Response-ability: building together as performative political practice

P5
1 July 2019
Explore lab

Catherine Koekoek

tutors:
Alberto Altés Arlandis (design)
Armina Pilav (research)
Hubert van der Meel (bt)

Lei Qu (external examiner)
Politics no longer works like the democratic ideal presumed it did. We need to find other ways of doing politics: not just representational and abstract, but situated and performative.

Architecture can help us doing this.

Building together means creating another reality, together, situated in the mud of a place, materials, bodies, thoughts and values.

Even if this happens on a small scale, the experiences, agencies and skills emerging in the process will be taken everywhere you go.
Contents of this presentation

I. Design proposal: three theatre structures
II. What it does: context analysis
III. Building together
IV. Analysing the building process: how building together performs politics
V. Reflection
one earthen floor to practice on, a roofed space with thick walls and a roof

one open amphitheatre, around a tree

and one roofed space, a ‘hooiberg’ that takes the role of a music pavilion
hooiberg: bandstand and fire place
local typology + bandstand + campfire
roofed space to be in and on
amphitheatre around a tree - excavating earth, outside, part of landscape
amphitheatre around a tree
escavating, in the landscape
practice space
one earthen floor to practice on, a roofed space with thick walls and a roof -- thick walls allow emptiness, undefinedness of floor
flat floor non hierarchy
thick walls
Karen Barad: “First of all, agency is about response-ability, about the possibilities of mutual response, which is not to deny, but to attend to power imbalances. Agency is about possibilities for worldly re-configurings. So agency is not something possessed by humans, or non-humans for that matter.”

(Dolhijn & Tuin, 2012, emphasis mine)
learning skills, building together

a more inhabitable, generous place, more affordances
Embodied knowledge, skilled practice

Skilled
Practice
Involving
Developmentally
Embodied
Responsiveness
I. Design proposal: three theatre structures

II. What it does: context analysis

III. Building together

IV. Analysing the building process: how building together performs politics

V. Reflection
Schema van de gelede stad, W.F. Geyl, 1947
image via "Cultuurhistorische analyse en beschrijving IJsselmonde", gemeente Rotterdam, 2004
practice space
amphitheatre
hooiberg
barley field - 60m x 40m
Oeverloos participatory project
Rotterdams Wijktheater
I. Design proposal: three theatre structures
II. What it does: context analysis
III. Building together
IV. Analysing the building process: how building together performs politics
V. Reflection
which materials & affordances are available on site?

clay & sand (potentially: water & reed)

trees - wood, constructive elements

space to grow crops
Building vocabulary

- Concrete foundations
- Basalt gravel
- Earthen (loam) floor
- Path/earth
- Water
- Straw
- Reed
- Oak wood column
- Oak wood column
- Grass
1. Planting barley

**ACTIONS:**
- Script improvisation

**PEOPLE:**
- Local farmer
  - Shares knowledge, builds local relationships
- Bees & birds
  - Enjoy enhanced biodiversity, pollenate
- School children
  - Are away from school, learn about nature & growing, learn skills
- Inhabitants
  - Help shaping their neighbourhood, learn skills, meet people

**MATERIALS:**
- Bags of seeds (provided by local farmer)

**TOOLS:**
- Poles & rope, hayforks, shovels, gardening gloves, boots (sponsored by municipality)

**DURATION:**
- 1 weekend, November

**LOCATION:**
- Field

**DESCRIPTION:**
- Sowing barley seeds, sharing & developing gardening & planting skills
2. Moving earth

**ACTIONS:**
- Script improvisation

**MATERIALS:**
- Collected material: sand, clay, earth

**TOOLS:**
- Groundwater pump, excavator, shovels, wheelbarrows, poles & rope, tarp

**DURATION:**
- 1 weekend & professional builders until finished, March

**LOCATION:**
- Amphitheatre

**DESCRIPTION:**
- Terraforming, digging a pond, making a hill, collecting clay & sand

**PEOPLE:**
- Stadsbeheer
- Professional builders, operating excavator, supervise & teach
- Oeverloos project promotes the event, shares design & participation knowledge
- Neighborhood inhabitants help digging, moving earth, or providing snacks, sharing stories
- School children help digging, playing with earth
- VSO school children make coffee in the tuctuc or help digging

