



Real Projects for Real People, Volume 4 is a reflection on the work of The Patching Zone, a transdisciplinary media laboratory based in Rotterdam (NL) where young professionals, students and experts from different backgrounds build a shared practice. In this edition, practice based creative strategies for complex, multi stakeholder, innovation projects are discussed. The Patching Zone's practice from November 2013 until mid 2015 is the placeholder for all contributions. The contributions in this edition are built around three main projects: *Mediawharf*; the innovation workspace for Zadkine, a secondary technical vocational school in Rotterdam; *The Wilhelminapier Experience Tour*; the development of the public space at the Wilhelminapier in Rotterdam and the international Live Transmission project; the research and development of mobile citizens video journalism. Read about the authors' motives for their creative strategies and its outcomes. Real Projects for Real People, Volume 4 includes contributions from The Patching Zone's team, local stakeholders from Zadkine and Wilhelminapier in Rotterdam and experts from Eindhoven Technical University (NL), Blast Theory (UK) Translocal (FI) and OCAD University (CA).



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Volume 4

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Who is it for?

Max Dovey

Abstract

The diverse groups of people involved in Points of Departure made us constantly ask - who is it for? When embarking on a project with so many people from different backgrounds you can find yourself in a cacophony of different aspirations and expectations. This article highlights how the misunderstandings and expectations that occur through large-scale collaborative projects can be used to serve and benefit the project.

When we began the project in November 2013 we were introduced to the different cultural institutions and educational partners involved in *The Wilhelminapier Experience Tour*. The directors of the cultural institutions on the *Wilhelminapier* predominantly occupied the mature over 50-age bracket, while the students we were working with were aged around 17-22. I was one of four 'Young Professionals' working on the project and, as our

job title implies, our ages spanned 25-35. Collectively, we formed a vast scope of ages from young adults to an older generation and part of our task was to bridge the demands of both the directors of the cultural institutions and the expectations of the students. The diversity in ages can create some confusion as views and opinions divide the creative process. 'Processpatching' is a working methodology that utilizes the diversity so that everybody's spe-



Discoveries that occur through a series of misunderstandings

cialty contributes towards designing solutions in more innovative ways. Therefore, conflicts of interests and clashes should be seen as positive alternatives to problem solving during the design process. This can lead to extraordinary discoveries that occur through a series of misunderstandings that directly result from the day-to-day workshops and activities from working in a 'Processpatching' model. I will describe some moments that occurred during the collaborative process where the misunderstandings and expectations of people involved highlight how clashes of interest can serve the development of a creative project. During one of the first meetings between

everyone involved in the company Carol Hol, one of the co-initiators of *The Wilhelminapier* Experience Tour, wanted to know who had visited the Wilhelminapier and what they thought of it. When only one student raised their hand to comment that they thought the pier was 'boring, dull, there is nothing for us to do there' Carol Hol appeared genuinely surprised. Carol Hol had been instrumental in transforming *the Wilhelminapier* since the 1980s when it was a sectioned off area of Rotterdam and the only remnants of this historic location were empty shipping warehouses. Since then the pier has undergone dramatic transformation and now this historic site is populated with skyscrapers, offices, cultural museums, institutions, restaurants and residents housed in large multi-story flats. The latest skyscraper, designed by architect Rem Koolhaas, is a trio of titanic silver towers constituting forty-four floors of apartments, res-



taurants and a boutique hotel. Finished in November 2013, just as we began working on the project, the building shimmers over the Maas River and it's constant visibility throughout the city has made it one of Rotterdam's iconic landmarks. It's construction was the finishing piece of an urban development project that, in less than thirty years, turned the abandoned shipping warehouses of the pier into a modern urban development designed for apartments, offices and cultural activity. The mighty buildings tower over you as you walk down the pier and without any significant open space until you reach the Hotel New York there is very little ground level accessibility. Most of the automatic doors at the bottom of these skyscrapers lead to reception desks where you will not get much further without a prior appointment. With the pier now hosting mainly high-rise offices, luxury apartments and penthouse suites the Wilhelminapier is designed to

