and learn from these research events. This led to different strategies and principles. Strategies that were useful in the setting I am referring to and can be useful in similar settings, and principles and values that I learned and I am willing to hold on to.

PEDAGOGICAL LOVE

In February, a series of workshops were organised within De Vrolijkheid with an aim of creating a film with the children. One of the classes was about building prompts (masks, clothes, hats etc.) for our film. One of the project coordinators, introduced what we were going to do. I felt that 9 from 10 of the children did not understand. They looked at her, then around them searching for what we are supposed to do. We shared big sheets of paper. They kept still. Yet then we started doing, making, showing, which brought sense to what we could do.

      One of the volunteers, started making a huge paper skirt to invite more curiosity and inspiration. Iliada sat with Alya, who still sat unengaged, and they made an apple mask together. And I spent mostly time with Eylül, who was also coming to the TeamUp sessions. This time she brought a phone with her and opened a translation app. 'Please add a sentence to translate', was heard out loud, following an, I assumed, similar sentence in Turkish. She then started looking into her phone pictures, where she found a picture of herself; a starting point for making the mask. She was interested in making it resemble her face, as she looked at a picture of her on her phone.

      At a moment she started spreading glitter over the mask saying 'niet goed', showing disappointment and frustration as the glitter wouldn't stay on the paper. I encouraged her, pointing out through gestures and simple language what was nice about the mask and presented her with other materials. We found some double-sided

IN THE END
EYLÜL WAS
PROUDLY SHOWING
HER CREATION

tape and worked through solutions. In the end Eylül was proudly showing her creation around, which we had hanged around her neck.

I believe that none of this would be possible without the presence of genuine love and care. It is what supports the patience and the willingness necessary to connect with the children. This thought has passed several times through my mind during the sessions, workshops and interactions with the children. The emotion of love guides my pedagogical practice. It acts as an intention, a
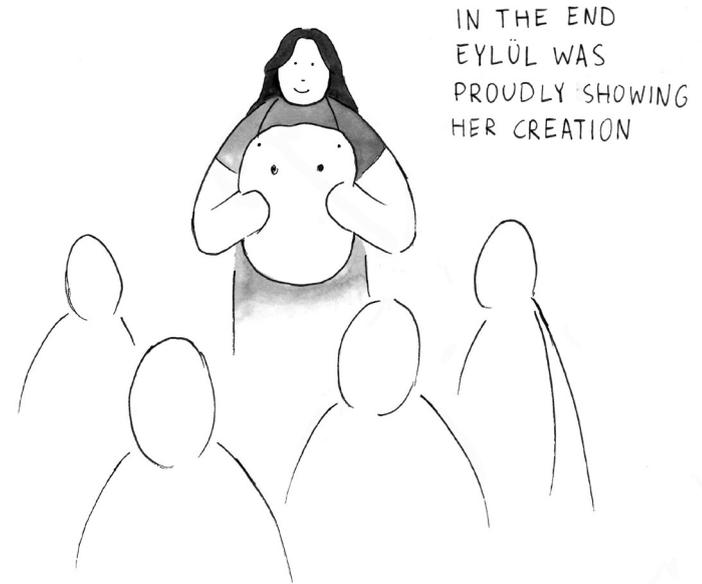
commitment to care to do what is possible to contribute to the children's emotional well-being. I feel that it is of a great importance, especially in a context where there are barriers and challenges experienced. In this case, an increased sense of instability and language barriers, which many times hinder direct communication. Love is invaluable and irreplaceable; I cannot think of another word I could use to describe what I mean. However, although I am mentioning this positive result out of my interaction with Eylül and of the other facilitators' interactions with

the children, I want to resist the tendency of projects and approaches to be inherently 'transformative' for the students, pointing out to the positive, sometimes 'transformational' effect they have. As Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) asserts, many times artistic interventions fulfil the "prevailing teleological view of education and schooling [that] requires prediction and the ability to demonstrate the effects of what we do on some desired outcome" (p. 215). Yet, my aim here is to understand and point out approaches that can be beneficial for the children and can support us in building stronger relations with them.

Despite seeing the role love plays in the context I am active in, I also felt a resistance in mentioning and foregrounding love. As Wilkinson (2017) contends, "the role of compassion and love in refugee educational resettlement has not been prioritized, particularly in the Western teaching system, where emotional involvement is commonly elusive and poetic connotations are factors often neglected and regularly misunderstood on the part of educators" (in Zaidi et al., 2022, p. 4). I acknowledge that I have been raised in a western society, taught through a western educational system (and still being part of it), which has shaped my relationship to the role human emotion should play in education. I have been taught, from my early school years till higher education, that academic performance is what comes first, that human emotion has no place in educational spaces.

Through reading bell hooks' *All about Love* (2000) I was able to understand this resistance I was feeling. Her words allowed me to see the scepticism

with which love is greeted beyond the field of education, as she frames it as a phenomenon characterizing the current state of western culture and society. Through a cultural analysis, she presents that the way western culture currently sees love can be summarized by Tina Turner's song *What does love have to do with it*, which has replaced the *All you need is love* message that was communicated in the sixties and seventies. Love is missing from public discourses, while in popular culture it is seen to belong in the realm of fantasy with the most popular messages being those that declare that love is meaningless, irrelevant.

This opposition towards love has also been cultivated through western world's tendency to prioritize the mind. The mind is believed to be the medium of learning and knowing, while emotion and expressing oneself with emotional intensity is disregarded. This makes speaking of love to be perceived as an act of weakness of irrationality, which has made, for many of us, speaking of love hard. It has become easier to speak of lovelesness, of love's absence than to describe and explain how it is present in our lives and ways we express it. There is a collective fear of love felt in our societies, a cynicism, and a confusion about what it actually is despite its constant presence in media.

Hooks also moves us to see images of popular culture as products mostly of individuals whose values are rooted in systems of domination. Systems of domination, such as patriarchy and racism, rely on "socializing everyone to believe that in all human relations there

is a superior and inferior party" (hooks, 2000, p. 97). Their maintenance relies on cultivating fear, a strategy to establish obedience. The idea of safety plays a great role in this. Ensuring safety means staying with what feels similar, familiar. The different, of any sort, appears as a threat. Such a paradigm encourages separation and alienation instead of connection. Following a love ethic is suggested by hooks as a way to transcend this fear and separation, as a way to connect beyond our differences. As she mentions: "A love ethic presupposes that everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well" (hooks, 2000, p.87). This aligns also with the ideas of Freire, who believed that through love we can transcend fear into courage (Freire, 1998, as cited in Darder, 2011).

I started questioning where I stand in relation to this discourse presented by hooks. Apart from allowing me to understand the resistance I was feeling, reading *All about Love* encouraged me to describe my educational practice through the lens of love and to underline the importance of moving with the intention to love and act through a love ethic. To dive more into the relation of love to education, I looked into the work of Wilkinson & Kaukko (2020), who frame (pedagogical) love as an "ethico-political practice" (p. 4). They argue that love is part of connecting the political with the social and of acting towards social inclusion, transformation, and justice. I feel that we can further understand the importance and potential of love by looking into past social movements, in which a love ethic was a base in the concern and the care for the collective good.

Bell hooks also argues that one of the major reasons there is so much confusion around love is that we are lacking a common understanding of what love is. I approach love as what bell hooks defines as a "combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect and trust" (hooks, 2000, p. 94). We learn from a young age that love is a feeling, an affection experienced towards someone else. However, this approach takes us to a wrong direction, as deep affection does not ensure a care for the well-being and growth of the other. Affection can be part of loving, but it is not loving. We can begin to approach love differently by seeing it as a verb, as an action instead of a noun. This brings a dimension of accountability and responsibility to it, as we are thought to have a fuller control over our actions compared to our feelings, which are many times thought to be out of our control. Love doesn't just happen to us; we can choose to love or not to love, which in turn has certain consequences.

Seeing love as a practice, as a way of acting, creates a deeper connection to education. Thinking of prioritizing affect, relationality and human emotion brought me to see acting through love as an integral part of my practice. This meant acting through a belief in the children's capacities and strengths. Through the idea that we are all entitled to live fully and well: to develop our capacities, take care of our needs and aspirations and that of others. Acting with love is part of what allows us to connect with the children, despite difficulties we may face. It is also what drove me to care to write these

words as a mean to further understand and develop my practice. It can be embodied in all instances of an educational praxis, from caring to create possibilities to connect and support each other, to attending to all the small moments of disengagement, or vulnerability, as in the instance with Eylül that I mentioned above. It is part of caring to not just do what is expected, of attempting to stay open to being affected, being present to the participants' needs, experiences and feelings and adapting according to them. It also about providing individualized care, caring for what may be best suited for the emotional stability of an individual at a moment.

As educator Paulo Freire has stated, "it is impossible to teach without a forged, invented, and well-thought-out capacity to love" (Freire, 1998, as cited in Darder, 2011, p. 190). Only through love can teaching become transformative and liberating. He argued that we should do everything with feeling, dreams, wishes, fear, doubts, and passion, supporting that human emotion should be part of our educational praxis; mind and feeling should not be separated.

PLAY AS
AN INVITATION
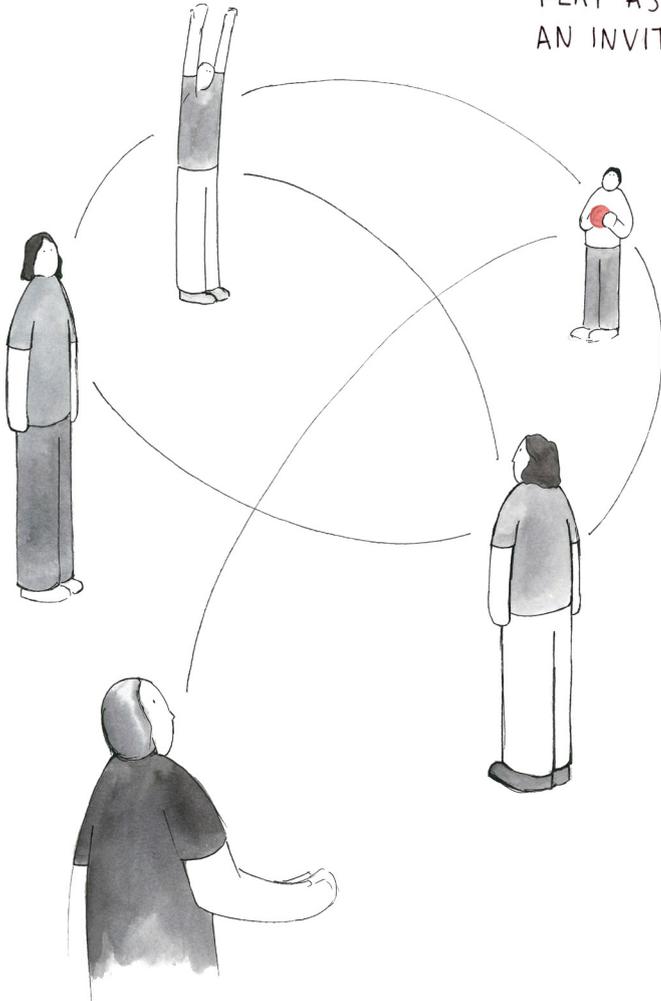
PLAY

After a session that took place in the end of April I wrote: today was very different. The reason behind this was that none of the children that usually participate in the sessions came. Instead, as new families had arrived at the azc (asylum seeker's center), four new children joined. Daniel also joined, who hadn't come to the sessions since months. It was such a beautiful session, with a warm atmosphere and many smiles. Apart from Daniel, the children didn't speak a word of Dutch of English.