---

de doorstroom

---

**stadsbeheer**

---

**professional builders**

---

**school children**
Van Brienenoordbrug
hill made with earth from pond &
foundations

380mm
6000mm
2000mm

compacted basalt gravel stage

robinia pseudoacacia
1-person bench
practice space
more-people bench

1600mm
700mm

oak column &

800
400
400mm
3. Pouring concrete foundations

**ACTIONS:**
- Script improvisation

**MATERIALS:**
- Sand, cement, water, woodwork, screws, EPS insulation

**DESCRIPTION:**
- Pouring concrete foundations, a stable support structure

**LOCATION:**
- Practice space

**DURATION:**
- 1 week, March/April

**TOOLS:**
- Concrete mixer, hammers, screwdrivers, wheelbarrows

**PEOPLE:**
- Professional builders supervise, teach, dig foundations & pour concrete
- Team of (VSO) school children help building, gain work experience, build connections
- Inhabitants drink coffee, share stories, meet, observe
- De doorstroom (VSO school) serves coffee
- Stadsbeheer
- Professional builders
- School children
foundations provide stable, water-tight basis for all self-built things to come
before the rest of the structure is built, the foundations can be used to sit on and play with
4. Making oak wooden columns

ACTIONS:
- Script improvisation

MATERIALS:
- 8 locally sourced oak tree trunks (sponsored by municipality)

TOOLS:
- Saw, steel column feet, screws, drills, adze

DURATION: weeks, April/May

LOCATION: practice space

DESCRIPTION: making "roedes", oak columns and placing them in pavilions

PEOPLE:
- Professional builders share knowledge, maintain craftsmanship, teach, build
- Team of (VSO) school children learn craft, gain work experience, build connections
- Stadsbeheer sources oak trees somewhere in the city
affordances of an oak column (“roede”)
detail of a connection of the oak column on the concrete foundations at hooiberg
5. Building wooden structure

**ACTIONS:**
- script improvisation

**MATERIALS:**
- 2'x4' beams, screws, multiplex wood

**TOOLS:**
- saws, screwdrivers, power drills, hammers, work gloves

**DURATION:**
- 20 days, May/June

**LOCATION:**
- practice space

**DESCRIPTION:**
- building the wooden structure holding up the roof, affording to use this space in many ways

**PEOPLE:**
- team of:
  - professional builders sharing knowledge, building, teaching, showing
  - volunteers from neighbourhood learning, building, screwing, carrying
  - architect guiding, sharing knowledge, building together, learning, listening
  - school children gain work experience, building together

**Diagram:**
- 18 mm multiplex
- 89 mm
- 38 mm
- 480 mm
- 800 mm
- connecting beams afford shelving/seating
- 18 mm multiplex
- 200 mm concrete foundation plinth

**Symbols:**
- professional builders
- architect/facilitator
- stadsbeheer
Corner connection becomes a closet.
6. Placing pre-fab roof

ACTIONS:
- Script improvisation

MATERIALS:
- Foil, gravel, green roof supplies, soil, sedum plants, solar panels, prefab Kerto roof

TOOLS:
- Crane

DURATION:
1 week, June

LOCATION:
Practice space

DESCRIPTION:
- Placing roof, making a dry space, installing green roof & solar panels

PEOPLE:
- Professional builders placing Kerto roof, operating crane
- Team of builders making roof water tight, placing green roof
- Stadsbeheer providing tools, plants, knowledge for planting green roof
- Energy consultant sharing knowledge, installing solar panels

architect/facilitator

professional builders
50mm sedum mat
50mm substrate
40mm drainage & filter
root barrier
epdm water barrier
Kerto Ripa roof:
18mm triplex board
45x360mm beams, b.s.h. 400mm
straw insulation
18mm triplex board (interior finish)

kerto ripa
pre-fab roof buildup
7. Building reed roof

ACTIONS: script improvisation
MATERIALS: wood 'lanen' (beams), sticks, blocks, willow twigs, reed, rope, ...
TOOLS: saw, rope, drills, file, block plane, rope, ...
DURATION: 10 days, June/July
LOCATION: hooiberg

DESCRIPTION: building historic 'hay mountain' (hooiberg), including reed roof and dry wood connections

PEOPLE: building team (5 people) of builders sharing historic knowledge of hooibergen, sharing knowledge about reed roofs, volunteers from the neighbourhood learning historic building knowledge, building together, students gaining building and working experience

- Knotting
- Connecting
- Layering, binding
- Hanging, connecting

architect/facilitator
professional builders
high school children
Step 1. Wooden columns stand on concrete foundations.
Step 1. Wooden columns stand on concrete foundations.