accommodate a privileged business lifestyle. It was not surprising the students had little interest in visiting *the Wilhelminapier* and did not go there to hang out. What was surprising was that the directors of the cultural institutions were shocked that the students didn't find the pier exciting. I suspect that some of the cultural directors still thought of the pier as a playground of endless possibility and that their relationship with the environment had not changed since they were ambitiously transforming it from an abandoned harbour in the 1980's. After all, it was the trespassing of just a small group of people who took those first steps in cutting through the fence and exploring the empty spaces as places of opportunity and began setting up cultural initiatives, parties and illegal shared housing. Some of the original group that remember the pier as this abandoned harbour are now running some of the current major attractions like The Hotel New York and LP2. Gerard Steenbergen (the director of LP2) would tell us about the parties that happened on the pier where the only way to get there was through a hole in the fence. It was those adventures that led to the modernisation and development of Wilhelminapier and turned the historic old harbour into a place of cultural regeneration.

Conflict in views between the students and the directors

During the 1980's *the Wilhelminapier* was an abandoned landscape that became a playground for exploration and radical transformation, but with the construction of this urban utopia, the sense of exploration had been

lost. The conflict in views between the students and the cultural directors was the first indication that we must attempt to re-create that lost sense of adventure and exploration for visitors on *the Wilhelminapier*. Our next steps focused on working with the students to develop ways in which the public space on Wilhelminapier could offer a sense of adventure and exploration to visitors and members of the public.

The guerrilla marketing campaign would cause some problems

During October 2014 we ran a two-week workshop with over a hundred students from Human Technology at Zadkine College. The students were developing mobile applications for *the Wilhelminapier* based on audience research they had been collecting from visitors on the pier. We encouraged the students to design projects and experiences that related to the findings of their research. One group of students identified the lack of parking spaces as a major problem for visitors on the pier and designed a mobile application that updated the user with available car park spaces. The group took their project one step further and made a self-initiated guerrilla marketing campaign to promote their project. The campaign used a visual logo with the words 'Wilhelminapier' and stencilled this logo with spray paint onto the walls of different cultural institutions on the pier. This occurred so discreetly that none of us workshop leaders noticed until Gerard Steenberg (the director of LP2)

tweeted a picture of one of the stencils on the side of his building. At the time Gerard was unaware who was responsible for the graffiti but I recognised the logo and was immediately concerned that the student's guerrilla marketing campaign would cause some problems. At the end of the week the students, teachers and cultural directors gathered and the students presented the projects they had made as part of the workshops.

The reaction to the graffiti was not what I anticipated; instead of condemning their actions, the cultural directors seemed pleased with how the students had engaged with and challenged the environment. When the students subverted our expectations by causing come mischief, the cultural directors seemed inspired by their juvenile attempts to stake their claim on the pier. Their actions subverted a set of rules and opened up a playful avenue that gave the students a feeling of ownership over the dominant skyscrapers, companies and cultural institutions. Needless to say we did not continue to cover the pier in graffiti, but we did learn the importance of creating a sense of ownership for people visiting the pier. We began asking how a sense of adventure, exploration and ownership could be created through a game-play experience on the pier. The directors of the cultural institutions were enthusiastic about developing this type of experience on the pier and the students were the perfect group to challenge and test the boundaries of a new adventure on the pier.

We began weekly game sessions with the students on the pier where we would test games and explore the space to help us develop an adventure-based experience for visitors to *the Wilhelminapier*. Although the students were



initially quite reluctant towards the idea of playing outdoor games, they began devising complex rules for strategy - based games like 'capture the flag' and 'Stratego'. We turned open spaces into bases for capture the flag or doorways into hide outs, transforming the urban environment into a place of adventure, exploration and ownership.