As we started gathering, I saw Youssef from a distance, I waved at him and threw him a ball. We then started forming a circle between us, together with Floor and Rafik, who are co-facilitators, and Maryam and her mum, who happened to be in the azc and joined us for a bit. Slowly more children joined, and we moved to different games, getting to know each, connecting and sharing moments of joy through play and movement.

Through the TeamUp sessions we always aim to connect with the children through play. However, this session reminded me of the power play has. The joy it gives, in combination with movement, to me, the other facilitators and the children. It offers an immediate, natural invitation to participate and engage. I throw the ball to you and you catch it, you throw it to me, and I catch it. I catch the ball and I say my name. Who are you? We get to know each other through movement.

Especially in a context where we don't share a common language, play and movement allow us to

communicate and connect. It feels like it is an organic expression of being human. They generate joy naturally. Especially for children, play feels like an almost instinctive activity to engage in, moving without a certain goal in mind, just to enjoy. And there is so much learning happening there. We coordinate our movements in relation to the others, there is a need to look at each other, to acknowledge their presence and adapt according to it. It offers opportunities to validate each other, learn to respect one another, to release stress and feel joyful. I believe that there is a lot of value in sharing moments of joy, especially in a setting where there is a high sense of instability. As andrienne marree brown mentions in *Emergent Strategy* (2017), "shame makes us freeze and try to get really small and invisible, pleasure invites us to move, to open, to grow" (p. 15). Through the sessions we were trying to create a space where we can feel good together and celebrate and honour each one's presence. I see that play is a mean, an intention, a strategy that can allow us to create that or to move towards creating that.

Describing this session also brought me to mind an activity we did, in which two facilitators turn the rope and the children are trying to pass through. In the beginning, children are passing one by one, then two by two, then three by three and finally, depending on the group's size, they pass all together or in bigger groups than before. There is value in each of these moments in the game. First, a validation and a celebration of an individual movement of a participant: I see you and you made it, you passed the fast-turning rope. Then, a coordination of

CROSSING THE ROPE TOGETHER

a group of two. An exchange of looks, a respect for the other and a coordination of movements: we are holding hands, when shall we run? This pattern then multiplies, making the dynamic more challenging, but also more rewarding.

Through play we are also able to observe a lot about the children, their strengths or where they may need more support. At some sessions we could observe an increased sensitivity or tendency to clash, while at others we could notice more initiative-taking or an increased sense of cooperation among us and the children. For instance, at one session I could observe that they took the initiative of helping each other during a rope skipping game. The older children especially, were indicating during another child's turn, when they should jump. They sat and observed the turning rope carefully, and when the time was right, they shouted 'jump'.

In the context I am referring to, we engage in play in relation to movement and connecting to the body. I started questioning what makes us feel so joyful when engaged in playing and when we connect to our bodies through movement. Where does the power of play lie? How can we benefit from getting a deeper understanding of it?

In order to find answers to these questions I engaged in reading research around play. Play has been vastly investigated through history, offering various, many times contradictory perspectives. It is a term surrounded by confusion and is carrying several assumptions, such as that it is something that children do and adults don't or that it is always a fun and warm activity, as David Cohen in *The development of play* (2019) mentions. To meet the purpose of this research and because of the vastness of the research made on play I focused on understanding the definition, characteristics and reasons behind play.

Stuart Brown in his book *Play: how it shapes the brain, opens the imagination and invigorated the soul* (2009) underlines the difficulty of defining play because of how varied it is. Climbing a hill can be immensely enjoyable for one and absolutely boring and tiring for another. A second reason for this difficulty is its primal nature, being a preconscious and preverbal activity, with origins in "ancient biological structures" (p. 15). It is a natural instinct we are born with. Although it appears purposeless, it is useful otherwise it wouldn't have been maintained through our evolution (Brown & Vaughan,

2009). It is how we learn as children, understand what is socially acceptable and what not, and develop our major personal understanding of the world. In addition, it is a way children tend to express and process anxieties (Cohen, 2019).A concise definition of play has been coined by the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga (1955), who summed up his definition of play as follows:

> "Play is a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner". (Huizinga, 1955, as cited in Brown & Vaughan, 2009, p. 20)

A fuller understanding can be gained by reading a description of properties of play. According to Stuart Brown (2009), they are the following:

> Apparently purposeless: done for its own sake, without a practical end goal in mind.
> Voluntary: it is not obligatory.
> Inherent attraction: it is an activity that is fun, it generates joy.
> Freedom from time: we lose sense of time.
> Diminished consciousness of self: we get in a 'flow' experience, a term that Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has coined.

Improvisational potential: we don't stick to a fixed way of doing things, which introduce us to "new behaviours, thoughts, strategies, movements, or ways of being".
Continuation desire: we want to keep playing and are eager to change rules and conditions in case something interrupts the process and the fun related to it. (Brown & Vaughan, 2009, p. 19)
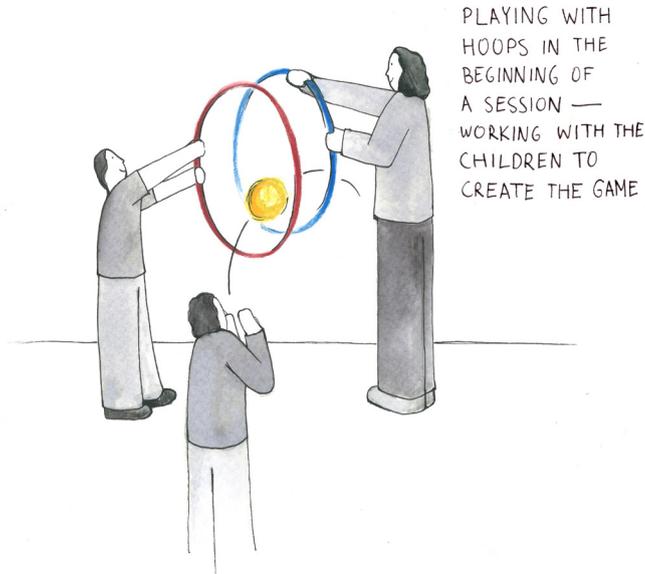
Reading the properties of play, moved me to reflect on how we structure activities. For instance, the importance of having rules, boundaries of time and space, but at the same time allowing flexibility and improvisation, by inviting participants to think of different rules or have activities that allow for improvisation and initiative taking to take place. I was also reminded of the importance of maintaining voluntarily participation, leaving it up to children whether they would like to participate in the activities or not, and of the value of observing the children, seeing what makes them feel engaged, and inviting them to share suggestions to change rules or conditions so that we can continue playing.

At the same time, reading the definition and properties of play also made me relate to the difficulty of defining it. Firstly, because I cannot claim that the activities we engage in with the children are always falling under the criteria and properties suggested. I cannot tick all the boxes, and if I would I could do so only in relation to my own personal experience and not in behalf of the other participants. I also became aware of the tendency

to romanticize play and present only its enjoyable and light aspect, without considering critical behaviors that can be observed through play. Furthermore, I believe that it is difficult to understand play if we don't bring to mind the feeling we experience when playing. The joy we feel, the loss of the sense of time and the eagerness to stay involved. A feeling that can be shared, but is at the same time personal and subjective, left to each one's individual experience. This relates to the work of Milhaly Csikszentmihaly, who states that "of all patterned human activities, play is supposed to depend least on external incentives" and that when engaged in play we enter a state of 'flow' (Csikszentmihaly, 2014, p. 135). He describes flow as follows:

"Flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement. It is the kind of feeling after which one nostalgically says: 'that was fun,' or 'that was enjoyable.' It is the state in which action follows upon action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part. We experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future." (Csikszentmihaly, 2014, p.136)

Play is not synonymous to flow. Although we can claim that some play activities can invite a sense of flow,

PLAYING WITH HOOPS IN THE BEGINNING OF A SESSION — WORKING WITH THE CHILDREN TO CREATE THE GAME

HOOPS EXCHANGE IN THE BEGINNING OF A SESSION

we cannot state that it is always present through them, nor that it is limited to them. Yet, we can structure activities in a way that can allow participants to enter a sense of flow. Play and creative activities are related to offering opportunities to enter such state and understanding the conditions that can allow someone to enjoy an activity for its own sake can help us consider how they are structured. However, I find important to highlight that the same activity is experienced differently by various individuals at different times and spaces and with different affects present. Therefore, there is not a universal approach that
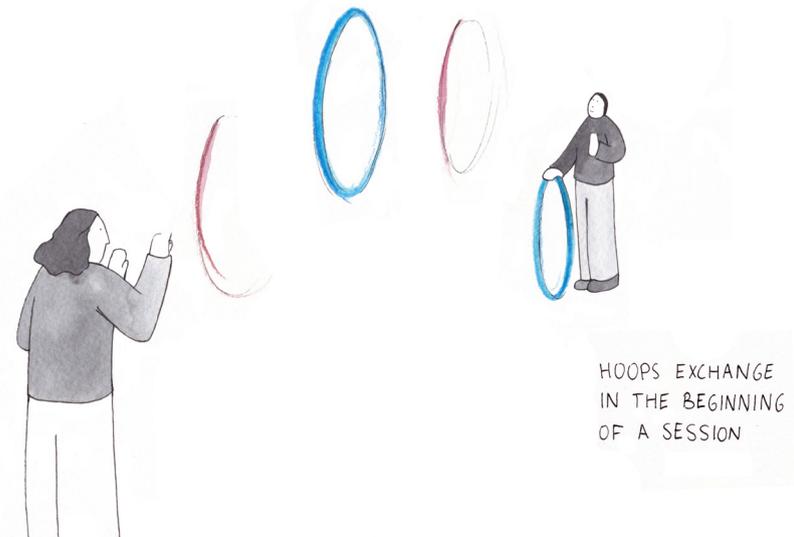
'works'. Entering a flow experience is relative, subjective, personal. We can only consider conditions that encourage it.