Step 2. Main beams (horizontal lanen and vertical sporen) are attached to columns - details via hooidelta.nl
Step 3. Secondary beams are attached to the lanen and the knot in the top.
Step 3. Secondary beams are attached to the lanen and the knot in the top.

Step 4. Slates are attached to outside beams, reed roof is placed.
8. Harvesting straw

**ACTIONS**: script improvisation

**MATERIALS**: materials gained: straw, barley

**TOOLS**: threshing machine, threshing flails

**DURATION**: 1 week, June/July

**LOCATION**: field

**DESCRIPTION**: harvesting barley, harvesting straw, making straw bales for building with

**PEOPLE**: local farmer

shares knowledge, builds local relationships

school children

are away from school, learn about nature & growing, learn skills

inhabitants

help shaping their neighbourhood, learn skills, meet people

stadsbeheer

is in charge of public space, helps organising, provides tools

brewers & cookers

use barley to make beer, to make barley couscous, and more

**Birds & Bees**

**Stadsbeheer**

**Farmer**

**School children**

**Inhabitants**

**High school children**
9. Straw bale building

ACTIONS:

LOCATION: practice space

MATERIALS: straw bales, trass cement, chicken wire

TOOLS: gloves, hands, pincers, trowels, ...

PEOPLE: local farmer

shares knowledge, builds local relationships

architect facilitates, mediates, organises

school children

build together, learn together

inhabitants

help shaping their neighbourhood, learn skills, meet people

DESCRIPTION: building straw bale walls together, rendering them with trass cement

DURATION: 1 month, August
concrete
wooden structure 480mm
straw bales 480mm
chicken wire
trass cement 20mm
1000mm
480mm
480mm
20mm
20mm
20mm
10. Making loam floors

ACTIONS:
- script improvisation

MATERIALS:
- EPS insulation, compacted gravel, sand & clay (from pond excavation), straw, linseed oil

TOOLS:
- concrete mixer, feet, hands, trowels,

DURATION:
- August/September

LOCATION:
- practice space

DESCRIPTION:
- mixing clay, sand and straw to make a loam floor, pouring floor, finishing

PEOPLE:
- builders/architects sharing knowledge about loam floors, building together, guiding
- Rotterdams wijktheater participants building the floor they will work on, mixing, feeling
- inhabitants mixing floor mix, leveling, pouring, finishing
- school children mixing floor mix with their feet, learning, feeling, building together

architect/facilitator

wijktheater participants

school children

inhabitants
Pour 1
1 L clay
1 1/4 L water
3 L sand

Pour 2
1 L clay
1 1/4 L water
4 L sand

After pouring:

1 week later: too much clay, sample has cracked
1 week later: sample is perfectly fine
I. Design proposal: three theatre structures
II. What it does: context analysis
III. Building together
IV. Analysing: how building together performs politics
V. Reflection
Building together as political practice:

*5 fields of tension*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>temporality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ephemeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>durable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>building process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>improvisational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scripted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>improvisational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scripted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>representational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>publicness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Temporality

ephemeral
durable
Celebrating the process

Leaving a trace

Expanding the brief: temporary project leads to durable change

Durability legitimises ephemeral process
2. Building process

improvisational

scripted
Improvisational straw building together

Scripted concrete foundations make improvisation possible
| improvisational | scripted |
improvisational

before: only one possible use:
passing through

scripted
improvisational

Offering a generous amount of affordances

scripted
Visibility: something happens in this park

Regular programming & events, building together, learning

representational

performative

both-and
5. Publicness
domestic functions in the park to make it more public

fireplace

casual meeting

a cup of coffee - a kitchen table
I. Design proposal: three theatre structures
II. What it does: context analysis
III. Building together
IV. Analysing the building process: how building together performs politics
V. Reflection
thank you

Arthur  
Eva  
Joost  
Veerle  
Yara  
Tom  
Franke  
Willie  
Jonas  
Freek Jan  
Willemine  
Rob  
Tineke  
Tommi  
Aska  

Susie  
Freya  
Venla  
Alex  
Alberto  
Hubert  
Frank  
Nights of Philosophy  
Stefan  
Liselot  
Alle spelers van het wijktheater  
Stichting Tussentuin  
& everyone else who walked with me  
in whatever way over the last year!