One of the issues raised in the project brief was that visitors on *the Wilhelminapier* would usually go directly to the institutions they were visiting and the tourists who occasionally pulled up on international cruise liners would immediately be driven off to the centre of Rotterdam and not stick round to explore the pier. People would not hang around, inhabit or explore the pier because many of the buildings required appointments (a screening at LantarenVenster, a table booked for dinner). Our project had to be publicly visible and encourage visitors to begin exploring different areas of the pier and combine the disparate

buildings on the pier. Through using games as a strategy for urban intervention and exploration we were able to develop adventure-based experiences that were then incorporated into the soundwalk of 'Points Of Departure'.

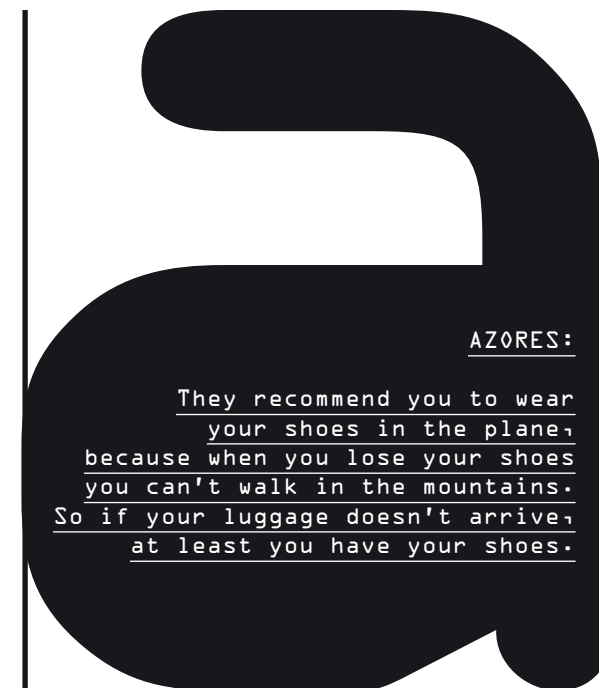
"The only thing that can be trusted... is a soundwalk that we performed on the pier during the Points Of Departure exhibition in March 2015. Visitors were instructed to walk to the end of the pier where there was a man writing dates on a blackboard titled 'Does this date mean anything to you?'. Upon seeing your date of birth written on the blackboard the visitor would approach the man who would give them a small card with directions to a room in the Hotel New York. Following the directions to the 4th floor they would find a bedroom overlooking the Maas River with a microphone on the table and a piece of paper on which was written 'Tell me about a journey that changed your life...'"

These three simple instructions allowed visi-



tors to wander the public space, encounter a stranger and explore the grand Hotel New York. The soundwalk enabled the public to explore the pier and experience parts of buildings they would not normally get access to. By wandering the water's edge, encountering a stranger and exploring the highest bedroom suite in the Hotel New York, the visitors experienced an adventure we created in both the public and private spaces on *the Wilhelminapier*. Through the mis-understandings that came from conversations and direct actions between the students and the cultural directors we were able to design an experience that responded to the mixed attitudes of everyone working on the project. Learning about *the Wilhelminapier's* recent history from abandoned territory to commercial urban environment encouraged us to turn a walk down the pier into an adventure. By changing how the students interacted with the pier, by explor-

ing and playing weekly games we were able to resurrect a sense of exploration and adventure that the directors of the cultural institutions felt so fondly of. Once we discovered how the development of the pier had been initiated by some wild explorers we were able to unbound ourselves from the constraints of the formal environment it had turned into and run wild down the pier once again. By working with such a wide range of ages and demographics we were able to strike a chord that resonated with everyone involved. Which is not easy when making a project with such a wide age demographic, but can be achieved by having some direct conversations and playing a few games to break the rules.



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They recommend you to wear
your shoes in the plane,
because when you lose your shoes
you can't walk in the mountains.
So if your luggage doesn't arrive,
at least you have your shoes.