Through this conversation with theory, and by seeing the difficulty of defining play and its emotional side, I am left with the importance of having the intention to move through play, acknowledging its affective value, but also that it is experienced differently from individual to individual. I see it as a way to learn from each other and to enjoy, but also as a means through which anxieties of the children can be expressed, observed and cared for.

MOVEMENT
AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

We were with thirteen children, plus one mother with a younger child. It was a combination of children who had been coming regularly through the past months, three children that started coming in the last three weeks, and Farida who came for the first time. I was trying to speak in my limited Arabic to communicate some things to the children who don't speak any English or Dutch. Amina and Naya helped me communicate, and Youssef, Farida and Khaled were correcting me when I spoke. This created a very positive connection between us, especially with Farida, who was coming for the first time. With time, we all came together and after some warm-up activities we played sticky toffee. Sticky toffee is a game loved by most of the children, that we were playing now two times in a row. The game goes as follows: someone is chosen to be the sticky toffee. All the other children need to run from the one side of the field to the other and the sticky toffee has to try and catch them. Once caught, that person is stuck to the sticky toffee by joining hands and together they have to run off and catch the other children. This pattern continues and with time the sticky toffee chain grows bigger, from being composed by one person to being a large group of children. What is valuable about this game is that the sticky toffee needs to work together, its members need to keep holding hands and decide on who they want to catch. Otherwise they cannot win.

FORMING A CHAIN DURING STICKY TOFFEE

DECIDING WHO TO CATCH DURING STICKY TOFFEE

YOUSSEF COUNTING
DURING STICKY TOFFEE

This time, as we had played this game a few times already, things were going smoother. There was less of pulling of hands and less splitting of the group in comparison to the times before. There was running, smiles, laughter.

While we were playing, I was holding Youssef's hand, as we initially had the role of the chasers. In the beginning I was giving the signal for everyone to start running. In the next round I invited him to count instead of me. He smiled and counted using his hands and saying the numbers in Dutch. He also came several times at the end of the session to say goodbye again

and ask when we are coming again, initiating a clap of hands and a question. Naya also took initiatives through the session, suggesting us how we play a hoop game differently, while she and Amina chose not to participate during the rope game this time. Movement and play made this possible.

In our sessions, we engaged in movement and connecting to our bodies through play. I find it almost impossible to disconnect play from movement in the context I am referring to. This moved me to look into embodiment, nonverbal communication and the relation between physical movement, mental health and social behaviour.

In her book *The joy of movement: how exercise helps us find happiness, hope, connection and courage*, Kelly McGonigal (2021) explains how physical movement can contribute positively to our mental health and help us connect with one another. In particular, she explains how exercise can help us feel joyful because of its connection to human instincts, as we engaged with life, interacted with the world and ensured our survival through physical activity. As she mentions, "human beings are hardwired to take pleasure in the activities, experiences, and mental states that help us survive" (McGonigal, 2021, p. 13). She brings into discussion "the runner's high", the feeling that is felt after a physical activity that requires some effort. An elevated mood, a bliss, a connection to life and to others, to being alive. This relates to Rae Johnson's (2018) description of the feeling of reclaiming the "body as a source of creative

power" (p. 71). It can be understood as what Csikszent-
mihalyi (1997) has called flow or psychologist Abraham
Maslow an "experience of embodied power as a peak
experience", while in Buddhism it might be referred to
as waking up, in connection "to its particular qualities of
clarity, energy, and engaged yet broadened perspective"
(Johnson, 2018, p.71).

       Conceptually, this is connected to an under-
standing of body/mind/environment as unified aspects
that form a utilitarian whole. In contrast to the primal
and Eastern conceptions of the body/mind as unified
aspects, western philosophy, with roots in the Hellenic
intellectual tradition, is based on a separation between
body and mind, according to which the rationality and
cognitive skills are emphasized, while the importance
of one's bodily experience is devalued. On the other
hand, accepting that body and mind work together
means acknowledging that our inner world, including our
internal biological activity as well as our feelings, ideas,
and imagination, is integrally connected with the outer
environment. It means acknowledging that the mind is
not separate and that it is influenced through the body
(Johnson, 2018). More concretely, according to Lakoff
and Johnson (1999) thought, speech, and abstract con-
ceptualization emerge from our embodied experience.
They argue that the subjective felt experience of the body
forms a significant aspect of the grounding of cognition
and language (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). I believe that
this is well understood by reading Ray Johnson's expla-
nation of a somatic approach:
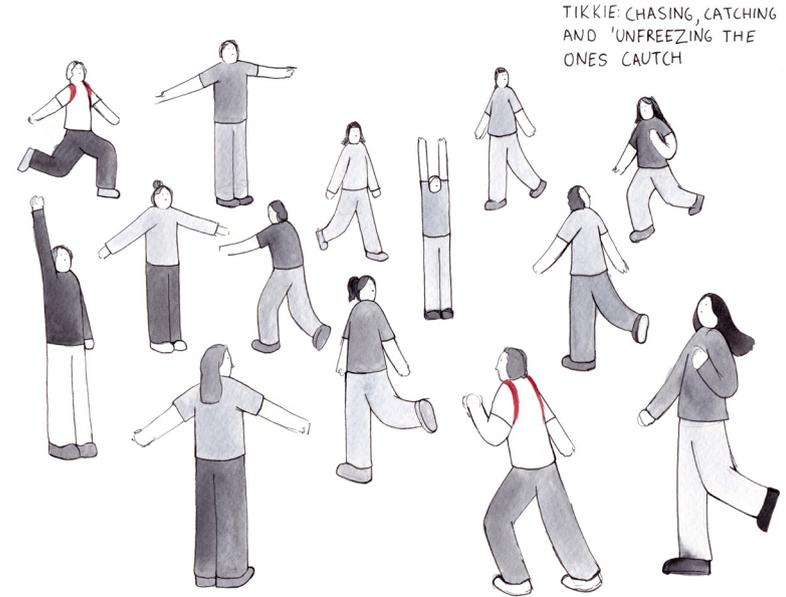
TIKKIE: CHASING, CATCHING
AND 'UNFREEZING THE
ONES CAUTCH

"A somatic perspective understands that a change in
one aspect of our experience affects all the others.
Our perceptions of the external environment affect
our perceptions of the inner one. Shifts in physical
musculature create adjustments in our emotional
state. Changes in sensory phenomena inform chang-
es in cognitive perceptions, which, in turn, affect our
relationship to the environment. And, ultimately, our
engagement with the environment both forms and
informs reality". (Johnson, 2018, p. 90).

Therefore, movement and changes in our bodily environment can directly influence the way we feel. This brought me to mind moments from our sessions. We always facilitate a different variation of a chasing game as a first main activity, that involves running and cooperation. I cannot recall a time that I didn't experience joy personally, but also collectively, while running with the group. I felt connected to my body, an elevated mood and empowered that I can facilitate an engagement for others. I also see that, most of the times, it impacts the children positively, with their initial mood positively shifting, during the time of running, freeing and chasing one another. We experience moments of collective joy.

Movement can bond us and help us build trust among us, even if we don't know each other, or are unable to hold a conversation. Kelly McGonigal (2021) analyses this effect through presenting psychological and neuroscientific research. Moving in unison has roots in our need to work with others to survive. It is a way we come together and can it make us feel a sense of belonging. Feeling joy collectively is part of this. This happens especially during activities that we synchronise our movements, which brought to me to mind the feeling experienced when we sing together, move with a similar pattern or mirror each other's movements.

The social dimension of embodiment has also been researched by Rae Johnson (2018), who asserts that the lived experiences of our bodies are a means of how we understand the world and have a social and a political dimension. As to Johnson, our embodied experience is

also a social experience and is of a relational nature. This means that our body signals are a response to others' and vice versa. Reading this made me consider my own body language through the sessions with the children, attempt to be conscious of it and reflect on it. What am I communicating through my body posture and facial expressions? How do we respond to each other's nonverbal language?

Additionally, she mentions that, while navigating interpersonal relationships and learning about the characteristics associated with different groups of people, "our bodies help to create and maintain the power dynamics that can arise between us – for instance, by signalling dominance or submission through our gestures and eye contact" (Johnson, 2018, p. 1). We are interdependent, we respond and adapt according to the others' embodied presence, without always being aware of it. Johnson also holds that, through somatic education, we can make changes in our nonverbal communication, which can in turn increase our personal agency. This made me think of the learning that can happen through moving with others. We experience and learn through the relational nature of embodiment, both in a positive and negative sense. Being invited and accepting to take space or improvise can be empowering, while being excluded from a circle can be limiting. In a group setting, through movement activities we can learn to work with each other, respect each other's limits, and communicate our own.

Reflecting on the learning aspect and the relational nature of embodiment also made me see

the importance of observing the body language of the children. For instance, in a session that a new group of children joined us, I recall Youssef who started looking at us and was hesitant to join in the beginning of the session. His facial expressions changed a lot from the moment he engaged; he started smiling and his body posture gradually moved from being hesitant to moving freely. He steadily took up more space during the activities and took initiatives to explain to his brothers what he understood that we will do. Similarly, behaviours such as distancing oneself from a circle, being hesitant to take a turn or showing disengagement, can move us to provide individual care or adapt activities accordingly.

Being conscious of one's body language and the others' was part of the intention I carried to be affected by what is emerging through the research and through my interaction with the participants. Being present is an inseparable part of such a process. Presence can be described as "the ability to attend, observe, and listen to the client/student, the environment, and especially oneself" (Johnson, 2018, p. 95). Besides learning to observe what is happening around oneself, it includes interoceptive awareness, honouring what is happening within oneself (Johnson, 2018). Apart from observing, there is a value in 'feeling the room', connecting to the collective emotion experienced, and practice humility to see if we need to adjust according it. In affect theory this is referred to as feeling the atmosphere of a space, the 'transmission of the affect', which is felt by the individual. This is something that we only experience when connect

to our own emotions and sensations (Truman, 2022, p. 82).

While writing this, I acknowledge that I am lacking somatic training, and the skills and the knowledge entailed in that. I am also aware of the fact that the specific group of children may have experienced traumatic events. However, the purpose of the sessions is not to therapize, but to bring moments joy and strengthen the resilience of the children, while offering a way to identify whether they are in need of further support by relevant professionals. Through this conversation with theory, I became more aware of the power of movement and became more attuned to observing the children's body language and adapt accordingly. I also grew more conscious of my own body language, started reflecting on what it communicates and honouring more what is happening within me. It became a process that allowed me to be more present, embrace educational moments more fully and be able to recognise and attribute attention to what is emerging during the research events.

MULTIPLE LANGUAGE USE

Me, and the other facilitators, Frank and Floor, decided to invite the children to count in their own languages during our rope skipping activity. We had previously tried this strategy, but this time we decided to create a system that every time, after one has jumped, takes the turn to count while the next child is jumping. Maryam proposed to come to the front and count, before we asked her if she wanted to. She enthusiastically said that she will count in Arabic and she smiled. Frank told her, 'you are allowed to count in any language you want'. She came up with the idea of counting in all the different languages she knows and created a mix of English, Arabic and Dutch. 'Wahad-Twee-Three-Twee-Thalata'. I felt that it was very validating for her that she could share and combine all the languages she knows. After her it was Hassan's, Ahmad's and Fares' turn, who chose to count in English. Alya didn't understand directly that she can count in Turkish while someone was rope skipping. I explained to her another time that she could count for us, which she understood and did so in the next rope-skipping round. She looked at me and smiled. She repeated the words patiently, as I was trying to pronounce them correctly. We were able to create an exchange which wouldn't be otherwise easily possible. And I learned from her. Üç: that is how many jumps Deniz did. Three. After that it started raining. Everyone started running home. We waved and gave our covid-friendly, shoulder to shoulder goodbyes.

This experience made me think of the validation that comes with inviting the children to share with us knowledge they already possess and attempt to learn from them. In this case, this could take place through sharing words from languages they speak. It also made me see the importance of opening up the space to all languages, not limiting them to using necessarily their mother languages. Through my experience of working with emergent multilingual children, I see that encouraging them to use their first language can create moments of validation, bringing them in touch with a language and culture they most intimately know. However, the children many times mix languages. Also, I observed in other sessions, that they sometimes faced difficulties recalling

'WAHAD, TWEE, THALATA'

some words or they preferred not to share words in their primary language. This is important to acknowledge, as I believe that all approaches should be adapted according to the participants. It is not about finding 'a solution' that works for everyone.

To get a further understanding of how language may affect children's experience of relocation, identity and the safeguarding of their human rights and dignity, scholars refer to the concept of 'transnationality'. "Transnational migration is taking place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants' simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society" (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, p. 131). This illustrates what García et al. (2006) name 'being in the middle' or having a 'double vision', an ability gained through experiences of making sense and settling in different locations and the critical orientation towards them that develops. Part of this is the moving through diverse linguistic ecologies, "developing strategic, dynamic and adaptive communicative repertoires" and navigating "the borders and boundaries of language and linguistic identity" (Van Viegen, 2020, p. 63). Contemporary understandings of language move away from its static conceptions. Instead, they advocate for a hybridity of languages, which extends beyond simple code-switching. As García et al. (2006) argue, "it is more a systematic, strategic, affiliative, and sense-making process…" (p. 34).

Therefore, allowing and encouraging the use of multiple languages at the same time can create more opportunities to validate the way the children already

communicate and make meaning. It can facilitate an approach that values the knowledge and skills the children already have, providing a focus on their assets and strengths instead of aspects they are perceived to lack in. This makes me see the importance of seeing the children as multilingual, or as potentially multilingual, instead of primarily monolingual. It stresses for finding ways that allow for fluid language practices to emerge, to acknowledge and honour diverse voices and ways of communicating, to celebrate the knowledge the children already possess and their multilingual abilities.

These insights also take us to the concept of translanguaging. Translanguaging is described as "the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state languages)" (García, 2017, p.17). Translanguaging was developed by minoritized bilingual communities out of the need to respond to the needs of diversity. Based on the idea that language is not a structure but an activity, it goes beyond national languages and challenges ideologies of homogeneity and traditional ideas about languages as entities. It recognizes that language is usually tied to a nation state and provides a shift through supporting that language belongs to the speaker, moving away from the static conception of language and allowing for fluid language practices to emerge (García, 2017). The concept of translanguaging is a move away from the monolingual paradigm and towards multilingualism.

This also brings into discussion the idea of the 'mother tongue' as being the central point centre of the monolingual paradigm, as analysed by Yildiz (2012). She proposes that the constellation between 'mother' and 'language', suggests a singular, affective and close relationship to our primary language, created through the connection to a mother's body, with the organic nature and uniqueness this relation entails. This also forms a narrative around identity and descent, underlining our belonging to a certain static nation. Moving towards multilingualism includes challenging this idea about the 'mother tongue'.

In order to get a deeper understanding of the debates around language, I engaged in a process of historicization through looking at the work of Yildiz (2012). Looking into the roots of what formed these ideas can help us get a deeper understanding of the present, acknowledge what needs to be changed and allow us to imagine and engage in practices that are more liberating. As Maxine Greene (1988) contends in *The Dialectic of Freedom*:

"If we're seriously interested in education for freedom as well as for the opening of cognitive perspectives, it is also important to find a way of developing a praxis of educational consequence that opens the spaces necessary for there making of a democratic community. For this to happen, there must of course be a new commitment to intelligence, a new fidelity in communication, a new regard to imagination. It would

mean the grant of audibility to numerous voices seldom heard before and, at once, an involvement with all sorts of young people being provoked to make their own the multilinguality needed for structuring of contemporary experience and thematizing lived worlds." (Greene, 1988, p. 127)

Thinking of these ideas brought me to mind a sign I saw during a walk around my neighborhood some months ago. I passed by a playground and stood to read the playground rules. It was in the evening, so it was dark and quiet, but still I could read them. Next to 'samen spelen' (playing together) and 'respect hebben' (having respect) there was a rule whose explanation was severely scratched. Yet I could read 'we praten alleen nederlands' (we speak only dutch).

As Yildiz (2012) claims, multilingualism has been getting increasing attention in the past years. Yet, this is a relatively new development, as a monolingual paradigm is what has been prevalent since late eighth century Europe. I find that the attempt to move towards multilingualism within the presence of a monolingual paradigm, as presented by Yildiz, is in a way depicted through this playground rules sign; the scratches present this new development, yet the framework within which it takes place is still very present.
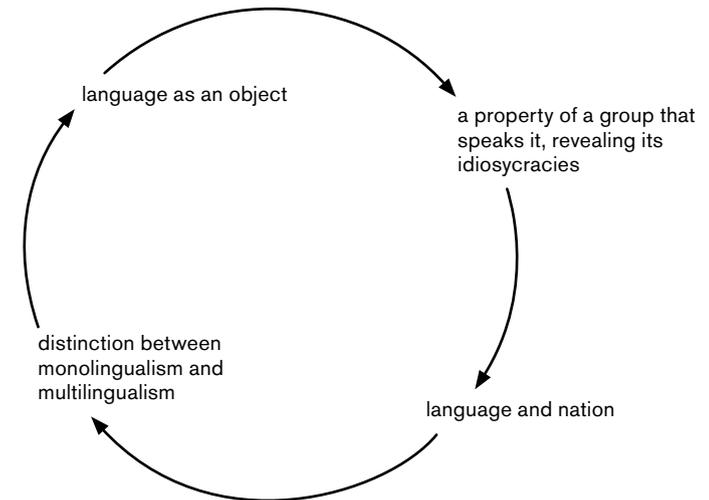
Monolingualism is not merely the encouragement and presence of only one language. Instead, as Yildiz (2012) mentions, "it constitutes a key structuring principle that organizes the entire range of modern social

life, from the construction of individuals and their proper subjectivities to the formation of disciplines and institutions, as well as of imagined collectives such as cultures and nations" (p. 2). Across history, monolingualism acted to disguise and prohibit multilingual practices, starting from Europe and continuing into the colonies. It is a paradigm that is strongly affiliated with a certain western view about language, identity and modernity, supporting that humans, along with their social formations own one 'true' language, their mother language, which naturally links them to a certain, clearly defined ethnicity, culture, and nation.

Through history, the paradigm also led to processes of monolingualization, multiplying the presence of monolingualism across subjects, communities, and institutions (Yildiz, 2012). A historical example that manifests this is that of eighteenth-century France, where at the time a big percentage of the population did not speak French. However, with time, mainly interventions into schooling, turned the population into being largely monolingual.

This example also manifests the strong link between the modern nation-state and the monolingual paradigm; they are interdependent of one another and emerged at the same time. This idea is connected to the conception that language is an object that can be acquired, that it is "a clearly demarcated entity that has a name, is countable, and is the property of the group that speaks it, while also revealing that group's idiosyncrasies" (Yildiz, 2012, p. 7). Following this, monolingualism

created the idea that the natural norm was having a single language, and that multiple languages could be a threat to the consistency of individuals and communities. Therefore, it was believed that, languages cannot be mixed, cannot co-exist and flow into one another, as this would pose a threat to their integrity. Following this, being in a specific country means speaking the dominant language. This idea has been practiced (and many times still is) in second language classrooms and contexts where non-dominant languages were spoken, by permitting only the dominant language, possibly as a way to learn the language faster. Just like the playground rule instructed the children to do.

language as an object

a property of a group that speaks it, revealing its idiosyncracies

language and nation

distinction between monolingualism and multilingualism

VULNERABILITY AND TRUST BUILDING

Eylül said 'mavi' loudly, while jumping over the rope. The previous week we made a switch in the rope with colours game we sometimes play, giving the children, one at a time, a chance to share how a colour is called in another language they speak, which we all call while jumping over the rope. This time Eylül took the initiative to share the word in Turkish without us asking her to do so. We showed the colour blue and she immediately called 'mavi', showing increased enthusiasm in comparison to the other sessions that she usually remained silent. I felt that asking the children to share words from their primary languages had started opening up the space to different languages, which Eylül showed through initiating such an action during this session.

Amanuel, coming for the first time, could also engage. After we called 'mavi', the Turkish word for blue, he also shared how it is called in his own language. Although we did not share a common language, he could understand what we asked him through the doing and the actions of the other children. He then showed a part of his t-shirt and said how the colour is called in his primary language. Eylül and Alya also shared what it is called in Turkish, which allowed us to identify and distinguish the languages. Alya learned that the language she is speaking is called Turkish, Amanuel shared that he uses a language spoken in Erithea. Alya was also enthusiastic to share how pink called in her mother language, pointing at Eylül's shoes.

At some point, Eylül distanced herself from the activity and sat on the grass. I went and sat next to her and, after making sure she is okay, I asked her if she count in her language, while another child was jumping over the rope. I tried to learn the numbers from her; bir, iki, üç, (...). It was a way to engage with her. It created an opportunity to connect and interchange that otherwise would not be there. After a few moments she joined the game again.

This also reminded me of another workshop within De Vrolijkheid, during which we were creating storyboards. Yousra, who spoke limited English and Dutch, looked at the empty boxes of the storyboard sheet we had shared and stayed still for several moments. I sat next to her and shared with her some words in Arabic. That seemed to have helped her get started with the storyboard and she continued individually without my guidance.

These experiences made me question how inviting the children's language practices can support us in moments of disengagement and vulnerability. Can asking the children to share words in their languages help us create more reciprocity in our interactions? How can learning some words from the children's language help in such situations?

Through the time, sessions and workshops with the children I acknowledged that such practices can sup-port us, but it depends on the situation, people involved, the conditions and affects present. I don't claim the willingness to reengage that Eylül or Yousra showed as

a 'victory' from my side, as I am sceptical of pedagogies presenting the turn of a student's no to a yes, especially in a context with such power dynamics. However, I am interested in learning and understanding what practices may allow us to facilitate more possibilities and move us past challenges we face. Reading about facilitation in *Holding Space (*2021) by andrienne marree brown, helped me navigate my thoughts around this. While explaining what facilitation is, she mentions:

> "Facilitation is a way of listening through and beyond the words being spoken, feeling for the current of longing underneath what can be spoken, listening through the fear, listening through the scar tissue: What is possible? What is the next step towards that possibility? Facilitation is also about being the grounding presence in the room. […] Don't get caught up in playing favorites or making the participants compete for your attention. Don't cross boundaries, and if, when, you do, be accountable and re-establish the lines. As the facilitator, you need to be a presence that the whole room can trust–trust to be present, on time, on purpose, trust to be a neutral person to whom anyone in the room can bring concerns, feedback, and ideas" (brown, 2021, p. 93).

This underlines once again the importance of learning to be present to feel the different affects and respond accordingly. And the value of building trust. andrienne marree brown mentions that "trust is built in

small gestures and vulnerabilities" (brown, 2021, p. 96). I found this of great value, as it is something I could recognize in my practice. It is something that made me rethink what we attribute attention to, to question again what matters. We build trust in experiences with others, where there is room to show part of our true selves. I see trust building when we are there in moments such as the ones shared with Eylül and Yousra, where we are able to offer one to one attention. Being there and offering one's presence and support at moments of vulnerability was important. A moment of offering intimacy, deep and respect strengthened the trust between us. Their reaction showed that it affected them positively, while I feel that it had a positive impact on the interactions that would follow. Facilitating such a practice means being there to listen to things said with words or left unsaid, making tasks smaller when needed, attending to the needs of the group or of members of the group, and being present to notice and celebrate small victories.

 Apart from being there in moments that the children may feel vulnerable, part of allowing for trust to be built is being open to show one's own vulnerability. As I am writing this, I am reminded of moments that I was able to show my own vulnerability or need of support and the effect this had. For instance, I recall showing being tired and dizzy while turning the skipping rope during an activity. Amina came and took the initiative to take my role, I showed her my gratitude and through such a small gesture we shared a moment of connection and trust. Seeding trusting relationships also takes place in

small gestures of giving the role to a child/children to lead or take over a task, practicing humility and letting go of being in control. It is a practice that creates room for one another and allows us to show our own needs and vulnerabilities. In terms of language use, such a practice also took place when I asked for children to help me or teach me different words in other languages they speak or in Dutch, a language that I am still not fluent in. Without being humble, without embracing vulnerabilities we cannot change, we cannot let go off and embrace what is emerging.

 I hold on to and I am learning from the notion "trust the people, they become trustworthy—or the necessary boundaries become clear" (brown, 2017, p. 17). Deciding to create room to trust others, allows them to be trustworthy. It is a practice that can create more trust between us.

 I cannot underestimate the value time has in this process. Building trust among group members, but also being a presence people in a group can trust requires time, just like relationship building requires time. Within this, language sharing becomes a practice, part of moving with the intention to foreground relationship building, build trust and practice presence. It becomes a possibility to move towards this intention.

HOW WE CHANGE (THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SMALL AND LARGE)

One day, before a TeamUp session, I had an interaction with Alya and Eylül, that I found very memorable. Eylül was eating a candy and I asked her what it is called in Turkish. She and Alya looked at me and said directly, with a sense of proudness, how it is called in Turkish. I was holding a pen and a paper, where I was meant to write the names of all the children attending. I explained to them what I was doing and showed them the fluorescent green pen I happened to have. After this exchange, Eylül asked for my pen and paper and wrote her name in Turkish, saying that this is how her name is written (mijn in turks), with an addition of the two dots over the 'u'. She smiled as she was showing it to me. Alya then had the idea of using my back to write something on the paper. She asked for the pen and paper and we created a playful moment that she was trying to draw on the paper while placing it on my back (I am quite taller than her).

She drew a house, which they both showed and told me how it is called in Turkish, repeating patiently to help me learn it. Alya then drew us, me and her, holding hands and smiling. Eylül then also wanted to draw. She drew two hands and wrote 'liv' next to them, eager to teach me the word. We were then called to start our session, our collective playing. We ran to join the circle.

I found very beautiful to observe how small actions of encouraging the children to take initiative in teaching us their languages created a larger shift in our

EYLÜL & ALYA
DRAWING

interactions. This moment of sharing took place after adjusting the activities to invite a sharing of more languages.

This pattern continued. The day after I came to the goodbye party of de Vrolijkheid. When I came, Eylül and Alya came to me and hugged me. Through the course of the event, as I was feeling quite tired, I sat on the floor. Eylül saw me sat next to me while smiling and called Alya while pointing at me. They both sat next to me, with Alya holding a big monkey. They taught me how different things were called in Turkish most of them by taking the initiative

themselves, such as, of course, monkey.

This is only one example that demonstrates how I felt that small interventions or gestures to invite the children's languages actually opened up the space to a sharing of languages. It invited many children to take initiative to share and teach us something through the sessions that would follow. I feel that small changes, a different way of doing something can move us towards the formation of a larger change. In this case, asking them to teach us led to the opening up of the space to learn from each other and move closer to creating more reciprocity in our relationships.

This brought me andrienne marree brown's *Emergent Strategy* (2017) in mind. In the process of explaining what emergent strategy is, she mentions:

> "together we must move like waves. Have you observed the ocean? The waves are not the same over and over—each one is unique and responsive. The goal is not to repeat each other's motion, but to respond in whatever way feels right in your body. The waves we create are both continuous and a one-time occurrence. We must notice what it takes to respond well. How it feels to be in a body, in a whole—separate, aligned, cohesive. Critically connected" (brown, 2017, p. 13).

Like a small wave that led to different unique and responsive waves, I felt that inviting the children to teach us something, lead to a larger shift in how

we interacted with one another. But what is emergent strategy? What can it teach us about the relationship between small changes and the larger impact we want to make and can see manifesting? "Emergence is the way complex systems and patterns arise out of a multiplicity of relatively simple interactions", while strategy describes planning and acting towards a goal (brown, 2017, p. 6). Combining these two words describes a movement, a way of acting towards creating the world we would like to see through relatively simple interactions. It describes a way of intentionally changing the relationship with ourselves, others and the world "to grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for" (p. 17). *Emergent strategy* stems to a large extent from andrienne marree brown's experience as a facilitator for social justice movements and refers to facilitation in contexts with adults rather than children. Yet, its content largely resonated with me and my practice, as after all it is a book about how we interact with one another, how we approach change around us and how we transform ourselves and what we practice.

  Emergent strategy takes inspiration from biomimicry and permaculture. Learning points become elements of the natural world, such as ants, starlings and mycelium. Observing and learning from nature, led to conceiving strategies, that can be followed for the organisation of movements for justice and liberation through the use of relatively simple interactions to build complex patterns, systems, and transformations. These strategies include adaptation, interdependence and decentralization, fractal

SITTING WITH ALYA & EYLÜL

awareness, resilience and transformative justice, nonlinear and iterative change.

One of the elements of emergent strategy are fractals, patterns that are seen for instance in ferns and broccoli. A fractal is an object or quantity that displays self-similarity, meaning that it appears more or less the same at different scales. To further understand this, we can observe at the leaf of a fern. A similar pattern is followed throughout the whole plant. What we see in the small scale is also reflected on the larger scale, the whole is a mirror of the parts. This inspires us to see that "what we practice at the small scale sets the patterns for the whole system" (brown, 2017, p. 33). It is a call to see that small-scale solutions impact the whole system and to use similar principles to build at all scales.

In my time with the children, I found that small shifts in how we interacted with each other made a larger change in our relationships and in the way our sessions evolved. It is something that made me recalibrate what I attribute attention to during the research. Reading *Emergent Strategy* during this process inspired me look more closely to my practice and reflect more on the pedagogical actions I engage in and the choices I make. If I would like to see a world with justice, love, community, more space for different voices to be heard and listened to, what do I do that embodies this? How do I hold on to and practice the commitment of maintaining and building respect, reciprocity and responsibility in my relationships with the research participants?

For me this reflection meant practicing being

more present, to see that the nature of our (small) interactions matters, something that made me attribute attention to small moments and interactions and attempt to learn from them. It also meant practicing humility and learning to trust, allowing myself to show my vulnerability, our need for others and for change. Part of this also became allowing for more initiative-taking to take place, to create opportunities to learn from others. I saw these as steps I could take to relate respectfully to the other participants and create more reciprocity in our interactions.

All this became a process with its failures (and lessons) and successes. Yet, I see that celebrating and supporting each other for the small changes, shifts we are making is important. We can build on them.

CONFLICT AND MEDIATION

During one of the sessions there was an argument. We were repeating an activity for which the children had to create a queue. Selim held to the order that was created on the round before, while others thought that a new order is being made. Ahmad took Selim's turn and an argument emerged around who should be first. Selim left frustrated and he refused to join back in. We then discussed with the rest of the group what happened. Talking about the misunderstanding was met with calmness and understanding. When everyone saw Selim from a distance, they started calling him to come back to join the game. We continued playing, Selim returned and joined gradually back in.

      This an example of a moment of conflict that ended up with a restored sense of harmony. As through most human interactions, arguments, misunderstandings and conflict haven't been absent from our sessions. Many times, we have managed to mediate such conflicts. This incident made me think of the importance of working through conflicts and how such moments can actually make us come closer as a group. However, it also made me think of moments when it was not possible, when we could not really talk through a conflict situation and discuss because of an absence of a fluency in a common language. I remember for instance a session that Defne was taking part. At a moment there was a misunder-standing, she got frustrated, started crying and wanted to leave the session. I found myself in a position unable

CALLING SEMIR TO COME BACK
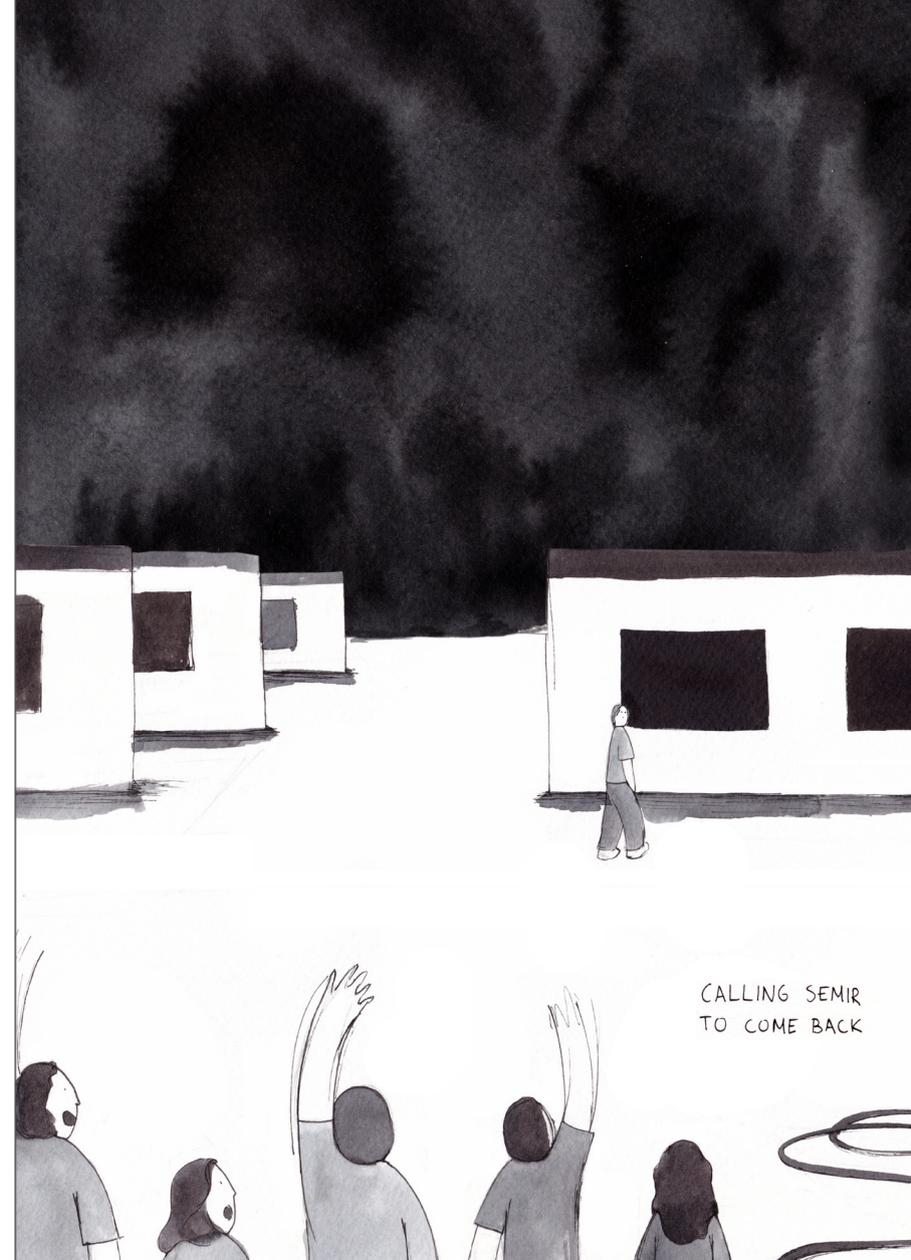
to explain and discuss with her as we didn't speak a common language. Any words I shared could not be understood. She left and joined us next week at the next session.

As andrienne marree brown mentions in *Emergent Strategy* (2017), "transformation doesn't happen in a linear way, at least not one we can always track. It happens in cycles, convergences, explosions. If we release the framework of failure, we can realize that we are in iterative cycles, and we can keep asking ourselves—how do I learn from this?" (brown, 2017, p. 60).

I have been looking back to this moment, thinking what I can learn from it. What could I have done differently? How can we resolve conflicts in such situations, what are practices and approaches that can support us in such moments? How do we hold them, especially when a language barrier is present?

I believe that as facilitators we hold the responsibility to restore harmony, whenever conflicts or disturbances occur. This should be a priority, always coming before moving to any further steps. The relationship with the participants always comes first. The words that I find important to reflect on are facilitation, and especially mediation. To facilitate is to guide, to make possible. To mediate is to hold a moment of tension and conflict. It happens when individuals get the support of a third party to address and navigate a dispute or misunderstanding, that has created between them.

Reading *Holding Change* (2021) helped me navigate my thoughts around what facilitation and media-

tion mean and how we can hold the space when tension or conflict arises. However, the book is created through reflections and lessons from her experience of holding space for movement workers, especially around social and climate justice. Therefore, there were aspects that resonated with the practice, specific age and context I was working in and others not. In the following lines I will refer to aspects that I found useful and combine and align them with my own thoughts.

Firstly, I want to underline the importance of creating the time and space to resolve conflicts. The white supremacist heteropatriarchy culture prioritizes efficiency above all, which may make us feel that there is somehow never enough time (brown, 2021). Although we can be aware of time, we can choose as facilitators to give time to what feels important and decide not to be controlled by it in this manner. According to *Holding Change*, mediation includes the following phases.

Surrender: acknowledging the need for mediation.
Landscape: all the parties involved can express what they see or feel about the conflict.
Listening: holding the space to allow the parties to listen to each other.
Negotiation: identifying what is required to move forward. Should apologies be made? Are (more) boundaries necessary?
Closure: Clearly stating what was agreed upon or what the next steps are.
(brown, 2021, p. 105)

Although these phases are referring to mediation in another context, I can see them taking place in the mediations within our time with the children. I see that following more or less the above structure is useful and can lead to resolutions. At the same time, I acknowledge that it is not and has not been always easy to follow because the absence of a common language between the facilitator/s and the parties involved. However, I feel that in such instances asking other children to translate or moving through simple language and body language can support us.

For instance in the example with Defne, I feel that it may have been needed to search for someone that could directly translate what she said. Alternatively, we could acknowledge the need and create space for mediation, through body language by creating a space outside the game to sit together, or by offering a time-out. These are of course possible scenarios I am speculating on for the future, unable to know how they would be received at the specific moment.

Furthermore, andrienne marree brown encourages us to be available and accountable after a conflict and mediation. Availability means not to disappear after a session, but to be there in case issues arise. For me, in practice it means checking with the parties individually after the session and/or being in the space a little longer to see if further support is needed. As accountability is concerned, it means taking steps to take responsibility if we individually caused harm during the facilitation or mediation. It may be needed to offer an apology, to make

amends, or to educate oneself.

I am also reminded of the importance of building trust through such situations, and of the impact the existent trust within the group has upon conflict situations. Trust is built through such moments of vulnerability. As facilitators we need to practice compassion, but at the same time be honest and clear.
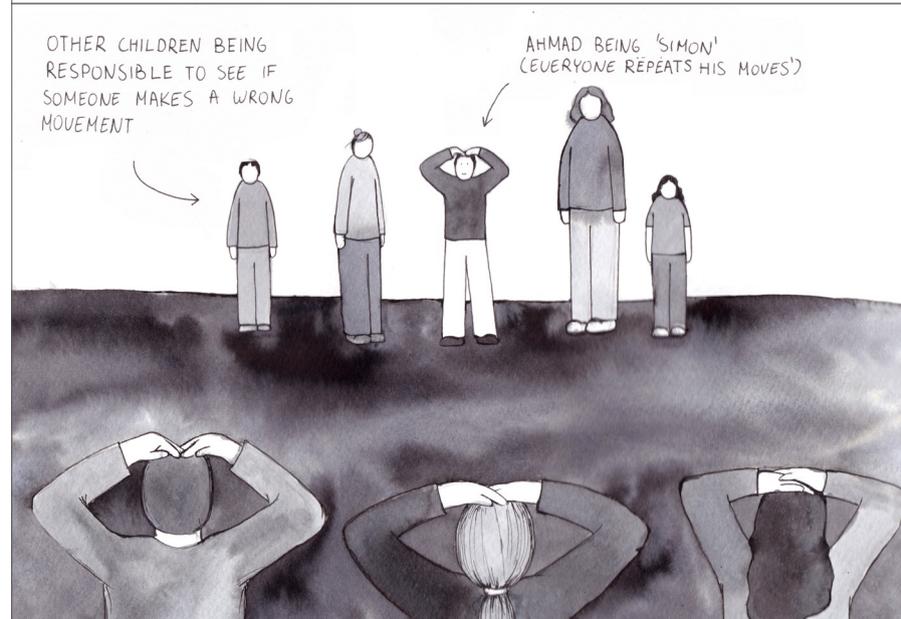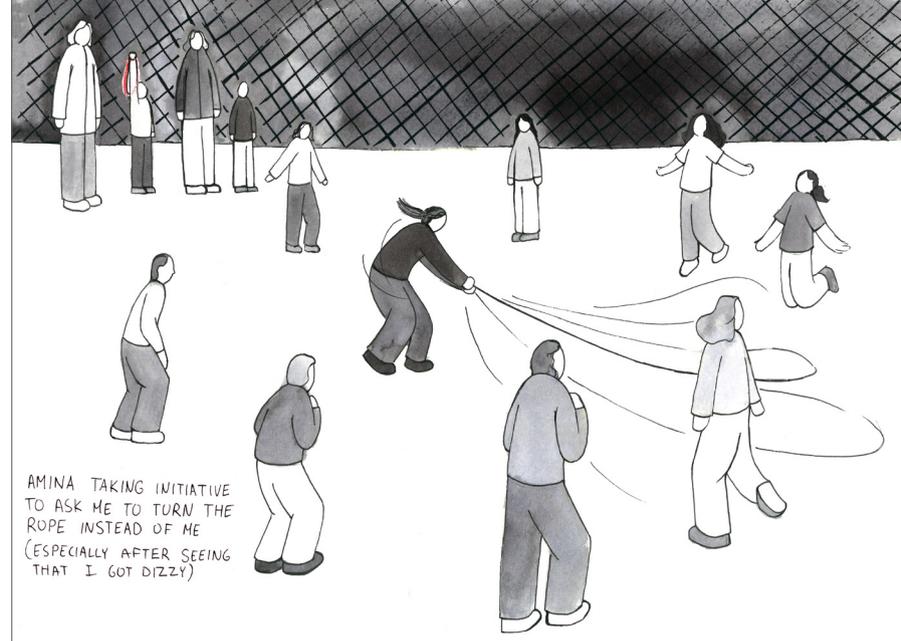
Writing and thinking through these events allowed me to be clearer about steps I want to take to mediate future conflicts and about the approach I am willing to have. However, at the same time, I feel that it is important to accept that things do not always depend on us as individuals. Sometimes although we may do our part, practicing our collective intentions and efforts, things may evolve in relation to the power dynamics, affects, and conditions at play. We can do our best but not everything can be controlled, not everything depends on us.
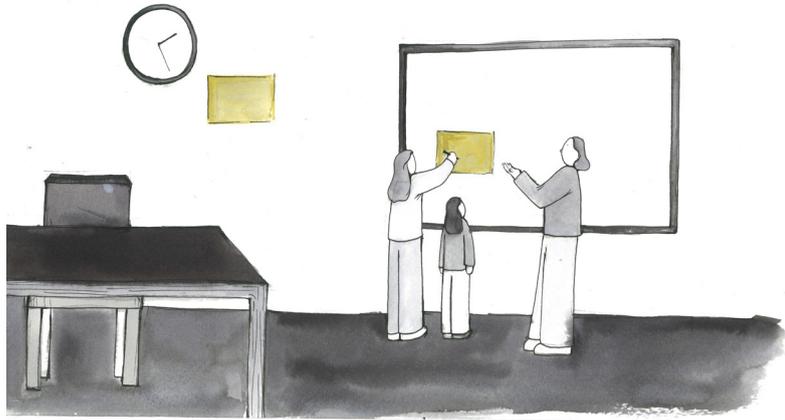
SWITCHING ROLES

The validation that I observed coming from asking the children to share words in their own languages made me think of how we can further facilitate these kinds of exchanges, that would allow us to learn from them, that would give them the role of teaching us something. Apart from facilitating more language sharing interventions during the movement-based activities with TeamUp, we started giving the children more responsibilities during the sessions, such as giving them the role of leading the moves in different activities, asking and listening to ideas to create adjustments, asking for help to set-up the space and giving them the rope during rope activities. I see this approach as part of being open to what is emerging; observing the effects of an 'intervention' and taking steps in the research in response to them.

Therefore, when given the opportunity to run two workshops with De Vrolijkheid, I wished to see how we can dive more into language sharing and how this can be facilitated in a classroom setting and through making activities. I planned to do this through creating zines with many languages during the first workshop.

It was holiday time and most of the children happened to be on an excursion. As a result, only three children and one adult took part in the first workshop. Before starting I asked them if they can see whether something is different in the space. I had tapped yellow papers on different objects around the room. 'We speak so many languages, I want to learn some words from

AMINA TAKING INITIATIVE TO ASK ME TO TURN THE ROPE INSTEAD OF ME (ESPECIALLY AFTER SEEING THAT I GOT DIZZY)

OTHER CHILDREN BEING RESPONSIBLE TO SEE IF SOMEONE MAKES A WRONG MOVEMENT

AHMAD BEING 'SIMON' (EVERYONE REPEATS HIS MOVES')

your languages'; this is how I decided to pose an invitation to start learning from them. I continued by going to the window and writing in Greek, my primary language, how it is called. Eva followed, as she started writing on the board what language she speaks: 'Russisch' (Russian). I then asked her how the board is called in Russian. After some thought and discussion with Katia, she found the right word and wrote it down. She also moved to the other papers without hesitation, writing how the different objects are called in Russian. Katia could not write in her language as she did not know the Russian alphabet. She participated through teaching us the words orally, but I felt that she was more hesitant than others because she could not write. This made me think of the importance of

SHARING WORDS IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES ON THE PAPER NEXT TO THE WALL

focusing on sharing the words orally and having writing only as an option, so that children that do not know how to write don't feel discouraged or excluded. I also feel that I could open up the space more to different languages, any languages the children know, so that Katia would also feel comfortable to share the word in Dutch, a language she knows how to write in. Since Dutch is not my mother language and my knowledge of the language is far from perfect, many times I was also learning Dutch words from them. Therefore, such a move would also enforce this sharing and learning from each other that was already subtly taking place.

Kerem joined us later. I invited him to engage in what we did, asking him initially if he noticed whether

something had changed in the space. When he understood the activity, he shared enthusiastically, at our first stop, how we call clock in Turkish: 'saat'. Chro could add by saying that it is the same in Arabic but with different letters. Kerem then moved around the different papers hanging around wrote and taught us how they are called in Turkish.

In each of these moments of sharing, teaching and learning, I could recognise a sense of proudness, a subtle smile and patience until I managed to repeat the word they were sharing and pronounce it correctly. All of them smiled and looked proudly as I asked them to tell me what they have written, taking the initiative to walk around different objects and teach us.

We then continued by coming back to the table to create our zines. I showed an example I had made to explain what a zine was. Inside I had drawn something and already written how it is called in Greek. I passed it around so that everyone could write and teach us how it is called in their language. Eva and Kerem shared and repeated the words till we could pronounce them correctly.

I had brought magazines, newspapers, and coloured papers, so that we could experiment with collage, as I was aware that it was a technique that they hadn't worked with before. This caused a lot of excitement. Katia flipped through the pages, saying once in a while 'kijk!' (look!). She gathered things she found interesting, glued them, completed them with drawing and wrote a kind of description of what she had created in Dutch. Kerem also showed enthusiasm while looking

into different magazines and cutting out different things he found interesting. He had a similar reaction when I asked him if he wanted to write how what he had glued on the zine was called in Turkish and teach us. Eva wrote in my zine how different things are called and shared how she calls different things in Russian. Through the workshop I was also engaged in making, aiming to be an active participant in the workshop, which allowed for a sharing of what we had created. In addition, I gave the children the role of taking pictures of what they felt that was important from what we did today. This was received very positively, however the camera had some technical issues and therefore we could engage fully in the activity.

KEREM SHARING HOW WINDOW IS CALLED IN TURKISH.

Although, I had thought that part of the workshop would be to ask each other how what they created is called in different languages, I felt that the children were not so interested in asking others and they were hesitant about letting others write in their zine. They were interested mostly in teaching us, which I felt that was very validating for them. This made me shift my focus during the workshop, attempting to create more possibilities for them to share instead of giving them the role of asking each other. As I was willing to allow for affects and gestures shared between us to influence and shape the scope the research, it also made me reconsider the focus of the next workshop. This observation and value I chose to give to it became part of being open to what is emerging through the process.

Also, what I can see from such exchanges of asking them to share and help us learn something, is that a connection and interchange is created that otherwise would not be there. I would argue, that creating such opportunities allow for a reciprocity to take place, that makes us come closer and move towards creating more respectful relationships. Through the duration of the workshop, Eva was willing to share and interact. We also had a discussion about what their favourite languages are, what languages do they speak, what language would you like to learn and they shared the words they know in Arabic and in English that they have learned from the other children -a conversation and exchange that I feel that the space for was created through the activities.

ASKING FOR WORDS IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES FOR MY OWN ZINE

KEREM WRITING AND SHOWING THINGS FROM HIS ZINE
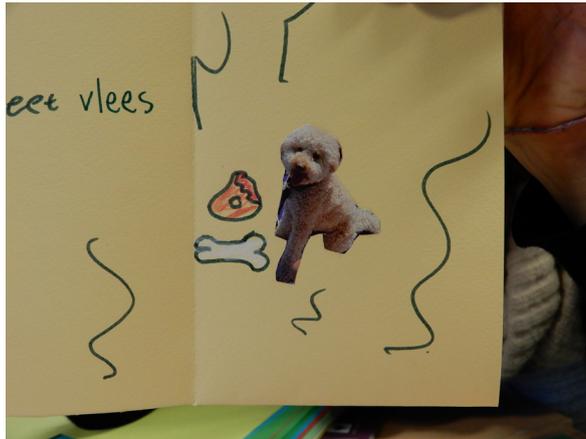
Picture of Katia's zine, taken by Eva

Picture of my zine, taken by Katia

NON-PARTICIPATION
AND INTENTIONAL ADAPTABILITY

For the second workshop I could do with De Vrolijkheid, I wanted to facilitate an opportunity for more children to work with collage, while adding materials that would still make it interesting for the children that already attended the first workshop. I proposed making small books using matchboxes, which could facilitate a language exchange, but also an openness to experiment. I adjusted the workshop plan in accordance to the evaluation of the first workshop. Therefore, I aimed to facilitate an oral sharing of different languages, a reflection on languages they know and or want to learn, which emerged through observing the interest they showed in the previous work-shop, a focus on learning from them and a larger incor-poration of play and movement. Before engaging in the booklet making, I wished to do some other introductory activities with the children. I had planned to start with the activity of naming the objects in the space as in the first workshop, but this time use small paper pieces (like stickers) instead of sheets of paper conditioned to write on. I would tape them on different objects around the space and also give them some, which they could tape on something to teach us how it is called in a language they know. Also, I had planned to facilitate the creation of a collective language portrait, taking inspiration from an activity used in multilingualism research (Kusters & De Meulder, 2019). We would draw a 'volunteer's' silhouette, think about all the languages we speak and draw them

on the silhouette using different colours. Questions I had in mind were:
-What languages do you speak?
-What colour/symbol would you give to this language?
-Where in the body is this language?
-What colour does it have?
-What languages do you want to learn?

I wanted these two activities to pose an invitation to share different languages, which could then be further facilitated through the creation of the mini-books with matchboxes. They were also a way for me to invite more play and movement.

Everything went certainly differently than I had planned. But yet the classroom became a place of pleasure, enjoyment, connection and learning from each other, which was the main goal. Just the means shifted, as we moved in accordance to the affects present.

Usually we start the workshops around 14.20-14.30, calling the kids to come if they want to after their school bus arrives at 14.15. This time I arrived at 13.45 and the children were already there, engaged in drawing individually on some big purple paper circles. This pre-vented me from preparing the space as I was planning to. Most importantly though, it meant that it was very hard to get their attention and ask them to do something differ-ent from what they were already doing. I went around and left next to each one of them a small orange paper. This got some of their attention; they started asking 'what is that?'. After everyone had a piece, I asked them to stick

it on something to teach us how they call it in a language they know. I aimed to use the paper pieces as something that could raise some curiosity. It could be used as an indicator of what they wanted to share, providing space for them to write on if they wished but not proposing it. Sharing orally allowed children to share their languages although they didn't know how to write in them, such as Maryam and Naya.

In the beginning, some of the children were hesitant to share as they felt that they weren't sure how something, in this case the cupboard we happened to be next to, is called in their primary language. I told them to share in Dutch, as I was not sure how it is called, a nice example showing the effect being not a fluent

Dutch speaker has; there are more opportunities to learn from them by asking them to teach me something. Naya shared that it is called 'kast' and Katia wrote it on a piece of paper.

I also asked them if in Arabic it is called 'doulap', which I happened to know because of my Egyptian dialect Arabic knowledge. Maryam said yes. Naya agreed, but then she became sceptical and said that in Syrian they call it differently. They both smiled. We also tracked similarities between Turkish and Arabic, as Naya and Maryam shared, after Eylül said how pencil is called in Turkish. Some of the children stood up and wrote in different languages on the papers I had given them. Selim went to the window, Fares to the chair, Zidan to

SEMIR SHARING HOW WINDOW IS CALLED IN TURKISH

the table and Katia to the wall, writing in Dutch and then trying to write in Russian.

Then, they returned to what they were doing. The reluctance in engaging in something else was felt across the space. I felt a heaviness and a tiredness in the room, which seemed like it affected everyone.
They resisted to engage in what I had planned for us to do, something I acknowledged and accepted as part of maintaining voluntary participation.

Observing this required some re-calibration from my side, as I wished to shift the not so positive atmosphere that I felt present. I brought a huge sheet of paper and started spreading it on the floor. Asking them for help got us all together, as we worked together to place the paper, cut tape pieces and go around the paper to place them. I was planning to do this in order for us to create a language portrait together. However, we ended up lying on the floor and creating each one's body outline, filling the paper with different postures and covering in between spaces with feet, hands, faces. I then tried to guide them to think of what languages we speak and place them on the bodies, showing them a small example I had done for myself. However, there was a lot of excitement and little interest in the activity. Instead, many laid on the paper and started drawing in and around the outlines. Katia only responded, who explained to me her relationship to Russian and Dutch. She can sometimes write in Russian but most of the times not, some words she knows, others not. I asked her 'what colour does Russian have?', and then 'what colour does Dutch have?'.

CREATING BODY OUTLINES

In the beginning she said that she doesn't know. She then said that Russian is blue. I asked her where and how would she draw it on the outline she had created and she chose to draw 'Dom', which I was enthusiastic to ask if it means house, as I remembered that she had taught me in the previous workshop. She smiled and confirmed that it was right. She wrote it and drew a symbol for it somewhere in the middle of the cat-like figure she had created. My feeling at that time told me that we had to move to the next activity to avoid losing the children's interest and engagement. I showed and told them that we could create mini-books in match boxes, which got the attention and interest of most of them.

FLIPPING THROUGH MAGAZINES WITH FARES

In the example of a booklet I had brought to show, I had created a visual and had written in Greek in it, encouraging them if they want to also write in any language they want. I shared that the book can be about anything they want and showed them the magazines, papers and markers I had brought, which they could use. That was a great point of inspiration for some. They came up with different ideas: a story about fire, cars, smileys and emotions, food, holidays. Making it was a bit hard for some and there was a lack of support, considering how many children there were. However, working it out together brought us closer, through providing individualized attention and care to the participants, while the

MARYAM SHOWING HER BOOKLET TO FARES

process allowed them to learn some different techniques and create a narrative. It was also a way to learn things from them and create an exchange between us.

We could ask questions about how different things they drew or collaged were called in different languages, ask them what happens in the story, about different elements in their booklets or what the title is. They were also interested in looking into each other's book, as they went around the space and asked one another to show them their book.

When some of the children were done with their booklet, I gave them the role of taking pictures of what they felt that was important from what we did today, which was something I had also invited at the first workshop. Different children took this role, engaging with one another, sharing and learning how a camera is used. For some of the children giving them the camera, was a way to engage although they had decided not to participate in the previous activities, such as Selim, who preferred drawing individually and not making the booklet.

After Selim, other children shared the camera, taking pictures of each other's booklets and of other moments. Allowing children to take photographs with a camera in a research context has been used as a participatory, task-centred activity to generate data (Gabhainn & Sixsmith, 2006). I wished to integrate this in the workshop, to offer another mean of engagement and interaction for the children, but also to take a step back and work 'with' and 'from' the children. As I believe that images cannot be neutral, I wanted to create an oppor-

tunity for documentation to be produced by the children, instead of me as a researcher. Through posing the invitation to take pictures of what they feel that is important, I wished to give them an opportunity to express their own perspective and facilitate a more active inclusion of the children in the process.

This workshop was a learning point for me, because it underlined the importance, but difficulty of letting go of plans. It became part of developing my capacity to adapt. This resonates with the concept of intentional adaptation, an element of emergent strategy proposed by andrienne marree brown (2017). Intentional adaptation describes changing with an intention, with a purpose in mind. We need to be ready to let go of our plans to accommodate what is, to adapt towards our intentions for the time we share together. This means listening for the opportunities present, adapting towards pleasure also in situations that may be felt as more challenging. She poses the question "how often, how quickly can I become aware of the miraculous nature of the moment I am in and adapt towards the pleasure available in that awareness?" (brown, 2017, p. 45). I now hold on to the notion of "less prep more presence" (p. 47), having a plan but adapting intentionally to what is present. Allowing for this to unfold requires humility; putting the ego to the side to listen to what emerges and to the need to make adjustments to hold a moment.

Fares showing his book to Selim to take a picture

Eva showing her book to a volunteer

Picture by Selim, who stood on the chair to take a picture of
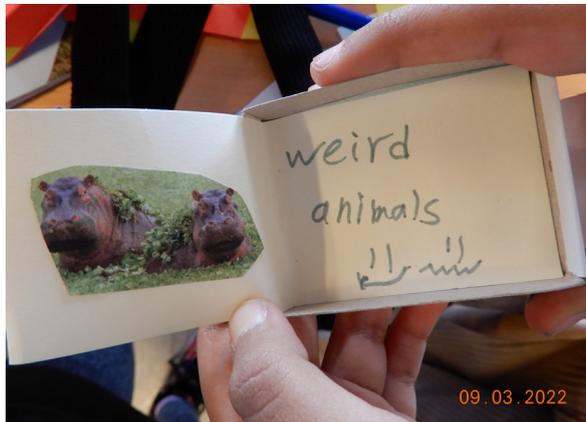the paper with the body outlines

A picture of Fares, while making taken by Selim

Katia showing her book to Eva

Picture of the space we were working in, taken by Katia

Naya showing her book to Selim

Katia taking a picture

Reflection

Through this research I primarily tried to learn from the children and the moments shared with them, as a way to build more respectful interactions and relationships between us, by using mainly the approach of affect theory. This included exploring different strategies, such as play and multilingualism, and principles such as pedagogical love, trust and vulnerability.

What has mostly stayed with me through this process is the importance of small moments and gestures, and of attempting to learn from them. I found a 'hidden' value in noticing and attending to moments of exchange between us. This includes being present to notice them and respond accordingly, investing in further understanding them, seeing how patterns of initiatives or behaviours can expand, and exploring how we can create more positive, intimate, trusting moments. Part of this became learning to be present, trying to give one's full attention and noticing that by practicing that we are also more likely to get that attention back.

Through the process the how became as important if not more important than the what. I recall in the beginning of the research process, exploring the many artistic, body and language practices that we can engage with. There are many practices that can allow us to build more respectful interactions and relationships between us. What I realized and was reminded through the process is that it is about how we practice what we do, how we behave, what lies in the core of our practice, what we decide to attribute attention to and how we attend to what is emerging through our time together.

Yet, although I, in collaboration with the col-
leagues I was working with, did select practices that
were in line with the practices of the organisations I
was engaged with and the interests of the children, the
perspective I adopted made me attentive to trying to
create moments of reversing roles, and of learning from
the children. Practicing trust, letting go, humility and
showing one's own vulnerability became part of this
process. Along that, I learned more about how we can
create space for multilingualism, while accepting that for
some children it may be empowering and for others not.
I also understood more around play, especially through
engaging with TeamUp, and saw how it can be a way
to connect with each other. Furthermore, as we worked
though movement and nonverbal communication, a
learning point for me became noticing mine and other's
body language more attentively and learning to adapt
and respond to the children's non verbal cues.

Another important point of this research is that
there is not one answer offered. This project is part of
an ongoing learning process and there is not an end
result, a final discovery or answer to be presented. I am
not willing to present a certain clear, consistent outcome.
On the contrary, I want the events I am discussing to be
prompts for further thought. The research questions can
guide me to in my future work with other groups I am go-
ing to work with, with what I am proposing in the pages
of this document even shifting. This is why this section
is not named conclusion, but reflection, it is a temporary
closing of a process. Understanding and engaging

affective pedagogies in relation to emergent multilingual
children and exploring bringing more reciprocity to our in-
teractions is something to be endlessly explored, with the
process changing according to the conditions and the
people present. Having these questions in mind changes
what we attribute attention to and working through them
created a shift in my practice with the children.

In this research everything mentioned and
explored is a response to what emerged with all the
conditions of who/what/who present. Everything I
decided to attribute attention to was chosen as it was
generative in the particular context I was engaged in and
each approach proposed was seen as a possibility at a
specific moment with the particular circumstances and
people present. Therefore, I am not offering a solution,
only possibilities, reflections, questions, lessons and
maybe some answers.

I started this document by mentioning some
principles, which guided me through the research
process and informed my way of doing. As I look back
to this project and my time and interactions with the
children, I am aware that their form changed. I didn't
let go off the principles of *Emergent Strategy* (2017).
However, if they were to refer to this particular project
with the particular group, with a different age and within
this specific context, and to what emerged through the
process and the lessons learned, another list would re-
place the former one. The research led me to revise them
and to create a collection of principles and lessons this
particular research led me to, through things I learned

from the children, colleagues, conversations with theory and through what emerged through the research events. Some principles remained as they were or are following the lines of the ones mentioned in *Emergent Strategy*.

Show that you care
Be humble, remember that you are also there to learn
Learn to let go of plans, give value to what is emerging
Trust, by trusting others they can practice being trustworthy
Don't be afraid to show your vulnerability, to ask and accept help
Be there, be present
The small matters (the small is a reflection of the large, the large is a reflection of the small)
Never a failure, always a lesson.
Remember why you are there
Smile, connect to the meaningful and joyful parts of the practice.

Right: Picture of Katia running

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